

Surviving the Zombie Apocalypse With Woody Harrelson, Jesse Eisenberg of 'Zombieland'

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on October 1, 2009 - 4:46pm

- [Abigail Breslin](#) [2]
- [Brian Tallerico](#) [3]
- [Emma Stone](#) [4]
- [HollywoodChicago.com Content](#) [5]
- [Interview](#) [6]
- [Jesse Eisenberg](#) [7]
- [Ruben Fleischer](#) [8]
- [Woody Harrelson](#) [9]
- [Zombieland](#) [10]

CHICAGO – Woody Harrelson and Jesse Eisenberg make an amazing comedy/horror duo in “Zombieland,” which is one of the most out-of-left-field surprises of 2009. It’s a great film that has been perfectly captured in the production notes in four words: “Midnight Run’ with zombies.” The stars of this buddy/road/horror movie recently sat down with HollywoodChicago.com to discuss the state of the genre, the end of the world, and how to make chaos look spontaneous.

Harrelson and Eisenberg star as Tallahassee and Columbus, respectively. Harrelson’s the alpha male and Eisenberg the neurotic follower and both are just trying to stay alive in a future where there are more undead than alive. The film is filled with increasingly over-the-top zombie deaths, but it’s the characters that will truly turn it into a cult classic, something that surprised the film’s stars.



Jesse Eisenberg and Woody Harrelson at the AMC River East Red Carpet Screening of Columbia Pictures' horror comedy ZOMBIELAND.
Photo credit: Linda Matlow/Sony

“I thought it was just a great and really funny script that was completely original,” says Harrelson. Eisenberg adds, “I didn’t think that there would actually be any good roles written into a zombie movie. When I got the script, and I think Woody had the same experience, we read it from the bottom of the pile because you don’t expect that a zombie film is going to have such well-written characters...I was just surprised to see that this film had such rich characters and that it was as funny as it was.”





Jesse Eisenberg at the Chicago premiere of Zombieland, Sept. 28th, 2009.

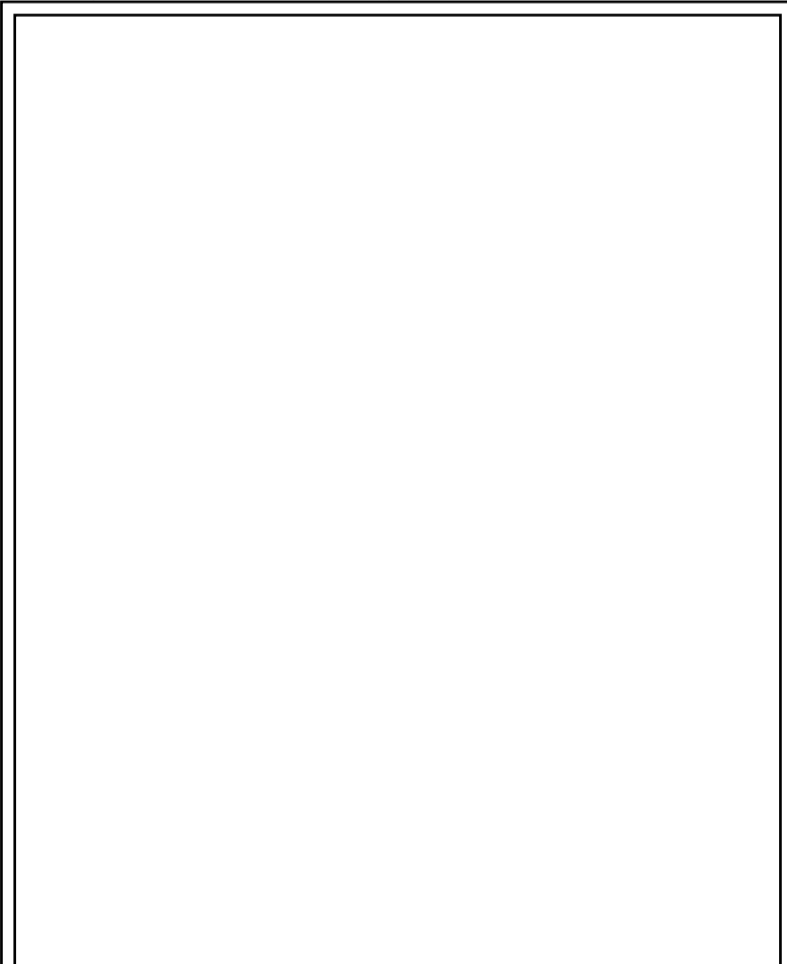
Photo credit: Joe Arce/HollywoodChicago.com

Harrelson had already been cast when Eisenberg auditioned and it sounds like the chemistry was instant. Jesse mentions how he got the part because they worked so well together and Harrelson expounds, "He came in for that audition and I was really gratified because we were sitting in front of Amy Pascal and all the brass at Sony—I had the part but if I had been in his shoes, I would have just been...He comes in and oh my God, he was so funny. He was improvising and I was kind of taken aback because I wasn't expecting him to do that. We were kind of playing with it right there in that very first audition, which I would love to see. It really kind of set the stage and when he left the room, I was like "I don't think we need to go any further.""

Life on the set of "Zombieland" contained a lot of improvisation and controlled chaos. As for the former, Eisenberg says, "I would get together with Reuben and make a list of all the lines that I didn't like and try to come up with alternatives. We would argue for like three hours about one line and when we would get on the set, he would go "Just say whatever you want.""

Eisenberg continues, "My favorite line that I came up with is one that nobody laughs at—the thing about getting a 4:30 shadow instead of a five-o'clock shadow."

Harrelson adds, "I love the one that he came up with on the last day in what is our first scene together. He came up with the thing about tossing the drink and saying "One and done, that's what I always say—well, I said it once." I thought he came up with some great sh*t."





Woody Harrelson still scanning the red carpet perimeters for potential zombies at the Chicago premiere of "Zombieland" Sept. 28th 2009.

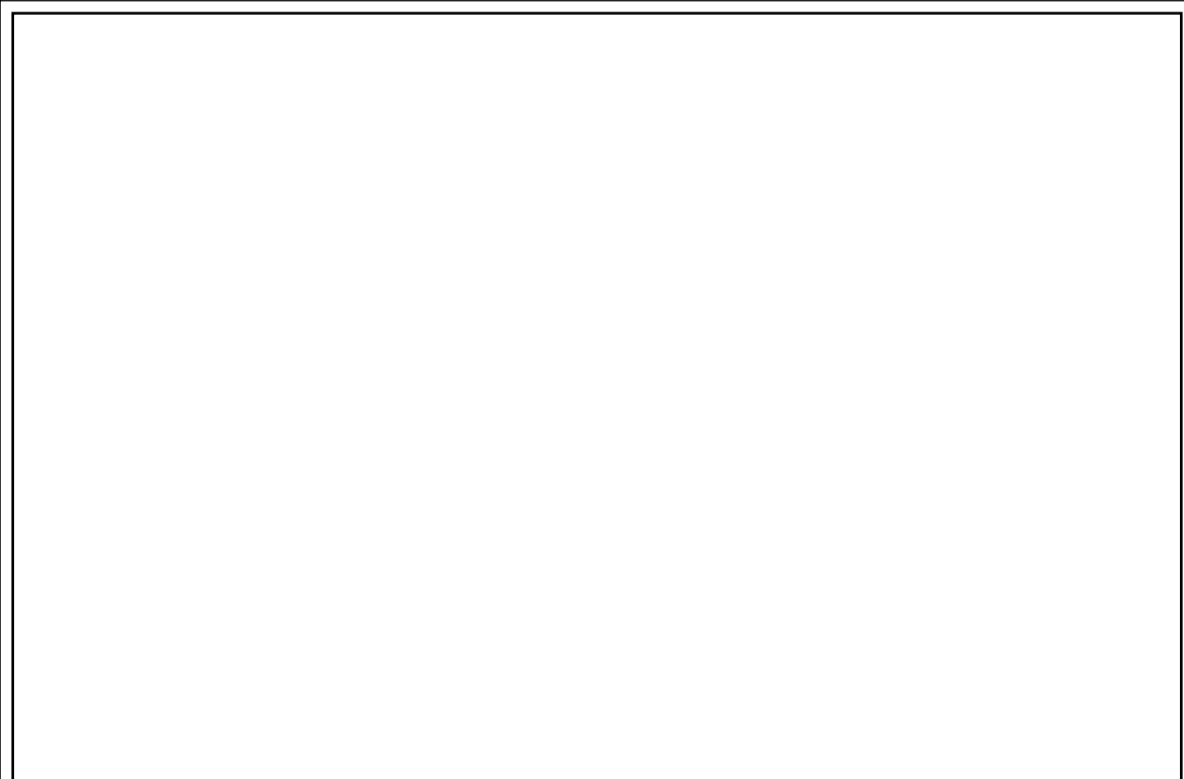
Photo credit: Joe Arce/HollywoodChicago.com

When the destruction level of the film comes up, Harrelson wryly says, "I think that is always neat to watch. A healthy level of destruction and mayhem is a good thing to take in during the course of one's day. I also think that we really felt at the end of the day that if we had slaughtered thirty zombies, we had actually done something."

Harrelson may have had a blast but Eisenberg admits to being a little more stressed out on-set - "I thought it was stressful to do a film over such a long period of time but you just have to get used to that. The other thing was that in the other films that I have done, there are usually two camera angles per scenes and very small set-ups. I was doing 20 takes a day on this movie that I thought were awful and if you do that on a smaller movie, they wind up in the movie. With this, there were so many angles that they could cut around and I didn't have to stress out over being perfect. "

Why are zombies so forefront in the film world again with films like "Zombieland"? Harrelson thinks the real world has a thing or two to do with it, saying, "I think that a lot of it does have to do with having eight years of an administration that made us believe that zombies are taking over. Then again, I do think that maybe the vampires are a little bit ahead right now."

The Bush administration was far from the only real-world subject of the day, something that shouldn't be surprising for people who know how active Harrelson and Eisenberg are off-set. Even the Roman Polanski issue came up. Harrelson seems undecided by Eisenberg feels strongly, saying, "You don't touch children. That is the worst thing in the world. You don't know how badly that screws up kids—it screws them up for life. Kids are sexualized in the media more than ever. That is why the girl in our movie is such a great role model for kids. She and her family are aware of the way that kids are objectified and sexualized in movies even at her age and so they don't put her in anything revealing or in any films that would put her in a compromising position. They put in her roles that present women in good ways."





Woody Harrelson stars in Columbia Pictures' comedy ZOMBIELAND.
Photo credit: Glenn Wilson/Sony

Even the trend for apocalypse films - "Zombieland," "2012," "The Road" - came up. Harrelson says, "I think that there is a real sense in our culture that we are heading towards some kind of apocalypse—maybe it is part of the Christian concept of the apocalypse but I am not saying that is an exclusively Christian concept. Maybe that is one of the things that make people resonate with these apocalyptic movies. I did this junket for 2012 and people kept asking me if I really thought that it was going to go in 2012 in the way that it seems to be going and I said that ecologically, we seemed to be right on target. I am really concerned with that because we are moving towards a very difficult time. Under Bush, we had eight years that were rough in every way, not the least was the assault on Mother Nature. However, I am not loving Obama—he made this statement when they were talking about trying to accomplish with the new legislation about global warming and he said "Let's not let great be the enemy of good." That just stayed with me and haunted me. "Great be the enemy of good"—let's not make great, firm international legislation and try to settle for what we can get. LBJ probably would have said that."

Will Harrelson and Eisenberg return to the world of "Zombieland" if given the chance? Eisenberg mentions a potential sequel more than once, saying, "I was thinking that they have to make another one." To which the more veteran Harrelson hilariously adds, "You probably shouldn't say that, just for negotiation purposes. Say "I have a lot of stuff lined up.""

Years of experience have taught Woody Harrelson that even in a film like "Zombieland," the characters are going to rule the day. "That is what drives you through a movie. I haven't watched the new Transformers movie but I assume that if you don't care about those characters, then the movie fails regardless. I guess it was really up to Ruben to make sure that you had enough investment in the characters so that the big effects don't interfere and the story moves along."

Invest in Tallahassee and Columbus when "Zombieland" opens tomorrow, October 2nd, 2009.



[11]

By [BRIAN TALLERICO](#) [12]
Content Director
HollywoodChicago.com
brian@hollywoodchicago.com [11]

Source URL (retrieved on Jul 22 2024 - 12:41am):

<http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/8848/surviving-the-zombie-apocalypse-with-woody-harrelson-jesse-eisenberg-of-zombieland>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/users/briantt>
- [2] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/abigail-breslin>
- [3] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/brian-tallerico>
- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/emma-stone>
- [5] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/hollywoodchicagodotcom-content>
- [6] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/labels/interview.html>
- [7] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/jesse-eisenberg>
- [8] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/ruben-fleischer>
- [9] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/woody-harrelson>
- [10] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/zombieland>
- [11] <mailto:brian@hollywoodchicago.com>
- [12] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/about#BRIAN>