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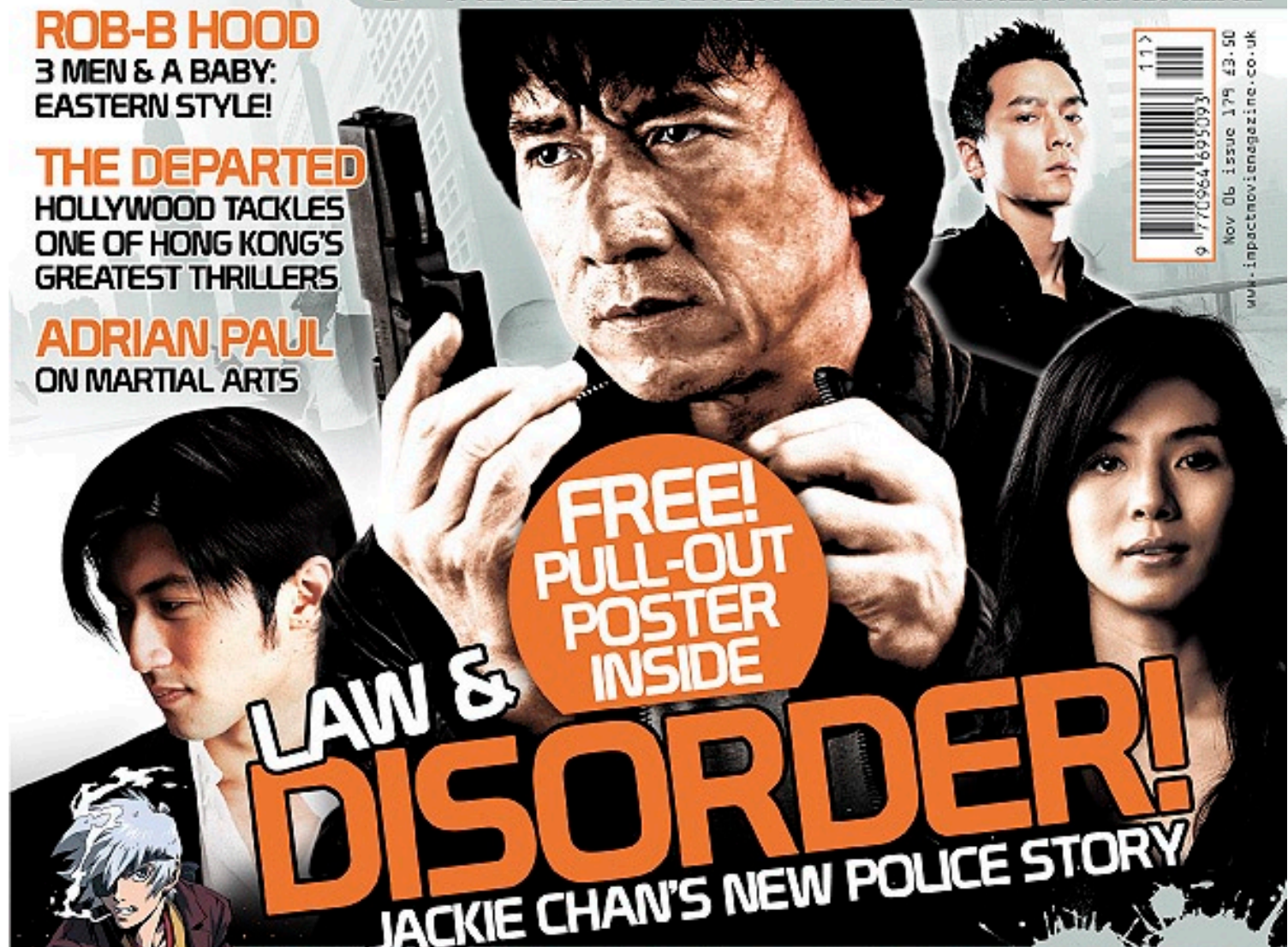
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Impact has covered the development of *Displaced* and watched it grow from a short into a bona-fide independent feature film. Impact's Eastern Editor, Mike Leeder, brings us the first review of the finished product...



In the world of first time independent film making, there's almost an unspoken rule, that you should stick to what you know, and what you easily have access to. Robert Rodriguez had access to a school bus, a hotel and a turtle so he put them in *El Mariachi*, Kevin Smith had access to both a convenience store and a video store when he made *Clerks*, and both locations feature heavily in the film. Most people would probably want to play it safe and go for something small and simple with their first feature film, something that's not too ambitious, doesn't feature much in the way of special effects, large crowd scenes, helicopters, gun fights, fast cars, aliens etc... With *Displaced*, the team at Skylandian Pictures

prove they are most definitely not 'most people' and that the rules don't apply to them, delivering an epic sci-fi action thriller that features all of the above and much more including the voice of Sir Ian McKellen as the film's narrator. Eastern Editor Mike Leeder brings *Impact* the UK's first review...

Private John Marrettle (Malcolm Harkey) was just looking for a little bit of excitement, a taste of adventure, but he never realized he'd get what he was looking for

This page, top: Private John Marrettle (Malcolm Harkey).
Bottom, left: Mark Strange as 'super-soldier', Radius.

and a whole lot more, when he reports for duty at a seemingly low risk military base in the process of being decommissioned. Within minutes of his arrival, the base is on full alert as two 'Class 4s' or aliens enter the facility and Marrettle not only survives a close encounter with one of them, Stehl (Mark Strange), but is forced to form an unlikely partnership with the alien to save himself from a renegade special forces hit-team led by the corrupt Wilson (Graham Brownsmith) and help Stehl find the whereabouts of a secret file that tells the location of captured alien plots, including Stehl's father.

Marrettle uncovers a conspiracy between certain elements on Earth and an evil alien race called the Merka, who are exchanging technological advances with corrupt members of various governments in return for human guinea pigs for their own experimentation. The 'Displaced' file holds the key to saving the day, but is now in the hands of Wilson who plans to sell it and its contents to the highest bidder, no matter what the consequences. The fate of not only our world, but many others now rests in the hands of a solemn alien warrior hoping to find his father, and a British soldier. All they have to do is track down a rogue military hit-team, avoid capture by the British Army and its covert team of operatives from the Ministry of Offence, and all Marrettle wanted was a little excitement!

Impact first covered the shooting of *Displaced* back in early 2003 after being introduced to the film by its leading man and producer, Mark Strange, while he was in town battling Jackie Chan in both *The Twins Effect* as a vampire, and in the reshoots for *The Medallion*. The project had evolved from a short film concept into a full length feature which, despite the lack of budget, was already proving to be very ambitious in its look and scope, thanks to Martin Holland's direction and camera work and Mark Strange's skills as a producer at persuading people to offer their support to the film, be it as actors, supplying locations, equipment



DISPLACED

IT'S NOT WHAT YOU WANT,
IT'S HOW MUCH YOU WANT IT...



Facing page, main: The lovely-but-lethal assassin, Sienna.

Below: Rogue SF boss Wilson (Graham Brownsmith).

Cutout: The multi-talented Mark Strange.

Top, right: Radius (Mark Strange) in action...

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Leading man Mark Strange wore multiple hats on the film as actor, producer, fight choreographer, fixer as well as playing an additional character, the menacing surgical soldier known as Radius, a government assassin who deserves a film of his own. It's an epic movie to place on a relatively new leading man's shoulders, but Strange carries the weight well...



and most importantly their enthusiasm. One of the biggest boosts for the project came with the addition of Sir Ian McKellen, seen most recently in the big budget *X-Men* and *Lord Of The Rings* trilogies. Lancashire born McKellen lent his support and vocal talent to the project during his ten episode guest spot on *Coronation Street*. McKellen had been shown a promo for the film and was suitably impressed by the project to come onboard, and hopes that the film will place Lancashire on the cinematic map. McKellen's voice-over opens the film, introducing the audience to the world of *Displaced*, and the fact that contact has been made between Earth's governments and Alien races with corrupt elements from both sides benefiting from this contact in ways that do not bode well for most of humanity. The VO, which is accompanied by some very impressive special effects work and chilling scenes with very high production values, draws you into the Skylandian universe and you quickly forget you're watching an indie film.

Leading man Mark Strange wore multiple hats on the film as actor, producer, fight choreographer, fixer as well as playing an additional character, the menacing surgical soldier known as Radius, a government assassin who deserves a film of his own. It's an epic movie to place on a relatively new leading man's shoulders, but Strange carries the weight well, his alien may look 'mostly human' but there are some very subtle moments where he reveals his alien qualities and peculiarities which are handled very well. Strange gets to cut loose with some nice moments of action as Stehl, including a spectacular run up and along a vertical wall without the use of wires.

Strange is a very accomplished martial artist and there are moments where I did wish he was really being given the best opportunity to showcase his skills with some more stylized choreography, but the film sets the tone at the beginning that the action will be quite down and dirty and Strange carries off the brief bursts of action with some very powerful kicking combinations and takedowns - hopefully in the sequel we'll see Strange getting



CED

to let loose in a more spectacular fashion! As noted, Strange also plays the masked character of Radius, who is given one sequence where his character is seen demonstrating his martial arts prowess against a team of soldiers to very good effect.

Malcolm Hankey plays Marettie very well, he's the character the audience is most likely to identify with. He's no hyper-muscled super soldier, he's the guy next door who joined the army in the hope of a little adventure and until now has found himself guarding paperclips and the like. His new assignment doesn't look like it's going to be offering him anything different, but five minutes after his arrival he's taking his first steps into a bigger brighter world, as he comes to terms with the facts that he's just experienced a close encounter with an alien, and the government considers him expendable if it means their secrets are kept from the general population. Hankey plays these scenes well, there is certain vulnerability about his character that makes him very believable as he's forced to step up to save his family, even if it means teaming up with an alien. There are also some nice moments of humour in the interaction between the two leads as they try to come to terms with their current situation.

Amongst the rest of the cast Graham Brownsmith acquires himself well as Wilson, a covert operative who's seen enough to realize that his loyalty is best served to the highest bidder. He believes in cold hard cash and if selling restricted stolen alien technology will fund his retirement then so be it. Stephanie Fend delivers a cool performance as the female freelance assassin Sienna who has a memorable running battle between her character and Radius in a church, while Patrice Kim is memorable in every way as Commander Santeen, an officer who has faced aliens before and paid the price for under-estimating them. Scottish TKD maestro Ricky

Lam last seen in *Just One Look* opposite the Twins, plays a superkicking alien colleague of Steh's alongside Stephanie Renke who arrive to take part in the final battle between the forces of good and evil. The main cast all deliver as do the massive supporting cast which includes numerous martial artists and stunt performers from across the UK who came on board the project.

The film was shot, directed and edited by Martin Holland whose other credits include work on *Mersey Cop/Fist of Justice* and *Crazy in Love*. Holland keeps the film's pacing fast and gripping, as the film barely lets up from the atmospheric opening to the final one liner from Marettie. Holland also has a good eye when it comes to framing the shots and while the majority of his camerawork is very crisp, there are some truly inspired sequences where he really shows what he's capable of as a director. Holland also works well with his cast, getting good performances out of them, many of whom had never really acted before. There are a few moments in some of the action scenes where I do feel he could have chosen a different angle or edit point, but for the majority of the film he's right on target. Holland is definitely a talent to watch out for, if he can deliver this as a first film as director, I'd love to see what he has in mind for his second.

Highlights of the movie would have to include the opening montage showing the exchanges of technology and flesh between human and alien counterparts set to McKellen's dulcet tones, Steh's infiltration of the military base which is intercut with Marettie's arrival at what he believes is going to be yet another babysitting assignment, Steh's running battle with Wilson and his men, Radius' introduction through

Top, left: Sienna hunting Radius in a church.

Lower, left: The gang's all here - just before the film's finale.

Cutout, below: Alien! Life-forms from another world (really).

Impact gives the double thumbs up to *Displaced* and the team at Skylandian Pictures for delivering a slick highly entertaining sci-fi themed action thriller that delivers both drama and high octane action.



a stolen film clip, Sienna versus Radius in and around a church, the attempted sale of the alien file which leads into an epic gun battle and chase complete with the arrival of additional surgical soldiers, fast cars, John Woo'esque gun-play, martial arts and the arrival and participation of a Gazelle military helicopter in the final battle between the good guys and the bad guys. *Impact* gives the double thumbs up to *Displaced* and the team at Skylandian Pictures for delivering a slick, highly entertaining sci-fi themed action thriller that delivers both drama and high octane action.

The film is being repped internationally by Silverline Entertainment and hopefully we'll be seeing a UK and/or North American DVD release very shortly. In the meantime we also have the latest project from Mark Strange to look forward to - *Underground* a co-production between Skylandian Pictures and Intense Productions, which recently wrapped shooting in London.

MIKE LEEDER

