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Wednesday, 13 June 2012 07:19

For a movie about the fallibility of memory, Paul Verhoeven's 1990 hyper-violent Martian sci-fi trip TOTAL RECALL was overflowing with unforgettable moments: The tri-boobed prostitute; Robotic Jonnycab's inexplicably murderous response to being stiffed out of a fare; Deformed chest foetus Kuato (parodied recently on a SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE skit with Andy Samberg portraying the mutated rebel leader); The nostril evacuation of Quaid's (Arnold Schwarzenegger) glowing tracking device; and everything sculpted at the bygone height of animatronic artistry by the great Rob Bottin (THE THING) and his team. Remember all that? Great, now forget it.

Director Len Wiseman's upcoming RECALL retake is going for a more somber, sober approach to the tale of a man in search of his identity. This includes a jettison of the original's Mars setting, the film now taking place on a politically divided earth. "It does ground it a bit more than taking off to a different planet. I find it a bit more relatable," says Wiseman. "We don't have any creatures because we don't go to Mars, but that's one of the reasons I wanted to build the synthetics [androids]. I still wanted to make sure there were elements in this world that we haven't seen before." Aware that purists may be upset with the plot adjustments, Wiseman says, "The [RECALL] script came to me, out of the blue, and I was just taken by the direction that it went in. Of course, there's going to be a side that says, 'Why even do it, if it's going to be that much different?' The other group says, 'If there's nothing new, nothing original, why bother?' With all of that out there, I just very selfishly make the movie for myself, and hopefully other people like it."

Wiseman goes on to say that this directive influenced his casting choices as well. Don't expect new Quaid (Colin Farrell) to unleash some hilariously frenzied gargling while strapped in the Rekall chair, or fling any dismissive quips after dispatching a bad guy: "Colin was first choice for me, because I was trying to bring across a certain tone. The film with Arnold (Schwarzenegger) had its own type and tone, and I really was not looking to do a better

photographed version of that, or simply update the visual effects." Farrell concurs, admitting that "No one does one-liners like Arnie. I grew up on COMMANDO, and PREDATOR still stands up as a brilliant, brilliant film." Farrell's performance will make more of an emphasis on the dramatic implications of the story. He says, "I certainly have approached every single thing I've ever done, regardless of how seemingly superficial it is or how light of an affair, with the same level of seriousness and played it with the same level of respect. So, with this in mind, for me this is the story of a man who is going from unconscious to conscious. A man who's going from being lost in the quagmire of his own irrelevant existence, or what he feels is irrelevance, to something of more sustenance. It's basically that time-old thing that we all search for, which is meaning in our lives, wherever that comes in. [Quaid's] whole world comes crumbling around him in a really violent and really aggressive way, and the whole thing is him on a journey, not back to who he was, but back to who he is."

Co-star Bryan Cranston is also taking an alternative tack than predecessor Ronny Cox's did with his sneering portrayal of villainous dictator Cohaagen. Cranston, coming straight from the latest season of AMC's BREAKING BAD, knew he had to start by adjusting his look for RECALL. "My hair (in the film) is wavy and blond. I asked for that," he says. "I said think of John Edwards as a template. I have a craggy, kind of aggressive face when I'm not emoting. I look like a Shar-Pei; I have so many lines on my face, there's still some intensity there. I wanted to be clean shaven and have some waviness to my hair soften my look so you wouldn't go, 'Uh-oh, here comes the bad guy', and so when [Cohaagen] was attempting to be fatherly, you might have a momentary sense of sympathy for him. There's a lot of video shot of when I'm talking to 'my people', and I didn't want it to be menacing or fearful. I wanted the people to look and go, 'I believe him. We're doing the right thing by following what he says. He's going to see us through the hard times.'"

Something that won't be changing, says Wiseman, is TOTAL RECALL's mandate to deliver some skull-busting action, although he's also keen to insist that the story basis from author Philip K. Dick has been kept very much at the forefront. "There's a ton of action," he says, "but action is completely dead if there's no driving emotion or mystery behind it. What I love about

this project the most—I love a mystery anyway—but when the mystery is about the character himself. I'm always drawn to that, like THE FUGITIVE, or BOURNE or BLADE RUNNER. Going through the action, there are puzzle pieces within; as Quaid is trying to find out the ultimate mystery, which is, 'Who am I?' That's a big part of it, because otherwise it's just a bunch of explosions and expensive effects." Wiseman also won the battle against having RECALL released in 3-D. "I'm not against 3-D. It just didn't work with what kind of film I was trying to make. Because TOTAL RECALL is already a very fantastic science-fiction world, by putting 3-D on top of that, it makes it almost overtly futuristic. It makes a world that we don't recognise even more disconnected. I wanted to feel a bit more old school and gritty in my approach."

Some of RECALL's extensive action takes place in zero-gravity, meaning a slate of tedious and uncomfortable wirework for the actors. Jessica Biel, who plays freedom fighter Melina, explains. "It's actually so physically painful that there's nothing to do but laugh. You just get completely giddy and it gets to a point where you feel like your eyeballs are about to pop out. We've done our best to laugh through it." (Farrell's own pragmatic risk assessment of wirework: "It's really ungraceful. Things happening to your body, you're afraid if you laugh too hard you may fucking fart; me in front of her or her in front of me." At this, Biel nods and says, "There've been some close calls.") Biel goes on to say that she had much more fun working on her fight scene with co-star Kate Beckinsale, who plays the juicy role of Lori, originated by Sharon Stone. She found the scene interesting "because [Kate and I] never fight with women. You're always fighting a monster or thug or something. You never fight a beautiful, sinewy long haired woman. I think it'll look really cool and aggressive. The only issue that we had during the fight was that Kate's hair kept getting stuck in my jacket!"

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