

INTERVIEW WITH KEITH HAMSHERE (STILLS PHOTOGRAPHER) - DECEMBER, 2012

Interview by Anders Frejdh, Founder of From Sweden with Love

[FSWL:] How did you end up working in the film business? Early on, you did some acting, didn't you?

[Keith Hamshere:] I started in the entertainment industry as a boy actor appearing on the London stage at the age of 12 in a show with Max Bygraves at the London Palladium. I then appeared as Oliver in the original cast stage show for fourteen months. Disney then offered me a part as Hailey Mills' brother in *In Search of the Castaways*.

John Jay was the stills photographer on *Search of the Castaways*, and as photography was a hobby at that stage, I ended up having lessons from Johnny and purchased my first Nikon from him.

I then went on to working in London as an assistant in between acting assignments. This took over as my interests grew.

I then worked for many society companies such as Fayer of Grosvenor street and Barons. This was taking over from my acting career when Johnny asked me to work as his assistant on *2001 a Space Odyssey*. I then became very involved in the movie as my friendship grew with Kubrick.

When the main unit shooting finished Johnny left and Kubrick asked me to stay on and shoot stills for special effects. I never looked back, and I ended up being on the movie for two and a half years, had several people working with me, had four dark rooms and was making huge enlargements from 10x8 negatives I had shot.

I went out to South Africa to shoot still plates for the *Dawn of Man* sequence which were used for front projection at MGM's UK studios.

Did you read any of Ian Fleming's novels when you were younger?

I never read any of Ian Fleming's novels until I started working on the films. James Bond hype started when *Dr. No* was released, when I was playing *Oliver*, I spent any spare time I had doing homework and reading scripts for future work. It wasn't until later that my interest in Bond grew.

Tell us about the work relation between the Still Photographer and the Director of Photography vs. with the rest of the crew.

I always make a point of discussing the look of the movie the DOP has adopted. It's important to shoot pictures that are sympathetic to the look and feel of the movie. In particular any still sessions that could be used for the one sheets and public's first awareness of the film. None of this could be achieved without the cooperation of the crew.

Without the trust from the camera crew I would not be able to achieve the results I wanted. Sometimes the only way to get into a great position for a scene I would be so close a steadycam operator, camera track or camera operators elbow that I must have their confidence... Similarly with special effects, their main concern is safety, so dialogue and trust from them is paramount.

Make up, hair and costume are just as important, I need their help and expertise to achieve the look of the characters the artists portray. On many movies I have a set

kept for still sessions, when time permits I would take artists aside for potential key shots, without the help of all departments my job would be almost impossible.

Describe an underrated part of your profession.

I have always thought it necessary to be on set from first to last call, listening to what is happening especially when multiple cameras and effects are involved is essential, being at the briefings from the first ad is important, it's a must to keep your eyes and ears open at all times. When the day is done another couple of hours are spent on the computer downloading the days shoot and making any small adjustments that I might deem necessary. A fourteen hour day plus is commonplace and then I might see my efforts as cover picture without a credit... for my pictures are given to the distributor at the end of main unit photography for the publicity campaign and the films' release, and I would go onto my next assignment.

Of all the films you worked on, which one(s) have been the most challenging to work with?

2001 of course, Kubrick was very demanding and a master of his art. The Bond movies were always challenging especially when a new bond would take the stage, Star Wars movies with their green screens and no backgrounds. In fact, I always looked on every movie I did as a challenge in one way or another, this generates enthusiasm to try something different, sometimes an artist might be difficult when they see a stills camera pointed at them, or a director can be very demanding ... all this is challenging.

What advice would you give to anyone getting into the business?

Don't get carried away with the glamour, this is often an outsiders point of view, it's far more like "muck and bullets", I'm only joking, but be prepared for hard work long hours and long periods of being out of work wondering when your next job is going to be, and always have a wet weather bag at the ready. It's not easy to get started and get known but keeping up your enthusiasm and determination will get you through.

What are your memories of Cubby Broccoli?

Kind, considerate, friendly to all his crew and he loved to play backgammon with Roger onset.

What are your memories of Roger Moore?

Laughter, fun, and would always sit around onset between scenes and often play backgammon with Cubby. The definitive gentleman.

What are your memories of Timothy Dalton?

Timothy brought a new look and tough side to Bond, he brought Bond into a new decade.

What are your memories of Pierce Brosnan?

Pierce had always wanted to play Bond, he was so upset when it was originally offered to him but was unable to accept. When he finally played Bond in *GoldenEye*

he must have been sad that his wife Cassie [Harris], who had always looked on him as James Bond and was in *For Your Eyes Only*, was unable to see him in the role before she sadly passed away.

I had worked with Pierce before Bond so it was great to see him in the role and we carried on Cubby's tradition of always having a backgammon board at hand for those times in between scenes.

What were the biggest challenges of your involvement with Bond?

Beating Pierce at backgammon... no seriously... Low light level action sequences were always challenging to obtain stills, special effect sequences were forever becoming more complex and the setting up of remote cameras with explosions all around became a big challenge therefore keeping ahead of all the new advances in equipment and photography was always essential as the "something new" might help in those difficult situations. Still sessions with Bond and trying to do something new but in keeping with the character was always demanding but great fun.

Which of your many photos on the Bond films are you most proud/pleased of and/or brings a certain special memory?

There are so many, I worked on nine Bonds (eight of those with the main unit) and I am of course proud to have been part of it for so many years, and to see my pictures over and over again bring a big smile on my face.

The first look of a new artist playing Bond was always particularly memorable, for example Timothy in the leather coat dark character profile shot with the gun held high and at the ready and Pierce in a DJ with the flames behind him was another and not forgetting those shots that included **Izabella Scorupco** all very memorable.

Being Swedish, how was it like working with Mary Stavin on *A View to a Kill*, and Izabella Scorupco for *GoldenEye*? Did you ever take any photos of Dolph Lundgren on the set of AVTAK?

You mention two of the most beautiful Bond girls I have worked with, **Izabella** was absolutely stunning and was great in the studio sessions, whenever there was some free time I would shoot pictures of her in my studio at Leavesden and team her up with other characters in the film.

Dolph Lundgren came to the studio from time to time during the filming of *A View to a Kill* and I was asked to take some pictures of him for an up and coming audition he had for a Sylvester Stallone movie. The rest is history.

How do you feel about your involvement with the Bond series today?

My last Bond was *Die Another Day* (I was under contract to De Laurentiis when *Casino Royale* was made). Looking back at the nine Bond movies I was involved in just brings back happy memories of the talented people I have had the pleasure of working with and feel proud to have been involved over many years of Bond's evolution.

What do you think about the recent Bond films with Daniel Craig?

Daniel brings another dimension to the Bond character similar, I suppose, in a way that Timothy did and so Bond lives, and is brought yet into another decade. Great movie entertainment!

Which are your Top-5 favourite films of all time?

I don't have a top five as such but movies that I keep watching that are on my shelves are:

Metropolis, Sunset Boulevard, Thomas Crown Affair (the remake with Pierce Brosnan), Dr. Strangelove, My Cousin Vinny, and Casino.

Which are your favourite actors to work with?

All... (On the grounds it might incriminate me) but amongst them would be Bette Davis, Ava Gardner, Audrey Hepburn, and Bob Mitchum.

What are your hobbies and how do you relax in between your work commitments?

I love technology, give me a new gadget and I will lock myself away for hours.

Have you ever worked in and/or visited Sweden/Scandinavia?

Sadly no, but I intend to soon.

What do you think of the 'From Sweden with Love' website?

Incredibly informative! I use it to look up my colleagues, and find out all the things I didn't but should know about them.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME, KEITH.

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