

CHARLES THE TV STAR (Article and photos by Robert Wort)

On a warm Wednesday 25th November 2009, 'Charles', my 1982 Silver Spur ANC 04359) was used in the comedy series called Lowdown which went to air on ABC in April of this year. Apart from being paid reasonably well for essentially doing nothing other than to bring my car there, it was quite an interesting experience to see how all these behind the scenes tricks are done. It was a long day which started at 3.30pm and finished at 2.30am. There was an awful lot of down time in between so I should have brought a book along.

The first scene required me to drive the Spur along Yarra Blvd in South Yarra at 3.30pm with my high beams on. The purpose was that cameras will be filtered to make it look like night-time as this is the time the scene is supposed to take place. We then went to the main area called 'The Unit' at the Melbourne Grammar Football ground in Port Melbourne.



Setting Charles up on the low loader trailer



Putting the camera rigging in place



Actor, Steve Bisley chats with the camera crew



Setting off for the streets of Port Melbourne

This was where Charles was secured to a low-loader trailer where all the running cameras were fitted.

The actors then sat in the car while it was being towed to give the illusion that the car was being driven. In-car camera shots would not be possible without using this method. They towed the trailer around the streets of Port Melbourne very late at night with two police cars escorting so that no other cars on the road could overtake them and spoil the scene (It would be somewhat annoying being stuck behind the trailer as they are only allowed to travel at 20 kph). Each time they did this (Twice in total); we went to the canteen and tucked into the food which was provided at restaurant quality by the caterers. Apparently this is the norm as it comes under some Actors Equity ruling. When they returned after the second run, they did the same thing with an Audi for another scene.

This was aired in episode 5 of the series recently and the plot went something along the lines of a high profile politician (Played by Steve Bisley) was caught drink driving on his way home from a function and the 'hero' of the series is a highly ambitious news reporter who will stop at nothing to get a good story.

In the final scene when the car was off the trailer, they asked me if I minded if Mr. Bisley could drive it for a short distance himself where he would be pulled up by the police (He drove for approximately 100 meters on the sealed surface of the football ground and not on a public road). All were very pleasant and great care was taken to ensure no damage was done to Charles.

For all the hours of hard work by the crew, my Spur was only used for the first one and a half minutes of the opening scene – That's show business I suppose.