

New photos, set report: “THE REEF”

Written by Michael Helms
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Having had a lifetime fascination with large bodies of water and immersing himself in them, it's probably no surprise that Andrew Traucki, co-writer and -director of the excellent, naturalistic horror film *BLACK WATER*, would drift out to sea for his follow-up feature *THE REEF* (see some new, exclusive pics below). For what might be the second part of a possible trilogy, and a film that has been completely financed by advance sales, Traucki has constructed a story involving a group of five whose boat capsizes in the middle of the ocean, leaving them adrift without communication—and subject to the attention of a massive shark.

On the beautiful Hervey Bay location just off the Queensland coast, surrounded by floating elements of his set and totally in his element, Traucki tells Fango, “Actually, *THE REEF* is based on a true story involving a trawler that went down off the coast near Townsville, where people were left in the sea. They ran into flotsam and started to swim to land, but were dogged by a large shark that had developed a taste for humans. I read that years ago, and it just stayed in my head. Imagine the horror of that experience, where you don't know whether you're going to come through? So when [he and producer Michael Robertson] were looking for a project after *BLACK WATER*, I remembered that and thought I was similar—a true-life horror tale—and maybe I could knock that up into something. I started writing, and as it developed, it did start to become something, and so I kept going.”



While *BLACK WATER* also dealt with a small group trapped in a watery setting by a large predator (in that case a crocodile), Traucki never saw *THE REEF* as an opportunity to simply repeat himself. “No, no—I've tried to make it different,” he says. “While it's sort of similar—it's a survival thriller—I've tried to make the character development and other things different. It's a

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little hard because it's a similar time frame, and hopefully, I've been successful. But I'm not trying to outdo BLACK WATER; it's a different film."

As with BLACK WATER, Traucki sought out a seriously talented all-Australian cast for THE REEF, and many of them separately shared similar reactions to his screenplay. With her feet firmly planted in the sand, actress Adrienne Pickering recalls, "I really liked the script when I first read it. It's got a really good build of tension. I like it—but I'm really terrible with these types of films. I just can't watch them. I got so down when I read the script that I actually had to stop and make myself a cup of tea, which I thought was a really good sign."



Fellow actress Zoe Naylor admit to not having perused the screenplay before applying for THE REEF, but immediately made up for it post-audition. "Once I was out the door, I felt so bad that I read the script and then sat down and watched BLACK WATER, and that was a really good thriller. Andrew knows exactly how to cut to keep the audience on the edge of their seats. In THE REEF, I believe the characters are fleshed out more, you really get a sense of their stories and it's much more realistic. The story really flowed off the page—a real page-turner—and that's a great place to start off with anything."

Also still on land, Robertson (who also produced the Outback chiller ROAD TRAIN) offers that Traucki is establishing his own subgenre with THE REEF, which additionally stars Gyton Grantley, Damian Walshe-Howling and Kieran Darcy-Smith. "It's in the family of the survival thriller, where you have young, attractive 20somethings put into an extraordinary situation they normally wouldn't be caught in. Andrew is interested in what I call very natural thrills. What we have in this film could happen to anybody. They go out on a yacht and run into difficulties, and those difficulties become quite dire, to the point where they have to make life-or-death decisions. The writer came up with what I call the super-natural; it's very realistic, and that's one of the strengths of his work and one of the things that resonates with audiences, in that they can see themselves in situations like this and think, 'What would happen if I was in this position?'"

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Keep your eyes here and on the pages of Fango for more on THE REEF and when you'll be able to experience it. You can also check out the official website [here](#) .

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