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'Scorpio':

Spy Chase at National Airport

By Tom Shales

That was no black priest. That was Burt Lancaster. What is Burt Lancaster doing disguised as a black priest? He is making a movie on location, and the location is Washington.

Lancaster, costar Alain Delon, and a 20-man British crew will be here for the next two weeks filming scenes for the film, a \$4-million spy thriller called "Scorpio."

About half the picture takes place in Washington, the rest in Vienna and Paris. Filming will continue in those cities once it has finished here.

Shooting began at Union Station Saturday and continues this week with a murder in Georgetown and a car chase through city streets. Other area locations will include exteriors at the White House and the Lincoln Memorial.

The clock is set at 5:12 but it is really 9 a.m. at National Airport, where director Michael Winner has already been filming for an hour and will film for three more—all for a brief scene that will probably last less than a minute on the screen.

Lancaster, in dark makeup, fake beard, and wig, is playing a veteran C.I.A. agent named Cross, disguised as a black priest so he can sneak out of town unbeknown to Alain Delon—who, as Laurier, has been assigned to kill him.

Winner, a puffy, curly headed authoritarian, is stalking through the bedlam at Gate 28 waving one of the 20 S3 cigars ("Hoyo De Montere;") he has smoked every day for the past 10 years and summoning 20 priests and 20 children into a hallway already packed with technicians and equipment.

"Can we have the priests?" he calls, not yet shouting. "Just fight your way through, gentlemen. We have this bit of machinery there but do your best." A few of the priests really are priests, some are seminarians from Catholic University, most are actors, and

one is a U.S. representative.

"I'm doing it just for the heck of it," laughs Rep. James C. Wright Jr. (D-Tex.). "It's kind of a new experience for me." Wright says that though he is a Protestant, he considers the role to be "type casting," and says a crewmember picked him as one of the real priests in the group.

What will he do with his \$25 fee for being an extra? "I plan on donating it to several of my favorite charities," he says. "The Wright children." He looks over to where the lights are shining. "Say! I think I'm supposed to be in there."

Ten special policemen are trying to keep the tourists away, but one woman gets through to Winner as he sits in his MICHAEL WINNER director's chair and an attendant hands him another cigar.

She asks what's going on. "Just doing a documentary film here for the airline," lies Winner genially. He gets up and arranges the children into the desired disorder, then bellows an enormous "Quiet!" that silences everybody in sight. He barks to a man near the camera and, calm established, calls for "Action." Lancaster says "Good-bye, my son" to an extra, pushes his way through to the gate, hands his ticket to customer service agent Bob Karb, who has been supplied by United Airlines, and walks toward the exit.

He will repeat the scene six more times, then five more in close-up. "That was all right, that was good," says Winner after the first take. "Now we've got to get to this position again," and he stands on an "X" made with red tape on the linoleum floor.

Travelers are let through when the shooting ceases. "We're gonna get us in a movie," laughs one Marine to another as they walk by. "I could never work for a boss like that," says a man carrying an Allegheny ticket who has been watching Winner. "He acts like he doesn't know what he's doing."

Winner is pacing, pacing. Thinking, thinking. An aide brings water and moves the chair according to instructions. Winner mops his brow. "Hot. A bit hot." Soon it is time for take 2, take 3, take 4. "Don't forget to do that pushing into Mr. Lancaster, the more the merrier," says Winner to the hired crowd. (Lancaster is always referred to as Mr. Lancaster.)

Most of the people watching wouldn't know it was Mr. Lancaster but for his personalized chair, which sits next to Winner's. During a break, a pudgy woman who works at the airport cafeteria breaks through to shake the actor's hand. "I'm not gonna wash that hand today," she bubbles later. And what did she think of that makeup job? "It's beautiful, isn't it?"

"Just one more please," calls Winner before take 5. "Last one—let's give it everything," he says before take 6. "One more please," he says before take 7.

When it's finally over, the kids (from Bowen School in Southeast) surround Winner's chair while Lancaster checks his hands to make sure they aren't peeling.

The kids ask Winner questions: "What's the name of this picture?" "Was Smokey Robinson here this morning?" "Are there going to be any riots in the movie?" "How do you bleed?" Winner explains, in answer to the last, that a small explosive charge makes it look like actors are spurting blood when they get shot in the movies. As he talks, a little girl, leaning over his chair, diddles with the viewfinder that hangs around his neck.

Larry Edwards, 13, has never been in a movie before, but he offers his autograph anyway. In fact, he insists. "I'm a professional, man!" he says, grabbing a pen. How much money will he make? "Twenty-five, man."

The crew members pack up the equipment at noon and stuff it into the Cinemobile, a huge traveling studio rented from Hollywood and parked outside. The crew is obviously British; they say "please" when they nudge you out of the way of a light or a cable or a camera. One even says "Excuse me, me darlin's," as he motions obstacles aside.

After lunch, the crew moves to Jim Finley's Gym, above Jim Finley's Garage, in Northeast. "Mr. Lancaster comes here to get somebody to do something," he half-explains apparently trying not to divulge too much plot. The film, he says, is the first "weighty" spy movie since "The Spy Who Came in from the Cold."

In the hot gym, a camera, dolly, lights and sound equipment are set up while boxers spar, jump rope, and punch bags. Into the heart of the ruckus walks Winner, clapping his hands for attention like a schoolteacher.

"Quiet please quiet," he says. "Now, do any of the athletic gentlemen hyab do tumbling or acrobatics?" A nearby boxer suddenly springs into strenuous sit-ups. "Fine, fine." That gets him into the picture.

Lancaster is merely tanned by now, out of his fake skin, beard, and Afro, asking Winner if the brim on his hat is too wide, and striding through a few takes in which he walks from the top of the staircase across the gym floor and out another door, while Leon Middleton, a local boxer slams into a punching bag. "Action, Leon!" calls Winner: Sweat is virtually pouring from the boxers and eventu-

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