



### **What attracted you to the project?**

One day, I heard that there was going to be a remake of "The Manchurian Candidate" and that Denzel Washington was going to star in it and would I be interested in reading the script. I was very, very interested because I had such a phenomenal experience working with Denzel several years ago when we did "Philadelphia" together. I gotta tell you, when you get a screenplay and you're reading it to see what kind of movie it might be, and you have the luxury of picturing Denzel Washington going through the motions that the script describes, it can really heat up the experience. So, I finished the script and said, "Yes, of course, absolutely, I would love to do this!"

### **How did you research for the film?**

Research, for me, is very important because I feel like I've got to believe everything we put on screen or else why should any other person believe what we put on screen. A lot of research went into the area of brain manipulation and how can you "brainwash" somebody, or how can you redirect a personality, how can you transform a human being into another human being through modern science. Again, in terms of the older movie, brain washing was a very, very brand new thing when the movie came out, when [Richard] Condon wrote his book.

### **What are your thoughts on Denzel and his performance in the movie?**

I am just in awe of the minimalism that Denzel brings to his portrayal of Ben Marco, coupled with the incredible emotional impact on us, the viewer, of that minimalism. I just applaud what he did.

### **What did you think of Meryl's performance as Eleanor?**

Eleanor enters a room that is filled with the most powerful members of her party, who have made a very firm unbreakable decision to go in one direction, and she walks in for about 3 or 4 minutes, changes their minds, turns the entire room around. Watching Meryl design the way she wanted to play that scene, watching her explore in terms of the literal ground that she was covering, just the way she circled the room, where she chose to pause, where she wanted to sit down for a minute, where she wanted to leap up again, it was just one of the most joyful experiences I've ever had making a movie.

And Liev's performance as Raymond?

I met Liev late in the game... He walked through the door and sat down, and I knew this was the guy because I liked him immediately. And it's imperative that our hearts go out to Raymond and I liked him immediately, my heart went out to him. He's so smart, so sharp. I was fascinated by the way he expressed himself and what he had to say, and by the time he left the room, we went through a couple additional motions to kind of like make it official, but I went, "Oh my God! We found the guy with that right combination of brains, emotional appeal, looks."

What kind of movie were you aiming to make?

The movie I wanted to make was the paranoid thriller. The Denzel Washington unraveling, going crazy even as he tries to regain his own idea of what his sanity is, and the closer he gets to the truth the crazier he seems. I just loved that. For me, first and foremost, it's the paranoid thriller.

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