

a tokyo story

We thought we'd investigate some of the wondrous things advertising folk produce when indulging in a little bit on the side. First off, Stephen Whelan happened across a sweet film featuring a nasty bug birthed by a techie from Blink and a TV doctor

Scenes from *Cockroach*



In their day jobs, Tom Kingsley and Will Sharpe respectively play the roles of runner/tech guru at Blink, and Dr Yuki Reid on BBC medical drama show *Casualty*. But not content with climbing one career ladder at a time the pair have just put the finishing touches to their first short film, *Cockroach*. So - casting aside feelings of envy and lust for one minute - what better springboard to launch our new feature on the many and various side projects developed in the creative labs of adland's agencies and production companies, post houses and cutting shops? Having met back at university in the hallowed halls of Cambridge, Kingsley and Sharpe's shared interest in the theatre saw them teaming up to produce a number of student performances. "We shot little films to advertise the plays, almost like trailers or idents," explains Kingsley, "and we made websites for each of the shows - we're heavily into self promotion! I guess the interest in film grew from that."

With the call of the 'real world' beckoning, the pair headed off in separate directions, but both kept one eye on the idea of directing a longer project together. Sharpe's recent trip to Japan to visit family provided the perfect opportunity for a filmic collaboration, and one week of shooting and two and a half months of Sundays later, *Cockroach* was born.

"How would we summarise the film?" ponders Sharpe. "Um... Kyoshi's work as a pest control man leads him to a mysteriously deserted house, and then on his 20th birthday he receives a letter from his dead grandfather telling him he's the Messiah. Yeah, that's about right."

The 27-minute short is an alarmingly accomplished, and self-consciously lo-fi shot at directing that spins a curious yarn across some beautifully framed locations. Primarily, filming

took place near Mount Fuji and in Tokyo, with around 11 hours of footage captured on a Sony A1 HD camera that Kingsley had borrowed from Blink HQ. "We borrowed all these lights from Andrew Thomas, Kosai Sekine's producer in Tokyo and spent the first day lighting the shot of Will in the bath before we realised we didn't have the time or know-how to light everything properly," admits Kingsley. "After that it became a case of having to speed things up and focusing on just solving problems as they arose." The pair admit the method of working was a bit shambolic, but with a script in place before they began filming there was a framework to keep their ambitions from outstripping their means. "I quite like that the process was a bit shit!" jokes Sharpe. "If you're going to go professional you have to be consistent with that and it's a whole different ball game. It was more important to us to be honest about the resources we had and not try to make something beyond the limitations we were working within."

Since wrapping up *Cockroach*, Kingsley has gone on to shoot his first paid-for job - a webfilm for Diesel that Blink's Bart Yates put Kingsley's name forward for. "It's a bit strange to suddenly have money behind a project. Like you can suddenly think about feeding the crew. I'm debating making a lasagne to bring to the set to keep costs down!"

Sharpe has kept his TV career going, but agrees with Kingsley that the long term goal is definitely to turn the hobby into the main bread winner. "We've taken this much too seriously," confesses Kingsley. "People in the Blink offices are just impressed that the film's quite long. So imagine how long it could be with a budget?"

"Quite long - that's the best description we've come up with yet!" laughs Sharpe. ☺

