



ART OF ACTION: CELEBRATING THE REAL ACTION STARS OF CINEMA

The Long Kiss Goodnight

The Long Kiss Goodnight

Director: Renny Harlin
Production Companies: New Line Cinema, Forge Productions
Executive Producers: Steve Tisch, Richard Saperstein, Michael De Luca
Producers: Renny Harlin, Stephanie Austin, Shane Black
Co-producer: Carla Fry
Unit Production Manager: Scott Thaler, Joe Boccia
Production Controller: Paul Prokop
Location Manager: Marty Dejcak
Post-production Supervisor: Bradley M. Goodman
1st Assistant Director: Bruce G. Moriarty
Script Supervisor: Nini Rogan
Casting: Mary Vernieu, Ronnie Yeskel
Written by: Shane Black
Director of Photography: Guillermo Navarro
MotoCam/Sno-Mo Cam: Cotton Mather
Underwater Photography: Peter Romano
Camera Operators: Andy Chmura, David Towers, Perry Harper
Special Visual Effects: Jeffrey A. Okun
Digital Visual Effects: Todd-AO Digital Images
Miniature Truck: Grant McCune Design Inc.
Miniature Bridge by: WKR Productions
Digital Effects: FXSmith
Special Effects Co-ordinator: Allen L. Hall
Special Effects Services: Special Effects Unlimited
Graphic Artist: Bill Choi
Editor: William C. Goldenberg
Production Designer: Howard Cummings
Art Director: Steve Arnold, Dennis Davenport
Costumes Designer: Michael Kaplan
Key Make-up Artist: Christine Hart
Key Hairstylist: Paul Elliot
Main Titles: Inc Bruce Schluter Design
Titles/Opticals: Pacific Title
Music Composer/Conductor: Alan Silvestri
Score Conductor/Orchestrations: Alan Silvestri
Sound Mixer: Doug Ganton
Re-recording Mixers: Paul Massey, D.M. Hemphill
Dubbing Re-recordists: Dennis Johnson, Matt Peterson, Bob Hile
Supervising Sound Editor: Stephen Hunter Flick
Supervising Dialogue Editor: Stephanie Flack
Sound Effects Recordist: Eric Potter
Stunt Co-ordinator: Steve M. Davidson
Combat Specialist: Mick Gould
Forensic Consultant: Det Sgt Mark L. Thorpe
Weapons Handler: John 'Frenchie' Berger
Nativity Parade Horses: Johnny Brunt
Picture Horses/Dogs: Rick Parker
Cast:
Geena Davis (Samantha 'Charly' Caine)
Samuel L. Jackson (Mitch Hennessey)
Patrick Malahide (Perkins)
Craig Bierko (Timothy)
Brian Cox (Nathan)
David Morse (Luke/Daedalus)
G.D. Spradlin (The President)
Tom Amandes (Hal)
Yvonne Zima (Caitlin)
Melina Kanakaredes (Trin)
Alan North (Earl)
Joseph Mckenna (One-Eyed Jack)
Dan Warry-Smith (Raymond)
Kristen Bone (girl 1)
Jennifer Pisana (girl 2)
Rex Linn (man on bed)
Edwin Hodge (Todd Hennessey)
Bill Macdonald (hostage agent)
Gladys O'Connor (Alice)

+ intro by Melanie Hoyes, BFI Director of Inclusion (Wednesday 23 October)

SPOILER WARNING The following notes give away some of the plot.

Eight years have passed since Samantha Caine emerged from a river, pregnant and with no memory of her past. She now lives a pleasant domestic existence with her boyfriend and daughter. But her past hits her like a bolt of lightning, causing her muscle-memory to reawaken the woman she once was: the lethal CIA operative Charley Baltimore. Wittily scripted by Shane Black, this pacey actioner, is enlivened by Davis's exuberant and committed high-octane performance.

Dick Fiddy, bfi.org.uk

A contemporary review

Those who survived viewing *Cut-Throat Island* will be shocked to learn that *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, the latest adventure by the actor Geena Davis and her director/husband Renny Harlin is a superbly entertaining action movie, perhaps the best of this year's many shoot-'em-ups. Granted, the plot is far from original, borrowing substantially from James Cameron's *True Lies* in particular. Moreover, it demonstrates not a flicker of interest in being anything more profound than a polished piece of genre manipulation and entertainment, as was the case with Harlin's best films so far, *Cliffhanger* and *Die Hard 2*. However, it has a clarity of purpose that makes it impervious to glibly dismissive criticisms.

Most of the credit for its integrated slickness must go to the screenwriter, Shane Black (writer of *Lethal Weapon*, *The Last Boy Scout* and *Last Action Hero*). For *The Long Kiss Goodnight*, Black was reputedly paid \$4 million, the highest price yet shelled out for a script – money well spent compared to the sums the industry lavishes on the likes of Joe Eszterh as for his dreadful pap. The plot revolves around a former-CIA assassin Charly Baltimore (Davis) who has suffered amnesia and become a mellow, cookie-baking citizen, Samantha Caine. She gets her memory back with the help of Mitch Hennessey (Samuel L. Jackson), a black private detective and a few traumatic experiences. It's all quite ridiculous of course, but Black and Harlin make sure the whole thing runs with nanosecond precision – not a detail is wasted or a plot point left unexplained.

Like *True Lies*, the film plays off domestic stability and boredom against the excitement and peril of the spy's life which ultimately intersect and conflict. There's a clever scene in which Samantha, slowly chopping a carrot, feels the urge to speed up. Her newfound skill with a knife, she concludes, means she must have been a chef. Inevitably, events lead up to a progeny-in-peril climax. No surprises there, but the one really interesting plot-twist, as in *True Lies*, is the use of a female protagonist, this time not playing mere back-up to any gun-toting he-husband. In fact, the film plays cute games with this reversal:

Frank Moore (*surveillance man*)
Graham McPherson (*CIA director*)
Sharon Washington (*Fran Hennessey*)
Judah Katz (*Harry, Perkins' aide*)
Robert Thomas (*alley agent*)
John Stead (*Deer Lick sentry*)
Marc Cohen (*teenage burnout 1*)
Chad Donella (*teenage burnout 2*)
Debra Kirshenbaum (*operator*)
Shawn Doyle (*Donlevy bum cop*)
Michael K. Jones (*bum cop 2*)
Ken Ryan (*news anchor*)
Craig Eldridge (*crime scene reporter*)
Susan Henley (*church mother*)
Reginald Doresa (*bar patron*)
Chuck Tamburro (*helicopter pilot*)
Larry King (*Larry King*)
USA 1996
121 mins
35mm

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Jackson's Mitch, captured by the baddies a second time, takes his leave of Davis' Sam/Charly, saying he'll be just downstairs waiting for her to rescue him again. And as in Black's *Lethal Weapon*, the two leads banter about their ethnicity, but there's an extra twist played here on the usual buddy-movie romance moves when the possibility of real sex and miscegenation is raised. There is also a nicely judged tweaking of the old cold-war dialectics that have provided the narrative impetus for so many spy-movies: in this, the baddies are not Russians, or Arabs or drug barons, but the CIA itself, staging things in order to blackmail Congress into increasing its funding.

This sort of film's success hinges crucially on its leads, and the two here are richly charismatic. Davis, shot with loving flattery, makes a noble screen amazon, six feet of tawny grace whether balancing a knife by its point on her fingertip or executing the perfect snow-plow on ice skates. She even looks better in a white vest than Bruce Willis. But, Jackson, wearing a ridiculous furry green flatcap and nasty check trousers, steals the show, injecting more aggression, sardonic wit and complexity into what is basically the black second-banana role that Danny Glover developed in *Lethal Weapon* and Jackson himself honed in *Die Hard with a Vengeance*. Several of his moments are especially memorable: thrown out of the car by Charly, Mitch lies prostrate on the road and smokes a cigarette as the traffic careens around him, the camera craning languorously away; or when he makes a blues narration of his own actions to a Muddy Waters riff while preparing for a confrontation. Apparently, an earlier version of the film had his character die at the end. Test screening audiences – understandably – were so distraught by this that the film had to be reshot to keep him alive.

Finally, it's a testament to *The Long Kiss Goodnight's* strength as a story, that one comes away from it remembering these aspects more vividly than the spectacular effects, stunts and editing (which are all, indeed, spectacular). All the technical elements are subordinated to the business of keeping the viewer interested in what will happen next to the characters, and that is a rare control on priorities in a genre so often afflicted these days with 'postmodern' jokiness (there's a little here too, but not too much) and spectacle for spectacle's sake. You can forget *Cut-Throat Island* now, all is forgiven.

Leslie Felperin, *Sight and Sound*, December 1996