

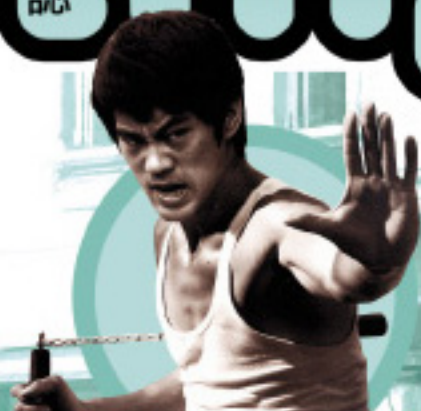
ANIME/IMPACT EAST/ACTION MOVIES/MULTIMEDIA

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衝擊雜誌

Impact

THE GLOBAL ACTION ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE



BRUCE LEE TV
WE PREVIEW THE NEW
BIOGRAPHICAL SERIES!

THE BUTCHER
JESSE JOHNSON IS
BACK IN ACTION!

BLOOD BROTHERS
JOHN WOO'S BULLET IN
THE HEAD RE-IMAGINED



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ANIME & ACTION
MOVIE POSTERS
INSIDE

ANIME ATTACK!

[KARAS, BLACK CAT, FULL METAL MOVIE & MUCH MORE!]

THE VIOLENCE OF THE LAMBS - BLACK SHEEP HITS UK SCREENS!



Eric Roberts makes a welcome return to form as Mafia hitman, Merle Hench.

Impact has been following the career of director Jesse Johnson since we first heard about his short film *Death Row: The Tournament*, and his first feature *The Honourable*. Since then he's delivered the brutal classic *Pit Fighter* and two sci-fi tinged actioners, *The Last Sentinel* (starring Don Wilson) and the soon-to-be-released *Alien Agent* (starring Mark Dacascos). This month Mike Leeder takes a first look at Johnson's latest project...

For close to twenty years, Merle Hench (Eric Roberts) has worked within the system as the enforcer of choice for a San Fernando Mob outfit. In spite of his occupation, he's polite, thoughtful and soft spoken, he's a walking anachronism, a man who seems out of place and out of time.

Merle Hench, AKA 'The Butcher,' has a very long fuse, he's been used to turning the other cheek... most people, himself included, thought that it was a ridiculous nickname. Now the mob has decided he has become a

liability and wants him gone. Merle would have probably been content to have just disappeared, to let time take its course, but they've pushed him and something inside of him has snapped.

What none of them knew, is that Merle has a very dark side, a secret past, and they wouldn't want to know just how he earned the nickname. Underestimating him was to be their last mistake, every dog has his day, and so too will 'The Butcher'!

Johnson has certainly assembled a solid cast for the production with early word on the film saying that it's "Eric Roberts as you've never seen him before, an awesome and

Roberts prepared for *The Butcher* by training with former Navy Seal Mark Stefanich, who had served with 'Seal Team Six', the US Navy's main counter terrorist unit. Stefanich previously trained Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt for *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* and worked with Jean-Claude Van Damme on such films as *Double Impact*, *Universal Soldier* and *Hard Target*...

JESSE JOHNSON RETURNS TO ACTION WITH THE BUTCHER



the Butcher

"He had a nickname he hated, his guns were in hock.. And he owed shirt to his bookie... but that's all about to change..."

trivia

Eric appeared in two soap operas, *Another World* and *How to Survive a Marriage* before being propelled towards stardom by his leading role in *King of the Gypsies* (1978), based on Peter Maas' best seller about a fracturing dynasty of New York City gypsies.

He was seriously injured in a car accident and spent three days in a coma. His left hand ring finger remains permanently disfigured, as a result of the accident.

Eric won an Academy Award nomination as a young prison escapee hiding out with Jon Voight aboard an out-of-control train in the ultra-violent, character-driven action adventure *Runaway Train* (1985).

In 1996, Roberts became the fifth actor to portray the Master when he starred opposite Paul McGann in the movie version of *Doctor Who*. Eric has since gone on to appear in current TV mega-hit, *Heroes*.



Johnson regular, Bokeem Woodbine.

breath taking performance, thrilling and terrifying at the same time.

To many people Roberts might be best known as the elder brother of Julia, but people forget how solid a career Roberts has carved for himself over the years. With a diverse range of performances in such projects as *Star 80* where he played the despicable Paul Snider who murdered Playboy playmate Dorothy Stralton, *The Coca Cola Kid* with Greta Scacchi, the first two installments of *Best of the Best* alongside Phillip Rhee and Chris Penn, the role of 'The Master' opposite Paul McGann in the 1996 *Doctor Who* movie, the under-rated *By The Sword* opposite F Murray Abraham, not to mention his Oscar Nominated turn in *Runaway Train* with Jon Voight. And of course, he was recently seen in *Heroes*, as the mysterious Mr. Thompson. Roberts will also appear in the forthcoming *Batman Begins* sequel, *The Dark Knight* as a crime boss.

Roberts prepared for *The Butcher* by training with former Navy Seal Mark Stefanich, who had served with 'Seal Team Six', the US Navy's main counter terrorist unit. (The unit was formed after the failed attempt to rescue hostages in Iran in 1980.) Stefanich previously trained Angelina Jolie and Brad Pitt for *Mr. & Mrs. Smith* and worked with Jean-Claude Van Damme on such films as *Double Impact*, *Universal Soldier*, *Hard Target*, *The Quest* and *Maximum Risk*. According to Johnson "...actors like him because he exudes experience and authority of the kind one associates with someone who's been where he has and done what he has."

The supporting cast includes a number of Impact faves including Robert Davi from *Licence to Kill* (and *The Silencer* with Sonny Chiba), the great Keith David from *Dead Presidents* and *They Live*, Bokeem Woodbine from *The Big Hit* and *Dead Presidents* and legendary Michael Ironside whose credits include everything from *Spacehunter 3D*, *Scanners*, *Top Gun* and, of course, Johnson's short film *Death Row: The Tournament*. Ironside is currently



Roberts and Inira Njorklund

starting in the new sci-fi series *Ice Planet* produced by long time Impact associate Paul Rapovski (*Hitman* with Jet Li).

The film also features Geoffrey Lewis from *Double Impact* and the original *Salem's Lot*, and Vernon Wells of *Commando* and *Mad Max 2* fame and European actress Inira Njorklund while stuntmen/action actors Garret Warren, Jerry Trimble, Joe Hess, Luke LaFontaine and the one and only Nils Allen Stewart also pop up as assorted characters. Plus, JJ Perry from *Undisputed 2* and the forthcoming *Tournament* served as assistant stunt co-ordinator on the film.

In addition to directing, Johnson also wrote the screenplay for the film while the cinematography was courtesy of Robert Hayes who previously shot both *The Last Sentinel* and *Pit Fighter* for Johnson, as well as the comedy *Grand Theft Parsons* starring Johnny Knoxville.

We'll leave the last word on the film to Jesse, "...the third act deals with a man facing down a lifetime of demons, in the case of Merle 'The Butcher' this involves his pair of gold plated .45s going back to work." We'll be reviewing the film in an upcoming issue of Impact. *The Butcher*, has already been selected to be shown as part of the 'Official Selection' *Cinema City International Film Festival* and 'Official Selection' *Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival*.

MIKE LEEDER



Eric in Heroes