

STRONG LANGUAGE

UK press cuttings

Time Out

Student Guide

Movies and shakers

Reckon you can slay Welles' *Citizen Kane*? Will Fulford-Jones gets the lowdown on movie-making from first-timer Simon Rumley.

Maybe you saw *Trainspotting* and thought to yourself, 'I'd like to do that.' Perhaps you saw the inappropriately-titled *Unforgettable* and thought to yourself, 'Jeez, I can do better than that.' Or say you're just a big movie fan who fancies having a crack at it yourself, how do you go about making a film?

Simon Rumley knows all about the trials, tribulations, perils and dangers of independent film-making. Now 29, Rumley – who, since leaving Hull University, has worked as a ski guide, written an as-yet unpublished novel, cooked burritos in Taco Bell in America, done some freelance journalism and sold ad space in the Daily Telegraph –

recently finished his first feature, *Strong Language*. But this ain't no Hollywood production: in the absence of any studio interest, and with the aid of overdrafts, credit cards, friends' money, a few small investors and a lot of favours, Rumley got together some cash and made the movie himself.

Strong Language is a movie about youth culture in London today, and very good it is too. It's done in documentary style: the 14 characters (who, at first glance, have almost nothing in common) talk to camera about everything from sex to drugs to rock'n'roll; in short, all the interesting stuff. There's a twist, of course, but I won't spoil it for you.

The movie cost a mere £32,000, and that, as Rumley (listed on the credits as writer, director, producer, editor and about a dozen other things) admits, is peanuts. 'For a similar production to be made, say, through the BBC, and with everyone getting a semi-sensible wage –

no one, including me, got paid a penny – the movie would have cost probably upwards of £300,000. We cut corners just about everywhere with the money. Still, a lot of people were willing to do it for nothing; one shouldn't underestimate the power of the words "feature film".'

Still, despite the difficulties inherent in making a 90-minute flick on such a tight rein, Rumley doesn't think the finished article would really be that much different. 'I knew I always had a budget that was non-existent, and the script was written around that. You have to make it easy for yourself. With a bigger budget, it would hardly have changed at all, although we maybe would have got some better food.'

Did he ever feel like jacking it all in, I ask him. 'Yes. I just had to keep telling myself I was going to finish it,' he replies. 'Just when we thought everything was under control, something else would go wrong.' Examples? After somebody lost a DAT sound tape, Rumley – acting also as cameraman – had to do two costly days of reshooting; a misunderstanding with

the music commissions meant that he ended up with two pieces of music for the end credits and none for the actual film itself; and then, after a mate snuck him into a Soho editing suite for free to edit the film, the mate got fired and Rumley had to make a sharpish exit, setting the editing process back by a good six months. As Rumley admits, 'it might sound funny now, but it was terrible at the time. I thought it was never going to get finished.'

Rumley recently got an international selling agent for *Strong Language*, and was planning, with its backing, to take it around many of the international film festivals with a view to finding a distributor for it. The agent's first job was to blow the movie up to 35mm, at a cost of around £25,000, almost as much as the entire budget of the movie. 'It all seems to be going in the right direction: hopefully we'll find a distributor by the end of the year. Still, I've lived with it for well over a year, and,' he adds conspiratorially, 'I'm a little sick of watching it.'