

FUJIFILM FIRST PERSON





# AGE OF HEROES

NORWAY WAS THE PRINCIPAL LOCATION FOR DP MARK HAMILTON'S SIXTH FEATURE, **AGE OF HEROES**, A TRUE SECOND WORLD WAR ADVENTURE CO-STARRING SEAN BEAN, DANNY DYER, AKSEL HENNIE, JAMES D'ARCY AND IZABELLO MIKO. HE REPORTS ON THE LOGISTICS OF SHOOTING THE SNOWY SPECTACLE.

“ I was invited on to *Age Of Heroes* at an early stage by director Adrian Vitoria, and although the script was still in development at the time, it was to be a Second World War story for Metrodome Pictures based on the true account of the formation of Ian Fleming's 30 Commando Unit, a precursor for the elite UK forces.

As a 'military' enthusiast, Adrian was eager to show me a number of movies (even computer games) to reference certain styles and movement he was keen to explore and as the script developed we sat for days viewing an array of war films, documentaries and original news reels for ideas and inspiration.

We both wanted it to have a contemporary and visually engaging style, but retain those classic war genre undertones. We looked to highlight poignant aspects of war captured in some of the Japanese and Russian films we'd seen, particularly the unnerving massacre in Elem Klimov's *Come And See*.

The shooting schedule and resources were always going to influence what we really could and couldn't achieve, so it was also essential for us to be very flexible in our approach and important to use spontaneity to our advantage, even weave it in as a style, as we have in previous films together.

For the most part, the setting was to be an alpine mountain range and one aspect I hoped to attain cinematic value would be by composing for 'scope' to complement the dramatic landscape and vistas that would surround us. There were no real objections or delivery requirements that opposed this, so S35mm / 3-perf it was.

Subsequently the choice of stock was fairly straightforward. I'd previously shot a documentary on S16mm in snow (coincidentally in Norway), so I knew I'd get results from the F-64D. It's slightly more contrasty than the newer ETERNA stocks and has a softness to it which I thought ideal for this period. It's

also happy being over exposed and with an abundance of sunshine and bright fresh snow I sometimes rated it slower (at 40 or even 32) which seemed to give a little more saturation, but not excessively.

The ETERNA 250D was used for pretty much anything else, including all the 'Scottish Highland' scenarios, which we shot in a richly textured area of Stavanger, and the ETERNA 500T soaked up the night exteriors.

I also used the ETERNA 250T specifically for one location; Fleming's underground HQ. There was just enough light to do so with mainly low-key 'practicals' and, although yet to grade this, it felt right to begin giving his environment an identity of its own.

We did some early tests on Fujifilm stock. These were initially to assess which shutter angles would best produce the differing stages of combat and, furthermore, to compare what we could expect to achieve from the rushes and later for the DI. ➤

Photo left: Sean Bean stars in *Age of Heroes*

## AGE OF HEROES

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◀ I met with Paul Dean at Soho Film Lab just prior to leaving for Norway and we experimented by matching our test footage with images from my earlier film references. Immediately he had a good sense of our project and we came up with a slight de-saturated ‘overall look’, which also allowed for subtle nuances for certain scenes in the script. All of which have been useful guides in the edit.

The original choice of cameras were the ARRI LT as the main body and a 235 when we wanted a bit more versatility to get stuck right into the action for any training and fight sequences.

In the end we settled for a 2nd ‘sync’ camera as a back-up for the LT and stripped the LT down as much as possible for when I needed to go to hand-held mode.

Adrian was particularly respectful of the military and adamant about getting believable performances. He’d often tell me: “If they begin to look like actors just waving a gun around, stop rolling”.

For this he sought the expertise of a military advisor, Major Tony Hood, who would manage the cast and plot the tactics and strategies that the forces would use as and when confronted with the locations we were in.

To this extent, it meant we had to be on our toes as anything could change from the script. We needed to keep the camera as accommodating as possible and I felt this added to making it more organic. Often shooting from the perspective of a member of the commando unit, I think the film greatly benefited from this process.

The shoot was actually a battle in itself, everything from the Norovirus sweeping through the hotel to the restrictions of services that the aftermath of the Icelandic volcano brought us was a challenge.

Our biggest ordeal, however, was the terrain and elements. Whilst we desperately wanted to capture the characters ‘struggle’ on film, in order to do so we had to do it first (with equipment) which was a feat in itself. In waist high snow even moving short distances and setting up the most ergonomic of kit needed to be executed like it was a military operation.

Fortunately, as these things tend to do, it only seemed to bring the fighting spirit out of everyone and the diligence of Jeremy Fusco (1st AC) and the rest of the camera department in the gruelling conditions was heartening.

Equally, our Norwegian gaffer, Thomas Lund and his team (of two) had such a positive work ethic for this type of guerrilla film-making we had no hesitation deciding to bring them all back to the UK!

Age Of Heroes, originated on 35mm Fujicolor ETERNA 500T 8573, ETERNA 250T 8553, ETERNA 250D 8563 and Super F-64D 8522, is due to be released later this year.



Photo main: *Age of Heroes* Commandos head off in snow covered Norwegian location; above: DP Mark Hamilton behind the camera; right: Sean Bean and Danny Dyer in action

