

**Production Notes: Yokology, Name-Dropping, Heat Stroke and a Paranormal Experience**

**Yokology**

*We are all Yoko.* (From an e-dialog with the Dark Bob):

Peter [Fletcher] was getting all misty and extravagantly emotional during the shoot. I asked him if he was recalling his reaction to Lennon's death and he said he was actually thinking about his friend's.

You're right — a lot of this movie came from what I was thinking and feeling in the wake of my own friend's death in '93. What Lennon's death is to a generation is a crystallization of that sort of brutal, wrenching farewell and the feeling of injustice it leaves behind. So we are all Yoko in a way.

**The Potato Woman:**

My grandmother and mother were bombed out of their homes three times during the last winter of WWII. Having been raised on tales of food rations and the terrors of air raids, my images of war have always been overwhelmingly feminine in tone. When I first visited Germany in 1988, I was intrigued by the idea that the country was "rebuilt by women." Since then I had an image of a woman lovingly building a structure — a house, a wall, even a tower — one potato at a time, like rebuilding Dresden brick by brick.

I got to shoot it years later, in Baitz, formerly East Germany.

**War of '99:**

We shot the daytime scene of me working with sugar cubes on September 10, 2001. That night, I animated the sugar cubes on the chess board, building a city and "flying" over and into it with the camera. The next morning, I woke up and smelled the smoke: The World Trade Center.

The Dark Bob gave me his song "War of '99," which he had left out of his CD because he felt it was too dark. I fell in love with its haunting refrain and rage in the last line "Jesus follow me down to hell and save you all from me." I then hesitated because it sounded

## The Heart of No Place

like a story told from a suicide bomber's P.O.V.: "Could He forgive what I'm gonna do?" I was not worried about threats on my life — I just didn't want to be too literal. Until it hit me one day: it's Jesus, not Allah. *Duh*. The song and the video form a mirror image of a sort.

### 1979 Gallery Opening:

The Art Dealer (Ross Crutchlow) has a British accent in 1979 and an Eastern European one in 1999. The Art Collector is played by Tress MacNeille, the famous voice behind *The Simpsons*. Kateri Butler, former fashion editor of the *L.A. Weekly*, plays Connie the guru; Penelope Sudrow (*A Nightmare on Elm Street 3*), her follower.

### Meltaway & Guitar Envy:

I met Michael Rother and Dieter Moebius in Tokyo during an exhibition of *Shelter* and videotaped their shows. I heard Dieter compare artists who are not appreciated in their own time and place to prophets and tried to recapture it in a noisy café — only to find a perfect version by Michael later. This seemed a private joke between them.

I photographed Can members Irmin Schmidt, Michael Karoli and Jaki Liebezeit in Cologne at their old recording studio Schloss Nörvenich — where I later filmed the Atlas sequence. Holger Czukay was photographed in Los Angeles.

### Atlas (the Monosoft scene):

Atlas (Chris Maher) is a Titan given the task of holding up the heavens by Zeus. The globe he is holding was originally a celestial sphere. His main job has recently been selling maps, but in the post-Cold War world he could be redrawing them. Although powerfully muscled, he is a vulnerable hatchling — "soft-boiled." As Daniel Mohn, the president of Monosoft, points out, "Software isn't just for computers...the 'soft' used to refer to the human factor: the cultural and intellectual."

The main reference here is Dali's *Geopoliticus Child Watching the Birth of the New Man*. I was fortunate to be able to film at Schloss Nörvenich near Cologne — famed as Can's first recording studio — which has a collection of Dali pieces. But there probably was a subconscious connection with Annie Leibovitz's famous photograph of Lennon curled up naked in fetal position next to Yoko. He was a 20th century man who decried the use of force and admitted to owning emotions. A lot of men could not handle that image, because it made their hero look "weak."

## The Heart of No Place

### Desert Scenes:

Charles Lane ("The Assistant") was my guide to the desert locations. We (Charles, Chris, Loren Quintana and me) arrived at Death Valley just before sunset, for the scene of Atlas carrying an easel/cross. We shot the chess scene the next morning.

Emboldened by success, we decided to shoot additional scenes at North Algodones Dunes at the Arizona border. We drove all night, arriving at dawn. After shooting all morning (I was a little worried about Charles' shaved and hatless head), we headed back to L.A. around 11 a.m. It soon became apparent that my 1985 Toyota's cooling system was on the brink. I turned on the heater, and that was it: Charles got sick and we had to stop. When I resumed driving, I hit a rock on the shoulder of the freeway, finishing off the cooling system. (I drove the Toyota for another three years until it was stolen.)

### The Envy suite:

Bernadette Colomine ("LeTV Reporter") translated the introduction on the set. Suzanne Smith and Bernadette read the English and French versions simultaneously and — *Voilà!* One take. Only later did I realize that now both the French and the American anchors were named "Ted." So a single actor (Loren Quintana) plays both Teds.

The Guitar Envy scene was entirely put together from simulated interviews. The three interviewees were told that:

1. John had just been shot.
2. They had to conclude their interviews by declaring "I loved his guitar!"

Everything else was improvised on the spot.

Peter "wrote" the Lost Weekend into the story. I then threw the "Tampax incident" at him (my voice was dubbed by Mitsu Salmon). Peter intensified it a notch by adding, "I still have it somewhere...I think it's gathering ants," which I, regrettably, had to cut.

### Arse Longa:\*

I had originally wanted German DJ Dr. Walker and his friend to play the two filmmakers. We tried to shoot it in Cologne twice, then in Greece, but it just didn't work out. I met filmmaker Peter Schulte at Filmlichter festival in Detmold. He videotaped me for his Brotcasting project and agreed to direct the scene in return. I am quite happy to have the scene in German (translation: Jan Martin Harbst), since the joke is funnier read than heard.

\* See "List of Ono Works Referenced."