



Intro

This is usually the part where I try to find some tenuous personal connection to the product I'm pitching I'm on, but in this case, I don't have to because I listen to Audible every morning when I'm walking my dog.

Now I can't say it's got me through the breakdown of a car, but those regular morning walks did help me get through the breakdown of a marriage. As did a slew of self-help audiobooks telling me that 'life is about embracing change' and to be 'excited for this new chapter.' Thanks, Audible.

As you might have guessed, I'm a firm believer that laughter is the best medicine so I love the idea of following a character who laughs her way through a day that goes from bad to worse, to downright awful.

What follows are my thoughts about how to build on what is already a tight, funny script and push it that bit further, making our audience laugh just as much as our character.

Tone

This isn't so much a comedy of errors, but more a comedy of escalation as we see just how much shit we can throw at this character (or, in this case, drop on her head and sandwich from a height) in the space of thirty seconds.

I always feel that comedy works best when it feels realistic and relatable, so when it comes to this film let's strike that balance between something that is heightened yet grounded.

This means pushing those acts of God as far as possible whilst still keeping them within the realm of possibility because as soon our audience stops believing these disasters could actually happen they'll stop laughing. Or, at least, they won't laugh as much.

Approach

There are two ways to shoot this.

The more conventional approach would be a locked-off medium shot that makes the action appear contained. But this feels somewhat dated and parochial, and telegraphs the mishaps to come. It also makes our audience feel like spectators, keeping the character at arm's length rather than giving them the chance to get up close and empathize with her - presenting her more as a caricature than a person.

Instead, I like the idea of something more cinematic, with an unsaturated, typically grey British day. Immersing our audience in the action by making them feel like they are on the road with our character and going through it with her. This is a fresher, more visually sophisticated visual approach than your typical comedy spot which will make it easier for the audience to empathize with our character and harder for them to see the jokes coming.

For this to work, we'll need to shoot the scene in several different ways. Not just so we can select and then stitch together the best performances in the edit, but because comedy is all about timing and this allows us to play with the speed of a joke or the delivery of a reaction.

Story

In terms of the story, let's give our character a super generic, unglamorous hatchback, making her feel like a relatable *woman of the people* and someone our audience can root for.

Following her inspection under the hood, we could have her lock herself out of the car just before the heavens open and it starts pouring rain.

Then, given she's already caught in the rain and seemingly laughing about it, I think we can lose the umbrella as she wouldn't be bothered.

To make the scene that follows that bit funnier, let's stop the rain and have her just about getting herself dry when the truck drives through the muddy puddle and soaks her.

And when she remembers that sandwich in her pocket, let's have it look really special, making it that much funnier when it's ruined with bird shit.

When our parking attendant eventually turns up, let's focus on her confused reaction to our bedraggled but seemingly upbeat protagonist, rather than the cost of the ticket.

Then, as our protagonist watches the tow truck winch up her car, perhaps it rips off the front bumper and leaves it hanging on by a thread.

And finally, when that lighting strikes, let's make it epic. A big, bright flash that melts the front bonnet and leaves it smoking - as if God is giving her the finger.

There could also be a charge from the electrical storm that puts her hair on edge, but this might be pushing it a bit too far.

I also really like the idea of this taking place over a single day to hammer home the extent and duration of her ordeal. Transitioning from a bright morning to an overcast afternoon, then a dark night that makes that lighting even more impactful.

Location

As with the tone, this is all about striking a balance. We don't want her broken down in a city where she could easily access help or shelter, but we also don't want it to feel like she is stranded in the middle of nowhere as this will make the spot feel small.

Instead, we're looking for a road in the UK that would feasibly have a double yellow/red line. Somewhere scenic but which also has some life and movement in the background as people walk by. Perhaps a suburb with a few houses but no shops and a rudimentary pavement or a lay-by on an A road with a no man's land vibe about it (although not a motorway as this could feel too dangerous). Ultimately, she needs to feel alone but not completely detached from civilization.

We also need somewhere with a streetlamp to provide us with practical light for those night scenes.

Characters and Performances

I'm far more interested in who our characters are, rather than what they look like, so we're laughing with them rather than at them. Some actors just have funny in their DNA and that's who we're after.

In terms of the protagonist, we're not looking for a model but a relatable pal in their 30s with a unique face and idiosyncratic expressions. The real test is whether she can laugh in a way that feels grounded and plausible but not monotonous, and which escalates and evolves with the arc of our story. It's not about how loud she is laughing, but about how hard she is laughing without ever straying into mania or lunacy. Oh, and most importantly, no annoying laughs. Just contagious ones that make our audience laugh too.

When it comes to our ticket attendants, let's avoid making them the stereotypical pantomime villain and instead an emotionless jobsworth. A slightly power-hungry rule follower who didn't get enough hugs or respect as a child. Let's look for an actor with a great resting bitch/bastard face who can do a lot with very little. A look here. A gesture there.

Sound and Music

Let's craft distinctive but realistic atmospheric sounds that identify each scene. Starting with the cawing and squawking of birds in the distance to subtly foreshadow what is coming, combined with the whistle of steam billowing from the engine of the car. This is followed by the locking of car doors, the pitter-patter of rain, the plop of bird shit, and the thunderous rumble of lightning. As well as the whoosh of cars driving past and the indistinguishable chatter of pedestrians. Not to mention the consistent laughter of our protagonist throughout.

For this reason, I think we should wait until we're in the edit to make a call on whether we need music or not, as we don't want to drown out these carefully crafted sounds and diminish their effect on the audience.

Edit

Where possible, let's look to capture as much of the action as we can in camera to ground it in realism, then create the rain and lightning in post. Also, given the adage 'the better the setup, the better the punchline', let's use some light-touch CGI to add a few birds in the background of the opening shot of the film, working in tandem with the sound design I mentioned earlier to foreshadow the bird shit scene later.

Thank You

So there you have it. I've ended this treatment on bird shit. I guess the only way is up from here. On a semi-serious note, thanks again for sending this script through. I've had a ball spitballing about it with you and coming up with my take. As ever, these ideas are merely a springboard for further discussion and I look forward to hopefully working with you to evolve and refine them as we move through the creative process.