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MARCH 2011

THE MAGAZINE OF COMICS, ENTERTAINMENT AND POP CULTURE

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'HITMAN'S' HITMAKER



Meet Adrian Askarieh, one of Hollywood's up-and-coming genre producers

In some ways, Adrian Askarieh's life isn't all that different from when he was growing up in West Orange, New Jersey in the late '70s and early '80s—he still hits the comic book store once a week and still plays video games.

The difference now however? It's an important part of his job as president of Prime Universe Productions.

After breaking into the business as an entertainment lawyer, Askarieh decided he wanted to have more of a hand in the creative end of the business. His first big break as a producer was with 2007's "Hitman," based on the video game by Eidos Interactive, and he still gets giddy talking about the surreal experience of sitting inside Grauman's Chinese Theatre with co-producer Daniel Alter, watching the Hollywood premiere of his own movie. Even the popcorn tasted better than he dreamed it would.

"For me, I couldn't think of a better job than being the guy who facilitates bringing comic books and video games to the movies," he says.

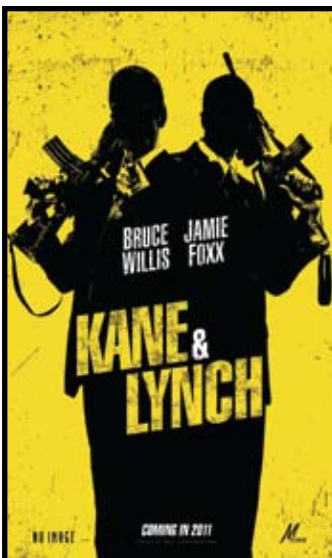
Askarieh recently took *Wizard* through some of the movie properties he's currently shepherding from the comic book and video game stores to the big screen:

KANE & LYNCH

With Bruce Willis and Jamie Foxx locked in as the leads for the adaptation of Eidos' hit first-person shooter game, the eagerly awaited action-thriller is scheduled to go before cameras in early 2011. The movie's story will pit the titular escaped death row inmates against a mysterious gang of killers.

"It's really the dream cast," he says. "[Willis] said in our first meeting, 'Look, I read every action script in town, and this is the best script I've read since the first 'Die Hard.'"

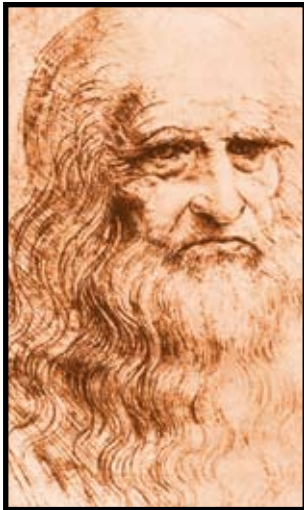
BY ETHAN SACKS



Bruce Willis and Jamie Foxx are tapped to play the leads in "Kane & Lynch," a video-game inspired flick about death row inmates (above) taking on a group of mysterious killers.



KANE AND LYNCH VIDEO GAME: EIDOS INTERACTIVE; DA VINCI, ROYAL LIBRARY OF TURIN; HITMAN: 20TH CENTURY FOX HOME VIDEO; JONNY QUEST: HANNA BARBERA PRODUCTION; ASKARIEH: PRIME UNIVERSE



JONNY QUEST

Believe it or not, there has yet to be a film made based on the iconic, action-packed '60s cartoon. "Jonny Quest" really came out of, 'Why hasn't there been a "Jonny Quest" movie," he says. "I did some digging and found out there had been some attempts prior and they didn't go anywhere.

"I called my friend at Warner Bros., Dan Lynn, and said, 'Look I want to take a crack at it,' and he said, 'Let's do it.'"

But while the studio loved the script, the project hit a speed bump when "Speed Racer" proved a box office disappointment; "Jonny Quest" has been postponed, but Askarieh is hopeful that the movie will still see the light of day.

HACK/SLASH

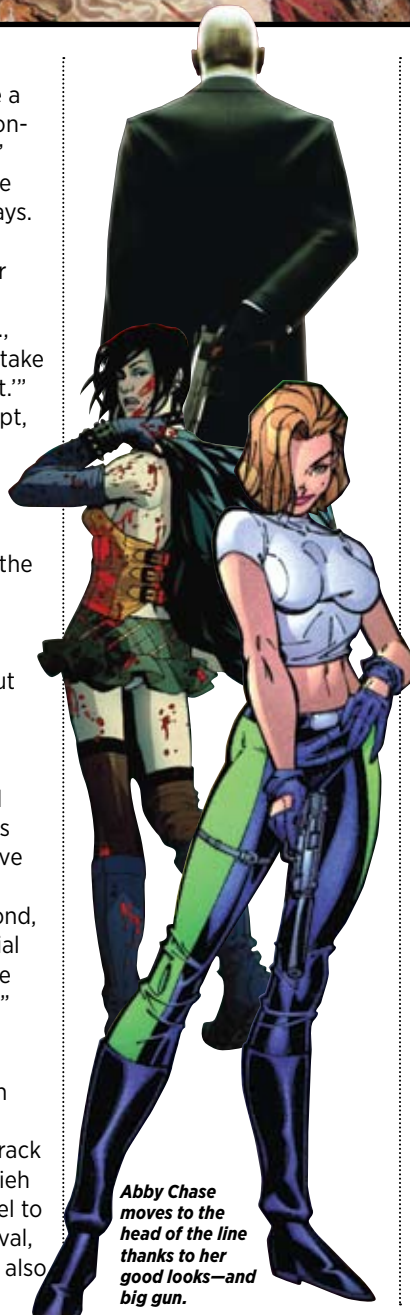
Askarieh is particularly excited about bringing Image's *Hack/Slash* to the multiplex. He struck a deal with Relativity Studios back in 2007, but the cameras aren't scheduled to roll until later this year. The script makes the wait worth it, he teases. "We have a great director who's stuck by the project for the last year, Frederik Bond, who's a world-celebrated commercial director," he says. "He really gets the character of Cassie and her journey."

HITMAN 2

It's not a matter of if, but when 20th Century Fox brings the genetically enhanced killer Agent 47 back to wrack up another huge body count. Askarieh just forwarded the script for a sequel to the video game company for approval, and is confident the production will also get started in 2011.



On "Jonny Quest," bad guys routinely died on camera, shiz got blown up all the time, and gunfire occurred every seven seconds.



Abby Chase moves to the head of the line thanks to her good looks—and big gun.

"We wanted to do a sequel, but also do a reboot, and we wanted to make it more character driven, bring it back to basics, have it not involve multiple conspiracies," he says.

DANGER GIRL

High on Askarieh's priority list is a film adaptation based on the hit *WildStorm* series by J. Scott Campbell and Andy Hartnell about a group of sexy female secret agents. Prime Universe is still in the early stages of putting the package together, including finding the right writer for the script.

"The trick with *Danger Girl* is that you want to present it in the right way, so people don't see it as 'Charlie's Angels,' because that's emphatically what it's not," he says. "It really comes across what J. Scott and Andy wanted, which is this love letter to all the cool movies they love, like *James Bond* and 'Raiders of the Lost Ark.'"

LEONARDO DA VINCI AND THE SOLDIERS OF FOREVER

Inspired by footage from Guy Ritchie's "Sherlock Holmes," Askarieh looked to the history books to come up with his own idea for a potential franchise. His epiphany: Artist-inventor Leonardo Da Vinci as an Indiana Jones-like adventurer battling monsters straight out of the Bible. Warner Bros. was so impressed, it bought the rights within 24 hours of seeing his treatment. Marc Guggenheim (*Justice Society of America*) is in the process of writing a script, with Roy Lee co-producing.

"This one is really my baby, I didn't adopt this one, I gave birth to it," he says laughing. 