

'Enjoyed every second. Great dialogue, well-paced, very funny . . . Eddie's the down-and-out anti-hero we've come to love in British films, beginning with *Clockwork Orange*. Tortured, betrayed, hounded by enemies from all sides, he flashes and fumbles through a story that needs only a great soundtrack to become a cult classic.'

- *Triggerstreet.com* (review of screenplay)

'One Britpic well worth catching . . . this doggedly downbeat and defiantly droll hybrid of the psychological Western and latterday film noir marks Loftin as one to watch.' - *Empire*



'Startling UK thriller brings the grit of 70s Hollywood to a messed-up London estate . . . Sizzling with tension and vivid, near-surreal imagery, this is a forceful and confident debut' - Hannah McGill, Artistic Director, *Edinburgh International Film Festival*

'The likes of *Red Road* and *London to Brighton* have pumped new energy into the micro-budget sector, and *Saxon* deserves the same kind of platform. It's a refreshing surprise all round . . . definite cult potential.' - Michael Brooke, *Screenonline / Sight&Sound*



'*Saxon* is a fast-paced, manga-styled sleuth movie - vibrantly colourful, rich with mordant humour, unapologetic in its cartoon violence, and slyly political . . . A literate, punk-inflected Western that strikes a savage vein of comedy.' - James Rice, Head of Screenings, *Edinburgh International Film Festival*

'All in, an impressive debut that reflects the years of effort Loftin spent honing the script before going into production.' - *The Herald*

'An off-kilter caper that emerges as one of the most refreshing crime films in years . . . the real star here is Loftin, whose surreal script is dark and downright hilarious' – *Metro*

'There aren't many occasions when you view a British movie and are struck by its uniqueness. Yet that's what happens when you watch Greg Loftin's directorial debut, *Saxon* . . . A triumphant micro-budget feature.' – *BBC Film Network*



'The opening twenty minutes has a brazen confidence as it swaggers into view like a combination of *Get Carter* and television series *Shameless*. The lively dialogue offers some amusing deadpan exchanges, the characters are intriguingly extreme and Sean Harris is an engaging, weasly underdog.' – *Screen International*

'A film that does for social housing what Woody Allen does for New York . . . one of the finds of the 2007 Edinburgh Film Festival.' – *Sneersnipe Film Review*



'Sean Harris gets more impressive every time I see him . . . The treat for UK viewers is Matravers as the balefully aspirant Linda, prowling across the screen like a praying mantis in shiny stilettos . . . her casting is just too perfect for words.' – *Cinemattraction*

'Evoking the Leone style (wide angles and tight close ups) without slipping into parody, his action scenes are well paced and thrilling. *Saxon* is a confident debut and one of the funniest films screening this year.' – *Montage*

'It's a hugely assured piece of work by all concerned. Filmed on digital video, English council estates have never looked more luminously dire, and any film which starts with a man being chased by murderous fishmongers can't be all bad.' – *Cinemattraction*

'*Unforgiven* meets *Trainspotting*' – *Triggerstreet.com*





SAXON

screenplay by **Greg Loftin**

+ the making of a guerrilla film

C *editions*

The DVD of this film, with interviews, behind-the-scenes footage and other extras, is available direct from www.peccadillopictures.com or from regular high-street shops and online stores.

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INTRODUCTION: The Making of a Guerrilla Film

Conventional wisdom and official statistics in 2005:

The average UK solo production film costs about £4.5 million to make. A guerrilla film is likely to cost £100,000 or less. Only 6 per cent of UK screens are dedicated to non-mainstream programming. As many as 95 per cent of all British feature films never get distributed (i.e. seen).

1999–2005

Starting with the seed of an idea, inspired by the people he met while making videos ‘for the council’ on derelict housing estates across London, inspired also by Greek tragedy (Oedipus and co.), Clint Eastwood’s *Unforgiven* and *High Planes Drifter* and, yes, even *Chinatown*, Greg works on a screenplay called *Saxon*. There is revenge. There is violent redemption. There are bandages: across one character’s nose, and across another character’s eye.

Funding bodies reject his applications for funding. Apart from *Don Juan*, a surreal political short which premiered at the Santander Film Festival, and a Reading Independent Video Festival Award, Greg Loftin is an unknown. He’s not connected. He’s made lots of short films, but he’s never made a feature before.

The script is pared down (fewer characters, fewer sets) to make the film dirt-cheap.

In 2002 Kevin Spacey launches Triggerstreet.com and the *Saxon* screenplay garners rave reviews.

2005

May Sillwood Films Ltd is incorporated as a Limited Company in the UK.

We take out a second mortgage, the maximum the bank will allow. The mortgage will be the funding base for *Saxon*.

We open a new Sillwood Films Ltd business bank account with Barclays, Soho Square. (Word has it that they know about the film business and how funny it is.)

We create a logo and style for Sillwood Films: rough, a bit punky, a bit Western.

sillwood films ltd «

June We send out letters to potential investors: 'You can buy as many shares as you like, but we're starting with investments of £500. We can't promise you a quick buck, but . . .'

In response, calls, envelopes and emails flood in. There are heart-warming good wishes, but there are also surprising silences. Some people back off. Other people offer time and support. And others invest what they can. Seven women over seventy invest much more than widows' mites. Neighbours dig deep. Old friends and new allies send money and love. Support comes from as close as next-door, as far as Utrecht, Detroit, Sydney and Melbourne.

Interviews by day and night, at home, in the office, in local bars and cafés. Production designers. Makeup designers. Costume designers. First assistant directors. Cinematographers. Everyone loves the script. Some people want more money than we have. Some people are wonderful but unavailable. Some are talented but precious. Some are keen but uninspiring. Some people are just right.

While keeping up with our day-jobs, we work into the small hours sorting through waist-high heaps of applications from actors and actors' agents, all promising to be The One. Shortlisting for auditions. Auditions. The world is heaving with quiz-show hosts and thugs, but we have trouble finding an Indian mother, Russell the bailiff, inexpressive twins.

Weekends are spent hunting out housing estates that satisfy the script's demands: dereliction, abandonment and, quite specifically, a large car-free concourse where a preposterous porch of Grecian grandeur can be built. There is a lot of bad housing in the world. We have both worked (in our day-jobs) for housing associations, and the good news for real people is that most social housing is being renewed. The bad news for *Saxon* is that most social housing is being renewed.

Reading and re-reading at every possible moment: *The Guerilla Film Maker's Handbook*. Lessons from case studies:

- The screenplay has to be brilliant. You can't make a good film out of a bad script.

- No matter how artistic the project is, get the legal rights right. You can't distribute a great film if your company doesn't technically own every single molecule of it.

- Don't be afraid to ask anyone and everyone for: advice, introductions, hardware, time, locations, services, skills, money, discounts, old flamenco tat. They may say no. But they might say yes.

- Get plenty of stills photographs during the shoot, and then some more.

- It's not a hobby. And it's not part-time.

July The director works with lead actors in a series of all-day rehearsals.

10 July All-day workshop in our kitchen. The director, producer, line producer, cinematographer, makeup designer, costume designer and production designer meet to get to know each other, interrogate the script, agree divisions of labour, discuss ways of saving money and/or time and/or lives. Initiates learn that a fake prop (e.g. weapon) is called 'a moody'. Fights, window-breaking and weapon-wielding all require unseen costly extras: safety pads, sugar-glass, fight coordinators, armourers. The makeup designer announces that she used to work with the daughter of real-life quiz-show host Henry Kelly. It could be a stroke of casting luck. The costume designer impresses us with his El Greco inspiration board – colours, light, drapery. And his line: 'No matter what resources you have, you go into every film saying we're making *Gone with the Wind*. You don't go in there saying this might get shown on cable TV some Monday afternoon.'

22 July First, speculative meeting with company lawyers Bolt-Burdon. Matthew Miller is our new ally.

24 July The cinematographer pulls out. (He has a small child. Another project has come up. It pays well. He's very sorry.) The shoot is scheduled to start in two weeks.

26 July First, speculative meeting with film/media lawyers Drew & Co. First lesson in shares, copyright assignments and star contracts. Andrew Curtis and Mark Johnson are our new allies.

27 July Heads of Department meeting in our kitchen – including the new cinematographer Steve Priovolos who must have been sent from heaven because he's talented, keen and, improbably, available. He even knows some of the crew already. Is he real? We are in awe/love.

6 August Location contracts negotiated, faxed, stamped, authorised, etc. Approval from the Tenants' Association. The Roundshaw Estate (once a set on *The Bill*) is going to be Saxon. It's already a ghost-town, as most of the tenants have left to make way for the bulldozers. The flats are beaten-up and boarded-up. There are 'free' design extras everywhere: unwanted furniture, household objects, graffiti of every colour and creed, a lavish choice of interiors. No need for costly sugar-glass: real windows can be smashed, as long as they are made safe afterwards. And there's a concourse to die for: a surreal car-free zone with plenty of space for Linda's and Kevin's provocative porch.

7 August We make up individual contracts for all cast and crew according to agreed fees, deferred fees and expenses. Computer drive explodes. There's even smoke. Line producer's car exploded earlier in the week. Will *Saxon* be like *The Exorcist*? There is an X in both names.

9 August First, speculative meeting with corporate accountants Derek Rothera & Co. Derek Rothera, Barbara Wills and Mehran Imanzadeh are our new allies.

[Introduction continues in printed book to page 22]

SAXON THE SCREENPLAY

EXT: THE WOODS – DAY

EDDIE is running for his life – three fishmongers in mucky whites are chasing him. EDDIE (white, late 20s) looks like a one-time punk. The woods come to an abrupt end – directly ahead is a high chain fence. We see EDDIE hit the fence with terrific force. He tries to climb but the fishmongers are on him.

INT: WALK-IN FRIDGE, FISHMONGER'S SHOP – DAY

EDDIE crouches in the corner surrounded by boxes of fish. He has a gag over his mouth and his hands are tied. He is wracked by violent shivering and barely conscious. SALMON is shouting at EDDIE. One of the fishmongers gets in behind EDDIE, grabs a good hank of hair and pulls his head back. SALMON is holding an oyster knife now, pacing up and down, his anger turning black. Then he moves in – stabs EDDIE in the eye.

INT: HALL, PAROLE HOSTEL – DAY

EDDIE is making a call on a public phone in a dingy hall. The phone is very damaged and the mouthpiece hangs by wires from the rest of the handset. The whole of this scene is shot in the reflection of a small dirty mirror above the phone. EDDIE has a great wad of grubby surgical dressing taped over his right eye. A drunk is singing somewhere out of shot.

EDDIE

Hello Linda? It's Eddie . . . you remember – Eddie . . . Yeah . . .
is Kevin about? It's just I need to borrow some money – ten
– no ten grand – Linda?

Click – the line goes dead.

EXT: SAXON HOUSING ESTATE – DAY

We hear a deafening roar as an aircraft flies low over the roof of a block of flats – the undercarriage almost grazes the TV aerials.

We see an information board which gives a little map of the housing estate – it's old and heavily graffitied: 'SAXON HOUSING ESTATE, London Borough of Nobs'. EDDIE walks past in profile.

It's a sunny summer morning. We follow EDDIE as he enters the estate – a woeful sprawl of low-rise blocks with a single high-rise tower. Saxon looks abandoned – most of the flats are boarded up and blind.

EDDIE walks across an empty concourse. In the distance a figure leaves one of the blocks and begins to walk towards EDDIE. This is RAHIM (Bengali, early 20s) – he's dressed smartly in a shirt and tie. He has a large wad of surgical dressing taped across his nose.

Another aircraft is roaring low overhead. As the two men draw near, the tension mounts – the moment seems strangely fateful: two men with casualty faces. They pass each other and keep walking. Then, without slowing their pace, both simultaneously cast a rapid backward glance.

EXT: LINDA'S FLAT – DAY

EDDIE is scanning the names of the blocks and door numbers of the flats. EDDIE stops dead in his tracks. What is this? One of the ground floor flats is faced with white stucco and has an enormous Georgian portico stuck on the front. The portico is maybe twenty feet long with gleaming white columns. A red carpet leads to a shiny front door. EDDIE checks the address again, walks to the door and knocks. Pause. EDDIE knocks again. LINDA (white, mid 20s) calls through the closed door.

	LINDA
What.	
	EDDIE
Linda?	
	LINDA
Who's that?	
	EDDIE
Eddie.	

LINDA *opens the door. She is very pale, very pretty and dressed expensively in black. She wears a large gold cross on a chain around her neck.*

LINDA

Jesus – Eddie . . . You're wasting your time – I told you on the phone –

EDDIE

I was in the area – thought I'd say hello . . . Hello.

LINDA

What's wrong with your eye?

EDDIE

I got an insect in it . . . got infected – it's nothing.

LINDA *nods and controls a twitch of disgust.*
Pause.

(indicating the portico)

You're doing all right, ain't you – eh? . . . Greek, innit?

LINDA *casts a glance beyond EDDIE to see if they're being watched, then beckons him in.*

INT: LINDA'S FLAT, HALL – DAY

They stand in a cramped richly wallpapered hallway.

LINDA

Kevin's missing. Been gone two weeks.

EDDIE

Where is he?

LINDA

He's missing.

EDDIE

Did he leave any money?

LINDA

What!

EDDIE

That came out wrong – sorry.

CUT TO: DOUBLE OR QUILTS – TV QUIZ SHOW

We see an extract of DOUBLE OR QUILTS on video playback. This is a cheap overlit quiz show, hosted by NICKO (white, male, 40s). There are three contestants, and in the spotlight at the moment and wearing a Hawaiian shirt is KEVIN (white, late 20s). He has a heavy forehead and a boxer's nose – the kind of face you rarely see on quiz shows.

NICKO

So Kevin – which country was divided by the 38th parallel?

KEVIN

Korea.

NICKO

Correct – ten points. In what sport would you use a grinner?

KEVIN

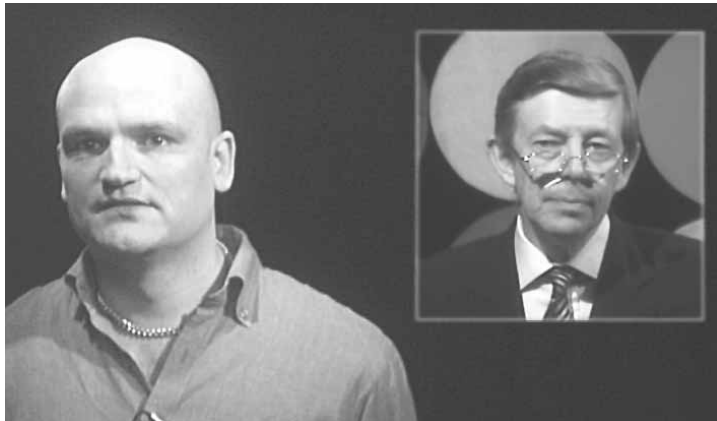
Angling.

NICKO

Correct – are you by any chance a bit of an angler yourself, Kevin?

KEVIN

No – I'm a boxer.



Laughter and applause.

CUT TO:

INT: LINDA'S LIVING ROOM – DAY

LINDA and EDDIE are watching KEVIN on playback on a huge plasma screen – LINDA's in a kind of trance. They're both smoking furiously.

The living room is full of fancy goods, statuary, and dolls. Dominating the centre of the room is a huge chandelier.

CUTAWAY: DOUBLE OR QUILTS:

NICKO

Which famous Beatles song featured a lethal tool?

KEVIN

Maxwell's Silver Hammer.

CUT BACK: LINDA'S LIVING ROOM

EDDIE nods approvingly to LINDA.

EDDIE

Yeah – he's good . . .

LINDA

He overcame himself . . . 'I'll double it, Nicko.'

She says this just ahead of:

CUTAWAY: DOUBLE OR QUILTS

KEVIN

I'll double it, Nicko.

CUT BACK: LINDA'S LIVING ROOM

LINDA

Turned himself into a winner.

EDDIE

I got myself into a bit of trouble.

LINDA

He broke the record – scooped a million.

