



Actor Gives His Take On 'The Cell'.

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Vincent D'Onofrio Discusses The Making Of The Sci-Fi Thriller

As the psychotic serial killer in "The Cell," Vincent D'Onofrio is compelling and suitably creepy. But the actor is balancing the role by playing a forensic pathologist in the upcoming NBC series "Criminal Intent." As for the criminal intent of his character in "The Cell," D'Onofrio had this to say about the role.

Did it trouble you that your character in "The Cell" was such a disturbing one?

It did. I'm not going to do it again for a while. Not because of any romantic reasons like I live my character, because that's ridiculous. It's all the research that I did about the psychology. Stuff like that gives you nightmares.

So why did you choose the role?

I wasn't very keen on the script, but Tarsem [Singh, the director] convinced me to do it.

How?

With his sense of how he wanted it to look. I knew that it was going to be a visual experience, and that aspect is phenomenal. The only hope I had for this film was that it would be a visual feast. And that's, in fact, what it is.

Are you suggesting something was missing in the story?

I think audiences are missing out on the psychology of the killer, why he is the way he is. When you do a film with a big actress like Jennifer Lopez, the studio doesn't want her off-screen for 20 minutes. In Tarsem's final cut, she was gone for several long periods, and that just doesn't work in the Hollywood system. I don't blame them, actually, because Jennifer is the only reason the film got made.

Did the nature of your character affect your working relationship with your leading lady?

Jennifer and I had a very good working relationship. It was a strange set because it was always very quiet. We were trying to make all these heavy visual statements. The challenge of figuring those out required a lot of thought and a lot of spontaneous good ideas. As an actress, Jennifer was there and very attuned. There was an energy between us that was very fragile because of the characters we were playing. We knew we had to get away with this real wild stuff. So we were paying attention most of the time.

Was there a way to lighten things up on the set?

Not me, nope! I'm not into goofin' off, unless we're doing a comedy.

Why do you think psychological thrillers are so popular today?

If I could add something, a lot of them have to do not only with psychology but also with faith and hope. Those elements of drama are very relevant right now.

Why?

I have a feeling it's because of how society is chasing technology. I think we're a bit blinded by the light, and it makes us desperate. Stories like "The Sixth Sense" and "Unbreakable" have to do with our desperation to figure things out as far as our humanity. We're scared that technology is going to destroy us.

How would you sum up your experience working on "The Cell"?

In the end, now that it's finished, I think it was an exercise for Tarsem. I'd love to do another film with him; he's a great guy. But I think "The Cell" was just to exercise himself a bit.

Like an auteur?

Yeah. And I'm all for that, if you can get away with it. And he did!

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