

NEWS

Baldwin shooting haunts widow of TV cameraman

A woman whose husband died on a film set and who now campaigns for better safety had warned of more tragedies

Jean West

The widow of a cameraman who died during a stunt on the set of a BBC TV series has told how she had warned the industry of further "inevitable" tragedies years before the fatal shooting in America by Alec Baldwin.

Andra Levinson Milsome, who lives in Scotland, said "haunting images" returned after she heard that the actor had accidentally shot dead the Ukrainian cinematographer Halyna Hutchins, 42, with a prop gun loaded with live ammunition on the set in New Mexico of *Rust*, a low-budget independent film.

The photography gallery owner said both "accidents" were preventable and is demanding accountability and an overhaul of health and safety on movie sets alongside tougher legislation for negligence, especially in Britain. She also wants stronger union support and for producers to tackle long working days.

Levinson Milsome, whose husband, Mark, had an illustrious career on films including *Quantum of Solace*, and TV series such as *Downton Abbey* and *Game of Thrones*, was widowed in 2017 when a Land Rover that was meant to mount a ramp and topple over struck him on the set in Ghana of *Black Earth Rising*, a TV series starring Michaela Coel and John Goodman. He was 54.

Levinson Milsome and her then 11-year-old daughter, Alice, received the news in Britain the next day. "The *Rust* incident brings it all back – another tragic, inexcusable and avoidable tragedy," she said. "Accidents are a result of unsafe acts and negligence and more focus and clarity is needed to make those responsible pay for their actions. We should never see these circumstances repeated. I certainly know how Matt

Hutchins [the *Rust* victim's widow] feels. My heart goes out to him and their young son."

Levinson Milsome has established the Mark Milsome Foundation to support young talent and campaign for safety. It is supported by leading actors and actresses including Robert De Niro and Dame Judi Dench.

Hutchins was the latest in a long line of cast and crew killed or injured on set. Camera crews were regularly positioned near speeding cars, trains or bullets, Deadline.com reported.

In the UK film world, the actor Roy Kinnear died aged 54 after being thrown from a horse while filming *The Return of the Musketeers* in Spain in 1988. David Holmes, Daniel Radcliffe's Harry Potter stunt double, was paralysed on set while rehearsing a flying scene in 2009. In 2019 Joe Watts, a stuntman then aged 32, was taken to intensive care after falling from a balcony on the set of *Fast & Furious 9*.

"Accountability now has to be key," Levinson Milsome said. "The fact that my beloved is now a statistic is infuriating, horrific and heartbreaking."

Unacceptably long hours, penny-pinching, inadequate medical support on

sets and employment of inexperienced staff had to stop, she said. The foundation has now filmed its own health and safety course for productions. It surveyed crews last year, finding that 62 per cent of participants felt health and safety regulations needed improving and 83 per cent blamed working hours and sleep deprivation for poor standards.

Levinson Milsome wants safety briefings recorded on mobile phones, and said producers must take more care with the credentials of those they employ. She also stressed the importance of swift access to hospitals and experienced medics.

In August last year Rory Kinnear, Roy's son, attacked the industry for its "don't-say-no culture" to dangerous stunts. His father was not offered a stunt double before his fatal fall. The 43-year-old actor is now a patron of the Mark Milsome Foundation. He has spoken of how the stuntman's death painfully reinforced how slow the industry had been to prioritise the safety of its workforce, with people "still saying yes to doing scenes when they should be saying no".

Levinson Milsome has had difficulties proving criminal liability and getting compensation for the post-traumatic stress disorder she and her daughter endured. "It was like pulling teeth with the Foreign Office and Ghanaian police who just insisted it was a road-traffic accident," she said. She was disappointed at the inquest verdict of accidental death. The ruling said: "Shortly before the execution of the stunt, the risk of Mr Milsome being harmed or fatally injured was not effectively recognised, assessed, communicated or managed."

She says that she was denied a future prevention of death report. "The parallels are there," she said, making comparisons with the *Rust* shooting. "This has to stop."



Mark Milsome was hit by a stunt car



PETER SUMMERS/GETTY IMAGES

Hundreds of homes were evacuated in Hawick as the River Teviot rose dramatically. Heavy rain is forecast for most of today

As Hawick dries out, ministers are urged to speed up flood protection

John Boothman

Ministers are being urged to speed up work on flood protection schemes in the south of Scotland after a week of heavy rain.

Last week two bridges were washed away and homes were flooded in Dumfries and Galloway, and the River Annan was at a 50-year high.

John Lamont, the Conservative MP for Berwickshire, Roxburgh & Selkirk, wants the Scottish government to push ahead with flood protection and provide immediate help to get

the area back on its feet. He said: "These weather events are becoming more frequent and the sooner work can start on schemes like one in Newcastleton, and work already underway can be completed in Hawick, the safer it will be."

His call was echoed by the Labour MSP Colin Smyth. He said: "This happens time and time again in the same places. It is shocking. Businesses need short-term support particularly after just getting back on their feet after 18 months of the pandemic. Government funding for the

flood protection scheme in Dumfries also needs to be agreed and work started as quickly as possible."

The Scottish government said it was investing an extra £150 million in flood risk management over five years, on top of £42 million annually to local authorities. It said: "The government takes the issue of flood risk very seriously and efforts to tackle it are becoming ever more crucial as climate change is increasing the frequency and severity of flooding across Scotland."

The rain led to a rescue

operation in Whitesands, Dumfries. In Hawick a major incident was declared and hundreds of homes were evacuated as the River Teviot flooded. There was severe travel disruption across the area and the railway line between Carlisle and Dumfries was closed while safety checks were carried out on the Annan viaduct.

Police said it was the worst flooding in the region for years. Another alert for heavy rain has been issued for most of today.

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