

MADDISON  
YOUNG

#TVFUTURES

# LOCATION ASSISTANT

If there is one consistent message being given to students these days it is 'move out of your comfort zone, and get real industry work and experience'!

It's a scary message, and my first year saw me take mostly internal and 'safe' experiences within the realms of the university. I was determined to change this approach as a second year student.

The thought of meeting actual industry employers from beyond the city of Portsmouth makes me a little anxious. I panic and ask myself, 'what will they expect me to know and do?' and, when push comes to shove, will I actually know how to do whatever it is they require? Well, I'm pleased to say that since the Summer of 2018 I've changed how I feel, and it was all because of an opportunity that came my way.

I managed to make contact with a location assistant from Shepperton Studios, who was looking for a location marshal. A location marshal for a new major film. A location marshal for central London. A location marshal position which, once the initial (starstruck) reaction faded, scared me to death!

From the minute I received a confirmation email from said location assistant, I knew this was reality. I was asked to meet the locations team at St Paul's Cathedral. Me being me, I arrived 2 hours early so resorted in the comfort of a McDonalds meal and free wifi. Free wifi, to check up on the details of the evening's events, but mostly to contact my mum in my nervous state!

On the first of my two days in London, I met my fellow marshals at 'the truck' (what I learnt was the hub for all location materials and our beautiful high-vis vests!) To my surprise, there were only five others. My over thinking on the commute convinced me I would be a tiny fish in a huge pond of marshals... I was wrong.

Between the six of us, we were set a huge range of responsibilities to prep for the next day, when the team were shooting. Admittedly, I have never been so physically tested. We were carrying heavy matting and safety equipment back and forth from the truck to St Paul's Cathedral. Trust me, the walk was far. Alongside this heavy lifting, we had to organise the 'crowd holding' area, where the other cast members are held. Having called them 'extras' in the first ten minutes of my shift, I swiftly learnt they prefer the term 'supporting artists', oops!

Despite my role being explicitly a 'location' marshal, I was naive to the fact a production company can truly hire out one of the biggest tourist attractions in London. This was a huge feat, in both setting up the barriers to 'lock off' the location and managing to work around the general public (especially on a Friday night whilst people are sporting their dancing shoes!)

Once the preparation had finished, leaving me mentally and physically exhausted, I prepared myself for the following day of work! The following day was in fact one of the craziest days of my life. My role included stopping angry members of the public entering the set, speaking to some incredibly talented people, and making a, now, very good friend. I assisted in the movement of the director and producers seats on the set; Very cool!

The number of marshals on this day was significantly higher which put me at ease knowing there were some other newbies among us. However, I was a proud, but temporary owner, of a radio pack over some of the others which made my responsibility a little more important! It was as if I had to, to those without a walkie-talkie, 'tell them what to do'. 'How exciting', I thought, before realising how much location lingo I was yet to learn! Remind me never to mistake a '10-1' for a '10-2' again...

Beside the toilet breaks, the shoot itself included stunt vehicles, famous faces and a large team of like-minded, successful creatives; I could not have asked for a greater experience! What was I anxious for? Simply spending two days working for a real company opened my eyes to how every cog in the engine of making a film counts, and I was one of them!

Maybe my nerves were heightened as I was doing work on a film rather than in a snug television studio like our one at university. Even so, these apprehensions have lessened immensely as I write this article, on my way home from another shift as a location marshal! Seeing more emails from the location assistants, and being able to work on the same production must mean I am doing something okay? I can't wait to one day sit in my local cinema to watch the film I was actually a part of, even if it was just a small part. ■