

## Love and other catastrophes (26 April 1997)

By Caron JamesTV WeekApril 26, 1997

Blue Heelers fans will breathe a sign of relief when they finally see Maggie Doyle and PJ Hasham get together this week. Senior-Constable Maggie Doyle (Lisa McCune) and Senior-Detective Hasham (Martin Sacks) have been attracted to each other for years, but apart from the odd kiss have managed to avoid becoming involved until now.

In a steamy scene at the end of this week's episode, the two enjoy passionate embraces, during which Maggie removes her top and is left to the audience to imagine the logical outcome.

But as usual in Blue Heelers, nothing is straight-forward when it comes to romance.

The scene takes place in an old mine, where Maggie and PJ have been trapped for the night after an explosion. The episode ends with the love scene, and it will not be clear until next week whether the two will be rescued.

"When I first read the script and the episode ended with a life-threatening situation, I got that uneasy feeling any regular actor in a show would get," Martin says.

"I thought, 'Ok, let's have a look at this', but I was pleased to see Maggie and PJ getting somewhere in their relationship at last. We'd gotten to the point where it was like, 'What's going on?' This episode takes their relationship a step further," Lisa agrees, "Something needed to happen," she says.

"It took a life-or-death situation to force Maggie and PJ to face up to their feelings."

Martin says he considers PJ hopeless emotionally.

"PJ has told Maggie he loves her, but that was when she was in a coma. Sounds like a man doesn't it?" Martin says.

"For all his bravado and the fact that he's good at his job, he's just hopeless in terms of being honest and straight-down-the-line about how he feels. He's gutless. Just shocking"

Martin says that in real life, he's not like PJ.

"I think I might be a little more direct, particularly if it's someone I care about," he says.

"The job always gets in the way for Maggie and PJ. But that's the easy way out - blame the job, rather than your personal misgivings."

Lisa and Martin have got to know each other well since they met when Blue Heelers started in 1994. Although they are close, there is no hint of real-life romance between them, and they say their off-screen relationship is more like being brother and sister.

So filming a love scene together wasn't romantic - especially since the scenes were filmed in a real mine.

"We didn't discuss the love scene together beforehand," Lisa says, "We just wanted to go in and do it, boots and all, so it didn't look rehearsed.

"Because it was shot in a real mine, it was a tiring episode to make, it was a very small space to work in and we were covered in dust.

"It was really uncomfortable, I can't believe how much dirt I swallowed."

Martin adds: "We seemed to be in there (the mine) for weeks. And when you're inhaling all that dust, you have to have a lie-down at the end of the day. Lisa said to me during the filming, 'If I inhale any more dust, I won't be working tonight',"

At the time the episode was filmed, Lisa was performing in the successful Melbourne Theatre Company musical A Little Night Music.

She admits that working on Blue Heelers during the day and performing every night in A Little Night Music was exhausting.

"But it was good, because I've seen how far I can take it," Lisa says.

"Another week and I would have to have stopped anyway, because I simply couldn't cope with the hours any more.

"I think I'll be just concentrating on Blue Heelers for a while now."