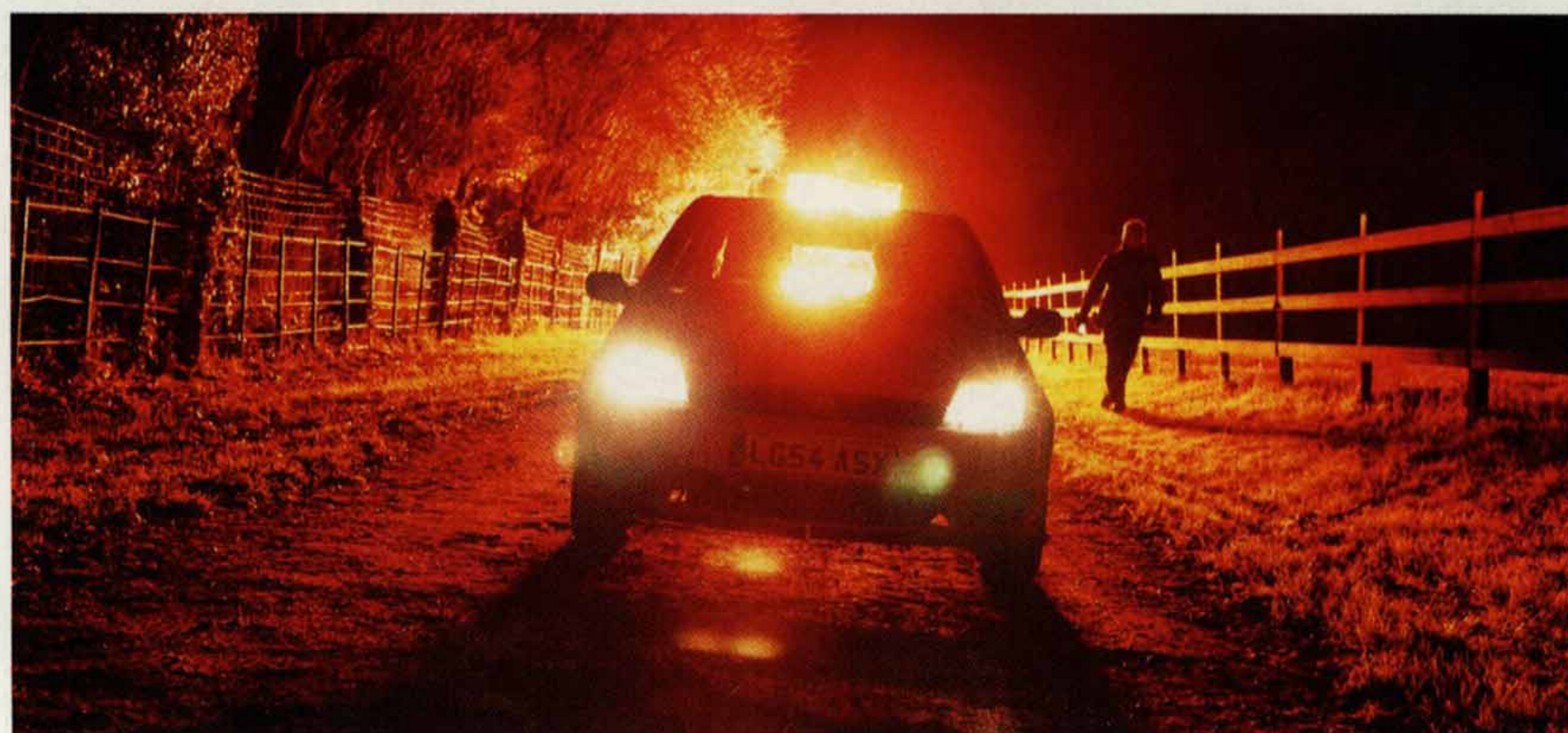


•|• A 2nd-Unit Shooting Gallery •|•



As a small car speeds down an icy road at night, followed by a huge tracking vehicle laden with Dinos and a 150K generator, I'm hanging off the back of a Cheyenne wondering if it's possible for it to get any colder. It's the first time I've ever had the problem of the tracking vehicle's exhaust swirling into frame — the camera is rigged as low to the road as we can safely manage, and the temperature is dropping fast. The driver of the so-called Plasma Truck is doing a superb job, but even he is beginning to look a little worried about how long we can go on shooting.

The second unit is hard at work on Edgar Wright's *The World's End*, and this particular sequence caps the climax: An enormous explosion chases our heroes' clapped-out old car down narrow country lanes at thunderous speed, as though heralding the end of the world.

Tonight represents the culmination of many conversations about how to achieve the effect of a huge plasma wave that explodes after our heroes' showdown with the Blanks, who have taken over the world. The effect of the Plasma Truck will later be combined with CGI by Double Negative to create the giant plasma explosion.

The Blanks are not human, and, in fact, they shatter into pieces when hit, spurting blue goop instead of blood. Much of the second unit's work has involved shooting elements of the Blanks' heads and other body parts being smashed, popped off or mangled. A supporting cast of amputees helped create believable shots of limbs being removed, and a few greenscreen days were needed to generate the elements of flying goop that the visual-effects team will add to the stunt scenes.

We had a lot of fun shooting

material for the film's prologue, which introduces viewers to the five main characters as they leave school in the 1990s. To give the prologue and flashbacks a home-movie feel, Edgar and Bill Pope, ASC elected to shoot on 16mm and distress the footage in-camera as much as possible. They had Panavision attach a handle to an Arri 16SR-2 so we could literally hand-crank the camera and achieve all the exposure variation and speed unevenness we desired.

The main unit had a pre-shoot during which they tackled the majority of the prologue, but there remained a number of elements for us to shoot on sets that were being created for the present-day part of the film. Typically, these sets would be swiftly redressed at lunch or at either end of the day so we could grab a few shots with the teenaged actors playing younger versions of the main characters. One thing I quickly discovered with the hand-cranked Arri was that you really couldn't vary it too much. In our era of crystal sync and electronic cameras, we are used to extremely precise and accurate frame rates. The footage we achieved with the hand-cranked camera had a lovely loose feel, and it didn't seem to matter how inaccurate the cranking was. In fact, Bill and Edgar were keen to push the exposure variations as far as possible.

Second unit can cover a wide variety of tasks, among them shooting inserts, working in tandem with main unit, working entirely separately with the main cast, and filming stunts. *The World's End* involved a mixture of all these. One thing that set this job apart was the attention Edgar paid to everything we did, and his desire to be present when we shot whenever possible. Watching his collaboration with Bill Pope, production designer Marcus Rowland, editor Paul Machliss and visual-effects supervisor Frazer Churchill was both a real pleasure and an education.

— Jake Polonsky