

Interview: Cillian Murphy, Rodrigo Cortes Run ‘Red Lights’

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 25, 2012 - 10:24am

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CHICAGO – Writer/director Rodrigo Cortes really broke through with the award-winning “Buried,” starring Ryan Reynolds. He returns this week with a very different thriller called “Red Lights,” starring the great Cillian Murphy, who joined Mr. Cortes recently in Chicago for a discussion about “2001,” working with Robert De Niro, and the complexity of audience expectations.

In the film, Murphy plays an investigator who works with Sigourney Weaver to debunk psychics, mediums, and other people who use deception to prey on people willing to believe. The film co-stars Elizabeth Olsen and Toby Jones and features a number of twists and turns (that won’t be spoiled here).

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Have you see it with an audience?

CILLIAN MURPHY: The Q&As are great. They’re GREAT. People get very exercised. I love it. Tonight should be fun.

RODRIGO CORTES: We love it. It’s one of the reasons we enjoy doing this tour — direct contact with your audience.

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: What’s an interesting question/response from a Q&A? Has there been an interpretation that surprised you?

MURPHY: I’ve had a couple. Again, if I talk about ‘em...

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: We ruin the movie.

CORTES: What I love, without giving away specific information, is that they are all trying to have an interpretation, which means that they can keep on thinking about the film when it finishes. The film ends with a big question mark. And people have accepted it with a challenging way. They offer theories that I find fascinating and ask me, “Are we right?” I say, “I don’t know. I have my own theory, but it’s just a theory too.” It’s open.



Cillian Murphy and Rodrigo Cortes on the set of Red Lights

Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Are your theories the same?

MURPHY: I think we're the same. It would be important.

CORTES: We know what's happening in every second of the film. We have to. But it doesn't mean it's the only valid theory. It's not restrictive. It has to keep on working inside people's minds.

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: I like the idea that more films should ask questions. What are some good ones that do that or ones that inspired this one?



Red Lights

Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment

CORTES: The best example would be "2001." For instance, when you see "2001," you can read the novel and have all the answers but Kubrick never wanted it to be understood in a conscious way. It's about perception. It's about feelings — the things that it tells you in many layers. You go home and someone asks what is it about and you say, "I have no idea but it really challenged me."

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Why Cillian? How did you get involved with the project?

MURPHY: Traditionally. You read quite a few scripts. You can usually predict where most of them are going to go. This one I couldn't and it was exciting to read something like that. It is unconventional in its structure. I loved that about it. I think the character is complex and the journey he goes on is unusual and multi-layered. Those are the sort of character I'm into and I had seen Rodrigo's work. This is the real deal, a real director — those are the kind of people I want to work with. It was a no-brainer for me.

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Did you write it with him in mind?

CORTES: No. I never write anything for anybody. You try to create real characters with complex psychologies and then you try to find the best available actor. With Cillian, you have something that nobody has — romantic comedy to horror film with the blink of an eye. This is a film that focuses on duality and contradiction. He's SO powerful in both sides and so truthful. You just have to see his career to know how committed he is to his art. You want actors that make things work. Everything is so real and he has such an intuitive approach to performance but, at the same time, he can be so detailed.



Red Lights

Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment

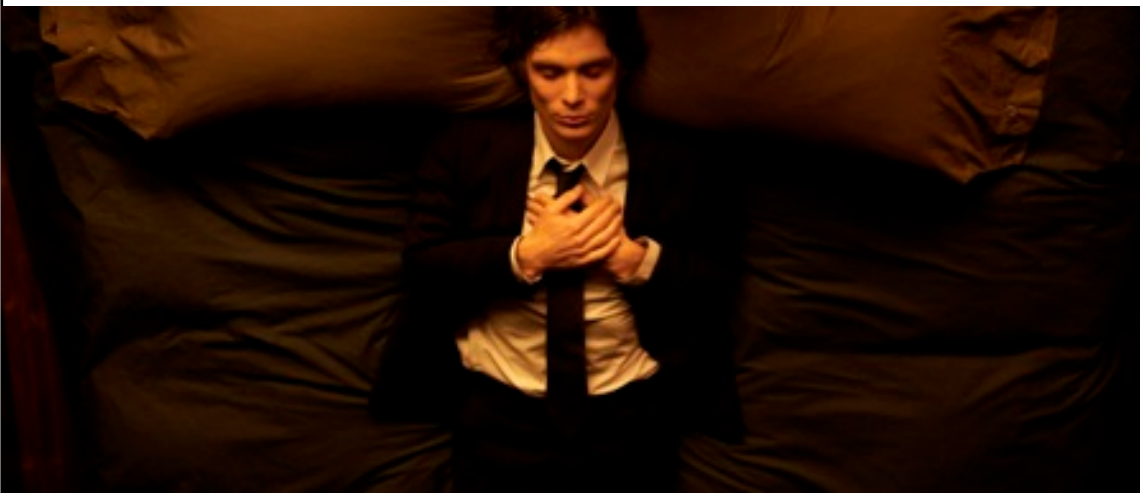
HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Does anything change when you come on board? Do you offer any input into character or story or is it the same script you signed on for that day?

MURPHY: That's what you sign up for. Filmmaking is a collaborative process by its nature but when you work with somebody — I need to feel safe on a film set. That comes from confidence in the director. And I completely trusted Rodrigo because I knew that he knew what he needed and wanted. If you have that environment, you'll do anything.

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: It had a pretty divisive response at Sundance — some raved and some weren't so happy but it was ALL across the board. Were you surprised by the variety of responses?

CORTES: No. When you take certain challenging options, you know that's going to happen. If you don't want that, you use a template. When

you do a movie like “Buried,” that’s going to happen. It’s what happens after a “unique” film. What I mean is that when you make “Memento,” it’s a movie that goes backward. When you do your next film, you can do another one backwards and people will tell you that you’re repeating but if you do it a different way then they’ll say they want one backwards. It happened after “The Sixth Sense,” for instance. You cannot live under that pressure. You have to trust your story. Every decision has a reason. Films start being real films two years after [they come out]. It’s what is happening now with “Insomnia” and “Unbreakable.” The other day, a couple of journalists congratulated us on the changes and reshoots after Sundance — we didn’t do anything. We didn’t change anything.



Red Lights

Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: There are stories all over the place that it’s different. None of it is different?

CORTES: Three seconds here. A few music changes. It’s exactly the same structure and there’s no scene that’s different.

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Wow. How did that lie get started? I’ve read that a number of places.

CORTES: I don’t know. Everything is about expectation and comparing things that you have in your head. What can you do? You smile and say that it’s a film and it will always be a film and it will have its life.

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Let’s clear something else up — I’ve heard there’s a different international version. Is that not true as well?

CORTES: It’s the same. Exactly the same. We cannot afford that many changes. [Laughs.] We don’t have the money for three reshoots or different endings.

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: With De Niro, is there any sort of awe when you act with a legend? You’ve worked with heavyweights but do you have that moment where you go, “This is Jake La Motta, Vito Corleone,...oh my God...” or do you not feel that any more?



Red Lights

Photo credit: Millennium Entertainment

MURPHY: Oh, I still have it. The thing is that I couldn’t believe that it was happening. I couldn’t believe that it was happening. Not only him but Sigourney as well. You just have to go, “OK, Cill, you’re here for a reason. Don’t drop the ball.” You put it on the side. They know this stuff too. It’s about two actors telling the story and trying to do their characters justice. That’s what it’s about. But then you go, “F**king Hell, it’s Robert De Niro!”

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Do you have any nerves more so than you otherwise would?

CORTES: No but only because you have to disconnect that part of your brain for the sake of the work. I mean, when I met him to talk about the part there’s that moment of awe but two minutes later we were discussing the characters and conflict. When you work, you’re solving problems as a director constantly. You just try to find truthful moments and ignore the actor’s surnames. You need to have a very straight relationship. We did. It helps that if he was an asshole than it would be more of a problem. He’s a warm man who put so much energy into what he does. Of course, when you’re working you call him Bob because he asks you to call him Bob, but when you leave you say “De Niro.”

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: How much of your own interest in the paranormal did you bring to this?

MURPHY: I wouldn't go see a psychic or have my palm read or my horoscope — it's not really my thing. But I can see why the world of it is so ripe for drama. It's the stuff of film. I guess I would have been skeptical and remain skeptical but open and intrigued and fascinated by people's fascination with it.

HOLLYWOODCHICAGO.COM: Do you watch any of your old films?

MURPHY: Nostalgia is death, man. It really is. For an artist or for a creative person. You have to keep moving forward. So much has happened since we made "Red Lights." I'm very proud of many of my films but you have to be ready to improve, to get better...I've got more to show...

See what Cillian Murphy has to show in "Red Lights," now playing in limited release and opening wider, including in Chicago, on July 27, 2012.



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By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [14]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [13]

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