50 MPH: EPISODE 20

"THEY DON'T MAKE 'EM LIKE THEY USED TO"
Transcript (00:37:43)

KRIS TAPLEY
This is *50 MPH*!

[INTRO MUSIC]

DENNIS HOPPER (as "Howard Payne")
Pop quiz, hotshot!

DENNIS HOPPER (as "Howard Payne")
There's a bomb on a bus.

JEFF DANIELS (as "Harry Temple")
You're deeply nuts, you know that?

DENNIS HOPPER (as "Howard Payne")
Once the bus goes fifty miles an hour, the bomb is armed.

SANDRA BULLOCK (as "Annie")
Stay on or get off?

DENNIS HOPPER (as "Howard Payne")
If it drops below fifty...

SANDRA BULLOCK (as "Annie")
Stay on or get off?!

DENNIS HOPPER (as "Howard Payne")
...it blows up.

ALAN RUCK (as "Stephens")
Oh, darn.

DENNIS HOPPER (as "Howard Payne")
What do you do?

KEANU REEVES (as "Jack Traven")
You have a hair trigger aimed at your head. What do you do?

DENNIS HOPPER (as "Howard Payne")
What do you do?!

KEANU REEVES (as "Jack Traven")
What do you do?

KRIS TAPLEY
I'm your host, Kris Tapley, and you're listening to an oral history of director Jan de Bont's 1994 summer blockbuster, *Speed*, straight from the people who made it happen. Now, don't forget to fasten your seatbelts. Let's hit the road!

KRIS TAPLEY
Gather around, everyone. We're moving right along here in the ultimate behind-the-scenes movie podcast, your own guided journey through the making of *Speed*. At this point we've pretty much met all of our cast. We have a few stragglers on that front, which we will get to next week as we really dig into the day-to-day of production. To start all of that off today, I thought I would craft a nice overview of the filmmaking talent involved in realizing this movie on screen. Before we dig in, however, I want to read for you an excerpt from something *Speed* production designer Jackson De Govia wrote in detailing his work on the movie. I've quoted from it before on here. This is from a special feature that first appeared on the five-star collection special edition DVD way back in 2002 and was recently ported over onto the 4K release of the film. It was an all-text feature, which is why I'm quoting. Again, this is production designer Jackson De Govia: "The exterior buses' paint scheme matched Santa Monica municipal buses of this model, a 1970s GMC, in all particulars with the exception of the '2525' numbers on front, rear, sides and roof. The numbers were done in a 1930s period serif font evocative of simpler times, which gave the bus character and warmth. This was especially important in many aerial shots, usually a dull angle, since the fat rounded typeface reinforced the homely charm of this rugged workhorse on the cusp of obsolescence." I dug that up because I've always been taken with that description of the bus in *Speed*, a "rugged workhorse on the cusp of obsolescence," because, frankly, I find that to be an apt description of the movie itself. As we've discussed before, Speed was made at the peak of a certain era in filmmaking history that would soon give way to the future. It's teeming with techniques that would either die out or evolve drastically as the '90s forged ahead, making it sort of a last-of-its-kind example of practical action filmmaking at its finest. Let's just say the words: They don't make 'em like they used to. Let me start with maybe my favorite quote from anyone I've interviewed for this project. This is first assistant camera Vern Nobles Jr. putting a pretty fine point on it.

VERN NOBLES JR.
Everything we did on that movie, we could not do today.

KRIS TAPLEY
Take it from him, because he's seen some shit. And it's even more interesting because the swagger that went into the making of Speed is an extension of the chaotic story it's telling. Here's Keanu Reeves and Sandra Bullock touching on that and why Jan de Bont was the man to lead the charge.

KEANU REEVES
Even from day one, even when, you know, Sandra and I were getting together in the beginning and when we got onto the bus and, you know, everyone was in costumes, there was a kind of, like, this is an incredible, crazy, fantastical story. But Jan de Bont had really kind of shepherded it and told everyone to play it for real, you know? To really take on board the circumstances. All of the performers, everyone, really – you know, we were in it together. We were on the bus together. Day in, day out, you're standing on the bus. You know, everyone has their moment. Everyone's reacting. Jan gave us so many things to react to. Like, there was a bus that would lean over. There was a day when we were crashing through cars. There was always something, really, that was happening to us and that we were sharing together.

SANDRA BULLOCK
You needed someone who could visually tell this story. It was all with the camera movement. It was all in this irreverent way that he figured out to have someone driving that bus. It felt very, very small. It was very small. And his storytelling through the camera is what sold the energy of the film. Had this have been locked-off shots, you never would have sold this film, but because of where he instinctively knew where to place the camera — and he would grab the camera away from the cinematographer and throw it on his own shoulder and put himself in peril just to get that, that sense of fear and urgency. And I don't know who else could have done that, but it was the perfect vehicle for him.

KRIS TAPLEY
And for good measure, here are actors Alan Ruck and Natsuko Ohama.

ALAN RUCK
On *Speed*, everybody on the crew – everybody, you know, as they say, "below the line," was busting their ass for Jan, because he was, you know, a world-class cinematographer, but now he had made it to the top of the heap. He was the director. And so, every department was just busting their hump to make things as good as they could for Jan, because it was like, "One of us had made it to the top."

NATSUKO OHAMA
They were adorable. I mean, masters of their work. When you make a film, the actors are really not the heart and soul of it. You see us, but it's all those guys down on their knees playing with little cars and bus – like toys. And then they're planning out shots, and then the stunt people, which were a major part of that film, I mean, they're solving problems like scientists.

KRIS TAPLEY

So, that's the focus of this episode. We're going to meet a whole bunch of production department heads today because I think they deserve their own space to talk more generally about all this stuff before we get deeper into the specifics of the shoot. We'll start with the first assistant director, David Sardi. We first heard from him in the locations episode a couple weeks back. A first AD oversees the entire set during production. This is the director's connection to each and every aspect of the crew. It's the central node of communication, and on a movie like Speed, well, you can imagine the first AD's hands would be incredibly full. So, let's hear from David Sardi, who has overseen the production of everything from Waterworld to Dante's Peak to Terminator Genisys, as well as notable second-unit work on Avengers: Infinity War and Endgame.

DAVID SARDI

We would never, ever make that movie that way now. It was kind of, like, the end of an era of really in-camera, practical, full-on reality filming. And this was his first directing project out of the box, and, you know, he had a lot of people that he trusted told him, "You're nuts to do this movie. This movie is almost impossible to pull off." I think, you know, people like, you know, John McTiernan told him, "Don't touch that movie with a hundred-foot pole. You know, you'll get creamed, because how are you going to pull that movie off?" And he didn't listen to any of them, and, you know, obviously, I'm glad that's not the case. For me, it was just balls-out, seat-of-the-pants, go-for-it filmmaking that, from the AD's perspective, was a hair-raising experience.

KRIS TAPLEY

Moving into the look of the film, here is director Jan de Bont.

JAN DE BONT

There's only one thing I wanted to see. I wanted to make it look real. And rough. I did not want anything that slows it down. I wanted the cameras mostly handheld, or if the cameras are too heavy, like on the bus, we have those little rigs on that were hanging on rubber cords that could carry most of the weight, but still has a feeling like it's that – I don't like shaky. It's not about shaky. It's just a presence.

KRIS TAPLEY

On that note, let's hear again from the cinematographer of Speed, Andrzej Bartkowiak. We also met him briefly in the locations episode. I love this guy. Andrzej shot everything from a string of Sidney Lumet classics including *Prince of the City* and *The Verdict* to James L. Brooks' *Terms of Endearment* to *Prizzi's Honor*, *Twins*, *Dante's Peak*, *Thirteen Days* – he's been around. He's also the director of movies like *Romeo Must Die*, *Exit Wounds* and *Cradle 2 the Grave*. Remember, Jan was a DP himself leading up to this movie, so this was going to be an important collaboration. Here's Andrzej.

ANDRZEJ BARTKOWIAK

He wanted to have constant movement. He didn't want anything static. He wanted the bus to be dominant, and, of course, the bus was the main character of the film, in a way. And, you know, that was very tricky, to be that realistic. Jan wanted it to be real, not a

visual effects movie, and that's what interested me, to do stuff for real. And, you know, we blew up things for real. You know, we had all these people on the bus with the driver driving from the 29th or 30th seat without hardly any vision except a little monitor on his lap, and, you know, at speeds. So, that's a lot of life in his hands. Plus, the light rig on the bus – you know, it was all lit. There was no natural lighting. So, the bus was loaded with equipment.

JAN DE BONT
I had seen some of his movies, and it's a lot of exterior work. Because it's really hard to do good exterior work, especially in difficult situations. I thought he would be able to handle that. The DP is also never in the bus, either. Nobody else. There's, like, two people. Just the sound mixer and me, that's it. And the script girl. They all were driving behind us in other cars and can see it on a monitor, but they can't really judge anything on the monitor. But he was a very good collaborator, and I think that's what I really needed, because things had to go quick, you know? And I didn't want to have an issue later, because I could always, if there were light issues, I could help him very easy.

DAVID SARDI
The whole movie was under 50 days. It was really shot fast. It was not extended. We were jammed. The budget Fox reported was $30 million, but I do remember, really well, that the last two weeks before we began principle, the studio pulled about a million bucks out of the budget. And pulling that kind of money out of that kind of a budget with the scope of that movie, it said to me, and I think it's true, I don't think the studio had a whole lot of faith in the movie, initially. I think they thought, "Oh, yeah, you know, it's just this action piece and, you know, we absolutely don't want to spend a dime on it more than we have to." And I don't think they had any clue what they were actually going to get. So, there was a lot of downward pressure on the budget going in. And that was an added layer of stress.

JAN DE BONT
Everything is always possible, and I think that, you know, when you have a small crew, you get solutions so much quicker than when you have a big crew. When you have a big crew, you have endless discussions, and I like to make quick decisions, because I know that the movie would only work if all the scenes were in the movie, as much as possible, and if you had endless discussions, then scenes could not be filmed. And I couldn't let that happen.

KRIS TAPLEY
We first heard from costume designer Ellen Mirojnick way back in the episode about casting Keanu Reeves. Remember, she was discussing how Jan wanted to create a new breed of action hero. Ellen has designed the costumes for films like *Fatal Attraction*, *Basic Instinct*, *Showgirls*, *The Ghost and the Darkness* and *The Greatest Showman*. She won an Emmy for Steven Soderbergh's *Behind the Candelabra*. Here she is again with her thoughts on crafting a wardrobe for the actors in *Speed*, which is an interesting case given that it all takes place basically in real time over the course of a few hours.

ELLEN MIROJNICK
You know, I have to say that those are the hardest movies to actually design, because you have to keep the audience's attention for those 90 minutes or longer. You make a choice, and once that choice is made, you've made a commitment to what the film is going to look like and how those characters will be portrayed, and that's it. There is no ifs, ands and buts about it. In the case of Keanu and Sandy, both those characters had layers to be able to change as the action went on, and that's very, very specifically designed for those purposes, but everybody else, one day, one change. And those one-change movies, they are very difficult to design. To this day I still think that. And, you know, Jan was a master of creating this. He knew exactly what he wanted to do, how he wanted to do it, and what was amazing about him, and I have never found this from another director to this day, in an action scenario, is that you would sit there and have a meeting and go through the action sequences and say, "Well, how many multiples do you think you need here? How many multiples there?" And he would tell you the amount that he thought he needed, and he was always right. He was always precise. And I think that was from his big overview of the experiences that he has had, you know, creating film and shooting film and being around many different types of films.

KRIS TAPLEY
We heard production designer Jackson De Govia's words at the top. Let's hear his voice now. In addition to *Speed*, Jack has led the art department on films like *Die Hard*, *Die Hard with a Vengeance*, *Volcano* and *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*.

JACKSON DE GOVIA
It was part of the *Die Hard* legacy. I mean, it was that kind of movie. You know the drop of the actor in *Die Hard*, at the end of the first *Die Hard*, the reason his face looks the way it does is because they just let him go. They dropped him on two, you know? "OK, we're going to drop you on three. One, two," bang! And you could see it on his face. And that was real. It was just real fear. You couldn't get it any other way, and there's a certain ruthlessness about it. You know, it's the highest level of art. And *Speed* has that legacy, because I know Jan is, like, a "will do anything to get the shot" kind of guy and it ends up, and years and years later you look at it and you can feel the clutch in your gut.

KRIS TAPLEY
Speaking of Jack, I want to keep him going here because there are a lot of little interesting design particulars that you might not immediately consider when watching Speed. I really encourage you to click through that special feature on the DVD and 4K because it's as thorough as you'd ever want something like that to be on a movie like this. It really opens your eyes to how detail-oriented and reality-based Jack was in his designs of things like even the bombs on display in the film and the dead-man's switches Howard Payne wields. Everything stems from function for him.

JACKSON DE GOVIA
If you've done what it would have to be to work that way, it's going to look real, you know? And if it doesn't look real, then, you're wrong. It is real. You know what I mean?

So, if you can do it, you do it. Doing things for effect is, like – is not good. The best thing is to try and figure out what it had to be in order to do what the script says it does. So, that's the best way to design, you know? It's like you're designing a car. You know, it's best to, you know, have four wheels. It works better that way. What you don't want to do as an art director or a designer for a movie is make something stick out, because it looks wrong. You're distracting the audience away from the action, from the story.

JAN DE BONT
The biggest department was the special effects department, with all the cars, the trucks. The biggest organization was how to get all the cars around the bus in the beginning, because you're driving on the freeway. There have to be cars there. You're not allowed to drive on a freeway, on a real freeway, with a film bus, so you have to create all the cars around you. To organize that, we had this guy, a precision drivers organization. We had them organize that, and they had all the drivers and they knew exactly how to cut in line, move over, so it looks like it's real traffic moving forward. And that was the hardest part, because that's a lot of work, to get those people there, to get the cars there, and different cars all the time, so you don't see the same red Volvo come five, 10 times or so.

KRIS TAPLEY
Jan is talking about a guy named Bill Young and I'd like to bring him in to describe his unsung contribution to movies like *Speed*. When you watch this movie, you have to keep in mind that every single car you see out on that freeway is part of the production. We're talking hundreds of vehicles, and those are not stunt drivers. They're precision drivers, as Jan said, and it's a market Bill totally cornered in his half-century in the business. Bill's cars have been seen in countless films including *Lethal Weapon*, *Rush Hour*, *Gone in 60 Seconds*, *The Italian Job* and *Ant-Man*. Here's Bill Young.

BILL YOUNG
I started my career right after I got back from Vietnam. I had two big-time writer-directors help me get into the business, and they put me on *Mission: Impossible*, the series, in 1969. And all I wanted to do is see the car chases with Carey Loftin, who was a big-time stunt coordinator, director. And then he got me involved with the cars on that show, and then when *CHiPS* came up, I was a friend with Erik Estrada. I got onto *CHiPS* and I had 100 cars a day, and what we did is we would surround the stunt people as they did the crashes. So, we'd have lead-ins and then lead-outs – tails and leads. Lead-ins are when you get, say, seven cars that are stunt people in a weave pattern and you put five precision drivers in front and five in the back. And then they will weave the chase car, maybe the police car chasing a car, will weave through my five cars that are in the back, and then get up to the stunt guys and start doing crashes. And then continue on to the front and weave out through the front of my cars. For instance, I would get, sometimes, 100 cars, and have to make sure that they're all gaffed in properly. And we would do the car chases on the 118 freeway with weave shots and I would have those 100 cars doing a million things, near-misses and that sort of thing. I got into the commercial end of it, where you really had to do precision, because they would have six or seven cars and you'd have to just do it absolutely precisely to open

up for the picture car, the main car. And then after *CHiPS*, Terry Leonard, big-time director, stunt coordinator, said, "Start a team." I said, "Fine." And I got a bunch of the drivers that I had on *CHiPS* and we went out and we started doing TV, motion pictures and commercials. And in those days, it was the '70s, '80s – everything was car chases. All the cowboy movies were gone and we just did everything, and everything was in Hollywood. Then it started to drift and they would take my driving team with maybe five or six or even 10 drivers to different states to do different movies. And we're still doing that. And I'm retired now. I just retired and they're still calling me for movies. But I left my driving to two assistants that I had, and they're using my name and still doing it. So, that's what precision driving is.

KRIS TAPLEY
While we're talking about Bill Young and all the cars out there on the freeway, I want to bring back transportation coordinator Randy Peters. We first met him two weeks ago in the episode about locations. Remember, blackbelt, badass, hung out with Chuck Norris and Steve McQueen. Anyway, one of Randy's previous production experiences would prove invaluable to solving the communication puzzle on a movie like *Speed*. After all, how can you get hundreds of cars on the same page when time is of the essence? Here's Randy sounding a lot like Quint speaking up in the back of that town meeting in *Jaws*.

RANDY PETERS
I did *Field of Dreams*, and that scene in the end of *Field of Dreams* where we get all the cars lined up, we were in a meeting with the film commissioner and everybody said, "How are you going to do this shot?" And everybody's like, "blah, blah, blah, blah." So, I was in the back of this meeting, I said, "Well, what you're going to do is you're going to have a picnic. You're going to have a picnic at the run, where the park is. You're going to get all these people and you're going to give away stuff. You're going to have a nice barbecue. You're going to get some free stuff. You're going to have raffles. You're going to have Kevin come down there and sign autographs. You're going to have a radio station that, when you go to a fair back in the Midwest or anywhere, you know, they'd broadcast from the fair." Back then it was AM, right? I said, "So, you're going to make a deal with the radio station. They're going to broadcast from that barbecue all day and get people, you know, worked up about coming down, and then you're going to go down and take the radio part down to the house and you're going to call action over the radio. And the only requirement these people have to have is that they have a radio." And they're all turning around, looking, like, "Who the fuck are you?" I said, "I'm the transportation coordinator, but whatever." So, anyway, getting back to Speed, that's what I told Ian. I said, "Look, I just did this." I said, "You ever go down to the airport? There's a sign that'll tell you to turn to this for traffic," thing. I said, "You'll be able to get a frequency." So, they got somebody to get a frequency and they got a radio guy and then they work the same thing. Everybody had their radios on and they were just going up and down the freeway, so you didn't have, you know, 200 radios out. That came from me. They'll say it's their idea, but they all know whose idea it was, I'll tell you that. They always put the transpo guy down on the bottom, man, when it's over. You know,

they do more work while they're making a movie than, you know – it can go so sideways if you've got a lousy transportation department, you know?

KRIS TAPLEY
I've got more from Randy to come down the line, but moving along for now, you know, Jan doesn't have a screenplay credit on *Speed*, but he was certainly responsible for some of its most memorable story beats. As he kept adding to the script in the summer of 1993 leading up to production, the budget inevitably ballooned from $15 million to, officially, $28 million.

JAN DE BONT
Quite a few of the action scenes I came up with for the bus, which were actually – I think they made it more interesting. I felt there had to be more real scenes, like going through a curve where there are a lot of parked cars and you know you cannot fucking make that turn, because you're going to hit every God damn car. Things that you would not write as a screenwriter, but you have to think about how the effect will be and how it will relate to the people in the bus being part of that. The intensity level has to be, you know, increasing as the movie goes along. You have to be careful that it isn't from the same type of action.

KRIS TAPLEY
Back to first AD David Sardi.

DAVID SARDI
Mostly you would plan on, you know, a gag is a gag, right? So, you would set it up and plan it and prep it and rehearse it and then perform it. But the thing about *Speed* was it was two miles of multiple stunts at a time. It was stringing together several moves that you can only rehearse so much and then you just sort of have to let it happen. So, obviously, I put complete faith in, you know, our stunt coordinator, Gary Hymes, who is still, to this day, a master of the craft. You know, his entire team, John Frazier and his entire team, they had people's lives in their hands every day, all day long, and they were flawless in that.

KRIS TAPLEY
Alright, let's bring in the two guys David just name-checked. We'll start with special effects coordinator John Frazier, who is an absolute legend. He's been nominated for an Academy Award 11 times for movies like *Twister*, *Armageddon*, Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, *Transformers* and *The Lone Ranger*. He won for *Spider-Man 2*. *Speed* is a movie 100% dependent on someone with John's expertise. And I should note for the layman, special effects and visual effects are two different things. Visual effects are what most people think they are, manipulations of imagery or wholly manifested imagery. When people say "CGI," they're talking about visual effects. Special effects are something else entirely. They are real-time, mechanical effects — gags, as David just called them – that are achieved on-set and captured in-camera. Anytime you hear about a blah, blah, blah machine, it's a special effect. You know, wind machines, rain machines. But on *Speed*, John Frazier's

ingenuity would really be tested as he and his team had to build and outfit all the buses we'll soon learn about for their various purposes. So, let's hear a little bit from John.

JOHN FRAZIER
When I worked with Jan, he was a cameraman. He hadn't made the big jump to director yet. And we had just done *Basic Instinct,* and on *Basic Instinct,* we made a lot of camera rigs for him for different shots. And he told Ian Bryce, he said, "You have to get John Frazier and his team." He said, "This whole movie is about, you know, camera tricks and camera rigs, and that's the guy that can build them for me." I was in Texas doing *A Perfect World* with Clint Eastwood and I got the call on the same day to do *Speed* or *True Lies*. But I knew in the back of my mind that Tommy Fisher always does Jim Cameron's movies and this wasn't going to be an exception. He may not have been available, like, on that day, but he was going to make himself available and I thought, you know, I'm not going to get caught in that trap. And I wanted to work with Jan anyways. I liked Jan. So, I decided to do *Speed*. My first read on the script is not – I don't read the words. I just look for things. Like a movie like *Twister* – like, OK, wind, rain, this, you know? And with *Speed* it's just, like, every page, you'd earmark the page because there was something on there for you. You'd turn the page and then it says, "The bus does this," and it was, like, "Boy, this is going to be a ride."

KRIS TAPLEY
The other guy David mentioned was stunt coordinator Gary Hymes. There again, talk about an element crucial to a movie like *Speed*. I wish I could list off the number of Oscar nominations Gary has received, but to date, the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences still has not established an award for stunt work. But Gary got his start as a stunt man on TV shows like *Fantasy Island*, *The A-Team* and *Airwolf*, and movies like *Scanners*, *Scarface* and *To Live and Die in L.A.* He went on to coordinate the stunts on productions like *The Untouchables*, *The Blob*, *Jurassic Park*, *Broken Arrow* and *Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle*. Here's Gary Hymes.

GARY HYMES
Unless people really have studied stunts or understand the evolution of it, really understand just how it was, so many times, a life-or-death situation, whereas now – believe me, it still, you know, is, but at least now you can embellish things with, you know, CG, and there's just technology. Things have changed. But it's also, we've very much upped the ante as well. Things just keep getting bigger and bigger and bigger. I'm sure there's probably some balance there, but I still think the guys like Hal Needham and Ronnie Rondell and Jim Arnett and the guys who got me started in the business, they were the true pioneers. But to see what they did, how it got a little better for us, and how over the years, like I said, in the last 44 years, just the difference is pretty astounding. So, I was kind of under contract with Spielberg. Essentially, I had to clear anything I took with Steven, because I was kind of overseeing all the films that Amblin did at that time, as far as the action goes. And I guess it was Ian Bryce, I believe, was the first one to contact me. And then I had a meeting with Steven and I said, you know, "Do I have your blessings? I'll be gone for, you know, seven, eight months, whatever it is." And we talked about it and he said, "Sure." Which actually ended up, in a very

roundabout way, leading to Jan doing *Twister*. Because Steven called me when Jan was up to do *Twister* and he goes, "Oh, you know, you probably know him better than anybody. You know, you've worked with him. You know, give me the whole inside story."

KRIS TAPLEY

So, this crew of department heads and their various workforces would be the ones tasked with physically bringing what was on the page to the screen. We're going to be hearing so much more detail about their exploits in the coming episodes that I just sort of thought we should get all of these introductions out of the way now and set the course for the vision behind this movie. And, again, it's clearly a vision that would not be duplicated today for a number of reasons: safety, affordability, time, ease of workflow. I think that is, in part, why we haven't seen a new Jan de Bont movie in the last 20 years. They don't make 'em like they used to, but more to the point, they don't make 'em the way he wants to make them.

JAN DE BONT

They don't make them anymore. They are so in love with visual effects now, and I can understand it. It makes moviemaking really easy, I mean, a lot simpler, that's for sure. So, basically, all the responsibility is moved from the set towards the visual effects studios, you know? And they have to make it look real. They have to put all that effort in there to make it as real as possible. But there's a problem with the creating of a digital effect and actually a camera effect, filming the same scene. If you would ask them to make a point of view from inside a car forward, visual effect-wise, or if you would do it in a real car looking forward, exactly the same position, there is no comparison between the two. Even if it's exactly the same image. It is – always will be flat. The perspective is always, no matter that it is digitally matched up perfectly so that the perspective should be correct. But the problem is our eyes don't work – that's only if you don't move at all. Our eyes move constantly left and right. So, the perspective, you never have that. They can never copy that. And our interpretation of depth on the real-life effort, and, like, on the jump or anything that's in this movie, is so different than seeing that same effect duplicated, reproduced with visual effects. It would be dead.

KRIS TAPLEY

Here's actor David Kriegel on this point.

DAVID KRIEGEL

Technically speaking, they don't make movies like that anymore, and they had these grips and gaffers who were creating these magnificent rigs to take advantage of the environment, and that's what they did. They captured what was really there, which is a super – oddly enough – unique thing. I think a lot of times filmmakers, particularly now, have too many toys at their disposal, so they create a reality that didn't really exist. Jan went to great lengths to capture the reality that he believed would have inhabited this world.

KRIS TAPLEY
Actor Richard Lineback had something to say on this so let's throw him in here, too. Richard plays Joe Morton's partner, Norwood, in the film. You might also remember him as Helen Hunt's dad in Twister, who gets sucked up into a tornado in the film's opening sequence.

RICHARD LINEBACK
Almost every scene was a special-effects scene, and the special effects were the stunt drivers and the driving and the camera and the camera angles. And, I mean, to the extent where things were actually done – maybe they weren't done at 50 miles an hour, but they were done at 20 miles an hour. Pavement's still hard. You don't want to mess up doing that stuff.

KRIS TAPLEY
And while I'm adding new voices to the fray this week, here's Alexander Witt. Alexander was the second unit director of *Speed*.

ALEXANDER WITT
When you see The Fast and Furious, there's so much CG going on that sometimes it's over the top. That's something that we tried not to do on *Speed*, and also, I try not to do on the Bond films that I've done. Because the audience is getting so sophisticated with the computers that they know when it's not real and when it's real.

KRIS TAPLEY
And there's something to be said for how budgetary and technological limitations really breed creativity and even frugality. Here's stunt coordinator Gary Hymes.

GARY HYMES
What I walked away from having done everything from, you know, $100 million films down to, you know, whatever, $10 million films, to me it was, like, with the money we were given, I think it was probably spent the most wisely. Every cent, more or less, was put on the screen, where you can't say that in other films. I think that kind of, in a way, set a precedent that, you know, you spend the money wisely. And there was so little waste on *Speed*. I look at films – oh my God, a buddy of mine, I got him started in the business. He's the stunt coordinator on *Black Panther* right now and he calls me every other week and he's telling me these stories. It's like, when someone gives you $300 million to make a movie, it gives you too many options and there's such waste these days, it's incredible.

KRIS TAPLEY
And finally, let's hear from one of Gary's guys, Brian Smrz. I think Brian has an interesting perspective on this because he was Keanu Reeves's stunt double on *Speed*. Yes, despite the line about Keanu doing his own stunts on the film, there are occasions where there is a stunt double on screen for him, and it's usually Brian. This was the movie that leveled Brian up a bit as Gary made him his assistant coordinator on the production. He went on to have a hell of a career coordinating stunts himself on films

like *Get Shorty*, *Men in Black*, *Mission: Impossible II* and *Live Free or Die Hard*, while also directing the second unit on films like *Knight and Day*, *Iron Man 3* and multiple *X-Men* films. Here's Brian Smrz.

BRIAN SMRZ
I can't stand the fake stuff. I cannot stand it. Like, the whole business has gone in this direction that everything's on a soundstage, and I am one of those people who believe people can tell. And I've been saying that for 15 years. It drives me crazy where the business has gone, and I think right now there's finally a coming-back where that's why *Extraction* and *John Wick* and *Mission: Impossible*, people are liking it because they go, "Oh, there actually is a difference." So, I am 100% against the way things have been done and would be done on a lot of movies. All the Marvel movies. Just a lot of movies, they try to do everything on the stage, and I just don't think it looks good. And on every movie, I've got to fight to convince people. Because it's also easy. It's easy to say, "Oh, let's just do it later." You just kick the can down the road and they can just march through production, and maybe it's cheaper. I don't think so, but whatever. I just think it's a laziness, almost, or just not understanding. I have a tough time with it. But it's almost every. It's almost every movie is designed and built that way.

KRIS TAPLEY
Some strong feelings! And that's OK. I don't think anyone, as I've said, is here to dump on the skill and artistry of today's visual effects artists. But there's a tangible impact to practical filmmaking and that was the stated goal, and the beating heart, of *Speed*. So, now that we've met all these folks and we've got our cast, we've got our crew, we've got our vision laid out – let's make this fuckin' movie!

[OUTRO MUSIC]

KRIS TAPLEY
Next week on *50 MPH*...

KRIS TAPLEY
Cameras finally roll on *Speed*!

JAN DE BONT
The bus is a character in the movie, and I made a big effort to make it a character. And that's the reason why I wanted so many buses.

GIL COMBS
I don't think I had ever been involved in something that had so many different places for the driver to be.

DAN SASAKI
I believe six lenses had to get scrapped, which was unheard of.

KRIS TAPLEY
We bring in tons of crew voices to recount a wild and crazy production, from hair-raising stunts...

BRIAN SMRZ
If he would get, like, a foot closer, I'd go, "Oh, no, that's easy. You can go a little further." And then he would go, like, a foot away, I'm, like, "No, no, no, I can't do that!"

KRIS TAPLEY
…to spine-tingling near-misses...

JOHN FRAZIER
She blew the security and jumped on the blow-up bus. And it was, like, "Abort! Abort! Abort!" She was 15 feet from being toast.

KRIS TAPLEY
And in the midst of all of this, inevitably, tempers flare.

GIL COMBS
I went straight to base camp, signed out, and I told the second AD, I said, "You tell Gary Hymes I just quit."

KRIS TAPLEY
All of that and more next week right here on *50 MPH*!

KRIS TAPLEY

Thanks so much for listening. *50 MPH* is written, produced and edited by yours truly, Kris Tapley. You can find us on Twitter @50MPHPod. I'm @kristapley. That's Kris with a K. You can also catch every episode and more at our website 50MPHpodcast.com. If you dug the show, please like and subscribe and do all the things. We'll see you next time.