



DREAM PALACE

# The Shout

*With a pre-recorded introduction by director Mark Jenkin.*

## Jeremy Thomas on 'The Shout'

I came back to England via a short stay in America, and a friend called Michael Austin, who has since written screenplays for Fred Zinnemann and the script of *Greystoke*, wanted to make a film of a short story, 'The Shout', by Robert Graves. It was my idea to have Skolimowski direct. I loved *Deep End*, and I thought he was just the person to make this film fascinating. I had great support from John Terry at the National Film Finance Corporation, who was right behind it. The production was very confined, it was shot in six weeks on location in North Devon. It was a lovely summer, with short working days and no disasters. But the film had the same quality as *Deep End*, of somebody in a foreign land. I thought, here's the most English of stories, set at a cricket match, and in the hands of an English director you'd run the risk of something that is not cinema, just a cricket match and a story being told. Skolimowski, I thought, would bring something extraordinary to the film, and I'm very happy with what he did.

**Interview by Richard Combs, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, May 1983**

## Jerzy Skolimowski on 'The Shout'

*What attracted you to the story?*

The ambiguity, and the sense of the absurd. I think we are surrounded by ambiguity; double meanings can be seen in everything. Remember, I started as a poet, I published three books of poetry, my mind was trained along the path of poetic associations. So I'm not afraid to wander away from direct narrative, and I feel safe with a story that tempts you both to believe and to disbelieve.

As for absurdity, there again, it is all around us – I'm just exploring my own recognitions of whatever one can get in touch with. Who's more absurd: Bates, or the world around him? Is he a mental patient because he is not normal? How do you tell whether a tree is 'normal' or not?

*Did you make many changes to the text?*

The first development of the script was by Michael Austin, and I liked this first draft enough to drop everything else. Then I worked on it for three weeks in between casting and location hunting, and wrote my own version. In the Graves story it's not a duel between two men, it's just the account of a man who shouts and kills with the shout. Bang, and that's it. Graves says the husband is a composer, but he doesn't go any further. The film has to show what kind of instruments he uses, so I did put a lot of work into building up that part and I have to take responsibility for the John Hurt character. I also invented the cobbler's wife, the girl the husband is interested in.

*Are the aboriginal references part of the original story?*

The sharpened death-bone and the soul-stones, yes. I didn't research them. I felt that Robert Graves was sufficient authority! I understand that these same things are part of the story of *The Last Wave*, which I haven't seen. It's an odd coincidence, but it would imply that back in 1926 Graves was right about the aborigines. Maybe he was right about the shout as well.

*I know you say that you like to shoot very fast, in effect to create the film as you go along. But to what extent did you improvise The Shout? It gives the impression of being very precisely shaped.*

I'm surprised at that, because the pattern of working was actually very chaotic. There are some films where one can feel a little bit jealous that one wasn't involved, not necessarily as a director but it would have been nice to be co-author or an actor in a supporting role, or anything. It must have been good to be there; it would have been a great creative atmosphere. I feel that *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* was like that, and I believe we were able to create this kind of atmosphere during *The Shout*. It wasn't coolly calculated, it erupted like a kind of volcano.

*At the same time, your introduction of the 'death shout' itself must have taken careful planning...*

Yes, this was where I used the Dolby system; it had to be applied just at the right moment so that we would be hearing something special. The shock of the sound is not a question of loudness or richness – it is sudden and it is complex, because the human voice is helped on 40 or more tracks by all the things that came into my mind that might be helpful, the Niagara Falls, the launching of the Moon rocket, everything. But over the top is the real human voice of a man shouting like hell.

*What makes the shouting sequence so effective is that there are so many surprising camera angles around Bates as he shouts, and the posture he presents is really just as horrifying as the sound itself.*

I must say we had the most difficult conditions to shoot this scene, on top of the dunes on a very windy day. I placed Bates facing the wind but leaning over backwards, so that he had to fight against the wind to come forwards, and already the physical effort was pretty strong. We had to stop him with a rail from pushing past the focus point, so all the elements of fight were there. It was very painful for Alan, his mouth was full of sand – but this was a way to achieve something really expressionistic and natural without special effects.

*Do you see the Bates figure in a sympathetic light, do you admire what he represents, or do you regard him as an intruder?*

Well, obviously I'd prefer not to be the husband. I'd prefer to be the man, Crossley, but I see the negative side of him as well and I show this. He's not a likeable character. So the answer is that none of the characters is closest to me – I try to be a little bit of each one. I both like and dislike them.

**Interview by Philip Strick, *Sight and Sound*, Summer 1978**

The Shout

Directed by: Jerzy Skolimowski  
©: National Film Trustee Company Ltd.  
A Recorded Picture Company production  
For: National Film Finance Corporation  
Presented by: The Rank Organisation  
Produced by: Jeremy Thomas  
Associate Producer: Michael Austin  
Production Manager: Joyce Herlihy  
Accountant: Tony Hedges  
Project Development: Peter Van Praagh  
Production Assistant: Jane Moscrop  
Producer’s Secretary: Sevilla Delofski  
1st Assistant Director: Kip Gowans  
2nd Assistant Director: Arnold Schulkes  
3rd Assistant Director: Peter Waller  
Continuity: Ann Skinner  
Casting Directors: Mary Selway, Patsie Pollock  
Screenplay by: Michael Austin, Jerzy Skolimowski  
Based on the story by: Robert Graves  
Director of Photography: Mike Molloy  
Camera Operator: Laurie Frost  
Focus Puller: Eamonn O’Keefe  
Loader: Peter Biddle  
Gaffer: Edward Cross  
Electricians: Terence Potter, David Hughes  
Generator Operator: William Thornhill

Camera Grip: Peter Butler  
Stagehand: Chunky Huse  
Stillsmar: David Farrell  
Editor: Barrie Vince  
Assistant Editors: Michael Saxton, Tim Jordan, William Diver, Sara Jolly  
Art Director: Simon Holland  
Assistant Art Director: Keith Pain  
Props: John Leunberger, Bobby Hedges  
Carpenter: Peter Verrard  
Painter: John Davey  
Wardrobe: David Paddon  
Make-up: Wally Schneiderman  
Hairdresser: Betty Glasow  
Processed by: Rank Film Laboratories  
Theme & Incidental Music: Anthony Banks, Michael Rutherford  
Electronics: Rupert Hine  
Sound Mixer: Tony Jackson  
Sound Maintenance: Michael Basset  
Boom Operator: John Ralph  
Dubbing Mixer: Gordon K. McCallum  
Sound Editor: Alan Bell  
Dialogue Editor: Michael Crouch  
Publicity Director: Dennis Davidson  
Photographed entirely on location in North Devon and completed at Pinewood Studios

Cast

Alan Bates (Charles Crossley)  
Susannah York (Rachel Fielding)  
John Hurt (Anthony Fielding)  
Robert Stephens (chief medical officer)  
Tim Curry (Robert Graves)  
Julian Hough (vicar)  
Carol Drinkwater (cobbler’s wife)  
John Rees (inspector)  
Jim Broadbent (asylum fielder)  
Susan Wooldridge (Harriet)  
Nick Stringer (cobbler)  
Colin Higgins  
Peter Benson  
UK 1978©  
85 mins

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DREAM PALACE: THE FILMS THAT CINEMAS WERE BUILT FOR

Blow Out

Mon 17 May 17:45 (+ intro by Ben Roberts, BFI CEO); Tue 1 Jun 20:40

The General

Tue 18 May 18:10 (+ intro by Stuart Brown, BFI Head of Programme and Acquisitions);  
Sat 29 May 12:45  
The Shout + pre-recorded intro by Mark Jenkin  
Wed 19 May 21:00; Thu 3 Jun

The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover

Thu 20 May 17:30 (+ intro by Justin Johnson, BFI Lead Programmer); Thu 24 Jun 20:30

Footloose + pre-recorded intro by Francis Lee  
Thu 20 May 20:45; Sat 29 May 18:00

Car Wash

Fri 21 May 18:00 (+ intro by Gurinder Chadha);  
Mon 31 May 18:50

David Byrne’s American Utopia

Fri 21 May 20:45 (+ intro by Tricia Tuttle, BFI Festival Director); Mon 14 Jun 18:00

Beginning + pre-recorded intro by Luca Guadagnino  
Sat 22 May 11:30; Tue 22 Jun 20:30

Black Narcissus

Sat 22 May 14:20 (+ intro by Edgar Wright);  
Mon 7 Jun 17:50

The Wonders (Le meraviglie) + pre-recorded intro by Mark Cousins  
Sat 22 May 15:15; Thu 3 Jun 20:30

Hair + pre-recorded intro by Kleber Mendonça Filho  
Sat 22 May 20:30; Fri 28 May 17:45

Magnificent Obsession + Fear Eats the Soul (Angst essen Seele auf)

Sun 23 May 15:45 (+ intro by Heather Stewart, BFI Creative Director); Sun 6 Jun 18:40

Beau Travail + pre-recorded intro by Kirsten Johnson  
Sun 23 May 18:40; Sun 30 May 18:20

Mirror (Zerkalo) + pre-recorded intro by Malgorzata Szumowska  
Mon 24 May 17:50; Wed 9 Jun 14:30

Syndromes and a Century (Sang sattawat)

+ pre-recorded intro by Chaitanya Tamhane  
Mon 24 May 20:30; Sat 19 Jun 17:50

Goodbye, Dragon Inn (Bú sànn)

Wed 26 May 18:10 (+ intro by Peter Strickland); Wed 2 Jun 20:50

The Gleaners & I (Les glaneurs et la glaneuse)

+ pre-recorded intro by Zhu Shengze  
Thu 27 May 18:15; Fri 26 Jun 14:30

The Seventh Seal (Det sjunde inseglet)

Fri 28 May 20:50 (+ intro by Mike Williams, Editor Sight & Sound); Wed 30 Jun 14:30

Broadcast News

Sun 30 May 15:40 (+ intro by Sarah Smith);  
Sat 19 Jun 20:20

The Elephant Man + pre-recorded intro by Prano Bailey-Bond  
Tue 15 Jun 17:45; Sat 19 Jun 12:00

The Warriors

Mon 21 Jun 18:00 (+ intro by Asif Kapadia);  
Mon 28 Jun 14:30