



In [Part One](#) of this story, director Christian Alvart noted the advantages of having veteran actors like Renée Zellweger and Ian McShane toplining CASE 39 (opening this Friday, October 1 from Paramount Vantage). But serving as the true catalyst for the film’s story, in which a social worker rescues a young girl from an apparently abusive home and discovers that she’s not as innocent as she seemed, is Jodelle Ferland as the child in question.

Alvart is quick to point out the benefits of hiring such an accomplished—albeit young—actress, whose many prior credits also include *THEY*, Terry Gilliam’s *TIDELAND* and, for TV, the *CARRIE* remake, *KINGDOM HOSPITAL* and the Dean Koontz movie *SOLE SURVIVOR*. “Jodelle is not a ‘child actress,’ ” he says of Ferland, who subsequently took roles in *THE MESSENGERS*, *THE TWILIGHT SAGA: ECLIPSE*, Uwe Boll’s *SEED* and *BLOODRAYNE 2* and the upcoming *THE CABIN IN THE WOODS*. “With 30 movies and TV shows on her résumé, all the work was done by other directors. I talk to her the same way I talk to Renée or any other actor—absolutely no difference. She’s so far ahead in her mind, she’s like a grownup.”

Alvart makes it clear that his predominant motivation on CASE 39 is to keep the film grounded in reality. “It’s a story that stays plausible enough that it never goes ridiculous. The approach is to make it as real as possible.” And the Paramount brass, by all accounts, are pleased with the footage they’ve seen. “They’ve pretty much left us alone,” Alvart says. “Pressure can only come when the production starts to get into trouble. So far, it has been very easygoing. I had one visit, and sometimes I get an e-mail that says, ‘Nice dailies,’ but that’s about it.”



With our interview completed, Fango follows the director to the set (actually part of a mostly shuttered hospital near Vancouver) for the shooting of a scene between the two female leads. An elementary schoolroom has been constructed, and is populated by several child extras. As Alvar steps away to attend to one of the myriad directorial decisions he must make, Zellweger pokes her head into the room to say hello. Her expression brightens as she learns FANGORIA has come to visit. “It’s been a long time,” says the actress, who hasn’t spoken to the mag since she had her first starring role in TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE: THE NEXT GENERATION over a decade ago, and a genuine smile spreads across the porcelain skin of her face. When she speaks, her words come out in an excited cascade of language.

“This film is not just grotesque and base,” she says. “It’s intelligent, and it walks a fine line between reality and the supernatural. So you can’t really tell whether one of the characters is experiencing something that might be outside of the norm, or if it’s just him or her experiencing something psychological. I loved that, because everyone has experienced something like that at some time. Then, when we met with Christian and saw his film [ANTIBODIES], I thought, ‘Yeah, OK. That guy right there, he’s not just a director, he’s a *filmmaker*.’ He has a very specific style and vision and creative abilities that you don’t see so finely tuned in a fledgling director. He’s just brilliant. I said, ‘I want to be in *his* movie.’ I wanted to be in the movie *he* is going to make.

“I trust him with pretty much anything,” Zellweger continues. “When we first met, I said, ‘Here’s the deal... I’m going to show up and you tell me what to do, because I’m not sure. All I know is that I trust you.’ So often, you get on sets with directors who don’t know what they want. They say, ‘So, what are we gonna do? What do you think?’ And I say, ‘Well, it could be this or it could be that’ or ‘I thought I could deliver the line this way’ or ‘Does the story go this direction or that direction?’ And they say, ‘Well, I don’t know...’ That *never* happens here. A lot of times I’ll say, ‘You be me, because I want to see the place that’s in your mind. I need to know how you visualize it, because how you see it will be right. Show me how fast and I’ll put in a little of whatever in between—fill in the spaces.

“It’s a different way of making films, where the camera angles and the style are literally their own character in the film, and you have to get out of the way of that because they’re storytellers in themselves. It’s cool. I like it a *lot!* I’m learning so much. It’s cool to come to work every day, sit back behind the monitor and watch it all play out. Everything Christian’s shooting makes you feel just a little uncomfortable, which is another thing I like about this film. It’s so smart. It’s going

## Exclusive: On Set With “CASE 39,” Part Two

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to be hard to go back to the old-fashioned way filmmaking. Yeah, the trial and error... It just doesn't happen on this set.”

Abruptly, Zellweger is called back for the next take, and Fango is escorted to another room, where we wait to meet CASE 39's youngest star. But when Ferland enters, one can't help but be struck by how young she is. Small of frame and fresh of face, she seems so much more youthful than her aforementioned filmography would imply. Never too far away is her obviously proud and protective mother.

The discussion starts off with the question of what it's like to act opposite an accomplished and respected actress of Zellweger's caliber. “She's *really* nice. It's great working with her,” Ferland says. “I liked Renee's BRIDGET JONES movies a lot, which is really why I'm happy I get to work with her.”

Auditioning for the role of the first apparently helpless then sinister Lilith proved to be a protracted process. “I had, like, six auditions for this part,” Ferland says. “I basically went in for the reading, and then I kept coming back more and more. I mean, I went in for one audition and the next one was with Christian. Then there was one with Renée and then another one with her until I finally got it.”

“There were also a couple more director's sessions,” her mother interjects.

Given Ferland's age—at the time of this interview, she's 11 years old—it has to be asked if her genre-centric choices of film roles have ever been a concern to her parents. “Well, she dissects the script,” Ferland's mom says, “so she knows the project inside and out and she studies the characters, so it's never anything foreign to her or unfriendly.”

And what about Ferland herself—does working on these types of scary movies ever bother her? “No,” she says with a mischievous grin. “I mean, I saw SILENT HILL *three* times.”

All too soon, Ferland is whisked back to the set for another scene. Next, Fango is led outside, where we're introduced to Dustin Brooks and Colin Decker, pyrotechnicians who have kindly

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agreed to demonstrate a bit of new technology they've developed which is being utilized in an upcoming setpiece. They explain how they've created a substance called Cool Gel which enables stuntmen to do full-body burns with no protective clothing. To illustrate, Decker dips his arm into a bucket of what looks like half-formed Jello. A flammable liquid is then dribbled across his forearm, and a lighter is placed near his wrist. Decker's entire arm ignites, flames fully a foot and a half high erupting across his bare skin. After a minute or two, the flame is extinguished—with no harm inflicted. The overall effect is staggering.

The duo are called away, and it's suddenly apparent that the entire afternoon has slipped away. As they say, time flies... A publicist approaches and leads this writer away from the ghostly Eastlawn Building. And as the sun begins to dip beneath the horizon, one wonders what the long-ago residents of the facility would have thought of the magic and madness being created within the walls and hallways where they once lived.

One can only imagine...

{comments on}