

MAGPIE FUNERAL Production Stories

Story One: HOW DO YOU CAPTURE AN ACTUAL MAGPIE FUNERAL ON FILM?

Greg Green, MAGPIE FUNERAL director, needed a magpie funeral for his film. Early CGI (computer generated imaging) tests were no good. So the quest to get a real magpie funeral on camera began. It was needed for a key scene, and after all, the title of the film is MAGPIE FUNERAL.

First a little background; When a magpie is found dead by another magpie, it calls out. Quickly five to six magpies surround the body of their departed friend. One magpie will then fly away and come back with several pine needles in its beak, laying them by the body. A ‘moment of silence’ is observed, followed by the magpies departing.

So how do you capture such an elusive event on film? Greg started by scouting five cemeteries in the Boise, Idaho area where he lives. The goal was to identify which cemetery had the most magpie activity. And he found one.

Greg visited that cemetery with camera equipment in hand hoping to come across a dead magpie and film a magpie funeral. Nothing. For weeks. Then one day, a miracle occurred. He spotted a dead magpie on the grass. Was this a recent death? He didn’t know.

While setting up the camera, he heard magpies calling to each other. Two minutes later, a magpie funeral was underway – and Greg was capturing it with his camera.

Greg recalls, “I must have arrived shortly after the magpie’s death. The symphony of calls around me was deafening, quickly transitioning to reverent silence. I was looking through the camera not believing my eyes. It was magical. You feel that magic on the screen.”

Watch MAGPIE FUNERAL and see this unusual magpie phenomenon first hand. It is a sight to behold.

Story Two: WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN THE POLICE SHOW UP?

All permits were in place as the production team proceeded to begin three consecutive days of shooting in an LA cemetery for the motion picture, MAGPIE FUNERAL. Director, Greg Green and his team were successfully filming critical scenes in the cemetery for the first two days.

But on day three...not so much. At about noon, nine police officers suddenly appeared and stormed our cemetery ‘set.’ Obviously there was a miscommunication but the nine police officers were not receptive to explanations at that time. Greg remembers, “The police officers were cordial, but we still had filming to do. How can we resolve this right now? It quickly became obvious that the rest of the day was lost.”

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The good news? The miscommunication was ultimately cleared up. MAGPIE FUNERAL's production team came back another day to finish the scenes that were not shot that day. Sometimes the best laid plans...

Story Three: TIMING IS EVERYTHING.

John T. Sweeney, MAGPIE FUNERAL'S producer, insisted that the production must start in mid October of that year. Greg Green, director, wanted to start shooting the following January. But John persisted. He explained to Greg that it was imperative principal photography commenced on October 22, offering no good reason. Greg relented and the production began on that date.

After shooting in Los Angeles and Oklahoma City, the production was wrapped and everyone headed home. Greg arrived back in Boise, Idaho exhausted. Directing a feature film is no small task.

Five days after arriving home, Greg developed painful symptoms that sent him to the emergency room. That next day, now in the hospital, the bad news was revealed. Cancer in the left kidney – the bad kind.

Greg has fully recovered and all is well, but if John would not have insisted the production start when it did, there would be no MAGPIE FUNERAL.

Greg thinks about that whole situation a lot. "There was something else going on - something John could not explain. I felt that too and decided to follow his advice to move the production forward. Thank heaven for John's insistence."

Greg was able to be a part of the editing process while undergoing chemotherapy. With a lot of help from the cosmos, MAGPIE FUNERAL was completed and will be released later this year. A very close call on all fronts.