

## **LETTER FOR EDGE GROVE ABOUT BANK HOLIDAY WEEKEND FILMING**

When I first told my friends and colleagues that I had a new filming project in the works, they were ecstatic. But when I explained that it was set in a primary school, that I had sixteen 8–10-year-olds signed up, and that we were filming over the August Bank Holiday Weekend, they all told me to get lost. I think they thought there were easier ways to spend a bank holiday weekend!

But they couldn't have been more wrong. I had the absolute privilege of working with sixteen incredibly talented, intelligent, and well-behaved Edge Grove students this summer. Despite it being their very first time on a film set, they were model professionals. Every single one of them turned up with a smile and a can-do attitude, which I couldn't have been more grateful for. When you're working to a tight schedule with lots of moving parts, there's nothing more uplifting than passionate, positive people, and that's exactly what each student was.

It was so special watching them grow in confidence over the weekend. On the first morning, Leila was incredibly shy, but by the end of day one, she was an instrumental part of one of my favourite scenes in the whole film. Sami and Jola came behind the monitor with me and called "Cut" on a couple of scenes. Luke, who came straight from the airport on the first day, was like a seasoned pro in front of the camera and blew his Viking horn take after take. When we asked the boys if anyone would volunteer to play a female role, Riley bravely stepped forward, and not only that, but he delivered a brilliant improvised line I can't wait for you to see, and Tyler gave Chris Hemsworth a run for his money with his version of Thor, confidently bicep-curling his hammer between takes.

Hunter took direction beautifully, and I couldn't have been prouder of his on-screen reaction to being cast in a dodgy role in the play. Chris was a natural at swordfighting. Aarin had us all laughing with his physical comedy, leaning back in disgust in his chair. Josh was a true team player, always listening, learning, and trying anything without a single complaint. Oscar pulled the perfect confused face in a very funny scene. Aman gave a tremendous performance in the big one-take scene we filmed on the final evening. Tippi was central to the hilarious hallway scene, while Liv and Lily, whom I quickly nicknamed Jennifer Aniston and Angelina Jolie, because they were such pros, shone in every scene. They even came back on the fourth day to help us, which I was hugely grateful for... even if they had no idea who Jennifer Aniston and Angelina Jolie actually were!

And finally, Garv was not only a brilliant lunchmate but also showed a real understanding of making bold choices. When I asked the group to react with disappointment to being told their school play would be Hairspray, Garv raised his hand and asked if he could instead react with excitement, because he loved Hairspray. It was such a lovely moment of an actor making a choice.

Each and every student brought something unique to their character, had their own shining moments, and can now proudly call themselves professional actors. I am so pleased they all

chose to take part. Without them, there simply wouldn't be a film. I truly hope they all continue in Drama and the Arts, and I can't wait to see them again to share the finished film.

The golden rules of independent filmmaking are: you always go over schedule, you run out of food, you avoid animals on set, and you never, ever work with children. But Aman, Aarin, Chris, Hunter, Jola, Josh, Leila, Lily, Luke, Liv, Oscar, Riley, Sami, Tippi, Tyler, and Garv proved every single one of those rules wrong.

I can't stress enough how professional, well-behaved, and patient they all were. Not once did anyone complain. Coming back to Edge Grove eleven years after I left, and being allowed to film there, was a dream come true, and I couldn't have asked for a better group to make this film with. If they ever need anything, I'm only a phone call away.

Finally, a huge thank you to all the parents for letting their children spend the weekend with us, and to Ms. Allen, who played an instrumental role in the production and made sure every student felt comfortable, confident and able to deliver their best performance. I honestly dread my next film shoot, knowing it won't be nearly as enjoyable as this one.

Best,  
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