CADDÓ BLUES: THE MAKING OF A STUNT

THESIS

Presented to the Graduate Council of the North Texas State University in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

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Denton, Texas

December 1985
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PREFACE

In the fall of 1877, Eadweard Muybridge shot a series of still pictures that captured motion.\(^1\) Moving pictures seemed like magic, given life by an inventive conjurer and a human flaw called persistence of vision. Muybridge's film involved the running of a horse and rider; thus, the earliest filmic images documented an action sequence or "stunt." The first official stuntman is recognized as a hungry California hypnotist who almost drowned diving into the early Pacific surf for Selig's *The Count of Monte Cristo*.\(^2\) With the early comedies of Mack Sennett, circus clowns and acrobats performed many dangerous stunts called "gags" because of their comedic nature.\(^3\) The term is still used today by stuntmen, calling anything from a pratfall to an elaborate car crash a "gag."

As the moving picture gained popularity, so too did its actors. Some film actors became "stars," drawing an idolizing public to the movie theaters in great numbers. The star became a very valuable piece of property in the film studio and the need to protect them from death or


injury became increasingly greater. Inevitably, stuntmen became very important in doubling for stars during all hazardous filming. Even one of the greatest actor/stuntmen of the twenties, Douglas Fairbanks, used a stunt double for some of his most dangerous stunts.

Stuntwork became a science when stuntman and technician Yakima Canutt left the rodeo to work in Hollywood westerns. Canutt perfected methods and designed mechanisms that made dangerous stunts safer and visually exciting. Many of Canutt's techniques are still used today by modern stuntmen like Hal Needham, Ronnie Rondell, and Paul Baxley.4

During the first fifty years of cinema, few films featured the work or life of the stuntman with the exception of *Hollywood Stunt Men, Lucky Devils, The Lost Squadron, Sons of Adventure, Callaway Went Thataway, and Singin' in the Rain.*5 In 1979, the first major film to gain popular appeal and show a behind-the-scenes look at the movie stuntman was *Hooper.* Directed by stuntman Hal Needham and starring "box office draw" Burt Reynolds, *Hooper* presented the stuntman as a rugged, fun-loving, almost suicidal superman. For the first time in film's short history, the stuntman and his craft became a topic of wide public interest. The stuntman had become "glamorous" almost rivaling his actor counterpart. Television also exploited


the world of the stuntman with programs like *That's Incredible* and later *The Fall Guy*.

With the growth of cable television in the late seventies, a demand for short films and interviews, called "fillers," increased dramatically. Many cable services, including Home Box Office and the Movie Channel, started using short behind the scenes film segments to fill in between featured films. The aspects of filmmaking often explored by these segments included directing, acting, and stunting.

Frequently, the behind-the-scenes film shorts borrow the form of the "sponsored" documentary film, examining the making of a film in a promotional fashion. Scenes from the feature film itself are mixed with interviews of the filmmakers and/or actors, with supplemental explanations given by voice-over narration.

The short film in the body of this creative thesis, "Caddo Blues," follows the basic structure of most behind-the-scenes short documentaries. "Caddo Blues" examines the making of a film stunt, a record breaking rocket boat jump, that was performed for the feature film *Final Cut*. Structured to gain immediate audience attention, scenes from *Final Cut* that include the jump are featured in the first two minutes of "Caddo Blues." Following the jump,

the remainder of the film explains the planning, preparation, and execution of the boat jump, with an interview of the stuntman who performed the jump and voice-over narration to explain other details of the jump's preparation. "Caddo Blues" concludes with the jump being shown again and the credits being rolled.

The idea for producing a behind-the-scenes segment occurred after the filming of the Final Cut. Three previous behind-the-scenes short films had been produced by producer/stuntman Gary Paul and successfully distributed by C.O.E. Films to Home Box Office. "Caddo Blues" was the fourth film to be produced in this successful "Backlot" series.

As in the previous short films of the series, "Caddo Blues" uses a mixture of film (16mm) and video (3/4 inch) to tell the behind-the-scenes story. To achieve the desired effect of slow motion photography during the boat jump, two Bell and Howell film cameras were used to shoot 16mm film at 64 frames per second. Three-quarter inch video was shot, using a Sony M3 camera and a Sony VO-4800 portable color videocassette recorder/player, to record the interview segments and the preparations for the jumping of the boat.

Scripting and shooting of "Caddo Blues" followed the basic documentary tenant of using two scripts, a shooting

script and an editing script. The shooting script functioned as an outline, determining what needed to be shot and what did not. The shooting ratio was approximately fifteen to one, with just over one hundred and five minutes of film being shot to seven minutes of film in the edit master. Voice-over narration was written and recorded in post production and then mixed in a supplemental manner with the interview segments with stuntman Gary Paul.

Post production included not only narration writing and recording, but also involved video editing, film to tape transferring, tape to tape emulsifilter testing, music composing and recording, and one-inch videotape transfer mastering. Three one hundred foot reels of 16mm film were transferred to one-inch video tape at Allied/WTBS Film and Video Services of Dallas. The bulk of the video editing was performed on a Sony RM-440 Automatic Editing Control unit with two Sony VO-5800 Videocassette Recorders. The first edit master was then tested for image enhancement by Sundance Productions using the emulsifilter process, but the almost insignificant improvement did not justify the cost of using the video enhancing process. Music composing and scoring was performed in C.C. Studios in Nashville, Tennessee. The three-quarter inch video master was then re-mastered on one-inch tape at Channel 8 post production facilities in Nashville. A CMX computerized video editing system was used for making the master copy. The CMX was
also used to insert the slow motion film footage that had been previously transferred to one-inch videotape and to insert the studio recorded soundtrack. The final edit master, which included all sound effects, music, narration, and transferred film footage, was dubbed to another one-inch video tape reel and two three-quarter inch videocassettes. The one-inch dub and one of the videocassette dubs were sent to C.O.E. Films in New York City for distribution to Home Box Office and other film short outlets.

The following body contains the script and a copy of the tape of "Caddo Blues." The script is a breakdown of shots used in the final edit master along with sound and narration directions. The videotape copy enclosed is a VHS half-inch fifth generation copy of the original edit master.
CREATIVE SECTION

I. SCRIPT

Caddo Blues

VIDEO

1. WHITE LETTERS ON BLACK BACKGROUND: A J.A.G. Production

2. DISSOLVE TO CU OF REAR OF BOAT AS ROCKET FIRES SUPER: Caddo Blues ZOOM OUT AND PAN TO FOLLOW BOAT

3. DISSOLVE TO LS BOAT POV: HIGH ANGLE

4. BOAT POV: LOW ANGLE

5. REVERSE ANGLE: MS OF BOAT DRIVER SLOW ZOOM TO CU DRIVER

6. ESTABLISHING SHOT OF TWO GUNMEN ON BRIDGE BOAT APPROACHES IN DISTANCE AND IS SPOTTED BY ONE GUNMAN

7. MS OF BOAT DRIVER

8. BOAT POV: LOW ANGLE

9. M2S OF GUNMEN ON BRIDGE THEY STAND AND PREPARE TO SHOOT AT BOAT

10. MS OF BOAT DRIVER AS HE RAISES GUN

11. LOW ANGLE UNDER BRIDGE AS BOAT APPROACHES

12. M2S OF GUNMEN AS THEY SHOOT AT BOAT

AUDIO

SFX: FADE UP BOAT ENGINE IDLING

SFX: ROCKET BLAST AND ENGINE ROARS INTO DISTANCE

MUSIC: FADE UP AND UNDER
VIDEO

13. MS OF BOAT DRIVER SHOOTING AT GUNMEN

14. LS OF BOAT PASSING UNDER BRIDGE

15. M2S OF GUNMEN FALLING OFF BRIDGE

16. LS OF GUNMEN FALLING

17. MS OF BOAT DRIVER AS BOAT PASSES UNDER BRIDGE

18. MS OF GUNMAN ONE FLOATING IN RIVER PAN TO GUNMAN TWO ALSO FLOATING FACE DOWN

19. LS LOW ANGLE UP INTO TREES OF SWAMP

20. BOAT POV: LOW ANGLE AS BOAT TRAVELS THRU SWAMP

21. LS OF TREE TOPS TILT DOWN TO WATER LEVEL AS BOAT PASSES PAN TO FOLLOW

22. BOAT POV: LOW ANGLE

23. LS OF BOAT TURNING THRU TREES

24. ESTABLISHING SHOT OF BOAT DOCK WITH GUARD BOAT APPROACHES IN DISTANCE AND GUARD PREPARES TO SHOOT

25. LS OF BOAT APPROACHING

26. REVERSE ANGLE OF DOCK AS GUARD FIRES GUN

27. MS OF BOAT APPROACHING

28. CU OF MACHINE-GUN FIRING

AUDIO

MUSIC: CONTINUES
VIDEO

29. CU OF BOAT DRIVER

30. LS FROM BEHIND GUARD AS GUN JAMS. HE THROWS DOWN GUN AND STARTS TO JUMP

31. REVERSE ANGLE OF GUARD AS HE JUMPS OFF DOCK

32. CU OF BOAT APPROACHING

33. CU REVERSE ANGLE OF DRIVER'S HAND AS HE FLIPS ROCKET SWITCH

34. MS OF REAR OF BOAT AS ROCKET BLASTS

35. LS OF BOAT JUMPING OVER BOAT DOCK IN SLO MO

36. LS: LOW REVERSE ANGLE AS BOAT FLIES OVER CAMERA AND LANDS IN SLO MO

SLOW FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

37. BOAT POV: HIGH ANGLE

38. LS OF TREE TOPS. ZOOM IN AND TILT DOWN TO WATER

39. LS: FAST TRAVELING SHOT OF TREES IN SWAMP

40. LS: SLOW PAN OF TREE TOPS TILT DOWN TO WATER

41. CU OF GARY PAUL SITTING IN BOAT

AUDIO

MUSIC: CONTINUES

MUSIC: CROSSFADE TO JAZZ TYPE INSTRUMENTAL

MUSIC: FADE UNDER (FADE OUT DURING EACH INTERVIEW)

NARRATOR(VO): Caddo Lake, picturesque, untamed, and often dangerous. An unlikely site to set a world's record boat jump; but it was exactly the place that stunt-coordinator, Gary Paul, found himself for the recent filming of the Final Cut.
VIDEO

42. LS OF BOAT PULLING AWAY FROM DOCK AS CAMERA SLOW ZOOMS OUT

43. LS AS BOAT SPEEDS TOWARD CAMERA

44. CU, PAN AND ZOOM OUT TO SHOW BOAT HULL

45. MS OF BOAT MOVING SLOWLY TO CAMERA

46. CU OF WING AREA BEING ADJUSTED

47. CU OF MARK CUTTIN WORKING ON WING

48. CU OF BRAD OVERTURF

49. CU AND PAN OF ENGINE

50. MS OF ROCKET BEING WORKED ON

51. CU OF ROCKET AREA

52. LS AS BOAT PULLS UP ONTO RAMP

53. MCU OF GARY PAUL SITTING ON BOAT

SUPER: Gary Paul Stuntman

AUDIO

NARRATOR(VO)(Cont): The Forward Picture release, directed by Larry Brown, involved the jumping of a specially designed, rocket boostered jet boat. Months of preparation and planning were involved to make this stunt exciting and safe.

Built to withstand the impact of a record breaking jump, the boat’s hull was reinforced with fiberglass and graphite.

Special fiberglass attachments for the boat, including a wing for stabilization, were designed and built by stuntmen Mark Cuttin and Brad Overturf.

A highly tuned 454 engine provided the initial power to achieve jump speed.

Additional thrust was furnished by a Jato rocket.

The jump ramp itself, went through several steps of design change.

GARY PAUL(SYNC): The original ramp was built flat, and then, after talking to the people in Los Angeles and some of my friends in Hollywood, we changed it and
VIDEO

53. MS OF GARY PAUL

54. LS AS STUNTMEN FLOAT JUMP RAMP INTO PLACE

55. CU, ZOOM OUT AS POLE IS HAMMERED INTO MUD

56. CU OF BOLTS BEING TIGHTENED ON SIDE OF RAMP

57. MS OF BOAT PULLING UP ON THE RAMP

58. ESTABLISHING SHOT FROM OPENING ACTION SEQUENCE OF GUARD SITTING ON BOAT DOCK

59. LS AS DOCK IS FLOATED INTO PLACE

AUDIO

GARY PAUL(SYNC)(Cont): put a deep V in it to match the deep V in the hull. And the speed, we were between around 45 to 50 miles an hour when we hit the ramp, so the speed was not the tremendous factor, it was being able to line it up so the boat wouldn't roll left or right in the air, which obviously you can't take. You land upside down and you only do that once.

NARRATOR(VO): After scouting a suitable location, the ramp was positioned facing a thin strip of land along the Caddo shore.

Hardwood poles were hammered into the mud at each corner of the ramp to provide stabilization. Movement by the ramp in any direction could have resulted in pitching the boat dangerously on its side.

In the film, the boat appears to crash through and jump over a floating boat dock.

For this scene, a fake dock was floated and anchored to one side of the jump ramp.
NARRATOR(VO)(Cont): The dock not only hides the ramp, but also provides a reason for the boat to become airborne. Ramp design and planning weren't the only problems stunt-coordinator Gary Paul had to contend with. Special safety measures were researched before any final decisions were made.

GARY PAUL(VO): Boat jumps are really different and I hadn't done a real big one before. I'd done a lot of car jumps for TV and film and we used heavy heavy seat belt harnesses and a lot of other things which we incorporated with the boat, but the problem with the boat was we had a big discussion with the drag boat people in California and they use parachutes to yank 'em out, and we discussed that. Then we changed our thinking and went back to using the harness because the G forces when we hit we figured we could get out of the boat because we put a breathing apparatus in the boat where we could breath. So it was kind of a combination of boat and car.
VIDEO

71. CU OF ENGINE CARBUR-ETOR BEING WORKED ON

72. MS OF MARK FIXING SHOULDER STRAPS ON GARY PAUL IN BOAT SEAT

73. MS: HIGH ANGLE OF MARK OPENING FUEL CELL CAP

74. MCU OF GARY PAUL SITTING ON BOAT
SUPER: Gary Paul Stuntman

75. CU OF CAN OF STP BEING OPENED AND POURED ONTO RAMP SURFACE
76. LS OF TWO STUNTMEN POURING STP ON RAMP

77. LS AS BOAT DRIVES UP ONTO RAMP. GARY GIVES THUMBS UP SIGNAL

78. LS OF BOAT AS IT TURNS TO MAKE APPROACH FOR JUMP

AUDIO

NARRATOR(VO): After a final engine check, Gary prepares himself for the jump.

GARY PAUL(VO): The first time is always the big unknown cause you never know what's gonna happen, you just have to play it by ear. We put sandbags in the nose to move the center of gravity and we had a fuel cell in it. We took everything from previous experience with cars we'd utilized,

(SYNC) But still, you don't know when you come off the end of the ramp, it could go end over end or it could roll. The first time is always a real experience.

NARRATOR(VO): Before Gary makes his last practice runs, the ramp is saturated with STP. This will provide the least amount of friction between boat and ramp.

After two practice runs, Gary signals he's ready.

Month's of preparation have come down to this moment.
VIDEO

79. LS AS BOAT ACCELERATES
80. CU OF BOAT DRIVER
81. MS OF BOAT SPEEDING TOWARD RAMP
82. MCU FROM OVER SHOULDER OF BOAT DRIVER AS DRIVER'S HAND FLIPS ROCKET SWITCH
83. CU REAR OF BOAT AS ROCKET FIRES
84. LS AS BOAT JUMPS IN SLO MO
85. LS REVERSE ANGLE AS BOAT FLIES OVER CAMERA IN SLO MO
86. LS BEHIND BOAT DRIVER AS BOAT SPEEDS OVER WATER. CREDITS ARE SUPERED IN.

Music
Randy Moore
"Ready to Ride"
Written and Performed by Pat Minter

AUDIO

SFX: BOAT ENGINE ACCELERATES
MUSIC: "READY TO RIDE". UP AND OVER.

SFX: ROCKET FIRING

SFX: BOAT SPLASHES IN WATER AND BOAT ACCELERATES OFF AND FADES DOWN AND OUT.

87. BOAT POV: LOW ANGLE

Stunt Coordinator
Gary Paul

Stuntmen
Mark Cuttin
Tony Huggins
Brad Overturf

88. BOAT POV: HIGH ANGLE

Production Assistants
Jeff Hartmann
Paul Vela

Assistant Director
Eliot Hall

Effects & Firearms
Randy Moore
VIDEO

39. MCU OF BOAT DRIVER
    Producer
    Gary Paul
    Director
    Stan Moore

AUDIO

90. BOAT POV: LOW ANGLE
    THRU SWAMP
    Writer/Narrator
    Stan Moore
    Special Thanks
    Mike Coker
    Larry Ford
    David Applebaum
    Morley Hudson
    North Texas State

91. BOAT POV: HIGH ANGLE
    DOWN RIVER
    Copyright (1985)
    JAG/Moore Productions
    FADE TO BLACK
    MUSIC: FADE DOWN AND OUT.
II. PRODUCTION

The enclosed tape is a 5th generation copy of the seven minute production "Caddo Blues." If the tape is not attached, it is on file and available for viewing in the North Texas State University Library or a copy may be obtained by writing to: Stan Moore
3560 Country Square #305
Carrollton, Texas 75006
Phone: 214-242-8655

Although Gary Paul is credited on the tape as Producer, Stan Moore and Gary Paul worked together co-producing and directing the project. Major funding, including the boat, jump ramp, and location expenses, were provided by Gary Paul. Production expenses, including film, tape, lab costs, CMX editing costs, and transportation costs, were split between Stan Moore and Gary Paul. Camera direction, camera work, photography direction, editing, and scriptwriting were all performed by Stan Moore. Both Gary Paul and Stan Moore shared direction of action sequencing and actor/stuntman direction. Background music direction was performed in cooperation with Randy Moore, under the guide of Stan Moore.