

# COOKED RICE

a bloodless affair

## REVIEW

### QUEEN OF THE DAMNED

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from a *Virgin's Diary* for a much more satisfying experience.

*Queen of the Damned*, on the other hand, plays like one imagines one of those theatre games would with a special-effects budget of a bazillion dollars. The plot meanders around with nothing at its centre, while the actors go through the motions of being vampires, but apparently without anything to say except, "I am a vampire."

"Did you ever meet anyone famous?" I would ask. "Oscar Wilde, Marcel Proust, Mozart, Jesus or anyone?" Alas, when Lestat (the character popularised by Tom Cruise in the superior *Interview with a Vampire*) makes the announcement, all he elicits is an "Are you going to kill us?"

No, but he wants to sing in your bad heavy metal band. Say what you want about Tom Cruise, but he at least had enough understanding of the material to know when to play camp. Stuart Townsend plays Lestat more like Jim Morrison: seductive in a bad-boy kind of way, but ultimately so pompous that you just have to laugh.

It was hard to watch *Queen of the Damned* without thinking about those Goth Talk segments on *Saturday Night Live*, in which a couple of high school rejects don black clothes and white makeup, and attempt to take themselves seriously while impersonating the Winona Ryder character from *Beetlejuice*. Not that there's anything wrong with that.

## OSCAR NOMINATIONS

BEST ACTRESS  
HALLE BERRY

## ACTRESS OF THE YEAR!

absolutely superb!

ROBERT & ROEPER

"BREATHTAKING!

Billy Bob Thornton outdoes himself...Halle Berry soars!"

A.O. Scott,

THE NEW YORK TIMES

"MESMERIZING!

Halle Berry combines a dazzling beauty and

# CAST IRON

Film owes success to strong actors

Peter Vesuwalla

If FilmExchange turns out any breakthrough films this year, *Turning Paige* deserves to be one of them, due mostly to a cast that director Robert Cuffley almost didn't get. The performers cover a spectrum of Canadian talent, with lead roles on each end: Katharine Isabelle, who was initially turned down for the title role, and Nicholas Campbell, whom the filmmakers never dreamed of casting.

Isabelle recalls finding the script, then entitled *At Shepherd Park*, in her trailer while on the set of another movie. "It's kind of weird," says Isabelle. "I read it and I really, really liked it and a couple of things seemed familiar to me, like I'd already heard them before."

It turns out that she had. The 20-year-old Vancouver native remembered that she had auditioned for the part four years earlier, but didn't get it. She would go on, undaunted, to score roles in such films as *Snow Day* and *Josie and the Pussycats*, as well as TV appearances in *Da Vinci's Inquest* and *First Wave*. But it was her performance as a sexy, bohemian werewolf in John Fawcett's unlikely cult hit, *Ginger Snaps*, that made Cuffley change his mind. "Robert Cuffley knew John Fawcett and was one of the first to see *Ginger Snaps*," she says. "I guess that's how it happened."

For Campbell it was the other way around. The veteran actor's experience initially kept him from even being considered for the role. "They didn't realise that actors seek good material and so they didn't make the script that available because they didn't think someone like me would be interested," says the 49-year-old star of *Da Vinci's Inquest*, whose big-screen credits go back as far as *The Omen* and *The Spy Who Loved Me*.

For Isabelle, who has since worked with such names as Hilary Swank and Al Pacino, working with Campbell was an engaging experience. "You couldn't get that guy to stick to the script," she laughs. "He's so amazing like that. He will go off and he'll get the total point

Katharine Isabelle in *Turning Paige*



## INTERVIEW

KATHARINE ISABELLE  
& NICHOLAS CAMPBELL

across, but it sounds completely natural and it so doesn't sound like it was ever written. I'm standing there going 'How do I respond to that and make it not sound like a terrible, terrible thing?'

"I stuck to the script because I can't improv like Nick can. It's just the little things he does, the stuttering and the little movements and the little tiny things he adds in that just make his character so completely real. You love him and you hate him at the same time."

"Some actors get impatient with me when it's more formal," admits Campbell, adding that Cuffley was open to new ideas. "In a situation like this, the director was totally open and he wanted to hear it every possible way."

Isabelle also admires the director's flexibility. "We had a really good time," she says. "[He'll] even ask you, 'What do you think about other parts of the script that you're not even in?' whereas that usually doesn't happen with the more mainstream directors."

"I count Robert Cuffley amongst the best directors I've worked with," says Campbell, which is high praise considering the length of the list. "I'm really anxious to see his film career develop. Not only for his benefit but for all of us."

*Turning Paige* plays on Friday, March 1, at 7:30 p.m. at the Garrick with Robert Cuffley, Katharine Isabelle and Nicholas Campbell in attendance. Admission is \$7.

# Th-Th-Th-Th-That's All, Folks!

ANIMATION DIRECTOR CHUCK JONES BROUGHT LOONEY TUNES TO LIFE