While Robert E. Howard's Conan novels have fascinated millions of readers, not all his fans are aware that the legendary author also created, in 1928, another dark hero: Solomon Kane. A 16th-century Puritan, Kane is a somber man who wanders the Earth with no apparent goal other than to battle evil in all its forms, and he makes his big-screen debut in a film currently on VOD and hitting theaters this Friday, September 28.

Produced by Samuel Hadida, a veteran of the RESIDENT EVIL and SILENT HILL films, among many others, and Paul Berrow, the screen adaptation of Howard's Kane adventures (mostly published in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales*) was entrusted to the talented hands of British filmmaker Michael J. Bassett. Having previously helmed WILDERNESS and the much-praised WWI ghost story DEATHWATCH, Bassett (who subsequently landed the job directing the October release SILENT HILL: REVELATION for Hadida) courageously decided to take an iconic character with a small, but dedicated fan base and create a fresh origin story for him. Without pandering to fans or alienating them completely, Bassett has managed to take a fun, dark hero and make him accessible to a larger audience.

FANGORIA: Why did you choose to bring this character to the screen?

MICHAEL J. BASSETT: Solomon Kane is probably not as famous as Conan, but for those who know him, he is an icon. I love his stories, and I wanted to introduce him to a wider

audience. In order to do that, I wrote a completely new backstory about his origins that isn't in any of [Howard's] tales, but I did my best to preserve his integrity. I thought I could make a good action movie, as I grew up with them and enjoy action movies with theme and power and heart. I think James Cameron is the best action director around.

FANG: How did James Purefoy win the role of Kane?

BASSETT: We have known each other for a long time, and we've always wanted to do something together. Unfortunately, he wasn't at the top of the list; we had other names in mind and we were thinking about big stars, and James knew that. But when he came in to read for us, he was just so perfect, and it was foolish of me not to think about him before. When he auditioned for the part, he was so passionate about it that he immediately convinced all of us. He came with his 12-year-old son, who read the script and said to him, "Daddy, if you don't do this, I'm going to kill you!"

James has a masculine presence; he's not a kid, he feels like he's lived a life. I didn't see all that straightaway, but now I believe he's one of the best things about the movie. His performance is deep as well as being physical, and he's perfect as the hero. We also wanted an actor who was willing to continue to play Solomon Kane, as we intend to film more adventures, and James was very happy about that.

FANG: Solomon Kane's appearance in the movie is reminiscent of Hugh Jackman in VAN HELSING; was this intentional?

BASSETT: No; Kane's look, with the hat and the cape, is the one created for him by Robert E. Howard, and that came before Van Helsing or any other character. So when we decided to make a movie about Solomon Kane, he had to have that. We couldn't say, "Van Helsing also has that look!"; he was the one who copied it. Kane came first, we had the right to use that look, and our choice was to be very faithful to the aesthetics of the character. VAN HELSING, to me, is a comic-book film, a children's movie, while SOLOMON KANE is more adult, sophisticated and intelligent. His hat gives him a Puritan look, and Kane is very Puritan; I wasn't going to take it off him just because I was worried about a movie that was made seven or eight years ago! Solomon is a honest character, and that's the most important thing.

FANG: What responses have you had from audiences so far?

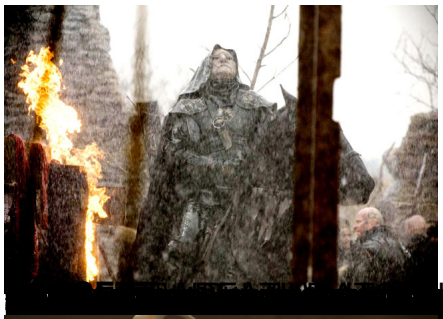
BASSETT: You never know what the reaction is going to be. Some people are going to love the movie, some people are going to hate it, and you have to take both to improve yourself as a director. I screened the picture in Toronto and in Austin, Texas, and everybody liked it. Even hardcore fans, because I've communicated with them on the forums; I'm a movie fan myself and like to talk to fans. I love Howard's writings, and since I was a kid I wanted to see the adventures of Solomon Kane in a movie, and he has always been on my mind since I began my filmmaking career; I just had to wait for everything to fall into place. And I've said all along: I don't want to do anything that spoils the well for Solomon Kane for later movies. I decided not to adapt the stories Howard wrote, because I wanted to do his origin tale and then more movies, and at the end of this film, he is the Solomon Kane of the books.

The things that happen to him in my script are part invention, part suppositions based on what Howard wrote and part just me making stuff up. It was done with absolute respect for Solomon Kane and his creator, though as a filmmaker, I wanted to put in my own sensibilities as well. Luckily, I think we have very similar sensibilities: the grimness of the world, the seriousness of the fantasy and the intensity of the action. It feels like a very good marriage.

FANG: How was it to move from small productions like DEATHWATCH and WILDERNESS to a bigger-budget picture like SOLOMON KANE!

BASSETT: I loved it, because this is what I've always wanted to do. Of course, compared to DEATHWATCH, on SOLOMON KANE I had to think about many different things at the same time, like having three cameras filming simultaneously on one scene, or 100 people on the set, but it all went very well.

FANG: SOLOMON KANE was shot in Czechoslovakia, as was DEATHWATCH, and in both films it's always raining and the sets are covered with mud. Do you particularly like rain?



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