

# REMOTE DISTRESS

a documentary proposal

the yard

35b holberton gardens london nw10 6ay 0208 9624 33 62 m07956 514 626

# **\_REMOTE DISTRESS**

**IN WAR SITUATIONS YOU MAY BE CALLED UPON TO HELP DELIVER BABIES OR FILL SANDBAGS – I'VE EVEN BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR PROCURING THE FUEL FOR OUR VEHICLE! THERE'S CERTAINLY NO ROOM FOR PRIMA DONNAS.**

**An Anaesthetist's Story  
By Dr Eric Vreede, consultant anaesthetist**

**PATIENCE IS NOT JUST A VIRTUE, BUT AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY, AS IS A SENSE OF HUMOUR (...) EVERY DAY SOMETHING NEW COMES UP. IT'S TOTALLY UNPREDICTABLE. EACH DAY BRINGS NEW CHALLENGES AND 'PROBLEM SOLVING' TAKES ON A WHOLE NEW DIMENSION!"**

**A Logistician's Story  
WORKING WITH MSF AS A LOGISTICIAN  
By David Parker, Logistician**

**I DON'T THINK I'LL EVER GET USED TO THE FEELINGS OF ANGER AND HELPLESSNESS AND THERE ARE MOMENTS WHEN YOU JUST GET EXHAUSTED AND FED UP. IF YOU TAKE THE GLOBAL VIEW, IT CAN BE VERY DEPRESSING. BUT THESE MOMENTS ARE OUTWEIGHED BY THE TIMES WHEN YOU FEEL YOU'RE REALLY MAKING A DIFFERENCE, FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE SO APPRECIATIVE.**

**A Doctor's Story  
By Dr Jane Ellis, paediatrician**

**a documentary proposal**

**development researcher >Donald Dalby - director >Joao Sarmiento**

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## Film statement

*This is a proposal for a documentary that will follow a volunteer doctor from the UK into a refugee camp in Iraq and through this personal account, bring audiences closer to the human reality beyond the images of a sophisticated war apparatus.*

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**“THE DISTANT VIEW  
SPARES US THE REAL COST TO OUR OWN HUMANITY”**

*Canterbury Archbishop comments on war .*

**THE “PRESIDENT UNDERSTANDS AND SEE THIS AS A  
REAL OPPORTUNITY TO TALK ABOUT THE FACT THAT WE  
ARE A NATION PREPARING FOR A POTENTIAL WAR”**

*White House communications director, Dan Barlett  
comments on the UN Inspectors findings in Iraq and the  
presidents State of the Union Adress*

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**\_Film statement**

This is a proposal for a documentary that will follow a volunteer doctor from the UK into a refugee camp in Iraq and through this personal account, bring audiences closer to the human reality beyond the images of a sophisticated war apparatus.

**\_Background and Need**

War with Iraq is looming on the political horizon and it is almost certain that Britain will play a major role in this military intervention. It is also a given fact that public opinion is very much involved with this debate as well as strongly divided on this issue. Assuming what appears certain, a war will take place.

It is a reality of any war, the displacement of thousands of people who leave their homes in search for a safer place. Inevitably a large proportion of these (always more than originally estimated) will end up in a refugee camp until they are able to go back home. Despite the fact that this is already expected, and that this conflict is of particular relevance in contemporary politics, the likelihood remains that refugee camps will become overstretched trying to meet the needs of the refugees.

A Channel 4 report on the 30-01-03, named "Consequences of War", estimated the conflict will create 500 000 injuries, 900 000 refugees, over 3 million people will need therapeutic feeding and up to 7,4 million people may need help. In a country where water is more expensive than oil, NGO's warn that medical supplies are inadequate and that an infrastructure collapse is likely.

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The public is aware of refugee camps through the news, but we believe a personal account onto this issue is relevant and opportune particularly when distance between audiences and conflict are supported by a media campaign showing military actions with technical accuracy. As the archbishop of Canterbury said "the distant view spares us the real cost to our own humanity"

In this film we will look at the motivation that drives someone such as a doctor, into an area of acute distress and limited resources. As it is, doctors already deal with life and death situations on a regular basis. Yet they probably have a reasonable lifestyle in their domestic environment, probably commute or live in a city with all the privileges and constraints attached to it, and despite the problems with the NHS, they probably work with a diverse range of technical assistance within a sophisticated structure.

So what motivates a doctor to serve a crisis area? In what way are the stresses similar or different? What kind of impact does this experience have on someone? What questions and realisations does one come across? How does that contribute to a better life? What does it tell about our own lifestyles at home? And what does it say about the refugees themselves?

## **\_Approach, Structure and Style**

### **\_Approach**

The documentary will follow a volunteer from the UK into an Iraqi refugee camp. Filming will start while the volunteer is still in the UK and will seek the individual's state of mind before going to a very different environment. We will

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leave with the subject to his/her destination and stay with him/her for the following weeks. We will seek to find initial impressions as well as to how he/she adjusts to the new setting. We will stay with the subject until he/she comes back home.

**\_Structure**

The documentary is broadly divided in three parts:

1. Days before leaving and departure to the refugee camp

The first part will try to portray the expectations of the character and what separates him/her from the camp he is going to. It will make a point on the difference, i.e., living in a rich society and the portrait of war through the news. On the personal level it will concentrate on the original motivation to serve a crisis area. On a wider level is the distance (physical, economical, cultural, etc) between the character and the place he is going to.

2. Arrival and stay in the camp

The second part will take on the subject as he arrives to the new location. The sense of dread and rising expectation gives way to hands on experience. The hours are long and the living conditions may be primitive and offer little privacy. The environment is often chaotic and volatile and the target populations are large and in distress. Situations can change quickly in the field, and job descriptions must change accordingly.

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How will the subject deal with the new environment, and the different demands that need to be met? Everyday is different and unpredictable. Is the subject prepared for this? How different is it from his/her expectations? How are moral issues challenged or re-inforced?

The narrative will maintain a relation to the media portrait of the war as it develops and as is received in the camp (satellite TV? BBC world service?). The documentary will also seek the intervention of refugees themselves, maybe through the eyes of a patient and his personal/family relations.

So on the personal level we have the challenge presented to the volunteer and how he deals with it. On the broader level we have the portrait of the conflict through western news items and parallel to it, the view of the refugees.

### 3. Returning home.

The return home will be the conclusion, with what we hope is a new person arriving back to a familiar environment. We hope to have someone who felt his life became richer with a clear shift in life interests. We expect the sense of relief for being back, but also the sense of prevailing waste in our society. We hope to show, that with this experience, there is a clear sense that our actions here (political; economical) have an impact elsewhere, and that a better future for everyone is directly related to the way we engage and contribute to the political discourse.

### **\_Style**

The documentary will have a conventional narrative style, with main characters, beginning middle and end, with a plot (overall goal) and subplots (daily demands). We wish to have an observational approach, with no narration. Nevertheless voiceovers will be a feature, as we will try to avoid a direct look

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onto the camera by the subject, and concentrate instead on his/her daily activities.

With an emphasis on what is personal, intimate and emotional the film will try to unfold the volunteer's inner struggles, frustrations as well as sense of achievement. It is a subjective diary on the inner and outer worlds of the volunteer, a personal account with an historical and collective drama in the background. It does not intent to be an essay, report or journalism, although it may use news reports as part of the setting.

### **Audience**

The current debate on Iraq has shown a deep involvement from the British public with this issue. From the tabloid press to quality papers, and in all TV channels and distinctive audiences, the interest of the public is remarkably wide and unusual. We believe that this documentary, by dealing with a common repercussion of war, through the personal account of a doctor, will attract the same audience diversity.

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**\_About the Yard**

The Yard is a partnership created in 2002 by Adrian Flaherty and Joao Sarmiento. The work covered is mainly web solutions and video work. It is also a pool from where different people work across a number of other disciplines.

The Yard has been involved with a number of non-commercial works, including projections for Greenpeace, a campaign against the war on Iraq and the London Portuguese Film and Music Festival.

From previous work done by Joao Sarmiento, two documentaries are included in The Yard portfolio: "Oasis Agora" (Oasis Now - 60m), takes heroin as a metaphor to speak about Portugal in the political and social context of the late eighties and nineties; and the "o mar e o ceu estao calmos" (The sea and the sky are calm - 30m) portrays the Portuguese revolution (24th of April, 1974), told through archive footage, live radio reports of the day and witnesses.

CV

**ACHIEVEMENTS:**

Producer, Director & Writer for Raw Edge Productions  
Assistant Director for Royal Court Upstairs Theatre  
BA Hons Degree in Film, Television & Video at the LCP

**EMPLOYMENT:**

- 1999-2002      Producer, Director and Writer for commissions (including 'Man Vessel', Alkila Productions, 'West Side Stories' and 'Our London' Riverside Studios / LWT) and 'Eveline' and 'An Artificial Arm' for Raw Edge Productions
- 2000-2001      Production & Development Researcher for 'Noble and Silver: Get off me!' and 'Celmates', C4 / E4 / Chrysalis Entertainment
- 1993-1998      Theatre Director & Assistant Director for theatre companies (including 'The Bear', Tara Arts, 'Heads', Wimbledon Studio, 'Romeo and Juliet', Etcetera Theatre and 'Sweethearts' Royal Court Upstairs Theatre) and 'Don Juan', 'The Imbecile', and 'Exception and the Rule' for Empty Pockets Theatre Company

**TRAINING:**

- 1998-1999      NVQ III Video Production, Beta & DV Camera Operation and AVID Non-linear Editing at CCC Media
- 1993-1993      Certificate in Screenwriting Practice at Birkbeck College
- 1992-1993      Bursary in Radio & Television Technical Operations at the BBC (including short course in Radio Journalism and production work placement with Blue Peter)

**EDUCATION:**

- 1989-1992      BA Hons Degree in Film, Video & Television at the London College of Printing Film School
- 1987-1988      Foundation Certificate in Fine Art at St Martin's School of Art
- 1980-1987      A Levels: Art, English and Printmaking    O Levels: Art, English (lang and lit), History, Maths, Physics, Greek Literature (in translation), and RE at Henry Compton Secondary School

**MEMBERSHIPS / HOBBIES:**

British Library, College of Psychic Studies, Intermedia, Kensington and Chelsea Community Car Scheme and Shooting People  
Art, Art History, Psychology, Driving and Cycling

Showreel and references available on request

CV

documentary research, direction and production  
dynamic, creative, responsible

## **RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE**

### **DIRECTION**

- 1999-02 Video installation: Directed a video installation for Oporto. This project had an unusual size requirement of 2304 by 576. Directed year of the volunteer for UN Portugal including interviews, concert, visuals and video installation piece. Plus "Tambor Mecanico" a multimedia event with a 3 screens video installation piece.
- 1998-02 Freelance live director: 5 and 6 cameras. Different types of music from Rock, Heavy Metal, Pop, Jazz, African, Brazilian, Latin, Rap, Choirs, Flamenco, Fado plus Poetry and Dance. Bands include: Blondie, Morphine, Paradise Lost, Manowar, Spin Doctors, The Flys, Napalm Death.
- 1999 Project co-ordinator/ documentary and concert director: Public celebration at Parque das Nações/Lisbon in April. The project was divided in 3 parts: A 30 minutes video jockey piece art directed by myself; "The sea and the sky are calm", a 35 minutes documentary - director, researcher and editor; direction of live concert, mixed with an external video source.
- 1998 Live director, editor, multimedia producer, VJ: Expo98 in Lisbon. Worked in the main stage with a range of duties including: Video Jockey, non linear editing (media 100) and multimedia, live director and mixer with 3 cameras for small stage, assistant director and live director with 6 cameras at the main stage with audience numbers up to 17 000 people.
- 1996 Documentary director (Honourable Mention): "Oasis Agora" (Oasis Now), a one hour video documentary shot in Portugal and edited in the UK. The documentary won an Honourable Mention awarded by an European Jury at the Malaposta International Documentary Film Festival.

### **PRODUCTION**

- 2002 Film Festival: Coordinator of the London Portuguese Film and Music Festival. The festival took place at several London Locations between the 1st and 8th of November.
- 1999-01 Exhibition Curator: CD-ROM exhibition for 'VideoLisboa International Video Festival' in January 99 and April 2000 and co-produced it in 2001. I wrote the exhibition brief, press releases, interviews, selected works and organised the gallery space.

### **OTHER**

- 1998-02 Visuals: several events since 1998. Most recent one for 10 years of Vodafone/ October/ Lisbon.

### **EDUCATION**

- 1990-93 > Guildhall University and LCP - Photography. 1993-96 > University of Westminster - Degree (BA Contemporary Media Practice). 1997-97 > Documentary Research workshop (by Kathy Chater)

showreel available on request

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