

LIGHTS... CAMERA... COD!

Hollywood actor and top angler Julian Lewis Jones takes us behind the scenes on his new Arctic Adventure

FISHING and filming – two activities that add up the dream job! For the past 10 years I have been trying to pursue that dream, and a few weeks ago I took another big step in making it a reality.

I have not count of how many 'pitches' I have submitted to TV networks over that time, and the number of rejection letters, usually polite, I have had in return.

But I have kept going and I feel stronger than ever about what I am trying to achieve as both a presenter and a fisherman.

There have been some great successes. I was lucky enough to film three fishing scenes for the Wales TV Network S4C during the last five years, including the most recent, Talbot Lewis Jones in Australia – an

epic adventure with my pal Rhys Iwanlyn where we caught truly spectacular fish.

These programmes were very well received, and I'm extremely proud of them, but my goal was always to reach out to a far larger English language audience.

A few months ago I took the plunge and decided that the best way forward was to do it myself – producing, directing and presenting my own 'pilot' fishing programme. So work began to create an entertaining fishing series for all viewers, not just anglers.

Recently, I was very fortunate to have been guest on the recent hit show The Big Fish Off on ITV, with Ali Harnali and Dean Macey competing with Kirk Macosco and me over in Catalonia.

I have nothing but admiration for what Ali



My good friend Mary was a huge asset to the show.

and Dean have achieved. They have made fishing entertainment, and long may it continue if we as programme makers can appeal to the masses, those that can only be a good thing for the sport we all love, and ensure that fishing becomes a regular feature on network TV.

I truly believe that we have a golden opportunity to get more fishing on television. The networks have thoughtfully realised its potential, and the viewing figures those fishing shows command.

In order to film my pilot I had, of course, to decide on a suitable venue, and being that I had to get something on the air by the end of April I decided on a place which had the wow factor and one which was within reach of a lot of UK anglers... Northern Norway.

Norway has become a very popular destination, thanks to what can only be described as 'out-of-this-world' fishing where sea fish of epic proportions, particularly cod, are caught.

I chose to return to a place I know – they

always tell you to stick to what you know in my business – so I decided on Narfjord in the Lofoten Islands, a stunning area in Northern Norway, and well within the Arctic circle. Thermals were going to be a major issue.

ASSEMBLING THE TEAM

Fishing and filming isn't something you can do on your own, and picking the right team of people to accompany me on this Arctic adventure was crucial. This isn't a place for shy types who don't like the cold.

To fish alongside me I invited legendary fish skipper Mary Gavin Hughes.

Mary and I have been friends for many years, and I knew she would be a great asset to the show.

The plan was that Mary and I would have a 'friendly' cod competition as part of the filming, but knowing Mary's fierce competitive nature, it was not going to be that friendly!

I also needed a caterer as I could cope with the Arctic weather so I asked my friend Stuart Kristians, a man who has towed the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, and knows his way around the seas. The only drawback with Stu is that he gets seasick!

To complete the team I asked my good friend Mark Lewis to come along to take stills, work as camera assistant and drive the camera boat.

Mark worked for Sarah Marina, to replace on Andrew Alesh's boat White Waves, and is a damn fine photographer.

JOURNEY TO THE ARCTIC

So, after three flights starting from Heathrow we arrived in Lofoten airport and were met by our boat for the week, Geir's Skutten, who drove us to the picturesque fishing village of Narfjord.

Narfjord has a very rich tradition of



JULIAN'S BIO

Julian Lewis Jones has appeared in several Hollywood films including the Oscar-nominated 'Tom Hanks Story', 'Oli's Eastwood's 'Twister' where he played Nelson Mandela's bodyguard alongside Matt Damon, and cult horror adventure film 'The Eagle'. He has TV work in radio-casting, and he's currently appearing in Sky's hit comedy 'Snobs'.



Epic fish in epic scenery: Geir 'Doctor Hook' Skutten plays a huge fish as the camera rolls.



Sitting aboard on the job! Geir and I with our spoils.

fishing, particularly for the Skud cod which arrive here in their masses in early spring after migrating from the Barents Sea to Norway.

The following morning we were told at breakfast that it was too rough to go out on the small boats, but that the 'Big Boat' was able to go out the short distance to the fishing grounds.

This is what makes Narfjord such a fantastic base for experiencing this fish-rich coastline: if the wind picks up and you are unable to take out the fantastic aluminium boats they provide, they have the Elbow, a soft ex-commercial vessel available to anglers.

That morning we set off out to two miles to the fishing grounds where ice-cold, open sea awaits.

BIG COD CLOSE UP

I have to admit the fishing wasn't quite what I expected – it was instant! Within just a few minutes of putting down the hulk the reels were hooped over and the first cod of the day were on their way to the boat.

To begin with it was traditional pits and speed jig that proved successful, but by the day were on the lanes that were by far the



Close-up 'hulk'! The biggest cod of the trip fell to our guide Geir.



Big fish offered better weather and a switch to the smaller boat.

most successful in picking out the biggest cod with the Big Bob Shads.

In between the heater both Mary and I caught fish in the high twenties of pounds and the whole team were coping well with the squall that came on very every 20 minutes, with Stu firing out every move and Mark busy with the stills camera.

Being the master he is, Stu would film a fish capture, already went over the side, they'd be back on the case to film me doing a piece to camera.

We'd caught more than enough fish for the cameras, but we'd need the best for last. Our host Geir – who is affectionately known as Doctor Hook due to his many years working as a hook designer for Hermal – latched into something

we knew was a bit special.

Fighting to stay on his feet in the middle of a wild Norwegian squall, he buried the fish every inch of the way to the side and Mary and I dropped to watch the action as it came aboard.

It was clearly the biggest fish of the morning. However, it was the fish that had the last laugh as Geir ended up on his backside, pinned to the deck with 40lb of freezing cold cod on his chest!

We'd shot some fabulous footage, and as we headed back to port we were still laughing at Geir's 'cod-cuddling' antics.

STORM BEFORE THE CALM

The weather changes dramatically in the Lofoten Islands, and the following morning the sea was flat calm and we were treated to clear blue skies to enjoy our magnificent surroundings.

As a producer, this dramatic change in the

weather was perfect for what I was trying to achieve. Contrasting conditions made the pilot more interesting and gave me more options when editing the film.

This time we took the small aluminium boats out and the fishing was as prolific as on the first day.

We caught plenty of good cod averaging 20lb, and Stu was able to film on board the camera boat.

We fished the day after as well, purely for pleasure this time, although Stu had to intervene. He needed to get back to London a day earlier than the rest of us, as he was working on 'Spectre', the new James Bond movie.

I'd made the pilot, and we'd caught some fantastic fish in beautiful surroundings with a fantastic group of people.

Flying back from Norway I was a happy producer. I'd learnt a hell of a lot and the work would start on editing our Norwegian adventure ready to show those good fish on the TV networks – the fishing dream continues.

Norway cod fishing really has the 'wow' factor for TV!



How that's a proper fish! The perfect end to the filming.

Angling Times
Media House
Lunch Wood

Julian would like to thank SeaAngler Fishing, RedMax, Tenix UK, and RedWave for their help during the fishing adventure. For the full story and tactics from Julian's challenge with Mary Gavin Hughes coming soon to SeaAngler magazine, a short film from the trip will be on Light Lines on May 26.

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LUNCH WOOD