

Montreal SnakeEater's Revenge

I arrive on the set of *SnakeEater's Revenge*, tiptoeing through the hallways of an abandoned senior citizens' home so as not to provoke the wrath of a dreaded SnakeEater. Screenwriter Michael Paseornek (*Meatballs 3*) sees my trepidation and waves for me to approach. He is visiting from New York to watch the filming of the script he co-wrote with John Dunning and Don Carmody and appears quite pleased with what he has seen so far. Personally, I'm more concerned about what I don't see. "One question," I whisper to him, looking over my shoulder. "What the hell is a SnakeEater and why is he so mad?"

"A SnakeEater is a nickname for an elite marine fighting group trained to survive in the jungle without weapons."

"Ohhhh," I reply, relieved that I will not be used as cobra bait. Paseornek goes on to explain that in *SnakeEater*, Lorenzo Lamas (*Falcon Crest*) played Jack Kelly, a suspended cop and former marine who used the skills he learned as a SnakeEater to avenge the murder of his family. In *SnakeEater's Revenge*, Lamas reprises his role, this time having to break out of a mental institution to find the dealers who have sold poisoned drugs to inner-city youths his character has befriended.

If it seems odd that the sequel began pre-production before the original was even released, Cinepix producers John Dunning and Andre Link (*Meatballs*) explain that foreign pre-sales and an option to renew Lorenzo Lamas' contract not only made the \$2.6 million sequel feasible, but also suggested the possibility of an ongoing feature series. And if those reasons aren't sufficient to make two action adventure films in less than a year, the poster in Dunning's office may offer the best justification of all. "People love making movies because it is an activity which suspends all thoughts of death."

Convinced by Paseornek that SnakeEaters don't bite, I venture onto the set, where a 15-foot air duct masquerades as a maze of tunnels through which our hero regularly escapes the loony bin to get the bad guys. This particular scene calls for Lamas to squeeze through the tunnel and bump into "a voluptuous woman" on her way inside. Clad in multicolored tights, an off-the-shoulder tank top, and Tammy Fae make-up, actress Felicia Shulman plays the vw. "Today, I'm a hooker. Tonight, I'm a nun in *Nunsense*, she smiles, as she juggles into the tunnel. Since it is only a three-week shoot—a fast pace by any standard—Felicia and Lorenzo only have time for a brief rehearsal before Take One.

"Roll! Speed! Frame!... Action!", shouts the director.

"Who are you?" demands Kelly. "I'm Billy Ray's Birthday gift," coos the vw. "Nice gift."

"Yeah, that Billy Ray's sure somethin'. He teaches me the bible. 'Its better to sew thy seed in the belly of a whore than to cast it by the wayside.'" (Here, the voluptuous woman ad-libs, moaning and squeezing her ample bosom.)

"I guess I missed that lesson in Sunday school..."

"Cut!", cries the director, displeased with the shot. He pauses, perhaps considering Jack Kelly's motivation at that moment, then adds confidently, "Lorenzo, drop your butt down more."

Take Two: Lorenzo obliges and drops his butt so low, he hits the lights. Take Three: He drops his butt and voids the lights. This one is printed.

While the crew sets up for different camera angles, Vidar Newhof, a P.A., removes a clothespin that has materialized on my jacket. It has the unit manager's name and phone number on it, though the latter strenuously denies being the culprit. Apparently, the shoot isn't fast-paced enough to keep the crew from playing practical jokes. But then again, Vidar tells me that today is relatively quiet. "On days like this, we pray for female reporters to harass!"

While waiting for her next take, Felicia starts to feel drafty (go figure) and is given a blanket. Feeling a draft of my own, I quickly look over my shoulder only to find another pin on my back. This one displays a new name, phone number, and message too suggestive for print. Proudly pocketing my second pin, I approach the director, George Erschbamer. (*The Golden One*)

while he watches the crew set up the next scene. Although the 35-year-old motorcycle jacket enthusiast could be, and has been, mistaken for an extra, the Vancouver-based director is, according to his longtime associate, ist A.D. Earl Peturson, "one of the most promising action directors in the business."

After a routine half-day's work, the lunch break is called at 3:30 p.m., and cast and crew vanish like cockroaches caught with the lights on. An hour and a half later, like cockroaches, they have all returned to the air ducts. "Where's Lorenzo?," Erschbamer asks, ready to resume shooting. "Where's the voluptuous woman?," another voice calls out eagerly.

While Lamas continues crawling like a panther in the fake air duct, I chat with prop master Marc Corriveau, who tricks me into a pair of thumb handcuff. Pleased to have my undivided attention, he shows me his latest toy, a *Mad-Max*-like metal boot he has designed for a wheelchair duel scene to be shot several nights later on a hospital rooftop. Corriveau releases me from my trap only when applause ripples throughout the set, signalling the end of the tedious air duct scenes.

Rubbing my thumbs, I find Lamas trying on his special boot in an empty room. Twisting his wheelchair upwards, he begins to make wheelies as though riding a Harley, and I must duck to avoid the Killer footwear. Apparently, Lamas will not require a double during the difficult rooftop scene, but then again, the 30ish actor began his career doing stunt work. On both *SnakeEater* films, he has performed in fight scene and in the midst of tricky explosions. After eight seasons on the popular *Falcon Crest* TV series, Lamas tells me he is enjoying the physical challenge and most especially, the character of

Jack Kelly.

"He has more depth this time around," says Lamas, who tells me he has grown restless of Lance's revolving bedroom" on *Falcon Crest* and is looking forward to doing new roles after his contract is up next year. As for portraying a SnakeEater, if the role isn't exactly Shakespearean, Lamas doesn't mind. "I'm not into message movies. I feel an actor's responsibility is to entertain the public."

While the final takes of the day are shot, extraneous crew members idly chat until the director calls for quiet, whereupon they suddenly freeze, as if silenced by supernatural forces. Later, when the magic word "cut" is heard, they instantly thaw, and sentences comically resume exactly where they trailed off. Supervising producer Irene Litinsky saunters down the hall to check on her crew and shakes her head at the graffiti she reads on the props. "You wrote that," She accuses production manager Paul Bujold. "I recognize your handwriting."

At 9:30 p.m., Irene breaks out the champagne to celebrate wrapping the second week of shooting. "Any excuse," quips Marc, my thumb torturer, as he clinks my glass. Although the day's filming is over, many crew members will remain to disassemble the sets. Mercifully, however, my job is done. Removing my last clothespin from my jacket, I show Irene the other half-dozen I have collected during the day. She laughs, but only at the first one. "That's disgusting!", she winces, throwing my pins into a nearby garbage bin.

"Don't" I protest, snatching my little trophies from the bin and pocketing them. "For research," I explain...

Hélène Auclair •

Lorenzo Lamas (Jack Kelly) looking for a reptilian lunch in *SnakeEater's Revenge*

