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"Darling, you can't rape a townie." - Barb Coard, *Black Christmas*

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Michelle Tomlinson ('The Cellar Door')

Submitted by bryan\_bloodsoaker on 09/24/2007

Interviews



One of the best new horror films of 2007 that (hopefully) will be getting some buzz in the near future after it gets off the festival circuit is Matt Zettell's *The Cellar Door*, starring an incredibly talented and interesting young actress named Michelle Tomlinson. Michelle's other horror work includes the Kevin Tenney alien-infection romp *Brain Dead* (also in film festivals as we speak). Tomlinson's groundbreaking performance in the girl-trapped-by-a-serial killer *The Cellar Door* has officially dubbed her the 'Pretty/Scary One to Watch' for this year. Michelle has some fascinating insight into horror films, women in them, and being trapped in a small box in a cellar for hours and hours!

So, how did you get the role?

I have been friends with the writer, Christopher Nelson, for a healthy amount of time. We had worked together several times before. He phoned me one day and said he had written a script with me kind of in mind. I went through the process, though, of auditioning and basically driving him crazy until I found out Rudy was mine. I had also done a photo shoot several months before the film went into production for a one sheet the filmmakers were making. (Before I knew I had the role) It was then that I met the incredible Hilary Six and Matt Zettell and instantly felt comfortable with both of them. I think that shoot might have helped a little bit in their final decision of casting me as Rudy.

What was your initial reaction when you read the script? Your reaction to the subject matter?

I DROOLED! The script rocked. It was a fast and easy read and I could 'see the movie' in my mind the entire time. I think I read it three times the first night I got it. Chris is a genius. I absolutely loved that Rudy won in the end, to tell you the truth. As for the subject matter, its pretty twisted. As a woman, I thought eeewww; I can't begin to imagine the horror of this! As an actor, I again drooled. Its the type of film and character you can sink your teeth into. Everything about the script was very appealing to me. I loved the humanity of it.

Have you seen *Captivity*? *Hostel II*? What do you think makes *Cellar Door* different? Or *IS* it different?

I didn't see *Captivity* because I heard it sounded pretty close to *The Cellar Door*. I didn't want to watch it and start that whole comparison game in my head and drive myself nuts. *Hostel II* I missed only because I ended up shooting something the last weekend it was in the theatres. I plan on renting it though; I think Eli (Roth) is a quality filmmaker with whom I'd like to work someday.

*The Cellar Door*, I feel, is very different. You covered some of this in your review. Its very simple in a lot of ways and very human. Herman wasn't meant to have some dark voice or walk with a weird creepy limp. He was simply a lonely guy who lived in his dead mother's house and had a sick fascination with how to find his perfect woman. Its a film that I feel is more what a reality could be and that's what I find creepy about it. Serial killers are often times normal looking guys--look at Dahmer, for crying out loud.

Scary Stud of the Month

Mr. February



Tom Atkins

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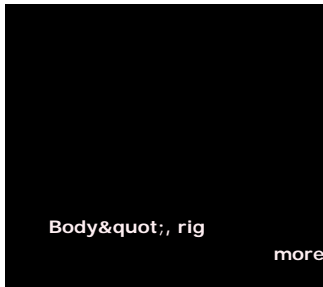
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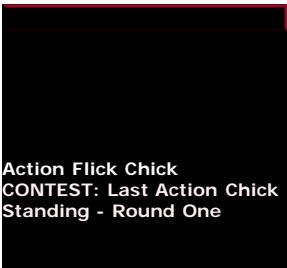
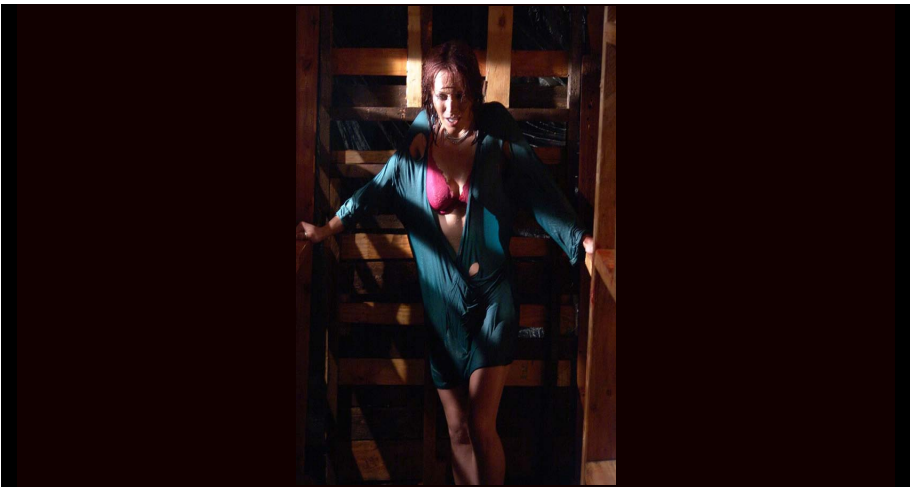
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*What do you think is the appeal of films that specifically take women and put them in the hands of dangerous men who intend to hurt them?*

I think its the intensity of the cat and mouse game. Its not two guys duking it out with major testosterone involved. Sometimes you never know who will win. Take the film *Wolf Creek*. I was so surprised by the way it ended! What made it great was the not knowing. I also think, for women, it has the appeal of an ordinary woman fighting her way out of an extraordinary circumstance.

*What would you say to someone who says that **The Cellar Door** is a film that exploits women? That it is misogynist?*

I would never look at *The Cellar Door* as exploitation of women or in the least bit misogynistic. IF the film involved nothing but naked girls screaming through a forest and then roll credits, I could see it that way. If anything exploited, its the strength of a human's (in this case, a woman's) will to survive. It happens every day, sadly. Domestic violence is at a massive high rate. There are women reported missing or found dead daily. If someone saw *The Cellar Door* as exploitation, I would strongly suggest the people ask themselves what they'd be willing to do to survive a horrid situation.

*What went through YOUR head when playing Rudy in the cellar? How did you try to make her real person? What was important to you when being her?*

The biggest thing that was important to me was saturating her in reality. I did the work of writing a full autobiography of her life. I programmed my entire iPod around the music she would listen to and picked specific songs for specific scenes. While I was playing Rudy in the cellar, it was important to me to keep her wheels turning. She was filled with horror, yet she was a strong woman. Matt was a wonderful guide for that journey. She had to try so many different ways to escape Herman; fighting him, seducing him, building a faux-relationship with him to gain his trust and the list goes on. I don't know that I had to try to make her a real person because she was written as a real person in a real bad situation. I also focused on her circumstances and her relationships with Herman and Christa.



*Was there anything unpleasant about being in such a visually uncomfortable film?*

I don't know if I'd say unpleasant, but that cage was definitely SMALL. As in, 'smaller than a shower stall at Bally's small. I couldn't even stretch out my legs. AND THAT'S WHAT ROCKED!! I was literally in that cage for nine days of the shoot, if I remember correctly. The first second I stepped foot in that cage, I had to remind myself to breathe. And I held on to that uncomfortable feeling for Rudy and used it. Add Herman and the eerily dressed set to that mixture, and the circumstances were THERE. It was a wonderful experience, overall.

*What do you want women to take away from your performance in this film?*

That there is always hope. We all have our cages in life. And most of us build them

ourselves or we succumb to what other people expect us to be! And it's easy to stay in them because they become safe. Even if we're suffering from mental or physical anguish, we stay locked up, safe and sound - in our boxes. While it's hard as hell and seemingly impossible to break out, you never know when the door will pop open for you and you find your freedom. That's a lot to ask, I think, for people to get out of the film. But that's one of the many things I realized while working on Rudy. There is always hope.

Visit Michelle Tomlinson at these sites:

<http://www.nowcasting.com/michelletomlinson>

<http://www.cellardoorthemovie.com>


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#### Re: Pretty/Scary Interviews Michelle Tomlinson

Submitted by stahss on 10/07/2007.

Michelle rocks, plain and simple.

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