

Deep Blue Sea

In the classic horror movies of the past, part of the fun arises from the "who's going-to-get-it-next?" effect. When it came time for veteran action director Renny Harlin and his producers to cast their taut horror film, "Deep Blue Sea," they knew that the time-honored tradition of "big name star equals hero" was a concept to be played with.

Harlin offers, "We wanted to cast actors who were solid actors but not necessarily movie stars, as in the first 'Alien' movie, where nobody could have expected that Sigourney Weaver was going to survive. We really wanted to twist the story and put the audience in the position where they have no idea who is who, or what's going to happen to these people."

Harlin knew, though, that he wanted to use the star of his film, "The Long Kiss Goodnight," Samuel Jackson. And Jackson was eager to join the story of a group of scientists and offshore laboratory workers being menaced by the genetically enhanced sharks they themselves created.

Jackson comments, "I looked forward to doing this picture, and it's something different for me. I grew up watching monster movies. Even though this has a different kind of monster, it has all of the elements of films like 'Frankenstein,' 'The Wolfman' and of course 'Jaws.' But 'Deep Blue Sea' takes a lot of the conventions from previous films and turns them into something new. Inside it is a great monster movie plus a big chase movie, and I like being chased by things."

Jackson also adds, "You know, we're the smartest thing on the planet theoretically, but when we get in the ocean, we're out of our element, other things become a lot brighter and stronger and faster and more adept at dealing than we are. So we are put in a position of having to out-think the sharks, and that's one of the appealing elements of this film."

Harlin was as good as his word when it came time to fill the other roles, including the laboratory's resident (and unintentionally heroic) chef, Preacher; the director looked to the world of urban music for his actor.

As he had with millions of his fans, LL Cool J had connected with Harlin on a

musical level at first. Then the director saw a couple of his films and cast him as Sherman "Preacher" Dudley, whom Cool J describes as "a cook who is a man of God, kind of like Robert Duvall's 'The Apostle' meets Chef Boyardee- then he has to run from underwater aliens. It's great. They should put on the movie posters 'Come on in... Keep your clothes on... Go home soaking.'"

The actor sees "Deep Blue Sea" as a personal "opportunity to grow. I've achieved a lot in music, but it's time for a change, time to grow."

Samuel L. Jackson received Academy Award and Golden Globe Award nominations as Best Supporting Actor for his performance in Quentin Tarantino's "Pulp Fiction," as well as Best Supporting Actor Award from the British Academy of Film and Television Arts. Earlier in his career, Jackson made movie history with his portrayal of a crack addict in Spike Lee's "Jungle Fever," when he was awarded the only Best Supporting Performance Award ever given by the Cannes Film Festival. He also won the New York Film Critics Award for Best Supporting Actor for that performance.

More recently, Jackson appeared in "Star Wars: Episode I- The Phantom Menace" and starred in "The Negotiator," the award-winning "Eve's Bayou" (which he also produced), the Quentin Tarantino-directed "Jackie Brown" and Barry Levinson's "Sphere."

LL Cool J/James Todd Smith first came to national attention as a hip-hop sensation in 1985 and has since sold more than 20 million albums. The artist has made the successful transition to acting, most recently including a starring role in "Halloween H20" (opposite Jamie Lee Curtis). Cool

J recently guest-starred on the critically acclaimed HBO series "Oz." Additionally, the two-time Grammy Award-winner had a long-running starring role in the hit NBC/UPN comedy series "In the House." His upcoming projects include Oliver Stone's "Any Given Sunday" (opposite Al Pacino, Cameron Diaz and Dennis Quaid) and the Miramax film "In Too Deep,"

opposite Omar Epps.

His other feature credits include "Toys," "The Hard Way" and "Krush Groove." Cool J recently authored this best-selling autobiography "I Make My Own Rules"; he is also the recipient of MTV's 1997 Video Vanguard Award and is at the center of two international advertising campaigns - for Coca-Cola and Gap.

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