

"Baby On Board", An Adventure In Film Making

by Gary Marconi

At the Picture This rally, while waiting in the parking lot for cars to arrive, a man showed up and began looking at the Miatas. He introduced himself as a producer for a film company that was looking for a Miata to use in a commercial that his company was making. He was looking for a brightly colored car and was offering \$150 for the use of the car for the day. He had read about the rally on the club website and decided to stop by the starting point of the rally to see if he could find a suitable car. He showed some interest in my car since it was bright red and had a chrome luggage rack on the back. He said that the car would not be driven and would just sit in a driveway. I said that I would be available on the date of the shooting, so we came to an agreement to meet at the film site on the day of the shoot.

I arrived at the designated place at 8:00 am. The film site was in the driveway of a house in a rather pleasant neighborhood just west of Glendale Mall. The crew was unpacking all their gear, filling up the driveway and most of the front yard. The producer greeted me and had me back my car into the driveway just in front of the garage doors at which time he explained the story line.

The concept of the commercial begins with a close up of a young man working under a car, then switches to a scene of the same man measuring a length of rope. Several of these types of shots were to be made. Finally, the young man goes to a side door of the garage and grabs the hand of his very pregnant wife and shows her his masterpiece. The camera then shows the Miata with a baby seat taped, strapped, and roped to the rear of the car. It was to be a commercial for a credit union and this was to be a setup for a pitch for a new car loan. The title was to be "Baby on Board".

There were 15 people in the film crew and I could not begin to list what they all did; there did seem to be a lot of people standing around doing little. One person was in charge of refreshments and she had a full table of coffee, juice and pastries laid out when I arrived. Around 9:30, she starting going around taking Subway lunch orders.

The first problem arose when they wanted to shoot a scene with the actor on a creeper under the car. When they realized that no one could fit under a Miata even without a creeper, the Creative Consultant wanted me to jack up the car so the actor could get under the car. I refused on the grounds that a person had to be an idiot to get under a car supported only by a jack. The Producer finally intervened and said that, even though he had two million dollars in liability insurance, he would get the crew to work around the problem. They opted for having the actor on the creeper with just his arm under the car.



The second problem came when the Creative Consultant wanted to duct tape the baby seat to the car. I told him that there was no way duct tape was touching the paint; that is why I put the luggage rack on in the first place. Again the Producer interceded and suggested that I work with

their prop guy to come up with another solution. Since the seat assembly was supposed to look like a Rube Goldberg assembly, we ended up taping the seat to the luggage rack and winding rope and nylon strapping around the car. The prop guy took great pains to protect the finish while he did the seat attachment. When it was complete, the Creative Consultant decided that the baby seat did not look like a baby seat so he sent a gofer out to get another one. This cost the production company about an hour while the seat assembly was removed and the new seat (\$140 vs \$40) was installed in its place. I have examined photos of



the two seats after they were installed and I could not see a difference.

The lighting guys kept chasing the sun, repositioning their reflectors as the it moved across the sky and the shooting moved around the car. At one point, they got right up to the hood of the car and decided they should cover the car with blanket in case one their 6 foot square panels fell. I was grateful.

It went on like this all morning. No more than five seconds of film was shot at a time and there was an average of six takes per five second shot. All of this was for a 30 second commercial spot. I finally left at 4:00 so I was there for eight hours. The schedule called for shooting to be completed by 1:30. In the film business, this kind of discrepancy is considered not too bad.

Well, I got my money and my car will achieve a small bit of immortality. I will never see the commercial since it will only be run in Fort Wayne but I have 90 photographs of 15 people taking eight hours to film a 30 second commercial with two actors and one bright red Miata.

Photos by Gary Marconi