

ONE FROM THE HEART

HOW A BEST FRIEND'S PLIGHT TRIGGERED THE DRUG-RAPE AWARENESS SHORT, *SPIKED!*

S *Spiked!* means far more to director Suzanne Jones than just her break into film-making, although that is clearly also important too. The drug awareness cinema commercial is also a deeply personal project... because her best friend was raped after her drink was spiked.

Drug-assisted rape is becoming more common. When slipped into a

knowing where you were taken or who you were with."

After her friend was raped – for which no-one has been convicted, despite an appeal on BBC1's *Crimestwatch* – Jones felt she had to do something. "This was a cause that no-one else was doing anything about," she says. "I wanted to help a really good cause and also get a great commercial on my showreel."

drink, a drug such as GHB, which is also known as 'liquid Ecstasy', causes people to lose their memory and inhibitions, leaving them at the mercy of a rapist.

The police investigate almost 500 drug-rape allegations a year, although this figure is probably an underestimate.

"Rape is a hugely unreported crime because of the stigma attached to it," says Jones, "and drug-rape even more so. If you think you've been drug-raped by a man, imagine going into a police station the next day not

Raising the money – even for such a worthy project – was a frustrating experience for Jones, who reckons she approached virtually every funding organisation in the country before eventually securing a grant from the DrugScope charity in May 2002.

With a little over £9,000 in her pocket and herself cast in the role of writer/producer/director Jones was ready to shoot – if she could put together a crew and find a location for next to no money.

The first person to offer his help was Fuji's Roger Sapsford, who had supported Jones' graduation film from the Surrey Institute of Art & Design in 1998, *All for Eight Pounds Fifty*. Sapsford offered the film stock for free, but also gave Jones the name of a director of photography for *Spiked!*.

Jones had worked with a male DP on *All for Eight Pounds Fifty*. "I was just 20 and found it difficult working with a 35-year-old man who had his own agenda," she says. "It

was a bit of a battle trying to get what I wanted."

Second time around, Jones asked Sapsford if he could recommend any female DPs. His suggestion was commercials cinematographer Alessandra Scherillo, who, recalls Jones, Sapsford described as "one of the hottest new DPs in the industry".

"I don't really do freebies anymore, but I thought Suzanne was so committed and the cause obviously was one for the girls," recalls Scherillo. "She was well-prepared, hard working, knew exactly what she wanted and had the support of a lot of really good people in the industry."

Scherillo, who graduated from the National Film & Television School five years ago after a decade working her way up from runner to loader to focus-puller to camera operator, brought her gaffer and operator with her – and a wealth of experience having shot ads for Nike, Ford, Nintendo and Stella Artois.

With production designer Paul Jennings on board, whom Jones had worked with on Five's kids show *Harry And Cosh* on which she was both writer and production manager, Jones had a crew, but still no location.

"We had no money for a location fee and we needed a slick and sexy bar to shoot in," says Jones. Unfortunately, most bar owners she approached didn't want to be associated with a film about drug-rape, fearing bad publicity for their business.

"It was the only time I considered giving up when we couldn't find anywhere to shoot," she recalls. Eventually Scottish & Newcastle, which owns the Bar 38 chain, rode to the rescue and offered its Clerkenwell premises in central London for free over a weekend last January.

Having identified the alco-pop generation of drinkers as her target audience for her 60-second film, Jones decided to shoot it in the style of a Bacardi Breezer-type ad, filling the bar with good-looking extras.

Scherillo, who shot the commercial on 35mm using Fujicolor F-250T 8552, is pleased with its look. "I normally shoot on Fuji and I'm always incredibly pleased how the skin tones comes out," she says. "I thought the reproduction of all the colours, given that historically Fuji has been a little bit weak on the red side of the spectrum, came out really well."

"It was the most colourful piece I've done because we decided to go for a Hollywood look with high production values. High glam is something I don't do that often."

After some initial post-production problems, Scherillo put Jones in touch with Red.

"They were an absolute dream," says Jones. "I have paid Red some money – though not nearly what they should have had – and they bent over backwards for me. If it wasn't for Red and Alessandra, *Spiked!* wouldn't have got to where it is now."

Spiked! was edited at Poppy Films by Angelina Shortt with original music by Marc Vickers. In total, some 25 crew and 40 extras worked on the minute-long film, most of whom offered their services for free, with just lunch and travelling expenses thrown in. Jones wanted to single out Simon McMenemy, Lucy Pascal, Melanie Cameron and Lucinda Rhodes-Flaherty for special mention.

Singlehandedly, without the help of an agency, Jones secured a national distribution deal and *Spiked!* has been showing with *Young Adam*, *Bright Young Things* and *Kill Bill!* at screens around the country, as well as in university cinemas. Jones has also made a two-minute CD-Rom version of the film for schools, police, youth groups, colleges.

Jones is proud of her film, which is the result of much goodwill and hard work. "It's very slick and lures people into watching it," she says, before the audience are hit with the potential consequences of a drink being spiked.

"The last shot is of a girl staggering out the bar. She's got one shoe on, one shoe off and is looking dishevelled after seemingly being raped. The message is then reinforced by the caption: Now rapists don't have to use force to get what they want. Who's watching your drink?"

Scherillo, too, enjoyed making *Spiked!* "It was nice to work with a woman director. Because of the subject matter there was this implicit solidarity and, at the same time, there was this political dimension to it which you don't get in commercials." ■ MATTHEW BELL

FUJIFILM *Spiked!* was originated on 35mm Fujicolor F-250T 8552



Photos right: Director Suzanne Jones with actor Simon McMenemy on the set of *Spiked!*; far right: DP Alessandra Scherillo behind the camera