11 May, 1994

It was intended to shoot this material the previous day, but this was not possible due to the late arrival of Tony Clark due to the delivery of incorrect stock. Turns out this was a blessing, as star conditions were better this night than the previous night.

The first shot with the motion control took some time to set up.... being the new improved small dolly and the new geared head, there were some teething problems, and a number of running repairs. Eventually the system was up and running not long after its scheduled time.

The Unit 4WD had its second flat tyre in 24 hours.

The new (secondhand) generator dropped a sump plug and shut down, causing a half-hour delay, until the unit manager-location manager-camp commandant-caterer-grip-motion control mechanic-general mechanic (Charles Kiroff) fixed the problem.

1 Redhead bulb blew.

Small though the crew may be, and primitive though the conditions are for this part of the shoot, it seems that this system of shooting is going to work.

In terms of results and schedule, much will depend on the weather.

12 May, 1994

Shot the remaining parts of this "shot" this morning. Everything worked well, no problems, though it was a bit of a scramble to get the material in the available time for suitable light.

Even at this early stage we're beginning to understand how truly weather-dependant we are. The material shot so far consists of four components (two time lapse passes and two real-time passes) which will go together to form one "shot" of a sequence of about seven "shots" which will appear to be one "shot".

The "shot" we're starting this afternoon is even more complex, consisting of seven components being shot over two nights, one whole day and parts of two other days. We can cope with a certain degree of weather inconsistency, but obviously a pass in full sun won't begin to fit with a pass in full cloud, particularly if one is in real time and the other is in time lapse and they're meant to fit on top of one another.

Still, if there is such a thing as a schedule, I guess we're on it so far.

13 May, 1994

Setting the gear up on top of this particular mountain proved a little more time consuming than expected, so the shoot here began at dawn this morning rather than last night as expected.

Weather was good, though ideally there would have been a little more cloud for the time lapse components.

All equipment seemed to function well, as did the crew. Everything scheduled for this particular day was shot.

14 May, 1994

Successfully picked up the remains of the "shot" begun yesterday. Weather continuity good.

The wrap on top of the mountain worked exceptionally well, crew and cast were on their way back to Adelaide by 10 in the morning.

19 May, 1994

An excellent night's shoot. Conditions very good after the significant wind dropped and people worked well.

This was most of the first dialogue scene, so the first time the actors were forced to extend themselves. They did so, and successfully. Rehearsal atmosphere good, willingness to work excellent.

Again, miracles from the tiniest of crews. Good to have a little extra help..... Pete Smith on set to guide the first recordings of guide tracks, Jeremy Webber to check out the field performance of the Motion Control Rig. It allowed for a slightly more elaborate lighting set up.

No major delays. Stock ratio remains good, despite showing coverage for this section.

20 May, 1994

A difficult part day's shooting in gradually deteriorating conditions. Increasing wind caused the abandonment of shooting relatively early, while a planned star shot was not possible either because of cloud cover.

The generator broke down at a critical stage causing a delay of at least an hour.

Most of this long night scene is now in the can, leaving only a cutaway and a time lapse star shot to do to complete.

21 May, 1994

Shooting not possible today or tonight due to high winds, dust and cloud.

Rehearsals were held indoors, in an available nearby shearers' quarters.

22 May, 1994

Late on Saturday night weather conditions suddenly improved.... the sky cleared and the wind dropped to manageable levels. Around midnight a decision was made to try and pickup the live action and time lapse passes of the star shot for the first main dialogue scene. If not done now, the next opportunity would not be until September, as the moon is on the rise and tonight is the last night with sufficient moonless time to attempt the shot.

Despite having had barely an hour's sleep before the decision was made to leave immediately for location, the little crew uncomplainingly stumbled their way to location and got the shots in cold and windy conditions. Dedication is not lacking.

23 May, 1994

A chasing the light sort of day. Very early start, waiting for sunrise, then the light wouldn't behave in the desired manner. Decision taken to come back and shoot late afternoon for early morning.

Achieved substantial amounts in the afternoon, but, as is almost inevitable, ran out of light with two shots left to do to be picked up tomorrow. Ambition always outstrips available resources.

A big day for the actors, who worked well and are developing a real presence and relationship.

24 May, 1994

A perfect example of weather dependency. The light was good and matched the previous day, but a constant windstorm gusting up to 80 kph made working conditions almost impossible.

Props kept flying down the valley, dust and grit got into everything and there was no way everything was going to match anything done the previous day.

In the end two shots were achieved .... a tricky little motion control transition shot from the previous night scene, and a wide shot on a long lens from a hill about 3 kms away.

Tomorrow is our last day here. Four shots are required to complete the day scenes and the transition to America. Two are difficult .... a complex performance-track and a motion control transition that relies on absolute precision. It doesn't seem possible that tomorrow will be as bad as today.

25 May, 1994

Today was abandoned at about 3 pm due to extremely high winds, dust and dirt. Impossible to shoot. Gusts of wind so strong that a well spread tripod with head on top was blown over. Cast and crew travelled back to Adelaide.

A few pickup shots to be done next visit to the Flinders.

18 June, 1994

Finally got to our first shooting day in America ..... Sudden(necessary) changes of plans, extraordinary difficulties in obtaining permissions to shoot(Las Vegas is Hollywood's backyard, and only money speaks), then eventually a reconceptualise and rewrite to get around the problems.

A blistering hot (104 degrees F) day on the Las Vegas plain was spent predominantly choreographing and programming a series of motion control shots for the next day. Complex work, including a shot (co-ordinated lateral track, camera speed change and aperture pull within a shot) that we had not attempted before (possibly no one has, and I don't blame them ..... it took us 3.5 hours to work out the mathematics of it).

A couple of timelapse shots done in the evening and night, but not all the programming completed.

Crew and cast worked exceptionally well in the hot conditions. Mike's decision to hire a motor home for his York films shoot and carry it through to Epsilon proved a salvation.

19 June, 1994

Even hotter than the previous day. Spent another 4 hours choreographing and programming the remaining shots, then began shooting.

Shooting went very well. With all the setting up of the shots already having been done, all concentration was able to be on the flow of performance, which was also helped by there being minimal time between setups. In about two and a half hours we shot ten sometimes very complex tracking shots. It was an aspect of motion control that had not previously revealed itself. It also meant perfect lighting continuity over a long scene.

Crew very proud of itself, particularly considering the extreme heat (106 degrees F). Very hopeful about the results.

Began the long drive to Palm Springs after wrap, stopping for the night at Barstow.

20 June, 1994

Drove to Desert Hot Springs and the wind generated power "farm" in the morning, ready for an early afternoon set up. Some problems fitting the actors into the shot because of the nature of the terrain (steep and scrubby), but eventually able to sort this out. An hour's delay through an equipment malfunction, but eventually the scene went well. Still extremely hot.

Packed up and drove to the second location, a truck weighing station near Palm Springs. Again very hot (parked right beside the main transnational expressway), but again the shooting went well (always subject to rushes being okay).

Consensus opinion was that we should push on to Los Angeles after wrap, set up base there for the remaining 3 days rather than be forced to move hotels yet once again. Our motley, dirty and tired crew was rejected as unsuitable by the first two hotels we tried, until ultimately a hotel as dirty and tired as us accepted us (we were grateful, it was, 3 a.m.).

Ratio remains good, today was a very long but pleasing day.

21 June, 1994

A relatively short day, very welcome after the previous three. No hitches or glitches, just went in and shot, packed up and left.

A substantial pickup shot remains to be done for this scene ..... a sort of reverse still needs to be shot, could have been shot today but it would have been unspectacular and ordinary. With a little planning and extra time, it will be special if shot in Adelaide a little later down the track. Crew and cast deserved a short day anyway. Tomorrow free for most, as final recces for last sequence in America need to be done.

Ratio a little higher today as we were shooting the second half of a shot, the first half of which has yet to be shot in Australia, and we needed to ensure we had sufficient options to physically be able to do the first half, (it'll make sense in the final film).

23 June, 1994

A 4.00 a.m. start to catch the morning light on this, our last day in Los Angeles. The location, a high view of the city chosen to best capture the smog situation, was among the most difficult so far, in that there was no direct vehicular access and all the equipment had to be carried a substantial distance.

Set up was smooth, apart from the problem of the keys being locked into the motor home (delay of 15 minutes).

A difficult scene for the actors, who had only a short window of time in which to complete the scene. As it turned out the smog rose much more quickly than nay of us had anticipated, and the city was completely obliterated from view by 9.00 a.m., rendering further shooting a waste of time.

Some problems kick-starting the computer due to strong interference from high-tension power lines, but all-in-all a satisfactory day's shoot, to be followed by the pack-up and return home.

23 July, 1994

One of the physically most demanding day's shoot we've been involved with. The location was a sort of a mountain sitting in the middle of a large, flat plain. The vehicles could get to within a few hundred yards of the summit, but most of those few hundred yards were up.

All the gear had to be lugged to the top, including some quite weighty items (Worrall head, generator, the control box) in hot conditions. Crew worked very well to do it in the time available. Shot seemed to go very well, then it was everything back down the mountain, but in the dark this time, although made possible by the help of the full moon.

Everyone exhausted but happy at the end of the pack-up. Two days of driving ahead of us.

26 July, 1994

A very frustrating day. High hopes dashed by technical problems.

A latish start to allow recovery after two days of driving, then a complex late afternoon shot wouldn't allow itself to be set up because of technical problems...this was the first time on this trip that the motion control had been

asked to track, and apparently something in the last 5,000kms of often bad roads had shaken something loose.

So an almost perfect sunset was missed because the gear wouldn't go. Tony and Charlie did as much as they could on location (restoring several functions), but ultimately it became clear that major work might be needed and the proposed night shoot was also abandoned.

Equipment was brought back to the accommodation, diagnostics were applied, and ultimately, close to midnight, all remaining malfunctions seemed to have been fixed, subject to testing with the rig on location in the morning.

27 July, 1994

A long day, but in the end it felt like quite a good day. On location in he morning to test the rig, and by early afternoon all remaining problems were ironed out and we could begin to set the shots for the remainder of the day.

Weather was not ideal, but the late afternoon sequence nevertheless went well enough. After sunset the clouds mysteriously cleared and we proceeded with the four-hour time lapse pass of the stars to cover part of the night dialogue sequence. Last third of this was clouded out, but might prove to be interesting. Depending on what the footage tells us, it seemed we escaped with the day.

28 July, 1994

Three very complex shots planned for today, the first being a walking transition shot to the tall trees location. Actors being asked to perform almost the impossible, to give a convincing performance whilst matching their speed and distance precisely to the motion control rig. The success of the shot depends almost entirely on their ability to be accurate to within a couple of centimetres in this pass, and then to be able to reproduce that in another location 600kms away.

After much rehearsing and waiting for sun, the shot itself seemed to go very well and we began to reset the tracks for the second and third shots, including a twelve-hour tracking time lapse shot of the stars, the pinnacles and the moonrise (the "glory" shot).

By the time the tracks were satisfactorily re-laid, the weather had closed in...conditions were bleak and windy with occasional rain, leaving us little choice but to abandon the rest of our plans for the day.

29 July, 1994

Morning blew up as bleak as the previous day, and there seemed little likelihood of filming today. We nevertheless proceeded to location and finished programming and rehearsing the first shot and hey presto, just as we were settling in for a long weather wait, the wind dropped and the sun came out.

First shot was thus completed on time and we programmed the glory shot. By the time darkness and the time to begin the shot approached, all cloud had disappeared and conditions were as near perfect as they could be.

Producer Domenico Procacci was to join us, and the peculiar nature of this sort of filming was illustrated by the fact that Domenico was taking off from Singapore at about the time we pressed the button to begin the filming of the shot...he was on location with us, 250kms north of Perth, before the camera had stopped turning over on that same shot.

Conditions held throughout the night, and we packed up from this location in the morning with the glory shot in the can, and high hopes for it. A twenty-four hour day for some, made the longer by one of the vehicles hitting a kangaroo during the night and a home having to be found for the resulting orphaned joey.

1 August, 1994

After the previous day had been dedicated to surveying and planning rather than filming, we felt highly organised and highly motivated (Domenico travelling with us) in this new location. Weather and excessive ambition tend to get in the way of the best laid plans, however.

Three shots were planned for the day in the Karri forest, one was achieved. It was certainly the trickiest, being the second half of the shot requiring absolute precision of the setting of the motion control rig and a complete duplication of the accuracy of performance by the actors.

Start of the day was delayed by a local location permission confusion. By the time this was sorted out by various officials visiting location and determining that we did indeed have the correct permissions, close to two hours had been lost. The setting of the track was more complex than had been envisaged, and then, instead of the very convenient cloud cover that had been with us, the sun broke through the trees and provided us with lighting problems that could only be solved by waiting until the sun was low enough for the contrast to be reduced. Sixteen takes later (a record by far for this shoot) the shot was finally complete, and there was no time left to get a serious start on anything else. Tracks for the first shot the next day were laid in the dark.

2 August, 1994

Quite a good day, although not the easiest. First shot of the day almost broke the record set the previous day, but the fast moving patchy clouds played havoc with the light. Barely a consistent minute could be found.

Second shot of the day was an adventure in itself...the motion control rig(without tracks) eighty feet up a giant Karri tree. And programming a computer eighty feet up a tree is no easy task. Ultimately the shot went without hitches, although no time was left to attempt anything else on this day.

3 August, 1994

A morning spent in a cow paddock avoiding cowpats and fighting weather conditions. First up, an hour and a half's delay while running repairs had to be made to the calibration of a lens. Occasional rain hampered the set-up. Eventually the shot was done in poor light. Lunch was taken leaving the set-up intact, and as luck would have it, the sun burst through for fifteen minutes, allowing us to redo the shot in much better light.

Ten minutes later the rain started, lightly, and we shifted locations to set up for a very early morning shot the next day. As the afternoon progressed the rain became heavier. Further preparation became impossible because of the risk to the sensitive electronics.

The decision was made to start very early the next morning to finish the set-up for the dawn shot.

In setting up today, the main motion control belt snapped in half, reducing our tracking ability to two lengths of track instead of four. Not a problem for the dawn shot.

4 August, 1994

At five o'clock in the morning it was still raining, and the dawn shot was abandoned for the day.

Heavy rain persisted for most of the morning, easing to heavy showers for the rest of the day. A possible woodmill location proved unshootable, and by early afternoon there were enough dry periods to set up for what was to be the dawn shot. It was possible to get a vehicle close enough to the tracks to house some of the electronics in there, and a couple of extra tarpaulins were purchased to more completely cover the rest.

The weather was kind enough to allow us to shoot this scene at dusk today, as cover for tomorrow morning's dawn. The fog began rolling in shortly afterwards, and there are high hopes for the misty dawn shot that would be the ideal.

5 August, 1994

Fog everywhere except in the creek where we wanted to shoot the scene, but good conditions and appearance nevertheless. Shot several takes in changing light, better than the previous evening's attempts, then packed up ready to begin the journey back to Adelaide.

Schedule for the next few days uncertain...we need at least three days for the actual driving, so only one day remains for shooting, since several of the personnel must be back in Adelaide on schedule. We'll see what we find on the way. And the weather continues to be bad.

Thursday, 25th August, 1994

This trip to the Flinders was designed to shoot the complex material at the very beginning of the film... her arrival on Earth leading up to the discovery of the campsite. Two factors very important over the next few days: the quality of the stars (hence of course also the weather); and the new in-camera motion control optical program, which should enable us to overcome some of the problems with laboratory opticals involving starfields, but which does make for somewhat technically more complicated shooting.

Our first shot is a case in point...three passes of the same piece of film in the camera, two real time and one time lapse. Two aperture pulls programmed in. A simple little shot of two feet landing has become very complicated.

First difficulty was laying the tracks...lens height had to be lower than minimum, so a large grave-shaped hole had to be dug through almost solid rock, which kept everyone very active for some hours and resulted in multiple blisters. Compromise was decided upon when the rock became impenetrable at about the time the sun was setting.

The shot was choreographed and the three passes programmed with some time pressure (there was only one and a half hours of shootable star time before the moon was scheduled to rise, and we needed every minute of that for the star pass), and we proceeded to shoot.

First pass went well, but upon attempting the second pass, the rig misbehaved...a hardware fault was suspected. Remedial action was taken, the first pass re-shot, then the second and third passes were done in good conditions and with just enough time to complete the shot.

Weather conditions were good, star visibility good to very good, and the new crew structure looks like working well.

Friday, 26th August, 1994

Overnight some investigations were done on the previous day's suspected hardware fault. This was, in fact, discovered to be a fault in the new in-camera optical software, which had been tested before our departure, but with insufficient time to iron out every possible bug.

While corrected software was being rushed up from Adelaide (it seemed very likely that the previous day's shot would be unaffected), we set up on location for the next shot, a somewhat simpler but "bigger" shot.

Dead trees were planted (more digging through rock), large rocks were arranged and it started to be come evident how much difference the new crew structure was making. Everything was arranged, choreographed and programmed before dark, and we had a good break whilst waiting for the new software to arrive.

It duly arrived (just in time before it started to eat into our star shooting time), was installed and the real time pass was shot. Back to the head and the star pass was added in good conditions.

Back at base, however, discussions about the software revealed a cause for concern...did "start" in real time mean the same thing as "start" in time lapse to the program?

Frantic phone calls to Adelaide that night and the following morning revealed that our concern was justified...two nights' work had to be junked because of non-matching passes. More than somewhat disappointing, but that's what happens when you're working this far out on a limb. The results should be worth it once we get some.

Saturday, 27th August, 1994

Decision made to program two shots on the one track today. Considering the misfortunes of the previous two days, this would enable us to shoot on our day off with minimal effort and maximum result, and the absence of two of the crew on the following day would not affect operations.

Programming and choreographing of both shots went smoothly, lights were preset and trimmed once darkness fell. The first pass of the first shot was shot well before stars were shootable, leaving plenty of time to most carefully set up the star pass.

The star pass, again using maximum amount of available time without moon, was achieved in good conditions.

A very smooth days' shoot, and the real differences between the current structure and the previous structure are now very evident. The actors are now much more and much better supported and can give of their best with much less distraction and difficulty. Job functions, although there is still a large degree of multi-skilling, are much better defined...instead of four specialists and three generalists, we now have eight specialists, and operations are consequently much more efficient. Crew comfort, although probably still somewhat lower than on the average shoot, is pure luxury compared to what it used to be. And the job of directing this film has become a far more focussed and much more pleasurable occupation.

Hopefully the results of all this will show on the screen...the passion and commitment of the new crew members rivals that of the established, so there's no reason why it won't.

NOTE: Ratios on today's progress report sheet have been recalculated to take into account the junking of the first two nights of shoot.

Sunday, 28 August, 1994

Another smooth night's shoot...arrived at a later time because all the track laying, choreographing and programming had been done the previous day.

First pass (real time) achieved without problems. Star pass started in only fair conditions...some cloud build-up during the shot, but uncertain as to how much this will affect the shot. There is no direct star continuity with this shot, so some cloud could actually be good for visual variety and dramatic dynamic.

Monday, August 29, 1994

Increasing length of available star shooting time means that it has become possible to attempt the reshoot of the
first two nights material in the one night.

Conditions looked fair (some cloud hovering on the distant horizon), although a substantial breeze was blowing. Some time had to be spent replanting our dead trees, which had been blown over during the previous night.

The second of the two shots was set and rehearsed, then the rig moved over onto the other track for the first shot. Shot was set, lit and rehearsed. Began shooting the real time pass, but quite soon the weather deteriorated markedly. The wind blew up, and the clouds blew in. Spots of rain were felt.

At the time when it was no longer possible to get both shots in, and with no real prospects of improvement in conditions, the night's shoot was reluctantly abandoned.

Tuesday, August 30, 1994

Morning broke crystal clear but somewhat windy. Out to location to reset the two shots abandoned the previous night, and to begin preparations for the following night's attempts (set dressing, blocking etc).

The wind gradually dropped during the afternoon, conditions stayed clear and morale was further boosted by a very positive rushes report from the previous Saturday night shot...the in-camera optical had worked, the stars were beautiful, the shot looked great.

The evening was further highlighted by the arrival of Ulli covered from head to toe in a mixture of tea and coffee...the contrast between her skin colour and the background in these "under the stars" night shots had been a little high, and Beverley solved the problem by manufacturing this concoction. Many jokes at Ulli's expense.

First shot seemed to go well (the triple pass double aperture pull landing shot), and we had dinner in the dark while the time lapse star pass was put down. On its completion there was a major reset (lights, rig, motion control gear etc) under pressure of time (a further three hours of moonless stars were required for the second shot).

First pass of the second shot completed without incident, the program behaved itself while the camera was being rewound, and the second star pass was started in good time.

A good day, with a real feeling of being on top of things.

Wednesday, 31 August, 1994

A day (night) that was almost very good, but in the end just good.

A calm clear day, ideal conditions, and a location move to the "campsite" about half a kilometer away was achieved with a minimum of fuss. Spent the afternoon laying two sets of parallel downhill tracks and dressing the campsite.

The first shot, her POV of the man as he goes about his business, required Syd to act in character for an uninterrupted eighty minutes...none of us could recall a situation where an actor had ever done a longer take in shooting a film.

The shot seemed to go well (very hard to tell what it will actually look like), and we then began the setup for what has been dubbed the "Hyperdome Shot"...her moving in time and space from her landing spot to the edge of his campsite. This shot, another in-camera optical, requires four passes and three aperture pulls, three of the passes in time-lapse, plus the use of two different lenses. All four passes must be shot during the same night.

All the preparations were made...calculations, locations, programming etc, but when it came to shooting the first pass, it was clear that to complete all four passes before the moon rose was a doubtful proposition, and the shot is too complex to risk doing under intense time pressure, particularly when it seemed unlikely that we'd complete anyway. And, as luck would have it, the clouds chose that moment to start appearing above the horizon in the direction we would be shooting them. The shot was postponed until first-up the following night.

The crew continues to work very well together in its new configuration. Having a cook along on this trip has made an immense difference to efficiency and morale.

Charlie twisted an ankle during the night's proceedings, was in some pain. Protestations of "I'm all right", but his workload will have to be watched for a few days.

Another set of rushes sent out, we wait with eager anticipation for the report.

Thursday, 1st September, 1994

Disappointing weather conditions forced a change in plans...heavy cloud and gusty winds meant that we set up for a long tracking shot of Her as she observes the man in his campsite in time lapse.

Crew worked very efficiently and the shot was completed within an hour of darkness, with seemingly very pleasing results. Equally pleasing was that the wind had dropped, the clouds had disappeared and we now had the best night since our arrival on this trip.

We then set up for the four-pass "Hyperdome" shot. Our first attempt at it was aborted between the first and second passes through a mag jam during the film rewind. The second attempt almost came to grief during the twenty minute time-lapse second pass when a strong wind blew up during the shot. Crew members were instantly converted into heavy-duty C-stands, and by the end of this pass there were a number of sore arms from having clung onto the various lights and jerry-built cutter boards. However the shot was saved and we now had two exposures on our little piece of film.

Tension grew as the camera rewound in readiness for the third pass...one mistake now and we would have to start again from the beginning. Rewind okay, and the third pass,

the man's campsite in the distance, was set. This was another twenty minute timelapse, no time to rehearse it, so directed "live" by walkie-talkie.

Everything seemed to happen the way it should have, so we held our breaths while the camera began its task of locating the exact starting frame for the fourth pass, part of the way through the three layered shot we had now created. It really was a tense time, but followed by elation as the computer told us it had successfully performed its allotted task without crunching up our precious few feet of film.

The star pass was quickly set up and started. A small amount of cloud drifted in about an hour and a half in to the shot, but even this was a bonus, as it matches with the shot this one cuts from, when cloud also drifted through. All in all, a terrific night...one with a very high degree of difficulty, but one in which everything happened the way it should have (subject to a lab report).

Friday, 2nd September, 1994

Final night for the main unit on this trip away, star unit of Tony Charlie and Rolf to continue on into the Center tomorrow for the opening three star shots.

Also the last of this run of special effect in-camera opticals, this one a fairly straightforward three-pass one, complicated only by four aperture pulls and the fact the the tracks had to be built on an incline of almost four to one to give the illusion of a horizontal track but with a total star background.

The building of a track that steep with our limited resources (four apple boxes, two milk crates of wedges and two half star pickets) tested our engineering skills (every crew should have a Charlie), but the real test was whether the motion control rig with Worrall head and Mitchell camera could pull itself up the incline. It can.

The crew worked exceptionally well to put the shots together, in what turned out to be quite difficult conditions...a strong wind blew up before midnight and stayed with us until after completion. The fact that we'd had an exceptionally encouraging rushes report that morning was a great incentive for all of us to not let the weather get the better of us.

The star pass was started (again just in time) in quite good conditions...a few streaky clouds in the first part of the shot cleared quite quickly. On completion of the star pass the weather set in, a thick black cloud cover accompanied by gale force winds. Our luck with the weather on this trip had held out right to the last, everybody looking forward to getting back and seeing the fruits of our labours.

Saturday, 3rd September, 1994

Main unit travelled back to Adelaide today, the star (celestial stars) unit travelled north for clearer skies and better weather.

First night camp was set up in a creek bed about 100kms up the Strezlecki Track from Lyndhurst (after two flat tyres). A fixed all-night shot of the polar star section of the sky was set up, and the shot was started.

During the night cloud set in. A complete shot is required, so the section shot is to be used as a forced processing of stars test, and the shot is to be re-done.

Sunday, 4th September, 1994

A day of dust and mud. Drove further up the Strezlecki Track, still in search of clear skies, up to Innamincka, through alternating dust storms and rain squalls, each of which quickly turned the dust into mud. Arrived in Innamincka about lunch time, another flat tyre on the way.

The locals were amazed at the mud on our vehicles...they hadn't seen a drop of rain for many months. Within an hour, in this, the driest corner of the driest state on the driest continent, it was raining.

Sat out the rain while our tyres were being repaired (at exorbitant prices), then ventured out to look for suitable locations.

A few possible (but not ideal) spots were found, but the cloud persisted and it was pointless to try and film this night.

Monday, 5th September, 1994

Up early in the morning for more surveying. The cloud was breaking up, but was replaced by a strong wind which was kicking up more dust storms.

Found a few much more promising locations in a wide circle around Innamincka, eventually settling for a difficult-to-get-to spot high on a sort of mesa just over the South Australian border in Queensland. It was within a few kilometres of the place where Burke and Wills died, and I can understand why.

The spot was chosen because it gave us the best chance to get above the dust, which was pervasive and persistent. The static shot was set at around sundown, on the highest point of the mountain (and the windiest), and started. We retreated down the hillside a bit to a more sheltered position and made camp.

Tuesday, 6th September, 1994

Stopped the previous night's time-lapse star shot at dawn. There seemed to have been no problems with this shot during the night so we decided to do the first of our two tracking shots up on this mesa as well... conditions were still very windy and the air up here was definitely freer of dust than that on the valley floor about 500 feet below.

The entire four lengths of track was laid on the edge of a rocky knoll. It was quite an engineering feat, using every available box, wedge and lump of wood we had.

Raised three fallen dead trees as foreground dressing in another monumental engineering feat...there's almost nothing that can't be done with a few lengths of rope and a good four wheel drive.

The wind was a constant nuisance, and most of the afternoon was spent lashing down the trees to stop them falling down again. Eventually choreographing and programming the shot was complete and we finished the first pass (real time for the lighting of the foreground) just in time to begin the star pass in good conditions.
Set the pass to run for the night and retired to camp.

Wednesday, 7th September, 1994

Dawn found the shot complete and the trees still standing. Packed up the location and restored it to something like its previous glory.

Shifted to second location (back in South Australia), a rocky (everything around these parts is rocky) knoll in the shadow of a substantial mesa.

Laid tracks (2 lengths), choreographed the shot after much calculations as to what the galaxy was doing at what time of night, and spent the rest of the afternoon installing rocks and dead trees as foreground.

The wind had substantially dropped and we started the shot in fairly good conditions under a clear sky.

Dawn found the shot complete, so a pack up and return to Adelaide.

Monday, 19th September, 1994

An ambitious day...almost 600kms of travel after an early final packup, then to set up and shoot a three shot sequence before sunset.

It is a sign of the increasing efficiency of the crew that we managed the task, and with a minimum of fuss and drama. The location was the middle of a salt lake that was hard but not quite dry...not the easiest of conditions to work in because of the danger of salt damage to both the sensitive electronics and the otherwise robust mechanical items.

Everything was set up off the ground...tracks, control boxes, cables, the works. Conditions were fine, cool with a bit of wind, so the work was not otherwise difficult.

Set up and choreographed the three shots, then shot them in close succession a little before sunset, hoping to get a second set of three takes in. Time ran out on us, so we were satisfied with the one take we did get.

Packing up took longer than usual (much salt rubbing off to be done, despite the care taken with setting up), but all were satisfied with a good day.

Tuesday, 20 September, 1994

Another early travel start, relocating to the Flinders this time. Some time was lost attempting to send rushes from Port Augusta...this was eventually abandoned after an hour of fruitless and frustrating trying.

Arrived at Mt Mary location a little after 2 pm. The rest of the afternoon was scheduled to be a set up only for the re-shoot of the "round-the-mountain" optical, originally shot during the first week of the shoot but requiring another go because of numerous reasons...some simple technical (e.g. flare in one component of the entire "shot") some complex technical (a non-match in one of the match dissolves) and some creative (a better "look" had since been found for the lead actress.

Some of the reasons for the re-shoot (particularly what we'd learnt since doing it some four months ago) caused us to re-examine our approach to the shot. The afternoon was spent making some major decisions and doing the calculations to support those decisions.

Wednesday, 21 September, 1994

A pre-dawn start for further planning and observations on sunrise and light conditions. Final shape of the shot was decided upon and programming started for a forty-four hour time-lapse shot of nine components.

Around lunchtime we were ready to begin shooting. Did the first part (a real-time shot with Ulli) without problem, then set the second part going (a six-hour day into night timelapse) and descended down the mountain for lunch.

Half way through lunch we spotted people at the top of "our" mountain (on private property in the Flinders). They had climbed up the other side of the mountain and were busy inspecting all the gear, which appeared to include peering down the lens.

We abandoned lunch and climbed back up the mountain...the six-hour timelapse was recommenced as a five-hour timelapse. Guards were permanently posted, tracks into the area blocked with large boulders and signs.

Darkness overtook this pass at the appropriate time, and the third component (an entire night timelapse segment exposed for the full moon) was started.

Thursday, 22 September, 1994

The first night pass was completed without incident at 5.30 in the morning. The camera was reset for the next day time lapse component, which began at around 6 am.

During this time lapse, a fair wind started to blow. As it increased in strength, we watched very carefully for any signs of instability in the camera, but all seemed okay.

This pass was completed at around midday, at which time we shot another real time pass with Ulli. Apart from the wind, this went well. The camera was then reset for the afternoon time lapse pass, which did not go without incident: an elderly woman, camped down below, somehow managed to climb all the way up our mountain with the apparent express purpose of turning off our generator... she was gently deflected back down the mountain; a mob of sheep climbed up a virtual cliff face with the apparent express purpose of getting into our shot...they must have got stagefright, deflecting themselves at the last minute; the wind became so strong that it literally blew the matte out of the matte box...it was found halfway down the mountain and restored to its correct position.

By evening the worst of the wind had abated. The second night pass was begun on schedule. It was decided to reshoot the two timelapse day passes shot today on our rostered day off tomorrow, while the rig was still up and the positioning uninterrupted by it not yet having been turned off...the risk of wind-caused camera vibration today is too high, and we would have to reshoot all the passes if we found later that there was something amiss with that one.

Friday, 23 September, 1994

Around midnight the night pass was interrupted by a fierce windstorm of about half an hour's duration. Again, the pass may be all right, but the risk is too high, and it is to be re-shot during our rostered night off.

The final morning pass was commenced in much calmer conditions, a good sunrise and lovely light. Then came time to shoot the final shot of the sequence, a real-time pass of Ulli. One take completed, then a technical problem...the rig would run, the camera would run, but the two would not run together. Tracked down as a software bug...this was now the longest continuous time that the rig had ever run, and after 35 hours the bug showed itself. The solution was fairly simple...for the rest of this sequence we would have to disconnect the camera from the rig and fire it off independently. The shot was then completed without further problem.

A further delay was incurred through some sheep on the facing mountain for the previous day's pass reshoot. Chris Corin the mountain goat scaled unimaginable heights to chase them out of frame, over the next mountain and practically into the Northern Territory. The delay, however, meant that the time to shoot the morning pass had gone, so we re-set again to re-shoot the afternoon pass. This was started and completed without incident, in much calmer conditions than the previous day.

Upon the falling of darkness the camera was re-set for the re-shoot of the wind-interrupted all-night pass and shooting commenced for another 11 hours, hopefully without problem this time.

It is very apparent during these few days on the mountain how the risks increase with the length of the shot...the longer the camera is running, the more time there is for something to go wrong, and the sorts of things that go wrong can be quite the unexpected. For example, our 44 hour shot has become a 72 hour shot...not only has the rig never gone that long without stopping, but the generator has never either. Petrol is easy enough, you get up every few hours and refill it. Oil is another question...because oil is pressure fed, you can't refill it while it's going. This genny burns a bit of oil, and has an automatic shutdown if it gets low. We think it is nearing the end of its capacity, and the tension now is, will it last until midday tomorrow?

Saturday, 24 September, 1994

Dawn broke to find the genny still chugging away - so far so good. The night pass had been completed without apparent problem, and the last bit of this giant puzzle, the re-shoot of the second day's morning pass was started. We were now into our fifth day on the mountain.

Thankfully the morning pass happened the way it was meant to, and at around midday we finally switched off the generator and packed up. Drove the hour and a half to our accommodation, set off an hour later for our evening shoot.

This night was reserved for the re-shoot of the previously attempted "hyperdome" shot (see September 1), which had problems of unknown origin in its original incarnation. Despite being at the end of a day that had started at 5 am for some of the crew, everyone knew what to do and how to do it...lights were set, the shot was programmed and the first pass commenced a little later than would have been hoped. Second and third passes were added, but by the time we got set to do the fourth pass (the star pass) it was within an hour of moonrise, insufficient time to complete the shot. We ultimately felt that the added risk of adding the fourth pass the following day was minimal, so we were able to wrap and seek some welcome sleep.

Sunday, 25 September, 1994

Tony, Charlie and Rolf out to location in the morning while the rest of the crew shifted accommodation back to our old haunt of the Willow Springs shearer's quarters.

The major task was the construction of an elaborate lighting rig for the campfire scene...a spacelight had been built by Charlie and Helen during the layoff, and this had to be suspended 20 feet above the camp gaslight, without obstructing our field of shoot, but still be able to withstand the often windy conditions that seem typical of this valley.

The rest of the crew arrived mid-afternoon (after a very trying trip out which included a collision with an emu) to find a dinosaur shaped and sized construction hanging over the campsite, visible from miles away...a truly impressive piece of engineering.

Preparations were made for the first shot of the night (hopefully the last of our complex special effects shots for a while), that of the man slowing down into real time from time lapse. Tracks were laid and programming started. Several short delays due to the computer crashing.

At sunset the decision was made to send Ulli back to base...she was suffering from a bad cold, and clearly wouldn't improve by being out here. Also there was no way that her scheduled closeups would match anything else we'd shot (red-rimmed eyes etc).

The slowing-down shot was interrupted some time after dark to complete the Hyperdome shot (moonrise still being fairly early tonight). Five frames into the star pass, the computer crashed again, but the camera continued to shoot according to previous instructions, and we were hopeful that there would be no problem with the shot.

Work on the slowing down shot recommenced after the star pass, and this was eventually in the can, but again after a number of computer problems. Problem solving on set has become a way of life.

Monday, 26 September, 1994

The day did not start well. Actors and director were scheduled to go to set at midday to rehearse and block the campfire scene, to be followed by the rest of the crew with a view to beginning shooting as soon as it was dark enough. However Ulli was worse than she had been the day before, and exposure on the cold and windy hillside, particularly considering the light wardrobe in this scene, would have run the risk of major complications.

A hasty rethinking cobbled together enough material to justify a day's (night's) work, but then it was off to the phone first to get our rushes report...we'd received a fax alerting us to a potential flicker problem.

The news was not good, but completely inconclusive...the material looked brilliant but there did seem to be problems with it, and because of the complexity of the inter-relationships between the shots, those who were viewing the rushes were incapable of working out what was okay and what wasn't. The only solution was for Tony and Rolf to get into a vehicle and drive down to Adelaide to look at the material. Charlie and Helen were hastily briefed on a couple of pickup shots and star tests (which they proceeded to do).

There was indeed a problem with the rushes, but of a magnitude much greater than had been anticipated. There was no option but to abandon the rest of this particular trip whilst sorting out the problem and its consequences.(In the final analysis, only the last two shots done were useable, the Hyperdome shot and the slowing-down shot... they look great).

Sunday, 9 October, 1994

A 2pm scheduled departure after almost two weeks of modifications, testing, further adaptations, rewriting of software, more testing. The new camera motor system had finally been installed late Friday night, a test shot and an expected result from the test at midday Saturday.

The test didn't arrive at the lab until after midday, and its return was a circus of delays and cancelled planes. The word from the lab was that it was okay, but after

our previous experiences, nothing less than our seeing that it was okay was going to suffice.

Ten am Sunday we finally got to see the test...all previous problems had been fixed, but now there was a new problem. By midday the problem had been isolated to being a software bug with the new system, and work started on debugging.

Half the crew left at about three, with the hope that things would go well enough for us to be able to shoot the following night. The problem was fixed late afternoon, a test was shot and despatched to the lab, and the other half of the crew left at about 6.30 pm. The test had been shot in such a way that a phone conversation with the lab the following morning would confirm if the fault had indeed been fixed.

Monday, 10 October, 1994

Moved out to location at about ten a.m. to set up for the first night of the campfire scene, material from the very first shoot that needed to be re-shot. The dinasaurean space light was rebuilt, then rehearsals started for the scene.

Our expectations were to be able to shoot around fifty seconds of this scene, because that was the limit of our star availability (moonset around midnight). We began to set the shot after some very satisfactory rehearsals, but found that no matter what we tried, the shot did not want to accommodate the shooting of any stars.

This meant that we could run the scene for much longer than we had anticipated...in the end for over two minutes. We began shooting in almost perfect conditions...a mild night, no wind. The scene ran well, very well, and we could even indulge in the luxury of a little coverage.

Shortly after eleven pm it was a wrap...two minutes fifteen seconds of screentime in the can, and all of us feeling very good about the material. If it all comes out as expected, this was, after the trials and tribulations of the last month, an exceptional day.

Tuesday, 11 October, 1994

A night of dramatics, both literally and figuratively.

The second part of the campfire scene to be shot tonight, including an in-camera star-pass. The shot was choreographed with some difficulty...motion control and acting spontaneity can only be mixed very carefully, and this was one of those occasions. The action was wild and wonderful, and the shot was constructed to accommodate this as much as possible.

Shooting began but fairly quickly ran into trouble. During the course of the action of the first complete take, Ulli kicked the esky so hard that she clearly incurred some damage to her foot...not only were three toes bleeding, but she was in obvious major discomfort as well.

A couple of satisfactory takes later and it became evident that she shouldn't continue. We selected one of the two good takes over which to do the star pass and chose to print the other without stars for safety.

Ulli's foot was iced and bandaged, the star pass started and we returned to our hut satisfied with a good night's work.

Wednesday, 12 October, 1994

The morning's proceedings were more dramatic than the scene the previous night...Ulli staggered out of bed, managed to get out the information that her foot was bad, very very bad, then promptly proceeded to lapse into unconsciousness.

Hawker Hospital was some two hours away, and by the time we got her there she was much the better...the diagnosis of torn ligaments with possible broken bones did not, however, lift anyone's spirits a great deal...we were finally shooting well and our lead actress was consigned to crutches for ten days.

Ulli was determined to keep working if at all possible, so we cobbled together some material for that night...a sunset pickup shot for the Las Vegas sequence, plus two

closeups of Ulli...one for just prior to the campfire sequence, and one for the end of the campfire sequence, which was to include a star pass.

The sunset was shot (probably not successfully), then the two night shots were set and choreographed. Special seating was built for Ulli to perform on, but as we came close to shooting we were subjected to constant high winds. We retreated to shelter and decided to wait it out, and indeed after about two hours conditions improved considerably. We shot the first shot, then prepared to shoot the second, only to find that the moon had moved into the shot, and we now had to wait a further hour or more for the moon to set.

Once that had happened there were no further complications. The shot was done, we retreated to base and Charlie stayed on location to supervise the star pass for what remained of the night. At least something salvaged from what was a trying day.

Thursday, 13 October, 1994

The second day of the new Ulli "foot" schedule. Some rethinking and rewriting meant we could now attempt a scene of substantial screentime, with Her having commandeered the Man's chair prior to the beginning of the scene (dramatically quite consistent) and Ulli therefore being able to now perform the scene while seated.

Took a bit to make this work, so rehearsals took somewhat longer than anticipated. Shooting was also made a little more complex, and the rest of the day was spent attempting to make sense out of the shots.

A short day as a result of the enforced turn-around into day, particularly because of the late previous night. Nothing shot but much prepared, and an excellent rushes report on the campfire material kept everyone's spirits well up.

Friday, 14 October, 1994

Rolf and Charlie out to set early in the morning to try and work out exactly how to shoot this scene...long action with limited movement made it a challenge. Eventually the inspirations came and by late morning there was a plan of action.

The day was very hot (almost 40 degrees), with very little shade available, but the task of programming a complex shot that ran just over four minutes began after lunch with much enthusiasm from everyone. As the afternoon wore on, however, there were niggling little programming difficulties...individual segments of the shot would work perfectly well, but when the whole shot was run it just would not run as expected. Some human errors had crept in and were corrected, but still the shot would not behave.

Intense frustration began to set in, and we abandoned hope of shooting this early morning scene just prior to sunset.

A break was called until conditions were more conducive to thinking clearly. Just after sunset we scrapped everything we'd done and started again in what was now a glorious evening. Everyone's enthusiasm returned, and we'd learnt an important lesson...for hot summer day shoots, choreograph and program the previous night if at all possible.

Slowly and carefully the shot was built anew, without human error this time. We set the shot to run in full for the first complete rehearsal and...again the whole looked nothing like the sum of its parts.

We now knew we had a real problem, of unknown origin, either hardware or software. Some time was spent tracking down exactly what was happening, and in the end we discovered that some of the functions (pan and tilt) were running a little slower (between 1% and 2%) than other functions (camera speed, tracking speed). This meant that the difference was cumulative, explaining why segments would run okay, but when the whole four minutes was run, the shot gradually disintegrated...by the end, the difference between pan and track was up to five seconds.

First prognosis was a hardware fault...one of the system's internal clocks (it has two, each controlling different functions) was running out of time. There was one possible short-term solution - fool the computer by telling it we wanted pan and tilt to take less time than we actually required. Programmed the change, ran the shot and

hey presto, it ran perfectly. Somewhat later than we'd expected we returned to our camp, confident of the next day's shot.

Saturday, 15th October, 1994

Our return to location early afternoon was greeted by more hot weather, but this time we had things under control. We checked the functioning of the shot, rehearsed the scene, then waited for the light to before beginning to shoot.

Three quarters of an hour before sunset we shot the first take, which went well. Part way through the next take a camera shadow just crept into the edge of shot, causing us a major problem...how to quickly enough re-program the shot to avoid this problem, which only existed for about fifteen seconds half a minute in. The sun was going down, the only achievable re-program would compromise that part of the shot substantially, but there was no obvious other solution...until Charlie thought of it. Hide the moving camera shadow with a moving bush shadow. He almost didn't say it because it sounded a bit obviously stupid to him,
but in this case obvious was not only the best, it was also by far the quickest.

A suitable bush was cut down in record time, and within minutes the shot was back on track. Take two went well, as did take three, take four was possibly a little too close to sunset and was likely to suffer some light drop-off over its four minute duration.

After a highly-charged forty minutes of shooting we were all rather let down by the thought that perhaps we could have done better. The only really satisfied person was the author: as writer he'd seen his words come to life as intended; as director he'd seen a terrific shot with two terrific performances; and as producer he was particularly happy...over four minutes of quality cinema in the can.

Monday, 17th October, 1994

After a much-needed and well-deserved rostered day off
(Moxan's Hut is exactly what it says it is, a hut. Conditions are primitive to say the least: two small rooms, one of which is a kitchen with very basic facilities; a single dribble shower with woodfired hot water and we had no axe or saw; a smelly pit for an outhouse; no electricity; and a three hour drive over very rough tracks to get to a phone and back) we left early for the long drive to Lake Gairdner. Some time was spent in Port Augusta sorting out our spare tyre situation, which was at a critical stage...two spare tyres left among four vehicles after five flats in the previous forty-eight hours.

Arrived at Lake Gairdner a little after 2pm, and onto the salt lake to set up the re-shoot of the previous trip's unuseable material. Adapted the program from that attempt and were ready for the first take in conditions that were still very bright. Both passes successfully completed, then we waited for some time until just prior to sunset for a second take, different lens, different conditions.

That too went smoothly. The sight of Ulli hobbling across the salt flat as quickly as she could manage between the two passes (it is important that the second pass is shot as soon as possible after the first) reminded us of what a great trouper she is...a less determined and committed actor would quite justifiably have caused us to fall days behind our schedule.

The wrap on the salt lake at dusk was almost joyous, with much anticipation of our overnight stay at Mt Ive Station, real showers and beds to sleep in.

We were, however, still faced with the problem of the errant track-pan timing. Today's material could be shot without worrying about it, but the for the re-shoot of around-the-mountain it could prove to be critical, particularly as we're going to be mixing matching passes of real time and time lapse. No time today to begin sorting out the problem. Tomorrow is a travel and set-up day, so time will be allocated then.

Tuesday, 18th October, 1994

Departed from Mt Ive Station on time, but suffered a hold-up of nearly half an hour due to sheep mustering activities along the track (it's shearing time). A further half hour delay was incurred through a major and almost disastrous tyre blowout

(Charlie's early career as a motorcycle racer prevented the disaster, his later career as a mechanic fixed it). Rushes of the salt lake were sent from Port Augusta.

Arrived on top of Mt Mary a little after 2 pm to be greeted by hot and very windy conditions. Tracks were laid after many calculations as to sunrise, sunset, moonrise and moonset (both time and position) and lens size (we decided to go with a wider lens this time to increase the safety margins).

Then came a rushes report (the four minute shot), which again was very good, both for the film and for the spirits of those making it.

Finally we started to work on the errant timing problem. Communications with Digital Arts had established the sort of tests we should be running to try and isolate the fault and confirm our suspicions that one of the system's internal clocks was to blame. The tests were run as darkness fell, but the results were not encouraging...the internal clocks were both behaving perfectly well, ruling out a relatvely easy hardware fault, but as well came the discovery that the time discrepancy was possibly not consistent (an error closer to 4% was discovered this time). Back to our (relatively) salubrious accommodation at Angorichina for the first of many phone calls to Adelaide and an uncertain program for the next day.

Wednesday, 19th October, 1994

Discretion is the better part of valour, and we decided not to proceed until the software bug had been ironed out. To this end, Digitals Arts called programming expert Jeremy Webber back from holidays. He proceeded, in Adelaide, to de-bug the motion control program, whilst in the Flinders we scrambled around trying to find anyone with a modem.

Eventually one was located at the Leigh creek coalfields to the north (courtesy of ETSA), and by three in the afternoon the new program was being sent to us by remote.

By 4.30 we were back on the mountain, testing the program, and by 4.45 we were choreographing the round-the-mountain shot in earnest.

In part due to the delay, and in part due to a higher degree of safety, we decided to cut the shot down from a three days and two nights event to two days and one night.

Choreographing was completed in extremely windy and cold conditions. If this weather persists, our chances of shooting successfully tomorrow are minimal.

Thursday, 20 October, 1994

Advance unit back on the mountain at 0500 in almost perfect conditions...we're having some luck here, because yesterday when we couldn't shoot for technical reasons, the weather probably would have stopped us anyway, and today, when we can shoot, the weather is fine, mild and still.

Final sunrise lighting observations were done, a large dead tree hauled up from down in the valley and erected, and by the scheduled shot start of 0830 we were ready to begin.

The first component of the shot was put down without fuss
(a real time pass with Ulli), then the first of the time lapse passes, day into late afternoon, was started. Charlie and Syd were posted as guards, the rest of us retreated down the mountain for some rest and housekeeping.

While the timelapse was ticking over, great strides were made with scripting future scenes, while during the afternoon another very positive rushes report came through. Morale is very high, and the months of shooting ahead seem somehow more achievable now.

A decision was made during the afternoon to shoot the real time night component later on this trip at any other location...the window of time available to do so between time lapse passes is very short, and we didn't want to
risk or compromise any of them.

Late in the afternoon the changeover to the sunset pass was made, smoothly and efficiently. Three quarters of an hour after sunset there was another changeover (these changeovers are usually about exposure and interval...

obviously a full day exposure is very different to a night exposure, but further than that, during the mid-part of the day, conditions change very slowly, requiring a very long interval to show change, whereas during the late afternoon, conditions change much faster, requiring a relatively much shorter interval between exposures), to the rise of the full moon pass, to catch the rapid shadow change in the direction opposite to the moonrise.

By 2100 the final long night pass was started, with Charlie and new focus puller Rod Bolton guarding the shot overnight. In all the days we have had on this mountain (this is our third attempt at the shot), conditions today have been the most consistently good.

Friday, October 21, 1994

0430 start to change over into the sunrise pass. The sun came up when the camera was round at the appointed place, and by 0630 the sunrise pass was complete.

The last pass in the sequence was then shot, a real time pass of Ulli, tilting up to the sky for the transition to the salt lake.

Although there is one more pass to shoot (Ulli's night pass), the shot is now effectively complete, as it will run perfectly well without the night pass. There was a lot of joy about its completion (this was our third attempt at it), and a lot of hope, considering how consistently well things have gone on this trip, that we've finally nailed around-the-mountain.

Wrapped from the mountain and were back down to breakfast by 0900. There was then a break from activities, and at 1400 director and actors drove to the Bunkers Valley to begin rehearsals for Bacon (also a re-shoot from the first three weeks).

Rehearsals went well, but planning shots was difficult... the scene demanded a lot of movement and activity, which the restrictions of motion control and Ulli's foot wanted to deny. In the end the demands of shooting screentime overcame the demands of creative freedom, and when the rest of the crew turned up at 1700, it was all well under control.

Gear was unloaded, shots planned in more detail, tracks were laid and choreographing and programming commenced, until a general "tiredness-of-the-last-few-days" set in and we went back to base, aware that tomorrow brings an accommodation move and a visit from a party of American journalists.

Saturday, 22 October, 1994

Accommodation shifts always take a bit of time, but this one went smoothly and people were breakfasted, packed and
on the road by 1000. Established ourselves at the shearers quarters at Wirrealpa, picked up the planeload of people from Adelaide and drove out to set.

The main shot for the day had already been programmed, but we spent some time adjusting and improving and rehearsing, did various interviews during lunch, then trimmed the lighting and were ready to shoot, having to wait a little for the light (lateish afternoon was required, to match the previously shot "Eggs" scene).

Just prior to the appointed shooting time, a cloud formed between us and the sun. That's really how it was, just a fairly small cloud deciding to make itself exactly where we didn't want it. It didn't move very much, just down a
little towards the horizon, at the exact speed the sun was moving down towards the horizon. It was like something out of a Winnie the Pooh story.

We stood by, and stood by, and stood by. The cloud kept hovering, changing shape, density and size constantly, but not its position between us and the sun. All around us in the valley was sunshine, but our little spot fluctuated between half sun, quarter sun and no sun. Within the average two minute period (the length of the shot) the light would fluctuate three or four stops four or five times.

Hundreds of light readings were taken, dozens of "Stand by to shoot!" supplications were made, always to be followed by a "Relax for a moment everybody." Our deadline for shooting was 1710, and at 1702 the sun finally burst clear. Within fifteen seconds we were shooting. The cloud must have seen this because it made a quick turn about and went haring back towards the sun. It reached its goal well before our shot

was complete, forcing us to cut, then stayed there for a good further half hour to make sure. It then broke up and faded away, but by then it was far too late to shoot the shot and we were half way through wrapping.

Further disaster almost ensued when a kangaroo leapt out from the side of the road during our drive home, straight towards the camera vehicle. By some fluke it cleared the bonnet, between the windscreen and the uhf radio antenna.
A closer shave is unimagineable.

A cloud-induced drunk spontaneously occurred back at quarters...though frustrations with the day were very high, general morale remains exceptionally good.

Sunday, 23 October, 1994

Back out to set by 1400 on a fine, clear day, tending towards a little too warm. Checked the shot, cooked the props (bacon and eggs) and stood by to shoot. A different approach to performance was taken today, no rehearsals but the "take" starting a good ten minutes before the light was right and Syd the Man cooking bacon and eggs for his visitor (Ulli) and the crew timing the shot to begin when he'd finished them and was bringing them over to her.

It was an interesting experiment, quite tense and certainly worth printing. Two more takes were done, the third being another excellent one. Then a scramble, two shots to be done from inside the Man's 4WD, made a fair bit more complex by the fact that our new camera motor can only be run from the motion control system. Once all the re-cabling had been done, things proceeded very well, and the second take of the final shot was in the can just before last available light.

After the previous day's disappointment there was a feeling of elation...3 minutes of screentime that seemed to us to be very good. Then a rare event...a tea break was taken.

After sunset we began the task of choreographing and programming the shot for the remainder of the scene, to be shot the following day. Tracks were laid, on difficult ground, but it proved difficult to make the shot work.
We started again, working out a different choreography (the actors have become expert at modifying their movements to work with, rather than against, motion control), and again started programming. Half way through programming (it was now well after dark) came the awful realisation that our present course of action would, with our limited lighting resources, make this unshootable, and everything came to a grinding halt again.

A total rethink was in order...time was taken to carefully consider the options and eventually some creative ones began to surface. Yet another complete change in the blocking of the rest of the scene, this time very influential on the dramatic dynamics. A conference with the actors, a rehearsal or two and suddenly we were all charged with new enthusiasm...it ran better than it had ever before.

Tracks were ripped out and completely relaid (Charlie is very stoic about these things), and programming began yet again. This time everything we tried seemed not only to work, but to improve. At about midnight (with Tony barely awake at the computer) the shot was set, ready for shooting the next day. A long but terrific day.

Monday, 24 October, 1994

Morning broke unhopefully...high cloud was moving in in increasing quantity, showers and thunderstorms forecast.

We were again in a critical spare tyre situation...wheels were being pulled off the trailers to keep the vehicles going. A further problem was the amount of diesel in the vehicles...with the nearest available petrol pump an hour and a half away, one vehicle had been abandoned empty on location, another was very low indeed. So the morning was spent sorting out that situation, and after the late previous night, we arrived a little later on location than planned.

It was very hot and hazy, with the sun trying desperately to break through...it was clearly a question of being ready to shoot as quickly as possible and then waiting for shootable light (this was the second half of "Bacon", so some sort of match was essential).

So ready and standing by it was. It was not an easy shot, quite a bit of action and actors running and moving, so it was the fastest tracking and panning that the rig had been asked to do. Also quite tricky for actors staying in frame, and an exceptionally tricky exit to the shot for the transition to the next scene.

During each vaguely sunny window we shot. During one take Syd took his final mark a little too close to the track and had his shin gouged by the cable bar. A little bit of blood and very sore, but no real delay. Eventually, as the cloud began to thicken, we felt fairly sure we had the shot, and the whole of the scene now.

Two pickups from previous material still needed to be shot, but in neither case did a match look likely. We wrapped the location whilst tomorrow's location was being arranged, ready for an early start despite the further forecast of showers. Tomorrow's scene can be shot in almost any conditions.

This film crew is becoming increasingly feral. Tonight we dined on rabbit, one of the many that have been run over by our vehicles. An interesting philosophical discussion followed.

Tuesday, 25 October, 1994

0800 start in overcast conditions (yet another flat tyre on the way to location). Jeremy went back this morning, taking the previous two days' rushes with him.

Everybody very flat after the ups and downs of the previous week, and this was also the first scene this trip that was completely new, being shot in a completely new location. With the even light though, we had plenty of time to get the scene right, and could afford the luxury of extensive rehearsals and a careful working out of how the scene should be shot.

By lunchtime, however, we were not much closer. Performance was not happening, nor was integrating the shot with the blocking. Nor, for that matter, was the blocking very successful. After lunch the crew was given a break while director and actors tried to work out what the hell they were doing.

Eventually some sort of scene was arrived at, and the programming of the shot began. Neither did this happen easily, and ultimately it became a question of just ploughing through it. By the time we'd arrived at what we were actually going to shoot, the scene was running a lot more smoothly, but by now we were under some time pressure.

Make up and wardrobe happened relatively swiftly, and we began shooting in light that was holding up, but only just. Shooting itself went about the same as the rest of the day...clearly we'd arrived at a point where the scene was over-rehearsed, and the actors found it tough going.

A couple of good takes later (and a number of not so good ones) and I think we'll find that despite a supposed easy day that became very difficult, we've shot a charming little scene. Phil turned up, took delivery of the day's work, turned around and drove back to Adelaide.

More overcast conditions forecast for tomorrow, which will make things interesting because we need a night of stars to complete our work on this trip.

Wednesday, 26 October, 1994

Today was a day of weather. DOP and director out at location at 0500 to observe and take readings of the sunrise. There was no sunrise, it just got light (heavy cloud).

By midday most of the clouds were gone and it was very hot...apart from the temperature there was a very unpleasant hot dry wind blowing. During the setup we were hit by a willy-willy...some of the unit gear was eventually found almost three hundred metres away, but luckily the only damage was one completely twisted shade umbrella.

We struggled on with the setup in the debilitating conditions, programming, dressing the location with dead trees of various sizes, preparing to shoot as soon as it was dark enough. This ultimately took much longer than expected...at dusk we were hit by a major lightning storm, some rain.

This caused a delay of about three hours, the main problem being that the lightning, which was directly behind the shot (nothing shootable on that side), didn't allow either real time or time lapse to be shot...the shots would have been peppered with flash frames.

Eventually conditions settled down enough for the two real time shots to be done, and we started the all-night time lapse in the hope that we'd get something interesting...it was either going to be terrific or terrible, but as we were homeward bound the next day, we had no choice but to try.

Thursday, 27 October, 1994

Out to location at 0430 to make the changeover from night timelapse pass to dawn/sunrise timelapse pass. Still a lot of cloud around, but some of it quite pretty, possibly an asset.

Shot completed after sunrise time, still no sunrise, no magical lighting up of the distant range. Conditions still interesting, so a second take of this time lapse pass started and completed...a weak sort of sun coming through occurred during this pass, so the next pass, a real time shot of Ulli, was shot immediately upon completion of the timelapse.

By seven in the morning everything was shot and we began to wrap. By nine in the morning we were on our way back to Adelaide.

(postscript: This sequence ultimately did not come out, for a variety of reasons, including a complete cloud-out during the star pass, after a very promising beginning, and a very dull "sunrise". Sequence will probably be re-shot on the next trip, at a different location. Everything else shot in the last two and a half weeks seems to have worked.)

Wednesday, 9 November, 1994

Beginning of a short trip to the Flinders...some re-shooting, some new shooting.

First up was a re-shoot of the last sequence attempted on the last shooting trip. We arrived at the Wirrealpa location at about three in the afternoon after an uneventful trip from Adelaide.

Set up was quick, the choreography being unchanged from the last trip, the program still in the computer's memory. Weather conditions were good (clear skies, very warm) and we were ready shoot as soon as it became dark enough. The in the middle of shot and some distance away, a light was spotted...not such a problem for the real time pass, but untenable for the star pass. An emmisary drove 40 kms to the source of the light, a road workers camp far to the south, and the offending light (a simple outside fluoro, but clearly visible across the plain at that distance) was extinguished.

The real time pass proceeded uneventfully, then the first time lapse of the night, a star pass over the real time, with moon to help delineate the horizon. After that the beginning of the "shot", a pass starting in the stars (after moonset) and panning down to the earth. Conditions for both were good.

Thursday, 10 November, 1994

Back out to location prior to sunrise to start the dawn/sunrise timelapse. Conditions still good. The the final component of the shot, a real time pass of Ulli in the early morning light. Both were shot without incident, and we were packed up, breakfasted and out of the accommodation by 0830 (after also having done two shots).

The move was to Willow Springs Station, and we went out to location in our valley early afternoon. In hot conditions we rehearsed the new scene ("Back to the past"), then tried to work out how to shoot it...all previously thought out methods were either more complicated and time-consuming than the scene warranted, or relied on having more hours of moonless star time than were available to us.

A lot of discussion and calculation later, and we were still being stymied by the immutable laws of nature...the moon sets at 0200 tonight, the sun rises at 0600, three hours of shootable star time in between equals 15 seconds of screentime at 30

seconds a frame. Compromise became a necessity, plus some ideas for enhancing the sequence at a later date using second unit material. Two simpler shots were set, programmed and filmed, the second was rewound, most of the crew went back to quarters for a few hours sleep and the star pass for the second shot was begun at 0200.

Friday, November 11, 1994

Another very early start. The star pass was completed by 0500, then a sunrise shot was set and commenced. Rest of the crew arrived on location at 0800 expecting to begin rehearsing the reshoot of the egg scene, but a miscalculation on our part meant that the sunrise timelapse was still running and the tracks for the egg shot not yet laid.

When the shot was complete we laid the full length of the track for the egg shot. It was by now becoming very hot, and once the shot was worked out we retreated to quarters for a couple of hours of sleep (and some belated breakfast) before coming out again in the afternoon to shoot.

Mid afternoon found the valley like an oven...at one stage the petrol in the generator boiled, and during the shooting there was a meltdown of the video split cable, forcing us to shoot the last take completely blind...one of the advantages of motion control is that at least you know the shot is being shot in precisely the same way as it was during the previous take. The disadvantage in a situation such as this is that there is no operator possible...without the video split you have no way of knowing what is actually being put down on film.

The extreme conditions brought out the real meaning of the word "toil"...we toiled our way through the scene rather than shot it. But eventually it was done, and a well earned break was taken.

Actors and director then worked on the second half of "Back to the past" whilst running repairs were being made to the videosplit...without it, no further work would be possible.

By the time the video had been fixed and programming could commence (after dark), a change in the weather hit. We were now in the teeth of a gale force wind, carrying with it the dust and grit from ten miles up the valley. Programming was exceptionally difficult, not so much because of the increasingly cold conditions, but because of the dust and sand that was constantly getting in everyone's eyes. The valley has had virtually no rain for over a year, and is slowly turning into a dust bowl.

Once programming was roughly completed a halt was called to the proceedings...the cast and crew desperately needed a half-decent night's sleep and conditions were near impossible after an already exceptionally difficult day.

A star intro for the sunrise reshoot was set and started, and everyone (except Charlie, who stayed) was thankful to get out of the valley and to bed.

Saturday, November 12, 1994

Early morning start (for some) as the Back to the Past sunrise shot was reshot (different lens, different calculations). This time it finished as scheduled, and we set up to shoot the shot programmed the previous night.

First rehearsal was encouraging...seeing the shot in the daylight for the first time provided no unpleasant surprises. Minor adjustments were made and we were shooting a little before our scheduled time.

On completion of the shot half the wrap for departure was done, then back to base for breakfast and more sleep.

Back out in the afternoon for "Bacon" pickups. A couple of more conventional shots, but made difficult by a return of the gale force winds. Attempts were made to create windbreaks, but even a small reflector needed two people to simply hold it in place, and we just didn't have the human resources to cope. The two shots were done, but no guarantees as to their success. Then the final pack up, and by dusk we were on our way back.

This was the shortest of our road trips so far, but also the most exhausting, for everyone. Four days of almost constant shooting with short breaks for a little sleep

in between, very tough conditions (heat, wind and dust) and a general shortage of time. Spirits in general, though, are very good, and it also seemed to us that we reached some performance highs this time.

Tuesday, November 15, 1994

Five months since we've shot anywhere civilised, and today we shoot in the centre of the city of Adelaide... quite a shock to the system.

A tricky sequence, the reverse of the traffic jam shot in Los Angeles in June, involving the actors going in continuous time from day through evening into night.

Set up to shoot the afternoon pass in the morning for a better light direction match. The actual setup and choreography was not complex, so we shot the very first block through, for tension and spontaneity. Seemed to work very well, although we did indulge in the luxury of a second, more rehearsed and formalised take. By lunch time we'd shot everything we could shoot to that point.

Then a break of seven hours, and back to shoot the dusk pass and the night pass. Again, things went very smoothly and the dusk pass was in the can before dinner, but not without some interest...an aperture pull against the spotting of a light to produce a visible darkening of the sky whilst the characters remained constantly lit.

Set for the night pass and managed, with our very limited lighting capacity, to overcome the problem of the lack of lights in our major background building...the very three floors that were primarily in our shot were vacant, and had no power connected to them...what lights we had were thrown onto the outside of the neighbouring buildings, causing reflections in our dark building sufficient to give us the sort of depth we were after. Shooting then proceeded smoothly.

The actors performed very well today, and all in all it was a very satisfying and productive day.

Thursday, November 17, 1994

One shot to be done today, on the surface a fairly simple evening's shoot, but, as so much of this stuff, the actuality was quite complex.

The 'shot' is a reshoot of part of a scene ("Truckstop") shot near Los Angeles in June (the original has a deep scratch down the middle), and is actually the continuation of a shot... this meant that the beginning of today's shot had to match precisely the end of the previous shot, in tracking speed, panning speed, tilt, lighting and feel. The following scene, to which there is also a precise transition, has also been shot (last week in the Flinders), so our exit to this shot also has very specific requirements.

It was very much a day of two halves. The first half was a media circus...two print journalists and a television news crew on set, hungry for action. They didn't get much apart from talk, because the first two hours were spent setting up according to the way we thought it would go, the next hour was spent trying to make that work, and the fourth hour was spent trying to work out what to do because this way wasn't working.

After the dinner break (and the effective departure of the circus) we started again...re-laid the tracks, modified the program, and eventually things started to work out.

Rehearsals seemed to indicate we were on track, and we shot two versions...one with mercury vapour lights and one without, there being the suspicion that the mercury lights may have been causing flicker and none of us particularly wanting to re-shoot this yet again. Then the wipe for the lab was shot, and we packed up and went home (only the second time we've gone straight home after a day's shoot).

Saturday, 19 November, 1994

An early morning assembly in the car park at Digital Arts to shoot pickups for "Smog", another scene shot five months ago in Los Angeles.

Two matte-quality backdrops had been painted, the first was set up and Syd placed in front in wardrobe...a look through the lens established that we were, in fact, in Los Angeles. Cheap way to travel.

The light, however, wouldn't behave as the light in Los Angeles behaved...thick clouds were rolling in. We needed strong sunlight to make the match, and after waiting until the time when the sun would have been too high, we packed up and went home (again).

Our intention is to try and shoot this next Monday morning, before the advance crew leaves for the Flinders and round-the-mountain take 4.

Monday, 21 November, 1994

This morning's conditions were even worse than last Saturday...heavy cloud, the odd spots of rain, completely unsuitable to shoot the match with Los Angeles. By nine in the morning we'd called off the attempt, and the advance party left for the Flibders by 9.30.

The weather improved as we drove further north, and by the time we arrived at the mountain it was perfectly clear, a little windy but relatively cool.

With our previous attempt at round-the-mountain we'd played it safe, using the 35mm lens and attempting the shot over only two days and one night. That hadn't really helped us at all, because here we were back for the fourth attempt.

So this time it is all out to get the best possible sequence, with the knowledge of the three previous attempts to inform us. The main difference in approach has come about through attempts to devise a system where at least some coverage is possible for a sequence like this. The most meticulous planning is required for this (as it is to make the shot work at its optimum).

Tracks were laid in the usual position whilst the broader aspects of the "shot" were debated. Going with the 85mm lens (visually the most powerful) meant that the shot would take around four minutes, which in turn meant that we were back to the two nights and three days scenario. But where to be when during this time? Everything seemed to be a compromise...if we captured this good bit, that would mean we'd either be forced to shoot that other bit that didn't work so well, or alternatively miss out on that other good bit. There seemed no way to get it all just so.

Light and shadow observations continued until well after sunset, and here our first breakthrough...the sunset had swung much further around at this time of year than we'd expected, forcing quite a change in the structure of the shot. With much to think about, we left the mountain at nightfall.

Tuesday, November 22, 1994

Another day of planning scheduled for today, in recognition of the degree of complexity of the shot.

Out on location by 0530 for sunrise readings, and of course the sunrise position had also shifted markedly. There was now a real possibility that we could structure the shot with almost no compromise.

After breakfast we returned to the mountain and began programming. This was a long and tricky process...the final result was that the shot consists of fifteen different components...five real time passes, nine time lapse passes ranging from three frames per second to one frame every thirty seconds, and one in-camera optical combining both real time and timelapse.

Then it was some hours of calculations...screen start and end time of each shot, actual time of day start and end time of each shot, length of interval of each time lapse shot. Complicating the arithmetic was the need for absolutely precise timing on some of the passes, so that the chosen "event" (for example a sunrise or a sunset) would happen in precisely the correct part of the frame in precisely the correct part of the shot. So at one minute and thirty seconds past six precisely we start a pass that will take two hours, seven minutes and thirty six seconds to complete. One hour, forty five minutes and thirty two seconds into the shot (576 frames into this pass, but one minute, fifty seconds and eight frames from the beginning of the entire sequence) the bottom of the sun will hit the horizon about a quarter of the way

across the frame, to have completely set just prior to that point exiting frame. Or so our maths would have it, we still have to shoot it.

About ten minutes after we had completed all our calculations (half an hour before sunset), the rest of the crew arrived. Then disaster struck. In attempting to show Ulli the shot in which she was to appear five times, the whole rig derailed, for the first time on the entire shoot. Some feverish activity followed...disassembling the rig, relaying the tracks, re-assembling the rig and re-adjusting and refining the previously programmed shot.

By nightfall all seemed okay. Charlie and Zac (Murphy, on attachment for a couple of weeks) stayed guard for the night and were charged with making various moonrise observations, to be factored into the calculations tomorrow.

This shot is now about as planned as it can be. If conditions like today's prevail for the next two and a half days (clear and calm), AND we have no technical problems, we should come back with something at least a bit special.

Wednesday, November 23, 1994

An early, early start to shoot the glow pass for the second morning. That achieved, waited until after sunup to shoot the first sequence, a real time focus pull, a time lapse segment and two real time segments with Ulli.

The first real time went easily enough, but then a bit of a wait until the sun was high enough to begin the time lapse. Time lapse went well (good, still, sunny conditions), then the two Ulli shots, one of which entailed Ulli standing on top a rock on top of the track case on top of the 4WD on top of the mountain.

Five shots before breakfast, something of a record for us. Between breakfast and the start of the next shot, a long time lapse around the mountain almost into sunset, wispy clouds started to drift in. The wisps became a blanket, not quite what we'd expected or were looking for, but potentially interesting nevertheless.

The shot clicked away during the afternoon, the cloud never wavering in intensity, so at least this pass ought to work. When, however, we started the sunset pass (an hour and three quarters before sunset), there was still no let up...if anything the cloud was thickening. We took a punt on the exposure, that we wouldn't see the sun (therefore two stops down on our previously estimated stop), and started the shot. Mostly it stayed even a little darker than that, and instead of a glorious sunset it just got darker and darker.

Still, it's often hard to tell what clouds do during a timelapse shot, and we do have a spare day to re-shoot this portion, enabling us to choose to use either or parts of both.

The first pass of the in-camera night optical was done, not without complications...every single available hand (and we had a couple of extras on this trip) was holding some moving cutter or manipulating some object during the shot, to the degree that there was no one left to do the slate. The pass was done, the film rewound without problem (we're getting quite confident with this now) and the all-night timelapse overlay started...still heavy cloud, but occasional bursts of stars, and with the moon coming up part way through the shot, the effect should be interesting. Charlie stayed on the mountain while the rest of us went back for a late dinner and some sleep.

Thursday, November 24, 1994

Some days it's very hard making this film.

Back on the mountain before first light, a glow pass started and completed, then a sunrise pass. Not much sunrise, still a lot of cloud, but again, could be interesting and we still have time to do another one.

Ulli's real time pass for this section of the mountain was done in beautiful light and back down for breakfast, leaving Rolf on guard. Topped up the generator's petrol, waited and thought. An hour later, the generator suddenly stopped.

On this film, during a multiple shot like that, this was total and unmitigated disaster.

Normally you'd just restart it. If it stops during a shot, well, restart it and do the shot again, no big deal. For us, it wipes everything we've done and we have to start all over. Anything you shoot after the genny has stopped will not match previous stuff with the degree of precision required.

A hasty conference on top of the mountain and we conclude that the genny is now burning significantly more oil than it was in the past. Its safe range is down to about 28 hours, simply not enough time to do the shot. The small genny, enough to power the rig, has a range of perhaps 24 hours. We have no choice...we simply cannot do this shot with our current lineup of gear. With the Tasmanian trip next week, this is a problem we have to solve. An unhappy wrap followed, back to Adelaide. Maybe we can do the smog pickups in the morning.

Friday, 25 November, 1994

Finally, something salvaged from the week. Early morning gave us patchy cloud but clearing, and by the time we'd set up the first "smog" pickup shot in the Digital Arts carpark, it was mainly sunny.

Shot went without incident, then the second setup the same. Performances were good, with Ulli reaching the standard she's set in L.A. and Syd, with a different approach and new lines, capturing it quickly and easily.
Another hole plugged, quite satisfying for all after the previous four days. The rest of the day was spent preparing for the Tasmanian trip and sorting out the limited generator time problem.

Thursday, 1 December, 1994

By the time the main crew arrived in Devonport on the ferry this morning, the advance unit had covered close to two thousand kilometers in surveys over the previous two days, through weather conditions ranging from warm and sunny to snow storms. Almost the most important factor in making this trip work will be to remain flexible, to attempt to arrange locations that will work in any sort of weather, which is much more variable and unpredictable here than it is on the mainland.

The two units met up at the Cradle Mountain National Park...after a quick settle into our backpackers bunkhouse (accommodation within a reasonable distance of the places we want to shoot is very limited) we went straight out to shoot...a short scene (Pre-belt) that formed part of a sequence begun in Western Australia.

The location, an abondoned tree clearing site) was outside the National Park (our permit to shoot in the State and National Parks had not yet come through) and the setup was fairly straightforward, a continuation of a track begun in the previous scene. Conditions were mild and sunny, and the scene was completed in good time.

Back to the bunkhouse for dinner, then out again for a night shoot. There are, on average, only thirty two clear days a year at Cradle Mountain, this was one of them, so despite the day having started early for all of us, we decided we'd better take advantage of the stars when we could get them.

The shot, of Ulli just after She and the Man have separated (Somewhere Else I), was kept as simple as possible...we didn't want to draw attention to ourselves by using the bigger generator so decided on a static frame so that batteries could be used for the time lapse pass.

The real time pass was completed a little later than scheduled, but this didn't affect the star pass, because astronomical darkness this far south comes much later than we'd anticipated. Total shootable star time is down to about four and a half hours here in summer, but that gave us almost twenty-five seconds, sufficient for the shot.

By now it was very cold, and we were glad to get back to the bunkhouse fire and bed after a very long day. Charlie happily stayed under the stars and ice to guard the star shot. A more than satisfactory first day.

Friday, 2 December, 1994

An 0530 start for some as the night shot had to be packed up and cleared away before the rest of the Park woke up.
Because of the very cold conditions overnight (thick ice abounded), the camera battery's life was much reduced, and the shot had decided to turn itself off before completion. Some quick calculations indicated that the star pass had stopped perhaps half a second after the minimum length required, so the shot ought to be fine.

The rest of the morning was spent surveying locations and dealing with the permit problem. The latter was eventually sorted out very much to our advantage...our Tasmanian liaison, David Male of Murchison Productions in Launceston, managed not only to get permission through, but also to have shooting charges (of between $500 and $1,000 a day) waived.

Out shooting again in the afternoon ("Complicated Relationships"), an awkward little setup at the side of the main track to the mountain. Position for the actors was also less than wonderful, sitting half in a sort of muddy ditch that was home to a number of leeches (what do leeches eat when there aren't people around?).

Two takes were done, both quite exciting from a performance point of view, but the gate check revealed inexplicable piles of "something" inside the camera in places where there should have been nothing. A halt was called while the camera was partly disassembled and thoroughly cleaned again, and we set up to do a safety.

By now, however, the shot couldn't be filmed as set...the late afternoon sun was casting a camera shadow over the last third of the shot. A hasty re-program resulted in all the action of the scene now taking place during an elongated first half of the shot, and we got the safety take in the can.

Consideration was given to doing another night shot, but time and conditions (light cloud moving in) and the previous long day decided against this. As it happened, most of the night was clouded over, so the decision was a good one...only two days into the shoot and already there were people who needed to catch up on sleep. Still, a good day (asssuming rushes are okay).

Saturday, December 3, 1994

Yet another clear day at Cradle Mountain (we're certainly getting our share of them), perfect for the beginning of the sequence planned for "Still Trying", involving a shot with dialogue that goes late afternoon into the following morning.

The setup was at the very edge of Dove Lake, a downward sloping track leading almost into the water. That in itself provided a number of problems, but these were slight compared to the problems we had choreographing and programming the camera move. You get some shots that just won't go smoothly...the move can be deceptively tricky to program in any way that looks natural.

This was such a shot...fairly innocent looking from a conceptual point of view, but when it comes down the actual practice it's a different story. Many hours later we finally had a shot that seemed to be okay. Because of the sloping track we couldn't check the shot through the lens, but intense concentration on the video monitor revealed a final product that was immeasurably more pleasing than we had thought.

By now we were under inevitable time pressure. Things might have been okay but for a National Park bush getting ready to cast a shadow over Syd...private property bushes can be tied back to avoid such problems, but National Park bushes can't. A decision was made to put the shot off for twenty four hours, but to use the night to do another, simpler shot, off the same set of tracks, that could make full use of the stars.

"Somewhere Else II" was programmed in record time...the intention was to use the late twilight to do Ulli's real time pass, then reset for the night pass. Late twilight, however, was rapidly diminishing in light level, and by the time we were ready to roll camera, there wasn't enough of it. Two takes were done, one at six frames a second and one at three frames a second (Ulli sat very still).

The star pass was then started, and we were hopeful of some interesting results, stars reflected off the surface of the lake at 28 seconds a frame, broken by ripples in the water at 6 frames a second. We'll see.

Sunday, December 4, 1994

Conditions overnight were generally good, mostly clear skies, so the star pass ought to be fine. The shot was stopped early morning, the gear secured (we were set up in possibly the busiest little spot in these mountains, the lakeside view of cradle mountain) and the first guard shift posted.

Later in the day crew and cast assembled for our second attempt at "Still Trying". Remarkably, the weather was still fine...the constant refrain from the locals was that we didn't know how lucky we were, we were in the middle of the longest sustained period of fine weather in anyone's memory, there had been only one day like this the whole of last summer, normally one mightn't see the mountain for weeks at a time, etc etc.

The shot was checked and trimmed, lighting and focus attended to, calculations of intervals and start times made and this time we were completely ready to shoot at the appointed time.

First real time pass of the whole shot was done (as a safety), then a couple more takes of the first segment. The sunset timelapse was started, then a lot of scurrying around to convince people not to watch the sunset from the top of a large stone outcrop at the edge of the shot. There being paths everywhere, and this being the time that many bushwalkers were returning from daywalks, it proved a tricky task. Success is estimated to be probable.

Sunset was mostly consistent, just a few slight exposure variations due to streaks of light cloud. When darkness fell the all-night timelapse was prepared and started. Guarding against car headlights was the major problem on this one. Conditions were good, clear skies and bright stars.

Our relationship with Park Rangers is exceptionally good...total co-operation and friendliness, and help beyond the call of duty.

Monday, 5 December, 1994

Another exceptionally early start for some for the changeover from the night pass to the sunrise pass. Again most of the night had been fine, several threatening vehicles had been successfully intercepted and the prospects for a successful shot are good.

The sunrise pass was started with a disappointingly small amount of mist on the lake compared to previous mornings...the continuing splendid weather does have some disadvantages. Still, the sun rose on cue, behaved in the way it was meant to behave and by a little after eight in the morning we were ready to do the real time morning pass.

Again we shot a safety of the whole shot, followed by several takes of the last portion (there was a tricky bit of timing). That done, we packed up from the lake and were back for breakfast by 1030.

At 1130 we went out again, to set up and shoot what is known as "Drawing Replacement I". The plan was for a shot that was relatively easy to execute, but a discussion at the proposed location led us to the conclusion that we were in danger of compromising quality for quantity... neither the location nor the proposed manner of shooting it were very exciting, and it had been slotted in only in an effort to take advantage of the continuing good conditions.

The next scheduled part of what had been an overly ambitious day anyway was to set up for another scene, "The Little Kiss", to be shot the following morning.
Rehearsals indicated that this scene would run better by combining it with another scene, "The Rules are Inconsistent". While a crook director was being ferried to the doctor in Devonport (fairly severe ear infection), the rest of the crew carefully set the shot in the fragile little location we'd dubbed "the fairy dell".

A decision was made to make the next day a rostered day off...a lot of odd hours and broken days had already been worked, there was a debilitated director, and we were hoping for a weather change to give us some early morning mist in the fairy dell. The gear was secured against weather and animals and the crew retired to the bunkhouse for well-deserved gin and tonics, beer, red wine and another splendid meal.

Wednesday, 7 December, 1994

In the morning the director was driven to Launceston Hospital (2 1/2 hours away) as his condition had worsened during the rostered day off. The weather was changeable, so the crew was left instructions to shoot the previously set and rehearsed "Little Kiss" if cloud or mist rolled into the fairy dell.

Doctor's advice was, as it turned out, not to travel back to Cradle Mountain that night. Crew was instructed by phone to re-shoot "Somewhere Else I" at dusk (the previous attempt had been beautiful apart from the fact that snow on the mountain had exposed under the stars and had bled through onto the previous pass, leaving a sort of stain on Her face in the shot). The re-shoot was at dusk because the clouds meant no stars.

Three different versions were shot as the instructions on exactly how to re-shoot it were hazy to say the least (a later rushes report was to report that at least two of them were very good indeed).

Thursday, 8 December, 1994

No mist again this morning, but overnight rain had freshened up the moss in the fairy dell so that it almost glowed. Today was our cut off point at Cradle Mountain, so we could afford to wait for mist no longer. A very early morning start (the scene had to be completed before sunrise) meant that conditions were very cold.

Due to the continuing absence of the director, a number of takes were done, until everyone was satisfied that there were at least two good ones in the can. Then a wrap out of the fairy dell and back to the bunkhouse for breakfast and a complete pack-up.

Our next accommodation had been arranged for Longford, just south of Launceston, so the crew travelled here and moved into the rather bizarre premises (dried flowers, lace curtains, countless bric-a-brac) while the director was seeing an ear specialist.

Tony and Charlie left almost immediately on a location survey (Charlie knew the approximate intended locations from our earlier surveys), from which they didn't return until nightfall. Activity for the following day hung in the balance as the director, now re-united with the crew, was still extremely debilitated and had another appointment with the specialist the following morning.

Friday, 9 December, 1994

Specialist appointment for the director provisionally held that the treatment was working (it didn't always feel like it was) and that an operation wouldn't be necessary. Early afternoon we departed for the summit of Mount Barrow (around 5,000') to set up to shoot "Belt Handover".

Conditions on top were very cold, despite the sunny weather...about four degrees with a strong wind blowing. The shot was constructed to be shot in any weather conditions, but particularly to take advantage of the mist or low cloud which envelops the mountain almost every morning and most evenings.

By sunset we were ready to shoot, but the strong wind kept all traces of mist away. We secured the gear against the weather and made our way back down the mountain, ready for an early morning attempt. Local knowledge had it that we were certain to get mist then.

Saturday, 10 December, 1994

Departed accommodation at 0500 to shoot "Belt Handover" in the mist. Half way up the mountain it all looked very promising as we struck some thick fog, but just prior to reaching the summit we broke into clear air.

The mist lay all around us, tantalisingly out of reach about two hundred feet below our position. We were in the midst of a sea of white, quite beautiful except that we couldn't get the height to take advantage of it.

We waited to see what would happen, and yes, it started to inch its way slowly upwards. We readied to shoot, but before the mist reached our level it started to break up and burn off. So near.

There was another good location, for "I've Got A House", a few hundred feet down the mountain...good for the scene but very rugged and difficult for the equipment. Ipossible to lay tracks. We decided to leave the shot on the mountain set, but take the camera and legs and shoot "House" in a more conventional manner.

The camera was set at the side of the track up the mountain for the first shot, a long lens wide shot. The actors started their scramble across the rocks to put sufficient distance between themselves and the camera. The El Cheapo Tandy walky talkies came in very handy.

That shot achieved, we began the delicate and difficult task of shooting in amongst the rocks (the location was an old glacial field of rock rubble). Setting and levelling the tripod was almost the most difficult task (apart from transporting the camera)...no rocks were big enough to set a tripod on, no rocks were small enough to provide any sort of level surface, nor could we construct one, and the slope was quite steep.

We toiled on through the day with the scene, eventually completing it mid-afternoon. It felt very good though, because there was time to concentrate on performance, and the scene, which had been thought to be a minor progression scene, turned out to be a major turning point, and it provided quite some pleasure to be able to shoot it very simply.

Then back to the top of the mountain to re-set "Belt Handover". Conditions for mist did not look promising (the day had warmed up significantly), so a spotter with mobile phone was left at the top, the rest of the crew went home (it had already been a long day).

By seven in the evening (the latest the crew could be called back to complete the shot before dark) there was still no sign of mist, so the spotter too went home as well.

Sunday, 11 December, 1994

Another attempt at the mist shot...0330 departure this time...if there was shootable mist, we were going to be there to shoot it.

Traces of mist evident as we travelled up the mountain, but again, none on top. The most glorious of dawns, but again we were unable to use it. Half an hour after arrival we left again, back home for more sleep and breakfast.

Early afternoon and Charlie and Tony went surveying waterfalls to find one more accessible than the one we had for later in the shoot.

Late afternoon the rest of made our way back up Mount Barrow, this time to shoot "Belt Handover", mist or no mist, at sunset.

Makeup and wardrobe, done, camera ready, we waited for Charlie and Tony to arrive (no mist). We were due to start shooting at six, and when, by seven, they still hadn't arrived, there was some cause for concern (for the scene, not for them). Eventually they turned up around 7.30, with horror stories of bad roads, drunken drivers and inaccessible waterfalls.

Within five minutes of their arrival we were shooting, the third take going into the can just minutes before the setting sun would have caused insuperable camera shadow problems. Then a little wait for the sun to set completely and one go at it in the fast fading post-sunset light.

All seemed to go well, and finally, eventually, the scene was completed...without mist but very satisfactory nevertheless.

Shooting has been quite difficult the last few days. Lingering ear infections and travelling up and down high mountains do not go well together. A suffering director in a crew as small as this affects both morale and organisation. For almost the last week it has been a case of struggling through rather than controlling things. Good rushes reports have helped ease the difficulties.

Monday, 12 December, 1994

Out to location near Quamby Bluff in the morning to shoot "Why are the Trees Dying?". Weather uncertain, quite warm but clouds drifting over, then clear, then cloud again.

The set up was in a tricky little position not far off the road...a sort of lookout rock about twenty feet above the surrounding bush. Just as well we have a small crew, otherwise there would not have been enough room on top.

The shot was rehearsed, choreographed and programmed. Cloud persisted fairly consistently, but it was difficult to tell what was in store for us as just behind us, in the direction from which the cloud came, was a high ridge...we had at most ten minutes warning as to average conditions, but we had two shots to execute that had to be perfectly consistent with each other.

A couple of takes of the first half of the shot were done, then as the actors were about to move to their second position, on another rock a small distance through impenetrable thorny bush away, the sun came through. We waited for a while, but by the time we had cloud again, the conditions were inconsistent with the take we had, so we had to start all over again.

Just prior to our second attempt we could see more patches of blue arriving, so lunch was called in the hope that conditions would stabilise.

After lunch there seemed to be consistently more sunshine than clouds, calling for the little HMI and the second generator. Our perch on top of the rock became even more precarious, with various guy ropes and safety lines criss-crossing like a spider's web. After all the mucking around, the shooting was quite simple...less than fifteen minutes from restart to finish. The actors were good, the light was consistent and we had the added fortune of bushfires in the distance providing an industrial-type haze over the view. A nice little scene.

The day was tempered somewhat by the news that Saturday's difficult scene on the rocks needed to be re-shot... flicker in a number of the shots. The newly fixed and extensively tested Rotovision motor was yet again responsible. It was the first time on this trip we'd used it, and then only because it allowed us to be free of the computers in what was physically a difficult enough scene to get. We'll hope for fine weather tomorrow and reshoot it then, and from now on we'll stick to equipment that's been built or modified by Digital Arts...that has been far, far more reliable than anything brought in from outside.

Tuesday, 13 December, 1994

Travelled to the Mount Barrow rock field to reshoot "I've got a House". Weather was inconsistent and difficult to predict...cloud, sun, cloud, sun. This is a scene with coverage, and the feeling was that we'd be chasing our tails all day, irrespective of whether we decided to go with cloud or with sun.

Headed across country to Ben Lomond to shoot "Belt Receive" instead. Arrived and had lunch, surveyed for spots to shoot the scene. Some of the better places were either too perilous or were subject to constant high wind, eventually settled on a protected spot that looked perilous but wasn't, on the edge of the mountain above the precipice known as Jacob's Ladder.

Laid the tracks, choreographed and programmed. Rehearsals brought out the best in the scene, and by the time we shot there was a real warmth about it. The end of the day had cleared most of the clouds away, and we were able to shoot in relatively consistent sunny conditions.

Packed up and travelled the 5,000 feet back down the mountain, well satisfied with the decisions made on the day...what could have been a write-off of a day had turned into a lovely scene. Rostered day off tomorrow.

Thursday, December 15, 1994

Depending on weather conditions, today we were either to reshoot "I've got a House" or to shoot a new scene, "Where are the Frogs?". Weather was fine, so bright and early we went to the Mount Barrow rockfield.

The scene had an added degree of difficulty this time...clearly we couldn't use the Rotovision motor, which meant that computers and control boxes had also to be lugged up and onto the rockfield, somehow set up and operated. Added to that were the worries from the actors that we wouldn't be able to find the freshness of performance we did first time round, when the major discoveries about the scene were made.

In the event, however, all fears proved groundless. Everyone was very focussed and worked very hard. When we shot there was time and space for the actors, who did themselves and the film proud. Not only did we finish the scene well, but we finished early enough to begin thinking about doing another small scene that afternoon/evening.

The trip down the mountain put an end to those thoughts. A wheel came off the grips trailer (broken axle) around a steep bend on the way down, and in the ensuing spin out of 4WD and trailer, major disaster (in the shape of a large tree) was only narrowly averted.

The resulting trailer rescue operation took all hands and another three hours...our two remaining trailers were fetched from base, contents of grips trailer transferred to one of them, mangled grips trailer bodily lifted onto the other and taken to a garage near base for repairs before the journey back to Adelaide on Saturday.

Friday, December 16, 1994

After much surveying of waterfalls in the north of Tasmania (not enough, as it turned out), Liffey Falls were chosen as the location for "Where are the Frogs?"

Jurisdiction over Liffey Falls was confused, with Forestry claiming some rights, National Parks and Wildlife disputing and claiming other rights, but both giving permission for us to shoot. The falls were about one and a half kilometers from the carpark, all in the direction of down. A good path, but Forestry had refused permission to use a four-wheel motorbike to transport equipment up and down. National Parks had insisted on a ranger being present during shooting.

It took the best part of three hours to get most of the equipment down to the base of the falls. The process was not helped by the ranger telling us we'd been led up the garden path...of course we could have used a 4WD bike.

We attempted to set the shot, but nothing would work with the lenses we'd brought down. Up went Bambi (focus puller) to get the required lens, a delay of half an hour. Eventually decisions were able to be made and a rough choreography was decided upon.

Director and unit manager then took off to find a 4WD bike, somewhere, anywhere, while tracks were being laid and programming commenced. 4WD bike was located and rented, and by the time of return the shot was ready. A few rehearsals, some trimming of the action and shot and we were ready, but the light was not. Probably a few hours before it would be, so the 4WD bike was immediately pressed into service...the larger of the two gennies was brought to the top of the cliff, the HMI to the bottom of the waterfall and cables were run through what seemed impenetrable undergrowth.

Eventually, somewhat later than expected, both the light and the lights were ready, and we shot the real time component of the scene. Then three slightly different timelapses, then another real time on a different roll for safety.

By now it was almost dusk, and the monumental task of wrapping out of the location began. Genny and HMI on the 4WD bike to the top, then...the bike broke down. Impossible to fix in the near dark. Crew and cast already exhausted from lugging more than half a tonne of gear up to the area where the 4WD bike could reach. As darkness fell, it was also becoming unsafe to continue.

By ten p.m. almost half the gear was up at the vehicles, but some of the heaviest and most awkward items were yet to come. We'd been at it now for fourteen hours, there were hours to go and the limits of endurance were being tested.

In the end we had to give up and leave the wrap incomplete. Charlie stayed in the midst of the unpacked array of equipment whilst the rest of us, nursing our aching bodies, managed to drive the hour or so back to base. The rest would have to be rescued in the morning (including the 4WD bike), putting an end to any hopes of shooting something in the morning prior to our departure to Adelaide in the afternoon.

Was it all worth it? Rushes will tell, but, on set, the scene went well so that everyone suffered the pain if not happily, then at least with some degree of satisfaction.

Monday, 9 January, 1995

Officially the one hundredth day of the shoot. I'm not sure if that's good or bad or meaningful, but it was something of a milestone. Let's hope the result lives up to the process.

One main location on top of Mount Buffalo in the Victorian High Country, to serve 12 pages of script. Apart from our valley in the Flinders, this is the only "repeat" location.

Some complex material to be shot during this trip, so we decided to start with the simplest (or what we thought was the simplest), the background time-lapse pass for "The Big Kiss", our first attempt at front-projection in the film.

The more we explored the shot, the more complex it became...the idea was to shoot a moving background over three days and two nights (compressed into about 90 seconds of real time) and place the actors, with interactive lighting, over the top, but it soon became evident that we'd bitten off a shot with an extremely high degree of complexity and unknown results...just the shooting of the time lapse alone was incredibly risky considering the changeable weather (and witness our four attempts so far at round the mountain).

Discretion was called for. By concentrating on the drama instead of the pyrotechnics (shooting the time lapse static instead of moving and ending up with a shot where everything happens within the frame rather than by the frame), the degree of difficulty was reduced an estimated five-fold, and the chances of success increased correspondingly.

The shot was then rather easily set and the first time lapse begun late afternoon, with further passes for sunset, evening and night. Charlie stayed out to stand guard and feed the generators, the rest of us returned to the Tatra Inn bunkhouse to celebrate the 100th day of shoot.

Tuesday, January 10, 1995

An odd day for most. Shooting occurred almost continuously over the entire 24 hours of it, but mostly that entailed only one or two people servicing the rig and the gennies or changing stock type, exposure or magazines.

DOP and assistant out to location at 5 am, back for breakfast, out again for a morning changeover, back for lunch, out again in the afternoon, again in the late afternoon for sunset, evening and night. Charlie again staying the night.

Weather not the best...a lot of erratic clouds, some thunder, no sunset to speak of, occasional clear patches. Because of all the uncertainties, we're shooting much more material than we will eventually need.

First day's rushes were driven to Albury (2 hours away), supplies were purchased, script was worked on and developed in leaps and bounds, actors worked with scenes.

Late afternoon the director and actor drove the two and half hours to Shepparton to survey trees for "The Tree" scene...much difficulty has been experienced finding an isolated tree of the right size and shape that someone will allow us to cut down.

In the event, one tree was interesting...it can be filmed to be "special", we're allowed to chop it down, but if anything, it is too big. We'll see if we can find a better one, if not, we'll make this one work.

Wednesday, January 11, 1995

Another 5 am start for the camera department to shoot the final sunrise/morning passes for "The Big Kiss". Another early start in the writing department, and quite some joy...the script is now complete save for the very last scene.

Decision made to shoot another day pass before getting on with the rest of the material, previous two days were both marginal and today there was more sun and the clouds were more interesting.

At about 1 pm we began the task of laying tracks. The idea was to lay one set of tracks from which most of the material can be shot. The environment of the location, an alpine meadow, is very delicate, and great care has to be taken to preserve it. As well, we happen to be only half a kilometer from the rangers' offices.

The decision was also made to structure this part of the shoot differently...as everything is to be done in the one location, and probably off the one set of tracks (which are in about the only place possible without destroying vegetation), we aim to rehearse and program all the material before shooting any of it. So ahead of us lay some days of rehearsals and choreography and programming, and then a much more concentrated shooting time.

This approach sits very well with the actors, allowing a more global overview, more intensive rehearsal and more focussed shooting. While the tracks were being laid they went off on a stills shoot...the crew on this trip includes Simon Cardwell to shoot stills (as well as be a pack horse), as stills to date have been a little too irregular.

After the stills shoot, actors and director worked on location by themselves for a few very productive hours, then camera department turned up to shoot the sunset and stars once again...with the different modus operandi there was no point in not having yet another go at it.

Indestructible Charlie is crook today, so Chris Corin gets his first chance to guard a night location by himself. With thunder and black clouds threatening at nightfall, his could be an interesting night.

Thursday, 12th January, 1995

Morning found conditions very fine...ten minutes of rain early in the night had given way to a cloudless night sky. Sunrise and morning were shot to finish off the shooting of this background plate.

After breakfast actors and director rehearsed on location once again, then early in the afternoon the task of choreographing and programming all this material was begun.

Saturday 14 January, 1995

The day started with a complete run-through of everything programmed so far...there were by now so many marks on the ground for actors and focus that we were running into the danger of forgetting which was which and what mark was for which scene.

The "revision" led naturally to the completion of the programming of "I'm Sad". This took some time...firstly getting the scene to completion, then programming in the special effects. Some time was spent attempting to sort out the backlash problem on the Worrall head, which suddenly seemed worse than normal (possibly a function of the increased use of the 85mm lens on this material).

Then a break until sunset, when the light would be right to shoot the scene scheduled for the evening, "They Do".

Part of the way through the break we decided to begin shooting a little earlier than scheduled...a consistent and fairly heavy cloud cover meant light would drop off earlier, but also that it would remain constant from this point.

With all the programming and rehearsing, shooting flowed very smoothly. "They Do" was in the can in barely over half an hour, so we just continued on, onto a much bigger scene, "Do They?". Three precise tracking shots, a lot of performance, focus pulling and hitting of marks, and not much more than an hour to do it in.

By the time we did the last shot we were chasing the light somewhat...one or two takes later and we would have run out. But we didn't, and it turned into a much better day than expected. If anything, we are now ahead of schedule for this trip. Crew and cast are keen to work tomorrow instead of having a rostered day off, so as to possibly get back a day earlier. Another two days like today and we'll have this part of proceedings finished with.

Sunday, January 15, 1995

Today was not like yesterday. It rained. Nothing was shot.

Hopefully tomorrow will be an improvement, although still heavier rain is forecast. Yesterday's rushes were sent off, Helen Carter arrived to be clapper loader for a few days.

Monday, 16 January, 1995

The day broke uncertain of itself. Crew were on standby from 0700...if cloud thickened, we'd go out and shoot. At 0900 there was still more sun than cloud, so Simon, Beverley, Ulli and Syd went out for a major stills shoot.

At lunchtime there was still more sun than cloud, so at about 1500 we went out to prepare for shooting after sunset. On the program today were "The Story I" and "The Story II"...about five minutes of screentime in all, and including some slightly tricky opticals. No real idea if the hour and a quarter of available light after sunset would be sufficient to shoot it all.

Ran through the shots and rehearsed. Final adjustments were made, a 25 minutes timelapse intro to "Story I" was shot, then a short break waiting for the sun to set. Everybody on standby...the second the last rays of the sun disappeared, the first shot rolled.

An hour and twenty minutes later we were finished. We'd shot the five minutes (seven shots in all, three of which were long tracking shots with complex actor/camera choreography) in a burst of the most extraordinary team work I've ever seen. Everybody was completely busy for the entire eighty minutes, everybody was under pressure, yet nothing faltered and the shots just rolled out, one after another.

The gear was secured for the night (just as well, there were a number of heavy showers during the night) and we returned to base for dinner, after as good a day's work as we've had during the entire nine months of this shoot so far.

First up was "The Story I"...seemed simple at the start until we began to consider all the things flowing from this scene: it had to establish the location strongly for the "Do They Have Sex on Epsilon?" scene; it had to come successfully out of the "Where Are the People" scene; at the same time it also had to take into account the beginning of "The Story II", which has to have an identical beginning with the variation that She is in it in two different "times".

Eventually the problems with this were ironed out and a satisfactory scene programmed. Then came "The Story II", and the working out of how to get Her to enter her own body while one of her is having a conversation with the Man. Many options were canvassed until we settled on what was probably the simplest and the safest (a sort of dissolving matte/wipe). The first part of this was programmed with some difficulty and trial and error, then onto the main shot of the scene, a master of about two minutes duration.

The master was fairly complex, a lot of moving and stopping, moving and stopping, and attempting to build the motion control around the actors' blocking, rather than entirely blocking the actors around the motion control. We've become more or less adept at this sort of stuff, and by the time a halt was called late evening, most of "The Story II" was programmed.

Rushes were driven to Albury during the day, the report on the first lot was good and all in all it felt a highly productive day, despite so little material having been shot on the trip so far.

Friday, 13 January, 1995

Continuation of programming in fine, warm weather. Despite the fact that the temperature here is probably ten degrees cooler than at the bottom of the mountain, the sun itself is fierce, so a ten am start to take advantage of the time between sunset and darkness.

First up was the completion of "The Story II", which was achieved without further problem. We then moved onto "They Do", a fairly straightforward scene apart from its transition requirements at top and tail.

Next was a fairly big scene, the 4 pages of dialogue of "Do They?". Initial rehearsals had indicated we could probably cover it very simply, but during choreography and programming the doubts started to creep in. The simple version was programmed, then back to base for lunch.

After lunch the doubts prevailed...although the simple version was improved upon, mainly in the blocking, we still felt the need for further coverage. The main problem was how to do this without ripping apart the motion control system for a very small shift for coverage we weren't even sure we needed. A confusion of maths and angles and light direction considerations later and we had the solution...two more tracking shots with cheated backgrounds and we now had considerable and quality coverage.

Then the big one, "I'm Sad", not only a very long scene (at least seven minutes), but also a very difficult scene on two counts...there were three very tricky optical effects planned for it, and it seemed to demand playing in an area of the location just beyond the reach of our current setup. It was difficult to devise an overall plan for it (too many factors to take into consideration), so the best idea seemed to be just to begin building it, piece by piece, and see what happened.

The first part of the scene (the transition from "They Do" and the "I'm Sad" part), was found to work well wide, and was duly programmed without having to shift the rig.

At about this time the sun set, and there was an immediate lift in everybody's level of functioning. The advantage of having two actors who were by now at ease working to the motion control system was decisive in not only being able to make the scene work, but in being able to achieve it within the self-imposed limitations of how and where it should work. Having the time to think was also a decisive factor.

By the time it was too dark to continue almost six minutes of the master run of the scene had been programmed (special effects components yet to go).

Tuesday, January 17, 1995

Everybody eager after yesterday, and again on standby to take advantage of possible heavy cloud. First task though was to dry out the equipment from the previous night's rain.

At around 1000 some heavy cloud started rolling in, so off to location. It wasn't entirely consistent, nor predictable, so first up we decided to shoot some pickups (closeups of Syd and Ulli) for "The Story II". Just about ready to roll and we realised we'd forgotten the sound gear...Chris, who usually records sound, was off to Albury to send off rushes. A half hour delay which cost us nothing as the sun decided to shine during that time.

And so it was for quite some hours...sun, cloud, sun, cloud, sun, cloud. Very frustrating, particularly for the actors, but struggled through nevertheless, with the promise that if we could get through at least part of "I'm Sad" before sunset, then the chances were that we could finish with this location tonight, a day ahead of schedule.

The pickups were finished by lunchtime, then after lunch we attacked "I'm Sad", a scene running almost eight minutes, delicate for performance, but with four different opticals in it.

We rehearsed the first shot, then managed to find enough cloud to shoot it. Then the Tony Clark Unified Thermal Theory was brought to bear...we were on a plain with rocks, warmer than the trees surrounding, causing a warm air updraft which would prevent clouds forming above us while the sun was high. His theory seemed to have some validity, because all around us was thick cloud, while above was clear sky and sunshine.

We rehearsed and prepared the rest of the shots in the scene while waiting for either cloud or sunset, whichever came first. Cloud came first, nice thick ones and we got ready to shoot the long master shot for part of the scene (one take per magazine). Just prior to shooting, it started to rain. We waited. It continued to rain. We waited. Fog rolled in, it rained harder. Then suddenly the rain turned into a torrential downpour, lightning, thunder and the heaviest rain by far we've had on the shoot. The plain we were on began to flood. Gear was hastily moved and secured, attempts made to keep it higher off the ground. The rain turned to hail. When everything was as secure as we could possibly make it, we abandoned the location, like drowning rats.

We had been within two hours of finishing at this location...the full extent of the catastrophe will be measured tomorrow, if it stops raining.

Wednesday, January 18, 1995

Bright sunshine in the morning, excellent drying weather. The gear was uncovered first thing and left to dry, it being deemed too dangerous to test any of it before it had thoroughly dried.

Early afternoon, first attempts made to test. Some unfriendly noises, but mostly everything seemed to work.

Late afternoon and we arrived for what we hoped would be our last shooting day here. A bit of stop start at first as the gear shook out its problems, but eventually everything was functioning smoothly. It seemed incredible, considering the punishment that had been meted out to it.

We rehearsed the various shots of "I'm Sad", then a short break before sunset as we prepared mentally for the hour and twenty minutes ahead.

Again we started the moment the sun had set. The first shot was the most complex, three and a half minutes of carefully choreographed action. The first take of this shot was somehow the most important...the performance was very involving for the actors, but at the same time they had to be more than usually careful about hitting a whole series of marks during it...not only hitting the marks, but hitting them at precisely the correct moment of time. As the take progressed it was clear that they were both inside it, the performances were very moving and involving. One false move and the whole is rendered useless, but the days of rehearsing had held us in good stead...they got through the entire take, beautifully. Then a re-set for the second shot, then the third, until the entire scene was in the can. Then back to the

beginning for take two of the first shot, and we saw how lucky we'd been in the first take, because it took several more attempts to get a take that was remotely useable.

In the available light we eventually managed two good takes of every shot bar one, and that was a coverage shot. We'd shot almost seven minutes of quality screentime, faster than the loader could load, in another display of astonishing teamwork.

Then Tony, Rolf and Helen drove rushes to Melbourne for processing and printing that night, so we could get a rushes clearance for the location and begin to wrap the gear. A terrific day.

Thursday, 19 January, 1995

In Melbourne in the lab in the morning, and the rushes looked as expected...fine. A phone call to the rest of the crew began the wrap.

By the time Tony and Rolf returned, the wrap was finished, and early afternoon we began the drive to the next location, for "The Tree", in Shepparton.

We hoped to arrive in time to set up a static timelapse shot of our tree, but as we came closer and closer to Shepparton, weather conditions deteriorated: a gusty wind blew up, there were showers and lightning and thunder.

By the time we hit Shepparton it was raining properly, good hard driving rain. Setting up was impossible, so we attempted to settle into accommodation without getting too wet.

An inspection was made of the tree. It didn't look as good as it did when it had first been discovered. Added problems included the ground it was on, which was quickly being turned into a quagmire by the rain.

All things considered, it was decided to abandone the rest of this trip and return to Adelaide in the morning. As it was, it rained constantly throughout the night and all the next morning. It didn't stop until we were almost at the South Australian border. The farmers were rejoicing, we were not.

Monday, 30 January 1995

The first day of what is supposed to be our last trip away...all the remaining Flinders material, Around-the-mountain take 5 and "The Tree", planned for somewhere between Tumut and Gundagai in NSW. This is also the biggest expedition we've had...more people, more gear, more vehicles. A second motion control rig will be operating for much of the shoot, more will be provided to combat the heat, more rushes will be run and so on.

Later departure than normal (1000 schedules, 1100 actual)
due to a desire to do one shot into night. This first week has all night stars without moon, and we'll need every bit of available star time.

A late departure led somehow inevitably to an even later arrival at accommodation...even this early in the piece I understood why we had stayed small and simple all this time. The more people, the longer many things take. First major decision was not to travel the further 3/4 hour to location to set up (and back for dinner and back again for the night shot), but to shoot the first scene at the back of the shearers quarters.

Weather was not very hot, but very cloudy. Our prospects for achieving a star shot seemed remote, so we set up for "Night Fixing", which did not require stars. Track was laid, shot worked out and apart from lighting, this was ready to go well before either dark or dinner. Preliminary preparations were then made for the star shot ("He Grieves"), just in case the weather cleared.

After dinner we began on "Night Fixing". The weather was indeed clearing rapidly, and by the time we'd lit and shot the scene, the night was clear. Several takes of the scene later (including one computer crash) and it was in the can. At about this time we were scheduled to stop, but stars wait for no one, not even the "Epsilon" crew.

So we started on "He grieves", a motion control car rig shot (our first). Car rig shots are always more complicated that they at first seem, and this was no exception. In addition, this was to be an in-camera optical, so the rig had to be more than usually stable.

Much rigging and fixing and screwing later we were in some sort of shape, and then dealt with the inevitable vehicle flare problems. Then it was Syd's turn, a difficult and emotionally draining scene for him. The first staisfactory take was successfully rewound, the star pass started a little after midnight in very clear conditions. One day in and a scene ahead of schedule.

Tuesday, January 31 1995

An odd sort of a day, slightly unsatisfying. Morning packup at the quarters, then out to location at midday. Weather was fine, surprisingly warm rather than hot.

Worked out all the material to be shot over the next two days, what shots how and when. Star material must have priority, to make sure we get the good nights when they're there. Eventually a course for the day was decided upon...set up and shoot part of "Driving Away" and all of "He Walks Away", and if the second camera arrives, set up and shoot the star shot linking "They Do" and "I'm Sad".

The shot for "Driving Away" was set up and filmed without difficulty, then "He Walks Away" was set up as much as was possible. Then a wait of some hours...we were expecting a piece of glass to arrive from Adelaide anytime after 4pm, and could go no further until it arrived.

The planned shot was one we hadn't attempted before...two passes in-camera (one real time, one time lapse), but incorporating a painted glass matte during the first pass. The idea was to shoot the real time pass late evening-for-night, matting out the relatively much brighter sky, to rewind, remove the glass matte and burn in the time lapse star pass, enabling us to see the action in wide shot whilst also having a canopy of stars.

The glass didn't arrive until 1830. It was set in its waiting frame and the laborious task of drawing the matte line and painting began. Our available paint wasn't really designed for this sort of work, but with the help of one of Bev's precious makeup brushes it eventually did the job. In the meantime Bambi set the recently arrived second camera to shoot the linking starshot.

By the time we were ready to shoot the light was almost gone...almost but not quite. It became a tail-chasing exercise. As the light dropped, the aperture had to be adjusted, each time the aperture was adjusted the glass matte had to be adjusted, while the glass matte was being adjusted the light would drop, forcing another aperture adjustment and so on.

The second take was deemed satisfactory (although with only marginally enough light) and rewound. Then we had dinner while waiting for it to become sufficiently dark to start the star pass.

Charlie and Syd stayed on location with the two running star shots. Conditions were a little worse than average, some cloud around (mainly in the direction we were shooting, unfortunately), but that would possibly clear as the night wore on.

Wednesday, 1 February, 1995

The day broke fine, the star shots may have been okay (only rushes will tell). Charlie and Syd returned for breakfast after securing the cameras and the entire crew headed out to location at 1100.

Half the crew set about laying two sets of tracks (the second motion control rig was expected today), while the other half of the crew began insulating and air conditioning the tent. After lunch we began choreographing, programming and shooting.

First up was the first of two shots for "He Starts the Car", followed by the unshot part of "He Drives Away". Straightforward shots both of them apart from lighting...the contrast ratio between Syd sitting inside his vehicle in the middle of the day and the hot sun outside was very high. Helen, Ulli and Todd (runner on this trip) arrived with the second motion control rig at about this time, so on completion

of these shots the second dolly was prepared, while choreographing and programming commenced on "We Could Try" with the first rig.

Once the second rig was ready we switched our attention to it and the second shot for "He Starts the Car", a tricky little uphill track with extreme focus pull. The shot was choreographed, programmed and shot, followed by the choreography and programming of the first part of "He Rips The Wires" (to be shot after sunset).

Then back across to the first rig for the choreography and programming of the remainder of "He Rips The Wires". Once that was complete we transferred back across to the second rig and waited for sunset.

Sunset came (as it inevitably does) and we began shooting the first part of "He Rips The Wires". This took longer than expected...regulating the amount of car exhaust caused some minor delays (solved by now special effects expert Charles Kiroff) and lighting was very fiddly because of the extreme close in nature of the shot. Eventually it was in the can and we transferred quickly back to the first rig for the remainder of the scene. Just prior to going for the first take, however, we ran out of light.

Meanwhile Helen had taken the second rig and was programming a star shot. When the light failed for conventional shooting Tony did the same with the first rig, and we left for a late dinner with both rigs running.

Two motion control rigs, two cameras and by far the most amount of people we've had working on set (twelve)...new ways of working have to be learnt, but a lot achieved today.

Thursday, 2 February, 1995

For no one particular reason, this turned out to be one of the most difficult days on the shoot for a number of the crew. It was hot, but we've had much hotter. It was a little windy but we've had much worse. The work itself was not particularly physically demanding. But somehow things conspired.

Morning started off heavily clouded...the star shots of the previous night would have to be a doubtful proposition at best. The first bad decision was to shoot a night shot, part of "Which Star?", on top of Syd's truck day-for-night. The eveness of the light and the relatively comfortable working conditions made this a logical choice, we should be able to get this in before lunch.

The camera was set up on top of the roof rack while actors rehearsed down the bottom, and fairly soon it was time to set them in shot. Up onto the roofrack they went, a lot of fiddling to get it right because of the limited space, almost ready to go and the sun started to break through. Oh. Suddenly it was quite hot and very glary. Put up the big scrim, a little tricky because of the necessary height above the truck, almost ready to go and the wind started to blow. Oh. Ropes out, a complex lashing job to prevent it from flying away, everything takes longer because of the lack of room up there, almost ready to go and the sun has shifted and the scrim has to be moved. Untie all the complex lashing, shift the scrim, the wind comes up a bit stronger, we almost lose the scrim, get it tied down, ready to do the shot, finally. Rehearse it once. There's something wrong, don't know what. Rehearse it again. Discover the problem...it's supposed to be a night shot of them lying there gazing up at the stars, but because of the intensity of the sun through the scrim the actors are forced to squint and they look half asleep in a scene where they're meant to be wide awake. Cut. Can the idea of shooting this scene here and now. It's nearly four o'clock, we stop and have a very late lunch.

During lunch the wind drops and heavy cloud moves back in. Lunch becomes a long discussion about what to do when, what are the priorities, when does the second camera have to go back to have its new motor fitted, what is the best use for the second unit, when can we shoot the tree timelapse, balancing which capable person is available when and what is the moon doing. On and on it goes, more things piling upon more things until any sort of clarity becomes difficult.

We start with the simple things...the second unit computer mouse is not working, we suspect because of the heat. First task is for Tony and Helen to try to get that working (we must try and shoot two star shots tonight, even though conditions don't look at all promising) while the rest de-rig the roofrack shot and set the camera back on the tracks.

The mouse can't be made to work, so the second unit (which is really just Helen and the second rig) will set up close to the main unit to do a transitional star shot between "Africa" and "The Story I". The first unit mouse will be shared.

First unit complete the programming of "We Could Try". As we get close to shooting, the sun comes back out, fierce as ever, turning an otherwise easy scene into a major lighting setup (as much as this is possible with the amount of lights and reflectors we have). We decide to keep programming rather than shoot, wait for better conditions.

We choreograph and program "The Final Fix", a short shot but difficult for Syd in terms of timing. Some dozens of rehearsals later it finally clicks. A large cloud is coming, we wait for it, it moves in front of the sun, we roll the camera, we stop...a mag problem. Reload, start again, barely manage one almost satisfactory take and the sun comes out again. No clouds on the horizon, either we shoot in sun or we don't shoot. Bugger it, we'll shoot in sun, and it doesn't look half bad with this particular shot. Finally, at five to seven, we've shot something!

Things are looking up a little...there's still a lot of cloud around but it's higher and shows signs of possibly clearing. The second unit shot, requiring an exact horizon match for something shot seven months ago, is looking good. The mouse goes over to the second unit to program that shot...but the computer stops working. Circuit boards are pulled out (it's bizarre seeing these bits of high technology being worked on out in the middle of nowhere), terminals cleaned, it works again, the shot is programmed.

The sun has set, so back goes the mouse to the first unit, to shoot the second shot of "He Rips The Wires"(programmed but not completed yesterday). Another short shot, a fast track with co-ordinated action, but in this post sunset stillness the flies are so bad that take after take is doubtful because of flies on the lens. Finally we just stop, on the assumption that we must have at least one good take without fly-on-the-lens.

The mouse goes to the second unit to start the "Africa" time lapse, then back to first unit to prepare the "Round the Roof Rack" timelapse for "Which Star?". Suddenly the high cloud lights up all pink and gold...we happen to be in a mode and on a shot that can take full advantage so we rip off a couple of real time takes, then start the time lapse. By the time we get back to base all cloud has cleared and the stars are glowing. What a day. Friday, 3 February, 1995.

Not a good day yesterday, worse to come today.

Rushes reports revealed some mysteries...alleged "gate weave" in two shots, one of which was the double pass matte shot. So first up, before our busy schedule of planned shots (now with some reshoots added), careful camera testing had to be done.

Arrangements were made to have the tests collected and sent off to the lab while we were shooting them, but...
first run of the first test, a major mag jam. Camera off the head and into the tent for cleaning and maintenance, second camera onto the head, first test, another mag jam. Two disabled cameras to be worked on.

In the end it took almost three hours just to shoot the tests and the day's schedule was out the window. During lunch (late again), plans were reconsidered and a new schedule appeared. Five minutes after lunch even that was modified to be less ambitious and more achievable.

First up was a reshoot of "Driving Away", a relatively easy shot but worth doing now because camera position is the same as "He Walks Away", one that we do have to reshoot now because we're running out of star time. Tracks were measured and removed (the whole of "We Could Try" had been programmed off them and not yet shot), and the shot set and executed.

Then a couple of fiddly little shots off the legs (shots unlike any we've done on this shoot, big conventional closeups of the truck's ignition key being turned), and finally both cameras being set for their major turns...the second camera to shoot the transition star shot between "They Do" and "I'm Sad", the first camera to reshoot "He Walks Away".

The shared mouse oscillated between the two motion control rigs, shots were set, the glass matte painted and Bambi (focus puller/camera ass't) finally had his first spare five minutes...he'd worked absolutely ceaselessly for the previous six hours.

Sunset came (skies were very clear), there were some minor panics and hiccups getting a satisfactory first pass of "He Walks Away" before it became too dark, but at the appointed time both star passes were started. Charlie and Adam (young local bloke getting some work experience...our crew continues to swell in this final run to the post) stayed out on set to guard the shots, the rest limped back to quarters trying to work out how to improve productivity (the premis is actually wrong... our apparent schedule problems are simply a function of a self-imposed rise in expectation).

Saturday, February 4, 1995

After a good star night, a morning wrap from the Bunkers location to the shearers quarters, nearby which was the location for the final scene in the film, "He Meets Her". The intention today was to shoot that just after dark, reshoot "He Grieves" with the second camera, then start star passes for both.

The day was hot, the tracks were laid in the creek bed that was the location for "He Meets Her". Meanwhile the truck rig for "He Grieves" was also built. Then rehearsals...this was the first scene in the film in which a character other than the two leads appears, and that new character was a six-year-old child (to be accompanied during the shoot by a two-and-a-half-year-old).

Eventually (and it was eventually) the scene was in some sort of shape and work on the technicalities of the scene continued. Shots were choreographed and programmed, the HMI and larged reflector dragged up a tree and tied, other lights roughly set. Work resumed after the dinner break. As darkness fell the task of fine tuning the lights began, not an easy task when the main light was 20 feet up a tree.

Then the problems began. The HMI ballast box stopped working. Upon disassembly the cooler fan was found to be not working, so the whole was cooled in the freezer and reset with a fan. The tilley lamp that was to be the main practical light source caught fire and burnt with four feet high flames. It was extinguished, cleaned out, re-assembled and started again, burnt almost adequately for a minute or two, then erupted into flames again. One of our small Dedo lights was then pirated and installed into the tilley and finally we were set to go, after delays amounting to close to two hours.

By this time large amounts of cloud had moved in and the younger of the two children had fallen into a deep sleep.
We shot the master shot without her, then coverage on Ulli. Child woke up and we were able to shoot a hastily convened wide shot for the end of the scene with all actors present. Then a major lighting turn-around for Syd's coverage. The wind started to gust, there were spots of rain...lighting had to be compromised but the shots were done and the scene completed at about one in the morning.

As the generator was turned off at the end of the wrap it began to rain. All thoughts of reshooting "He Grieves" had disappeared with the advent of the clouds, and we sat drinking beer in the rain, exhausted after a very long day, but satisfied with the material.

Monday, 6 February, 1995

After sunset and moonset observations the previous night, early start for dawn and sunrise observations. Back onto the mountain after breakfast, to lay the tracks for this, our fifth and last attempt at "Around The Mountain".

Our marker pegs, set underground at the end of the last attempt, were located and the tracks set to replicate as exactly as possible the previous set up. A frame from the previous attempt confirmed how accurately this was done...barely a tenth of a degree out in the pan, less than that for the tilt. The program was adjusted by these amounts and by lunch time we had the entire program.

Most of the rest of the day was spent calculating the shots anew, taking into consideration new sun, moon and star times and also what we'd learnt from previous attempts. This took until just after sunset, so we took advantage of the early state of readiness and fine weather to do one of the night passes a day early (albeit out of order).

A guarding-the-rig roster was drawn up, Charlie and Zac scored first watch and stayed the night in extremely clear conditions, not too windy.

Tuesday, February 7, 1995

A cloudless night meant the first night pass is probably good...clear conditions at sunrise allowed a good run at the first few shots of the day.

First up was the real time transition shot from Wirrealpa, shot this time before sunrise...means that the transition itself will be a little less fluid, but it allows the shooting of the next four shots to start much earlier, meaning much greater light movement on the landscape.

The second pass, a morning timelapse was started just before the sun broke, and we really had the best of the conditions. An hour or so later we did the first of the two consecutive Ulli real time shots, the long shot of Ulli standing on a rock on the track box on the roofrack on the car on the mountain. Nice crosslight because of the earlier start time.

Then the third shot, real time of Ulli with coverage past sunset was shot, again without problem. By around nine am the all-day timelapse was started, two people on the mountain at all times.

And so the day went, with little to differentiate one hour from another apart from the changing of the guard. The sky remained completely clear, an important factor with intervals as long as this day timelapse.

At six in the afternoon the shot was changed to a shorter interval sunset timelapse. That too went as planned, the sun setting in shot as programmed. Then a couple of "glow passes", for coverage and to add colour in the transition to night.

At 2030 we started setting up for the most complicated of the shots, an in-camera optical, double pass of Ulli and the stars. Getting a backlight in was somewhat tricky because of the steep hillside...Ulli herself, to be level with the camera and far enough away from it, had to stand on a Charlie-built contraption of track sleepers topped by all four apple boxes. The backlight was managed in the end, but caused a tricky little flare problem that took some time to solve. Solved it was, then on with the shot. A satisfactory take of Ulli was achieved, rewound, and the night pass started a little late, meaning that moonset was now some 8 seconds before Ulli came into shot, instead of the two seconds we had hoped. Not really a problem.

With Syd and Bambi staying the night, the mountain was left, still in clear conditions.

Wednesday, 8 February, 1995

Early morning back on the mountain. Some cloud on the horizon near where the sun was to rise, but this probably hadn't affected the previous night's shot, and enhanced the first shot of the day, a pre-sunrise glow pass.

Then the sunrise timelapse, with calculations made for the sun to pop in frame as the shot was sweeping around. These shots are always tense, especially on longer lenses, because the slightest mistake in the figuring means it's missed. Not this time...the sun announced itself precisely in the middle of frame, surrounded by a halo of luminous clouds. Beautiful.

Then two real time passes with Ulli for different parts of the shot, the second one interrupted by a programming bug. Tony switched hats from DOP to computer programmer and had the problem solved inside half an hour.

Then the big shot, an all day timelapse. Started in good conditions, seemed to be running well, but then the cloud moved in and the shot slowly turned to mud. It is very dispiriting to sit for such lengths of time in the heat on the mountain and watch your previous four hours of work turn sour. Nothing to be done about it though, it will have to be shot again or covered in a different way.

The two-hour sunset timelapse was no different...huge light fluctuations, practically no sunset to speak of. The shot was stopped early to be ready in case there was any colour on the clouds around.

Then everything happened at once. Five minutes before the calculated time for sunset the sun broke through with more clarity than any of the previous observations. A fast

timelapse of the previously aborted shot was quickly programmed and shot, then the camera swung around to where the clouds were practically catching fire. A pink pass for here, an orange pass for there, we were shooting fast timelapses all over the place of the most beautiful post-sunset we had seen in all our many days on this mountain. It was a most extraordinary and rewarding half hour of shooting.

Increasing cloudcover meant another whole night pass (as a safety) was not worth the effort, so with Zac and Chris doing guard duty, the rest went back to accommodation to try and reshoot "He Grieves" with the recently arrived second camera with new motor. That exercise too turned to mud...the new motor had to be configured (to the computer program), which took some hours. When finally we began looking at the possibility of a shot it was already almost eleven p.m., and we'd been going since 5.30 that morning, and were due to continue at 5.30 the following morning. The cloud was still heavy, the shot looked wrong so we called it a night.

Thursday, 9 February, 1995

Early on the mountain for the final morning passes. Shot was readied for the first "glow pass". Some cloud in the sky so prospects for interesting colour were good.

Pink began to suffuse the clouds slightly...the shot was set running in the hope that we would capture it at its peak. As the camera panned around the pink grew in luminosity, by the end of the pass it was beginning to fade - perfect timing. Then the sunrise on distant hills pass went equally well.

Considering everything we'd shot and what was doubtful, we changed plans at the completion of that shot. Instead of another Ulli real time pass we decided to shoot what was effectively a day pass early in the morning, hoping for more accentuated shadow movement. An hour and a half later that was in the can, and we immediately despatched Chris with the rushes to Adelaide.

At this point the "Around the Mountain" was effectively covered, but the plan was to continue shooting for coverage while DOP and director went to Adelaide to check rushes. Detailed instructions were given to Charlie and Bambi and the two of them were left on the mountain to continue shooting. Charlie had a beer to celebrate his birthday on the mountain.

Tony, Rolf and Syd then travelled to Willow Springs to meet Helen to set up "The Tree" timelapse, which was to be done over the next two days by a second unit consisting of Helen and Syd. Shot was set, Tony and Rolf departed for Adelaide and there were now two units shooting continuous timelapse.

Conditions were clear, but late afternoon the wind came up very strongly. By nightfall it was gusting at almost gale force...parts of the Mountain shot are certain to have been affected, and a sailcloth reflector took off and was torn to shreds. By the time the midnight stills shoot (to take advantage of both moonset and stars) started, conditions had tempered somewhat. Zac and Simon stayed guard after completion of the stills shoot, Syd travelled back to Willow Springs for the continuation of the Tree shoot. Bev had a gin (or two) to celebrate her birthday.

Friday, 10 February, 1995

Charlie and Bambi back on the mountain early for yet another sunrise, shots done to instruction.

Crew by now getting a bit tired and stir crazy, constant vigilance with very little to do. Zac left on top of the mountain whilst the others went down to breakfast...some hours later his plaintive cry over the CB radio... "Please, somebody get me off this mountain." Zac was rescued off the mountain and shooting continued.

Meanwhile in Adelaide rushes were viewed...some excellent, some good, some unexpectedly not so good, but enough there to understand that we were close to realising our ambitions. A phone call back to the public phone booth in Angorichina to break the terrible news (for them still on the mountain) that they were to stay up there and keep shooting. Instructions for reshoots, at different intervals and starting times, were relayed over the phone. Shooting continued while DOP and director returned to the mountain.

Weather stayed clear, a new sunset was shot in good conditions, a night cover pass was started and Chris and Todd stayed on the mountain for the last time. Back at

accommodation there was a certain madness in the air. Simon had a beer to celebrate his birthday.

Saturday, 11 February, 1995

Our last morning on the mountain, probably forever... we'd shot some safety coverage, and if the main event didn't work this time, it was never going to work.

A reshoot of the first four shots this morning, to change the balance of the exposure between the sky and the earth. We were, by now, quite practised, shooting went quickly and efficiently. Once again Ulli had to do her shot, standing, this time, on a rock on two layers of sleepers on the track box on the roof-rack on the car on two jacks on the mountain...such dizzying heights.

This time it was over...108 hours of continuously monitored filming for what was effectively one shot. The wrap off the mountain was boisterous but very efficient.

Then a wrap out of accommodation and on to our next nemesis, "The Tree". Originally to be shot in Tasmania, then in the Victorian high country, then at Shepparton, then in the Adelaide Hills, now finally at Willow Springs in the Flinders.

Arrived at Willow Springs and had lunch, then a break of a few hours (it was very hot). Towards evening rehearsals started at the tree, beginnings of planning for shots. It was soon realised that little could be set until our axeman arrived...positioning is crucial, where the tree falls is obviously also crucial. Another sunset timelapse needed to be shot, so rehearsals shifted to another tree while that was underway.

Rehearsals continued until dark, then a night timelapse was started, still in hot, clear conditions.

Sunday, February 12, 1995

Up to the tree shortly after 11 am when Ken the axeman arrived from Adelaide. Round-tree discussions were held, advice given on likely outcomes on certain types of chops, plans formulated.

Track laying commenced almost immediately, rugged spinifex-covered stony and sloping ground making the task quite arduous. Occasional cloud gave some relief from the heat. Once tracks were laid, shots were worked out. A core number of shots required a fast track in or out, which provided further problems with camera jolt at the beginning and end of the shots...acceleration at these points was very rapid, pushing the limits of what the rig is capable of, and it showed.

Some Charlie-engineering later and the problem was for the most part solved. Programming of shots continued.

In the late afternoon working conditions became quite pleasant...a thunderstorm threatened, the sun was covered by cloud, a nice breeze blew. Programming continued.

By nine at night we had an ambitious list of shots to do the next morning, a list the like of which we had never attempted before. Shooting time would be restricted to between the hours of 0730 and 1100 because of the light (we don't have the resources to counteract the sun), and our axeman had to be back in Adelaide that night. Hence all the material prior to and during the chopping had to be shot during this two and a half hour block, as well as the actual felling of the tree itself. Most people had an early night in preparation.

Monday, February 13, 1995

Up on the hill just prior to sunset, in preparation of the big day (the big half day, really). At seven thirty we shot the first shot, a master coverage of the performance scene prior to the cutting of the tree. At the last minute it was decided to defer the closeups until the next day, we had more than enough to shoot in the available time, and they could just as easily be done after the tree was down.

Rig was reset from low legs to high hat with Charlie modifications, then the "assembly line" shooting began.

Program 2...fast track into the tree with Ulli swinging the axe but pulling out before contact; repeat of program 2 but with Ken swinging the axe and making the chop, leaving the axe embedded in the tree; program three... fast track out from the tree with Ulli pulling out the embedded axe; program 4 fast track into a different part of the tree with Ulli swinging; repeat of program 4 with Ken pounding the axe into the tree; program 5 fast track out of the tree with Ulli extracting the embedded axe and preparing to swing again.

Shot after shot like this, until the rig decided it had had enough of this high speed nonsense and took off down the track at an even faster rate. Quick thinking by Tony shut it down, Charlie and Bambi caught it, but not before one length of the track had been severely disturbed. A (very) quick re-lay and all was well again, but clearly we were pushing too many limits...the shots were slowed down a little and filming re-commenced.

Then off the dolly onto legs, one of the very few operated shots in the whole film (there are to be three or four in this sequence).

Two shots from the second unit camera down the hill, then more chopping closeups...some with Syd, some without.

Some more shots were planned, but the tree was proving far more difficult to fell than Ken (a champion axeman) had expected...he was to say afterwards that it was the hardest (literally) and most difficult tree he could ever remember chopping down. It was an almost comical race against time...who would expire first, the light, Ken or the tree?

Everything was held in readiness for the fall, but when it came, it came without warning. In a hasty flurry of "Roll cameras!" and "Get Down!" (to be out of sight of the down hill camera), the tree fell, such a mesmerising sight that none of us really knew whether we had the shot. Thirty one shots in under three hours, most of a dramatically and visually dynamic scene in the can...let's hope for fine weather tomorrow to finish. The timelapse of the now-treeless hill was started.

Tuesday, February 14, 1995

Fine weather in the morning, so up the hill bright and early to mop up "The Tree". The time lapse shots had been running through the night, and after the sunrise timelapse had been completed, we began on the closeups of the drama immediately prior to the tree fall. After the breathtaking speed of shooting yesterday we expected to be finished everything mid-morning, but everything proved a little trickier than allowed for (for example She disappears and returns during her closeup) and it was almost mid morning before this part of the scene was finished.

Then Syd and Ulli closeups during the tree felling itself...his mainly quiet and emotional, hers wild and aggressive...and finally the drama at the end of the scene, again quite critical for performance for both of the actors.

It was lunchtime before we were through, but at the end of it we knew we had an epic scene, a scene of great power, beauty and horror. It clearly was going to be the scene we'd all hoped for, and there was subdued joy despite the heat. A final daytime timelapse was run during lunch, the after lunch a fairly substantial wrap from the hill (two motion control rigs) during the hottest part of the day.

Difficult to drag ourselves off to our Bunkers valley late afternoon after the wrap, but the promise of an end to this trip by the weekend (if we finished everything) kept everyone going. Despite the late arrival in the valley, we decide to have a post-sunset go at "We Could Try", previously programmed but never shot.

Tracks were laid in the previously measured position while the second camera position, for a wide telephoto shot, was found on a rise some distance away, and set with the legs and second head. The whole motion control paraphernalia was in frame for this first shot of the sequence, and some quick work was going to have to be done if we were to fit both shots into the short time between sunset and insufficient light.

By sunset we were ready...the motion control track was about a minute and a half of performance, delicate and sensitive both in feel and movement, but Syd and Ulli were terrific...two good takes in quick succession. Then the place erupted into a dervish of action...computers, lights, dollies and tracks were disassembled in record time and stacked out of shot just down a rise. The camera had its motor, mag and lens

changed and was rushed off into the distance. As the shot was set, the last of the gear disappeared out of view, and with much of our loudest shouting, the shot was done in fading but sufficient light. A hard, but exceptionally good, day.

Wednesday, February 15, 1995

Inasmuch as the previous day was rewarding, today was disappointing. Flukey weather (sun,cloud,sun,cloud,etc) didn't help, but it was just one of those days when things didn't go well.

It started well enough...two main scenes to go, plus some bits and pieces, so we attacked the first main scene, "You're Too Extreme". After initial rehearsals and blocking the rest of the crew were shown the scene...even in its rough form it was very affecting. Decisions on coverage were made, the laying of tracks begun.

This proved the first stumbling block, as individual lengths were laid and then re-laid and then had to be re-laid again as the level fluctuated from one end of the tracks to the other. Maybe the heat was affecting us.
Finally tracks and rig were ready to begin choreography and programming.

It was decided to fire off a small and easy scene ("I'm Back!") first, off the same set of tracks. It was programmed, we went back for lunch and returned ready to shoot. One tiny little thing after another caused slight delays, then fluctuating light played havoc. Our small easy scene had become a big production, and it wasn't until quite late in the afternoon that it was complete.

Preconceptions about the choreography of "You're Too Extreme" proved to be misconceptions...the scene didn't want to be shot in the way we had planned to shoot it.
When finally we found what it was about (simplicity), it seemed doubtful there's be enough light to achieve it.

And so it proved to be. Even with two cameras (one locked off on legs, the other with a ten second re-set for two shots off the rig), the scene would take a minimum of ten minutes to shoot. Light was fading so fast by the time we were ready that it was pointless to try. Still, we were completely ready for tomorrow...twenty minutes of solid cloud at any time of the day would do it, otherwise post sunset.

Thursday, February 16, 1995

Out to location in the morning in uneven weather...crew and cast on standby to shoot "You're Too Extreme" while preparations were being made for parts of "She Goes".

Preparations consisted of digging through solid rock. Another ground level motion control tracking shot was required, so another grave-shaped hole had to be dug, three metres long, a metre across, half a metre deep. There was a thin layer of dust and small stones, then shale.

Many blisters and a long time later the hole was considered deep enough. A welcome respite for lunch, then back to track laying in the hole. Cloud build up was encouraging, and by mid afternoon preparations were being made to shoot "You're Too Extreme".

Minutes away from rolling camera there was a short, sharp rainstorm, only ten minutes or so, but heavy enough to severely disrupt proceedings. By the time we'd recovered from that (drying props etc), the clouds had all but cleared, and we were consigned to waiting until sunset before shooting the scene.

Filming went well...three substantial performance shots in the available half hour of light, and both Ulli and Syd in good acting form. One major scene left at this location, tomorrow possibly the last day of our last trip away.

Friday, February 17, 1995

Absolutely clear conditions this morning, so at least we have consistent light. Also unaccountably cool (jackets were worn during the first half of the day) and quite windy, which is a mixed blessing...the wind itself is a problem, but the harder it blows the less flies we have. Flies have been a major pest over the past few weeks,

playing havoc with the performers' ability to concentrate and often playing havoc with the shot as well.

So wind it was for "She Goes". The first shot was choreographed and programmed, then immediately shot. It went well and felt very good. It had been subject to many script modifications over the past few weeks, and the final version, arrived at only the day before, seemed very right.

Then two shots of Syd's fabled Sharpie Dance, providing much amusement to all, hopefully to the audience as well. Then round for closeups of the dramatic part of the scene, interrupted by lunch because the light had travelled too far around to get the second one. After the break we resumed in better light and completed that part of the scene.

The planned next shot couldn't be made to work...we were frustrated, as has happened so often on this shoot, by our inability to crane. A six inch crane was all that was needed, but for all we could do about it it might as well have been six feet. Two other shots were devised to replace the planned one, these were both shot without difficulty.

We were now down to the last shot of the last scene in the Flinders, and there was tremendous anticipation about finishing today, wrapping and leaving for home tomorrow morning. The shot, however, was not an easy one...a tracking two-pass in-camera optical with double aperture pull (a shot of Her feet fading away, leaving her empty boots, a reflection of Her arrival shot).

Boots had been grabber-screwed onto a wooden plate. The plate was buried into the ground and pegged into the solid rock underneath, the ground above then restored to something like its original condition. The first pass required Ulli to be in these fixed boots, pulling aperture as we tracked to fade the shot towards black. This process was then repeated with just the socks in the boots, opening the aperture correspondingly through the shot so that the final result would be that the boots and ground stay at even exposure, but the legs fade out. By the time this had been programmed and rehearsed the sun was getting low. One attempt was made, but in the rapidly changing light, chances of success were remote. One more shot tomorrow, and a slightly less boisterous wrap than it would have been (made up for later that night).

Saturday, February 18, 1995

Out to location mid-morning to prepare for the final shot of the trip. A bit of waiting around for the light, the shooting began. First a pass of Ulli in boots, rewind, another pass, of boots without Ulli. Syd standing immobile in the background the whole time. Then a safety shot, no fancy opticals, just the same shot of the clothes falling down onto the boots, in case our technical capability is outstripped by our ambition.

Finally a third take of the optical and we were finished. A long wrap (including the filling in of the hole dug two days before and also the hole dug seven months before for the arrival fade-in), trouble with cars (only one of the 4WD vehicles is now in sound shape), and eventually the long drive home, the last time we would all be doing this together.

Wednesday, February 22, 1995

Four-thirty in the morning start to shoot a pre-sunrise scene in a street near the Digital Arts studio, "You Like It Here?". Shot had been surveyed the previous day, but in the early morning a decision was made not to shoot it...ultimately it was one of those locations that look promising, but viewed through the lens it looked like a scene from "The Sullivans", quite the wrong sort of feel for both the scene and the film.

Instead we set up, in the studio, to shoot the performance component of "Which Star?", other bits of which have previously been shot, and which had been stymied by wind in a previous attempt at the Bunkers.

The comfort of working in the studio was something quite new and different for this crew...no wind, no glaring sun, temperature-controlled conditions, hot and cold running water, toilets, phones...at was almost too much.
Despite these adversities the shot was ready by eight in the morning and in the can by 8.30. The rest of the day was spent beginning the preparations for the front-projection scene, "The Big Kiss".