

# THE REZORT

## PRODUCTION NOTES

**PLEASE NOTE** that all reviews are embargoed for month of release or week of release depending on your outlet including blogs, forums and social networking sites.

## **The Cast**

Archer	Dougray Scott
Melanie	Jessica De Gouw
Lewis	Martin McCann
Jack	Jassa Ahluwalia
Sadie	Elen Rhys
Wilton	Claire Goose

## **Filmmakers**

Directed by	Steve Barker
Written By	Paul Gerstenberger
Produced by	Charlotte Walls, Karl Richards, Nick Gillott

## **SYNOPSIS**

Following a near apocalyptic zombie outbreak, humans now have the upper hand and life has returned to relative normality with only an occasional reminder or mention of recent horrific events. Most people wouldn't even blink at seeing a zombie now. They know how to handle them. It's no big deal because humans fought and won the battle and are in control again. The latest craze in this post zombie-outbreak world is the Zombie Safari: it is the newest and coolest thing in adventure holidays – a chance to go out and shoot the undead in the wild. The ultimate test in action and adventure, the ultimate blood sport and, to many, the ultimate in therapeutic revenge. But unbeknownst to most that go on Zafari, the park is a highly controlled and monitored environment; a maze of concealed security cameras, restraints and barriers. The eyes and ears of trained security personnel are on the guests - and the zombies 24/7, always ensuring a safe shooting distance between the living and the undead. Nothing is left to chance. Nothing is unplanned. So far...

We enter this world through Melanie who is still reeling from her traumatic experience of losing her family during the outbreak. Deeply damaged and disturbed by the zombie nightmares that haunt her, she hasn't yet hit the point of anger or revenge. She's just plain terrified and she seems to be the only one. Desperate to help Melanie overcome her tragic past and save a relationship that's crumbling under the pressure, Melanie's boyfriend, Lewis, books them a trip to the five-star ReZort. But just as Melanie prepares to face her demons, all hell breaks loose when a zombie- rights activist hacks into the park's security system and uploads a virus which disables all security settings releasing thousands of zombies back into the wild. The ReZort experience just got real. Outnumbered and isolated, Melanie and the few remaining guests at The ReZort must work together to battle their way to safety. And the only way Melanie is going to get out of this alive is to face her worst nightmare head on.

## ABOUT THE FILM

The zombie movie genre is a popular one, with examples ranging across the decades from George A. Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* and *Day of the Dead* to the TV phenomenon *The Walking Dead* as well as more comedic interpretations like *Life after Beth* and parodies like *Shaun of the Dead*. However, Gerstenberger was inspired to do a film with a new take on the genre, setting the story in a world after the humans have won the war against the zombie apocalypse and exploring how humanity would recover after such a huge percentage of the population has been wiped out. Gerstenberger relates this to the years after World War II, where there was a generation who had lived through one of the most violent periods in human history with the irrecoverable aftermath on culture and the individual, juxtaposed with a younger generation born after the War, with no understanding of that reality or the lessons it held for society. According to Gerstenberger, the film explores the repetitive and cyclical nature of "man's hubris. We get overconfident, we ignore the risks and we get our comeuppance." A process humanity is doomed to continuously repeat.

"I was a huge fan of Michael Crichton and his tech thrillers, like *Jurassic Park* and *Westworld*", says Gerstenberger. "So those were some of the influences [in writing this]." The parallels to both films are clear, in that *The ReZort* is set in a Safari Park on an island, where an environment is created for entertainment for visitors to interact with unnatural entities, but eventually become overrun by the inhabitants under containment. Added Gerstenberger: "The zombie theme park essentially meant that we could have fun with the concept and the themes as well as the hidden messages about society" within the film. However, the writer was keen not to make the film too serious, but rather maintain some of the humour inherent to many zombie and horror films: "I'm not a huge fan of gruelling horror. I like to have fun when I'm at the cinema". Added Jassa Ahluwalia, one of the stars of the film, *The ReZort* could be described as "Jurassic Park with Zombies", however, "There is a lot of stuff in there if you're looking out for it in terms of social commentary, parody and satire. But at the end of the day, it's a lot of fun".

The writer also took inspiration from other genres to flesh out the narrative and set the film apart from other zombie films. Such examples included historic war films. "The centrepiece scene in the movie was based on *Zulu* where the nucleus of survival is getting smaller and smaller and smaller". Martin McCann, who plays Lewis in the film, relates this film Marc Foster's 2013 take on the zombie genre. "If I was to describe this in two films, it would be *World War Z* meets *Jurassic Park*. This is smaller in budget and production, and we don't have Brad Pitt. But we do have Dougray Scott".

Scott, who plays Archer in the film, also draws a parallel to Foster's film, but finds it to lie more within the Western genre: "It reminds me of one of those old Cowboy movies. So if we get it right, hopefully it will

appeal to a wide audience”. Jessica De Gouw, who plays the protagonist Melanie sums it up as “a hybrid of genres. It is zombie horror in some respects, but it’s also more of an adventure and quest story than zombie films normally are with a very weighty truth about the human condition”.

Finding the right director to navigate the tone of the film was integral. Says Scott of the director of the director, Steve Barker, “[He] had a great vision for the project and has been attached to it for quite some time so he’s determined too. A lot of really great directors take a lot of film references from great movies and [Steve’s] references are good. I love the movies that he loves”.

Barker himself was on the lookout for something new having worked extensively in the horror genre previously. A huge fan of zombie movies, Barker, was drawn to the possibilities offered by The ReZort’s script: “zombie movies are always now set in an apocalyptic world – this script fascinated me because we had won and this was something that I hadn’t seen before. It’s not a traditional film but a throwback to the movies that I loved; John Carpenter movies, where you weren’t tied to just one genre.”

“Getting Steve Barker was great”, says Gerstenberger, “I was a fan of his *Outpost* movies and he came on board with some great ideas. Initially the film was set in a country house so it was more a British film in that sense, but the production company wanted to give a more Global feel. Steve came up with the idea of setting it on an island and how to do that. He also helped to open up the hidden messages which the film alludes to, like homelessness, or refuges and immigration.”

Added De Gouw, “Steve is such a zombie buff and has such enthusiasm for filmmaking and this type of film. I was not so familiar with this genre, but he knew the story and the genre inside out so to have him to steer me and drive the film was great”.

When Ahluwalia first met Barker in an audition for the film, he was impressed with the director’s understanding of the project. “He wasn’t trying to reinvent the wheel, which people often do with genre films. With this, he was trying to make a really good wheel which has all the elements and tropes which you want, is ambitious but in an overall effective way”. “I absorbed all the elements of the classic zombies pictures that I grew up and then tried to do it my own way...I tried to stay away from the modern take on zombies” adds Barker.

Whilst humour is integral to overall film, Barker felt that a bigger story was being told: “the film is entirely about the disenfranchised, about how we treat refugees” he adds, keen to highlight the more “serious undercurrent” behind the script.

## CASTING THE GROUP

While *The ReZort* is an ensemble film, the role of Melanie is integral to the film as she is a conduit for the audience into this post-apocalyptic society: “it’s through her eyes that we go on this journey and navigate this world”, says De Gouw, who plays Melanie. “She’s a moral compass as well.” In writing the script, it was important for Gerstenberger that she operate as the audience’s eyes into the characters and environment, but also have her story. “[Melanie] is the audience’s identification figure, but at the same time she has this journey which the movie is effectively about”. “She lost her dad during the war, so she’s on a path of discovery”, adds De Gouw. Such a layered role was a difficult one to portray, according to Gerstenberger, “Her character is a tricky one to pull off as she’s someone who has a lot of demons and is damaged and broken in a lot of respects...[The role required] someone to portray that without coming across as simpering”. In rising star DeGouw, Gerstenberger feels they found that quality and more, “In many respects, [Jessica as Melanie] is a lot stronger than I imagined or hoped she would be...[Jessica] is on the cusp of greatness [as an actress]...so when she signed on, it seemed like a real coup...She’s one of those people that when you watch her playing this character, you really sympathise and like her, you want her to get better and to go on this journey. That’s what this movie needs.”

This journey involves Melanie and her boyfriend Lewis, played by McCann going on a zombie safari to face the demons of her past. Says McCann of his character: “Lewis is a normal guy who has been quite traumatised by the war on the zombies and we slowly see his guard and securities unravel as the resort crumbles”.

Lewis is Melanie’s rock in their everyday life, but over the course of the film his own dark past is revealed. “Lewis is a character which went through a lot of versions [as the script was developed]” according to Gerstenberger. “We got him to this place where he is a nice guy who did horrible things during the *Zombie Apocalypse* to survive and now seems like he is good for Jessica’s character, Melanie. [We felt like we] needed this sense that he is doing this for her and helping her...[But] when things go wrong, he starts to revert back to the man he was and the psychological tools he has to use to stay alive start to reassert themselves and not always to the benefit of the rest of the team.”

As a comparative to Lewis, Gerstenberger also wrote the character, Jack, played by Jassa Ahluwalia, who is a video gamer, at the park after winning a contest to live out his gaming fantasy of shooting zombies. Unlike the rest of the characters who are survivors of the war, Jack was born after it and so has no understanding of it, representing the attitude of many generations subsequent to the devastating World

Wars: “Jack rocks up and just thinks it’s all hilarious, lots of fun, and when things go wrong, the reality kicks in very quickly”.

Rounding out the cast is Dougray Scott as Archer, who the actor describes as “a lone wolf, sort of the archetypal cowboy. He’s a very mysterious character who you don’t know why he’s there other than he’s good at shooting”. Unlike the “posh business men and screaming kids” populating the park around him, Archer goes on the zombie safaris to “let off steam” and so when the residents are unleashed, it falls to Archer to protect the group as more and more of his own story is revealed over the course of the film. He is also the first of the group to be aware that something has gone awry and that there might be a more sinister cause.

For Gerstenberger, Scott was the ideal Archer, “When people would ask who would be good for Archer, I had always imagined [he] would be perfect.... He’s one of those actors who can tell a story with his face, his eyes or an expression”. Added De Gouw, “He’s the perfect Archer. He’s wonderfully dangerous. I can’t imagine anyone else as this part”. For Scott, the appeal was in the originality of the story, “I liked the character and thought the script was really good. I found it surprising that I hadn’t seen anything like it before.”

### **ZOMBIES ON LOCATION**

Finding the perfect location for The ReZort was crucial in conveying the fragile luxury of the post-apocalyptic world. Mallorca offered an incredible range of possibilities from hidden valleys to mountain retreats. Mallorca also lent itself well to the island aesthetics devised by Barker and the various Heads of Department: “we were after something that felt seductive and sleek. We wanted audiences to see the island as the island would want you to see it; something that felt very alluring and enticing” which was very doable on such a beautiful island.

### **LAST WORD**

The ReZort is a slick and contemporary thrill ride offering a fresh twist on the zombie film genre but first and foremost it is fun and entertaining, made to appeal to a broad audience of film fans: “it has a great sense of escapism and entertainment” explains Barker. “When I first read the script I was immediately struck by the unique proposition presented by the concept itself. It was a brilliant read and great fun to bring about”.

## **CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Dougray Scott**

Dougray trained at the Welsh College of Music and Drama, where he was named most promising drama student.

His theatre credits include working with Sam Mendes at the Donmar theatre in *To the Green Fields Beyond* and with Jon Caird in the West End in *Becket*.

Dougray has starred in both independent and studio films. With over 35 titles to his credit and having worked with some of the industry's most renowned directors, he has also appeared in much television in both the UK and America.

He appeared multiple British and US films before his breakthrough performance starring in *Twin Town*, which garnered great reviews and became a cult hit worldwide. From there, Scott's extensive acting CV continued to grow in quantity and quality. 1998 saw him star opposite Drew Barrymore in the hit film *Ever After*, as well as *Deep Impact* alongside Robert Duvall, Tea Leoni, and Vanessa Redgrave. He later starred alongside Tom Cruise in *Mission: Impossible 2*. Other film credits include Michael Apted's *Enigma* (opposite Kate Winslet) as well as the 2002 film *Ripley's Game*. He later joined Jennifer Connelly with a lead role in 2005 film *Dark Water*, and in 2007 starred in Xavier Gens' directed *Hit Man*.

More recently, Scott has added to his impressive resume with appearances in the critically-acclaimed *My Week with Marilyn*, alongside Eddie Redmayne, Kenneth Branagh and Michelle Williams. *New Town Killers* directed by Richard Jobson and *The Last Passenger* directed by Omid Nooshin and in 2014 *Taken 3* with Liam Neeson.

Amongst his Television Credits: *The Crow Road* for the BBC, *Hemlock Grove* for Netflix, the hit series *Desperate Housewives* for ABC, NBC's *Heist*, *False Witness* for Ion TV, *The Ten Commandments* for ABC amongst others notably *Strikeback* for Cinemax. Returning to the UK he has appeared in *Day of the Triffids* and the hit comedy *The Wrong Mans* for BBC and *Father and Son* for ITV in which he starred and received rave reviews.



## **Jessica De Gouw**

Australian native Jessica De Gouw is rapidly emerging as one of Hollywood's most engaging and sought after young talents.

De Gouw is currently in production on WGN America's drama *Underground*, where she will star opposite Christopher Meloni. The series follows a group of slaves who plan a daring escape from a Georgia plantation to cross 600 miles to freedom, aided along the way by a secret abolitionist couple running a station on the Underground Railroad, as they evade those tasked with bringing them back, dead or alive. De Gouw will play the role of Elizabeth, a socialite who shares her husband's abolitionist ideals.

De Gouw was last seen in the Australian TV Mini-Series *Deadline Gallipoli*, opposite Sam Worthington, Charles Dance, Rachel Griffiths and Hugh Dancy. The series explores the origin of the Gallipoli legend, when Australian and New Zealand troops were sent into a hopeless battle in Turkey during WWI. It is told from the point of view of war correspondents Charles Bean, Ellis Ashmead-Bartlett, Phillip Schuler and Keith Murdoch, who lived through the campaign and bore witness to the events in 1915.

De Gouw's television credits include her role as Mina Murray in the NBC drama *Dracula*, as Helena Bertinelli (The Huntress) on CW's *Arrow*, the ABC telemovie *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, *Crownies*, and *Underbelly: Razor* and *Ticky Business*.

Her additional film credits include: *These Final Hours*, *Cut Snake*, *The Dinner Meeting* and *Kath & Kimderella*

## **Martin McCann**

McCann grew up in Belfast and his love of acting began when he joined YouthAction NI's Rainbow Factory, a cross-community drama troop for Catholic and Protestant children. He is currently a Patron of the charity.

McCann made his feature film debut as Jimmy Riley in *Closing the Ring*, directed by Richard Attenborough. Attenborough cast McCann in the film after seeing him in a stage production of *A Clockwork Orange*. McCann's earlier feature film credits also include; *Jump* (as Pearce), *Swansong: Occi Vs The World* (as Occi) *Clash of the Titans* (as Pheadrus), *Killing Bono* (as Bono) and more recently; *Shadow dancer* (as Brendan), *Falcon* (as Sebastian), *X+Y* (as Michael) and *'71* (as Haggerty).

After working with McCann, Attenborough contacted Spielberg and recommended McCann for *The Pacific*. He was invited to LA to audition for the HBO mini-series and was thus cast in as R.V. Burgin.

McCann's TV credits also include; *My Boy Jack* (as Bowe), *Titanic* (as Conor), *Ripper Street* (as Martin Donovan) and *The Bastard Executioner* (as Randolph).

McCann first developed his love of acting on the stage, performing in theatre productions such as: *To be Sure* (as Laim), *1974* (as John), *Charlotte's Web* (as Wilbur) and *A Clockwork Orange* (as Alex).

Recognised and respected in his profession, McCann won the Irish Film and Television Award for Best Male Performance in *Swansong: Occi Vs. The World in 2011*. He was later nominated for IFTA Best Supporting Actor for *Jump* in 2013.

### **Elen Rhys**

Welsh born and bred Elen Rhys is a highly skilled stage and screen actress, who first established her acting career in television before moving into feature films.

Rhys's film debut was not a small one, as she appeared alongside Nicolas Cage and Stephen Graham in *Season of the Witch*. She then went on to star in several more features, including *Clean Skin*, *Panic Button* and *The Darkest Day*. Her more recent film credits include *World War Z*, *Date Night* and upcoming film *Crow*.

Rhys has starred in a great deal of critically acclaimed BBC and ITV TV dramas including: *Atlantis*, *Doctors*, *Holby City* and *Torchwood*. She has also starred in *The Bastard Executioner*, *Hinterland II*, *Camp X* and *The Assets*.

Her theatre production credits include; *The Muse*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *She Stoops to Conquer*, amongst others.

### **Claire Goose**

Claire is a theatre, television and film actress, best known for her television appearances in *Casualty* and *Waking The Dead*. Over the last decade Goose has established herself as a diverse actress, working on an extensive range of television programmes and feature films. Goose's first feature debut was in horror film *Alone*. She went on to star in thriller, *Bad Day*, as an undercover agent. Portrayed an emotional character, Mia, through a marital affair in *Candle to Water*. She recently finished filming *Generation Z* by Steve Barker.

Goose's impressive television credits include critically-acclaimed BBC and ITV dramas such as; *Exile*, *Undeniable*, *Waking The Dead*, *Casualty*, *Hustle*, *Secret Smile*, *The Bill*, *New Tricks*, and *Death in*

*Paradise*. Making use of her talents off-screen as well as on, Goose also commentates on the TV Series Road Wars. Claire is currently filming *The Coroner* for the BBC in its title role and in *Unforgotten* for ITV.

Goose has been a part of several theatre productions, further demonstrating her diversity within the arts. Her most recent theatre production credits include; *The Perfect Murder*, *Hiding* and *When We are Rich*.

### **Jassa Ahluwalia**

Rising star Jassa Ahluwalia is best known for his work on the hit BBC Three series *Some Girls*. Initially a recurring role Ahluwalia impressed the show's creators and his lovable bad boy character Rocky became a series regular.

Born in Coventry, raised in Leicester, Ahluwalia lives in East London. Owing to his mixed British-Indian heritage Jassa is a fluent Punjabi speaker and continued his passion for languages at University College London, studying Russian and Spanish. In 2010, at the start of his second year, he left university to focus on his acting career.

Following on from the initial success of *Some Girls* Ahluwalia landed the role of Young David, slaying Goliath in the blockbuster mini-series *The Bible*. Other work includes BBC One's *Ripper Street*, and a leading role alongside Martin Sheen, David Gyasi and John Boyega in TV film *The Whale*. He has recently completed work on ITV's highly anticipated new six-part crime drama, *Unforgotten*, in which he plays the son of series lead Nicola Walker.

Ahluwalia's talents also extend behind the camera. He produced a segment of the world record breaking feature film *50 Kisses* and short film *Modern Man*, screened globally as part of the Très Court International Film Festival, an official selection at the San Diego Film Festival, winner of Best Film at Kinofilm Manchester and winner of Best Comedy Short at the Isle of Man Film Festival.

Ahluwalia has firmly established himself as an emerging British talent and is very much a star on the rise.

### **CREW BIOGRAPHIES**

#### **Steve Barker (Director)**

Steve Barker began his career in 2002 directing and writing the screenplay for the short-film *Magic Hour* starring John Simm. In 2007, Barker made his debut as a director in the feature film *Outpost*, starring Ray Stevenson. In 2012, Barker lent his efforts to the sequel, *Outpost: Black Sun* which kept as much of

the same dark tone and aesthetic as the first. Both *Outpost* and *Outpost: Black Sun* were filmed in the space of twenty-eight days, which Barker highlighted as a stressful but memorable experience.

Barker has since co-written the screenplay for *Breathe*.

### **Paul Gerstenberger (Writer)**

Paul Gerstenberger is a writer for film and TV. In features, Paul's films range from crime capers such as *Fakers* for Guerilla Films, starring Matthew Rhys; to *All Stars*, a kids street dance movie starring Ashley Jensen and John Barrowman, produced by Vertigo Films; to horror projects such as *Bad Meat*, which was directed by Rob Schmidt. Paul also has a number of scripts in development with companies both in the UK and the US. For television, Paul's credits include being the lead writer on Endemol's *Paradise Café* for CBBC, primetime drama *Primeval* for ITV1, and writing twenty two episodes of the award-winning Nickelodeon show *House of Anubis*, produced by Lime Pictures. Paul has a number of projects across many genres in development with companies such as Lime Pictures and ITV Studios and his feature film *Generation Z* shot in 2014.