

SOLAR CITY
Director's Treatment



I wonder, if people knew the real cost of coal energy, would that make the switch to solar easier? Because it turns out, we really shouldn't measure our electric bills by kilowatt hours, or dollars. But in the degradation of the environment coal production causes. And the toll on human life it inflicts.

And that's what your campaign shows us – in the most unblinking, unapologetic way: the real cost of using fossil fuels. And yes, it – the truth, this project, what Solar City wants to illustrate - is the hardest of truths. Because we've either ignored it, or were ignorant about it. Either way, let's use these spots in the way you intended them – as stark, sobering declarations about the impact of our choice to stay reliant on coal-generated energy.

For me, the most effective and truly compelling way to present these is through a docu-style approach. These films have to be personal, intimate, felt, raw and unforgiving in their realism. They have to be so authentic they're visceral. Because the message isn't some thinly veiled product play. It's very simply, a plea to the audience. An invitation to change an industry and an industrial practice that's nothing short of inhumane. And unnecessary.

And the only way to galvanize people's attention is strip away any artifice or technique between these films and the viewer. And in the most direct, immediate way – show the truth. The faces we see will be honest – etched in grime, suffering and the claustrophobia of a hard life with no way out. Locations will plunge us into a world so bizarrely different than our comfortable lives as to be alien: the pitch black of a mine shaft, clouded in choking coal dust. Massive, loud, dirty machines destroying the earth's interior at a rate of tons per minute. Huge refineries – billowing toxic emissions into a blue sky.

These spots will be beautiful in a frank, bold, unrelenting way. They will be honest narratives that take the hard lives of nameless men and their conditions and present them as essays. Essays that question what we perceive and have been told, is 'normal'. My hope is that each of these films will help the viewer understand that what they're seeing - is anything but.

Tone

The content of these films is arresting. And unsettling because of the very real implications they point to. Given that, I would like each spot to be keenly honest and straightforward. I'm not looking to beat the viewer over the head with frightening images. But visually, I'm not going to pull any punches. It is, what it is. And the coal business is literally – deadly. That's the emotional signature I want these spots to have – the startling truth that coal production is measured in human life and radical environmental damage. And I want these films to stop people – make them sit up and pay attention and then, to make a better choice. Like Solar.

Locations

We have to see these locations (both above and below ground) for what they are – dark, frightening, claustrophobic, dangerous, violent and industrially impersonal. And we can't art direct that – we need to find the actual places: real mines and refineries. So let's research all over the world until we source real, working locations we can shoot. So much of the impact we want to make will be a result of these backdrops – whether it's a dark, choking coal mine or an industrial refinery spewing pollutants. The power of these places will come from the reality we show – these are ugly, threatening workplaces that maximize production. And minimize human health and safety. Even worse, these are the places that generate the power we just used to run our dishwasher. So let's never lose that narrative thread – and visually present the plain, eye opening truth of how terrible these places are to help bring the viewer to a powerful conclusion: our energy comes at a cost we can't imagine

The Workers

Generations of men have gone underground not because they want to, but because they have to. To feed their families, because there's no other job, because they lack opportunities many of us take for granted. So we're presenting these workers in an unflattering light – but not because they're the villain. They're victims. We want to remind the audience of a harsh, undeniable fact - these people have to endure unthinkable conditions. So we can watch TV, go on the Internet, make our child feel safe with the flick of a light switch.

So we have to find men who live this life. Because it's ugly to see, and we need to pull back the curtain and see that pain, sacrifice and endured hardship in their faces. I want the audience to connect with these men as real people. We need to see their hardship and their humanity – otherwise, we won't be moved by how human, real, touchable and familiar to us they are.

I see some of our shots in Mine functioning almost like living stills – captured, powerful portraiture moments of a miner, face smeared in coal dust, eye whites dulled by dust, staring into camera – lit solely by his headlamp, the rest of the mine around him a dark, frightening void. And if we can capture both that suffering and that humanity these frames, the audience will be with the miners, not against them. We'll be seeing what they see, experience what they do, we'll immerse the audience – in a first person way – into the nightmare these men live. As their day to day job.

The Look

The photography has to capture the grim reality of these places, the lives of these men and the dangerous work they do. There is something just very simply, awful about what we are seeing in these films. And the photography has to present that straight up, no chaser. In Mine I really want to work with tight shots that heighten the cramped conditions and claustrophobic reality of these men basically trapped underground for entire shifts at a time. The lighting should be kept to an absolute minimum to amplify that sense of being miles underground, cut off from the

world above. I'd like to explore using the narrow beams of headlamps as light sources. We'll see the beams cut swatches of light through that pitch black – revealing workers in an almost accidental way. As if the light stabbing around in the dark suddenly men operating a massive continuous digger clawing through the guts of a mountain. I see colors here largely monochromatic reflecting the colorless, grim subterranean world they exist in: grey, black, slate, everything always dirty and grimy, coating every inch of machine and worker. For the other spot, I'm very drawn to Refinery. We would start outside - from a distance almost like you're coming across that Mad Max encampment in the middle of nowhere. It could be foreboding, beautiful and disturbing.

And a great juxtaposition to Mine which is deep in the bowels of the earth. In Refinery, we start the study from the outside, then progressively begin to work our way into the belly of the beast so to speak – as we discover all the pipes and machinery. Again, it's an almost alien world of industrial, mechanical indifference. There's smoke choking the sunny sky above, and a mix of macro shots – like the huge, sprawling interior of a factor, with micro shots – a complex networks of pipes, greasy and dirty. And as we delve into the Refinery, the viewer become enmeshed and almost visually trapped inside this refinery. That sensation of being trapped inside this indifferent complex of industrialism becomes a metaphor for the workers as well – both above and below, ground.

Sound Design

Sound is crucial – it will become a sub textual element. Not just sound, but an amplification of the visuals. And in a way, lend a dangerous, almost anthropomorphic life to the machines and buildings, giving them a menacing presence in these films: massive diggers destroying mountains from the inside, men shouting to each other over the din, trucks braking, work sirens shrilling. The cumulative effect of the sound design should be almost violent and disorienting.

MINE

Dusk – the last rays of sun slowly melt into a darkening sky. We're outside, next to a towering mountain. Two men in dirty, coal-caked reflective suits slowly walk towards a tunnel in the side of this huge monolith.

From a new angle, we see them – unsmiling. They feel already exhausted. A last tired shaft of retreating sunlight falls over one man's face – and disappears into the deep, etched lines of a life lived hard. And underground.

Just inside the tunnel, they climb into a rail car – the driver turns, nods – a solemn, tacit acknowledgment – and the car slowly moves forward. Swallowed by the tunnel.

We cut to the reverse angle – watch the rail car coming towards us, the tunnel entrance growing smaller as it recedes behind them.

We cut to the POV of the miner's – their headlamp lights fixed straight ahead – the tunnel's black feels infinite, one of them looks up, we see what he does: the tunnel roof, cut low for the rail car is suffocatingly close. And wet, glimmering.

The miner looks straight ahead, again – he's our POV. The low rail car's dim lights cut tiny holes into the pitch black. Even with their headlamps on, cutting through the blackness, its impossible to get your bearings. The rail car makes a turn, and for a second – we're lost it in the pitch black.

SFX: We hear only the sounds of the cart on the tracks and the ominous cracking of the rock.

We cut to an elevator – the two men climb inside the steel cage, secure the door. It slowly lowers. The men disappear from sight – taking the only light – their headlamps – with them. We cut to their POV, looking out from inside this small, metal coffin. Which continues its slow, deliberate trip downwards. They're looking straight ahead – at a wall of rock, gleaming, reflecting back their headlamp beam. It's a vertical coffin of sheer rock, a foot from their faces.

We hear sounds – muffled, but growing louder: clanking, whooshing, roaring. One of the miner's looks down – through the open grate of the elevator's floor we see a faint light somewhere below him.

For a moment, his light flickers. Then goes out.

Black frame.

The CLANKING WHOOSHING ROARING are very loud now. And much closer.

Cut to the men – as the elevator arrives deep inside the mountain somewhere. We see them pull back the steel door – then cut to their POV.

A strange world. Their headlamps shoot tight, narrow cones of light into an alien landscape. The rock floor is wet and shines like a reflective pool as they step out of the elevator. Twenty feet away a multi-ton continuous digger mauls through sheer rock with its giant, toothed rotor.

From the sides and top of the rotor, rock and debris are spit out, disgorged by this industrial destroyer. And everywhere – a fine, choking dust fills the air. Shiny motes float through the air, coating clothing, machines, lungs.

We cut back to the men. One of the slowly, almost warily pulls on his gloves. The other waits, doesn't move for a long second. We hold on his face. He's someone's father, or brother. Maybe a husband. He blinks – dust motes swirling around his nose, his eyes, trying to find a way in.

He gives a small, almost defeated nod. Coughs. Turns on his headlamp. We cut back to his POV. As a new wall of dust gets spit out by the digger. The wall moves towards him, us. Begins to cover the camera lens.

We're looking through a kaleidoscoped lens of glass and dust. Now, more dust. We're slowing losing our view. We hear the digger, grinding, pulverizing. More dust – the lens is covered. Everything goes BLACK.

We're blind.

The ROAR and GROAN of the digger gouging the inside of the mountain is deafening.

Over this black, roaring void the super comes up:

SUPER: We trust this.

WE CUT TO A BEAUTIFUL SUNRISE OVER THE MOUNTAIN.

The first rosy shafts of morning light bathe a mountainside as the sun rises over it. It's quiet, pristine. We hear a dawn chorus of birds in the distance.

SUPER: And fear this? SUPER: SolarCity. Power Forever.

REFINERY

It's dusk – last seconds of daylight fading into night. We're flying through a puffy white / grey bank of clouds. We see little patches of blue sky to our left, right. We punch out of the clouds – and see a refinery up ahead. A massive, sprawling complex of buildings and dozens of smoke columns. Every column spews continuous emissions.

We realize we weren't flying through a cloudbank - but a wall of toxic emissions. SFX: We hear the ominous buzz of a working refinery.

Camera swoops down – squeezes through and past towering smoke stacks. Now, we hear it. The refinery. It's loud, cacophonous. The sounds are blended, indistinct – it's machinery CLANKING, compressors WHOOSHING. We weave through and around the exterior of the Refinery – see long, continuous conveyor's shuttling coal containers along an endless track. We hear the cars RATTLING along the track.

The Refinery's exterior lights come on – reflecting off the grid work and spare metal architecture of the buildings. It's every bit as Alien and disturbing as the Close Encounters landing area: harsh lights pump artificial illumination into the sky.

We cut inside to a control room – and see endless rows of gas pipes networking through the huge facility. Men in white coveralls and hard hats work giant control boards of metered read outs and level indicators.

We cut to – and move laterally – across a wall of endless gauges. We're moving faster now, but the refinery's interior feels endless, we can't escape. It's an unending, grey industrial warehouse of production.

The camera – we – exit through a window and like a jet fighter bank straight up. We're parallel to a massive smoke stack, flying, rising hundreds of feet.

Until finally – we stop – mid air, and watch a violent, orange ball of flame burning atop the stack.

SUPER: We trust this.

The camera pulls back – pans over – and holds on the sun, glowing brilliantly as it begins its slow rise over the horizon. The sound drops away – it's quiet, peaceful.

SUPER: And fear this? SUPER: SolarCity. Power Forever.

Summary

It's exciting – and sobering – to be involved in this conversation with you. There's urgency and

necessity to this campaign, and I feel both with penetrating intimacy. For me, there's simply the truth of this message – there is a human and environmental cost to coal energy. There isn't, with solar. And these two films, will help people make the right decision – by going forward with Solar City. I would be honored to help you launch this project.