

COMING UP Sample Treatment 3

Proposed Edit for *A Man In A Box*

The Technique

A Man in a Box is created from real interviews that have been recorded. The interviews are edited and delivered by the actors in the very manner in which they were first said. This is achieved using an innovative acting device that lets the actor copy the exact speech pattern of the interviewee. For stage productions the actors wear earphones through which the interviews are played and copy precisely what they hear, recreating the same cadences and tones of the interviewee, down to every last stammer and stumble. The likeness between the actor and the interviewee is extraordinary as the technique encourages the actor to iron out their own idiosyncrasies thus enabling him embody the interviewee with uncanny immediacy. For television the earphones would need to be hidden or alternatively the actors would need to learn not only the lines but precise the speech pattern as well, so that the interviewees rhythm is not lost. The speech is very bizarre and fractured, as spontaneous conversations tend to be. The experience is not dissimilar to Nick Park's animated *Creature Comforts*, disconcerting and often highly comic. The effect is to make the audience feel as if they are somehow in direct contact with the interviewees themselves, as every train of fuzzy thinking is transmitted.

The Edit

The piece will be edited into two 12 minute sections. This will be achieved by focusing on Colin, his obsession with autographs and his shifting relationship to mortality which is brought about by the death of his father. Material that drifts away from these core themes will be cut. Much of the current material is anecdotal; this is largely what will go, putting the drama of the relationships in the foreground. The general structure of the piece will remain the same. Each of the family members will be portrayed in their rooms, as they were interviewed, each inhabiting their own individual "box" within the house.

(The tracks numbers I refer to below correlate with the Royal Court Rough Cut Edit provided)

Part 1: Tracks 1 to 7 currently run at 12'16'. These will be cut down to 6'09'.

This section will set up Colin in his world of autographs and his relationship with Lin. The material will centre on

- 1) His sacred world that no-one else even in his family is allowed to share in
- 2) His "curse" on the celebrities
- 3) His child like demeanor- hiding behind the sofa at embarrassing moments

The cuts: Sections of Track 2 *Ammunition Boxes*, *Curse*, All of Track 3 *Train spotters* and Track 4 *Polly*, Sections of Track 6 *Bruno* and 7 *Anticipation* (The material to go in the above tracks is when it concerns other characters outside Colin's immediate family at home.)

Tracks 8 to 12 will structurally not change but will be halved in length.

The cuts: Track 10 *Donated her skin* Linda's story about her mother donating her skin for a skin transplant will be cut and Tracks 8 *Prime Minister* and 11 *Facsimile* will be trimmed considerably without losing the build up to opening the envelope and subsequent anti climax.

The second half of part 1 will reveal the excesses of Colin's obsession and his wish to be famous just so he could sign autographs all day. Stories about his brothers and about Linda's cancer will be cut.

Part 1 will end with Track 16 *Hasselhoff* when Colin leaves to get David Hasselhoff's autograph despite Linda's pleading.

The cuts: Track 13 *Sellotape*, 14 *Needlework*, 15 *Whole Page*, *The Star* and 17 *Garden*.

By cutting Track 14 and 15 which show Freddie Cannon signing for Colin, the audience never sees Colin successfully getting an autograph. Instead they witness him getting a facsimile from Tony Blair to the amusement of his family. The theme of success and failure will be carried through into Part 2.

Part 2:

The second part will go deeper into exploring the motivation behind Colin's collecting and the impact it has on his son Billy. The death of his father towards the end reintroduces the theme of mortality, which Colin is forced to deal with up close, unlike in Part 1 when he can flippantly remark "You meet people and they die."

Part 2 will start with Track 28 *Witnessed a Failure* that will take place outside the Savoy as if Colin has just missed David Hasselhoff. The text in track 28 is not specific about whose autograph Colin is trying to get so it is possible to change the context in this way. By cheating the story a little here there will be for a stronger narrative link between the end of Part 1 and the start of Part 2. Apart from this scene moving in the order, the rest of the structure remains unchanged.

The scenes with Linda and Lisa tracks 18 *Cheer Bears* and 19 *Murdered* currently run at 4". These will be cut down to 1". Lisa's world of cheerleading can be created visually rather than relying on the text so substantial cuts can easily be made. The material that will remain is the story of Billy's friend's murder.

The scenes with Colin and Billy currently run at 11"40'. These will be cut to 5 minutes. The section will still start with Billy being coerced into letting the interviewer into his room but this will be much briefer. Again no description of the room will be needed as this can be shown visually. The material can easily be cut down as a lot of it is saying the same thing as it stands. What will remain will be the need for Colin to compete even with his children and the impact this has had on Billy.

The cuts: Sections of Track 20 *Ugly duckling*, *Sleep and Play Darts*, Track 21 *Stinks*, Track 23 *Hum to myself*, *Embarrassing*, Track 25 *Alton Towers*, Sections within other tracks

Linda, Colin and Billy in the sitting room.

The cuts : Track 29 *Crying and Rose* will serve just to reveal the death of Colin's father and the bets that were waged in the hospital, Track 30 *Black People* will be completely cut.

The interviewer, Colin and Billy at Fairfield Halls: this section currently runs at 7" this will be cut down to 4"30'.

The cuts: Sections of 31 *So Sad*, 32 *Last Breath* and 33 *Cock of a gay*, *Stalking Us*

The individual tracks within the scenes do not run together seamlessly. A possible device to mark this intentional visible edit point could be a shot of an autograph- one of Colin's own designs which he gives examples of in Track 12 *Emulsion* or one he has collected.

As the Interviewer appears in the final scene filming Colin and Billy, a hint of her presence visually throughout might be useful. Possibly the boom is always in shot.

