

**Richard Armitage: «Finding the right concentration while acting in the middle of six tornados was not very easy...»**

Even if sometimes disaster movies went under B-movie rules and most of the time were made with low budget, which is something that influences the final results, they keep on fascinating that audience which loves apocalypse events, natural calamities, cataclysms. The recipe for a disaster movie usually involves characters we will forget soon after leaving the cinema and huge special effects aimed to surprise the audience and hide screenplay failures.

Tornadoes are not widely used in films and, if you think about it, one of the few examples is Twister (1996), written by Michael Crichton and directed by Jan DeBont. Before Into The Storm, which last weekend was 10th in the American Box Office and now released in Italy, only one another recent title was about tornadoes: Sharknado (a trash movie quickly turned into a cult), broadcasted last year on Syfy, putting together sharks and hurricanes in an unlikely way. Steven Quale's movie (director of Final Destination 5) has a definitely different approach, dealing with the story of a group of people fleeing from a series of devastating tornadoes striking on Oklahoma. The main character is a common father, Gary (the British actor Richard Armitage), who joins a storm chasers team trying to film the event, to try to save his son's life (Max Deacon) at the same time. In the cast, Sarah Wayne Callies from The Walking Dead. Into The Storm, which is filmed with the found footage technique, has wonderful special effects and some scenes that will make you gape. In London, at the Into The Storm junket, we met Richard Armitage, who we'll see again in cinemas this December as Thorin Oakenshield in The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies.

*- We know that when you prepare for a role you also write a long biography about the character you are about to play. Can you tell us how you prepared for this movie?*

**RA:** In this case I already had some details about Gary's past because they were in the script. So I simply started from that. However, since the story focuses on every single moment, there were very few chances for me to do further research about the character.

What I found interesting about this role is that it wasn't only me, as an actor, unaware of what was going to happen, but also the character himself. It's such an intriguing plot. I really enjoyed myself.

*- What did you particularly like about this character?*

**RA:** Gary is a very common man who has to face an event much bigger than him, I've always liked the idea of him turning into a hero, after this experience. Even that it was just for a single day. The movie, in fact, covers the period of six hours in one day. Gary is vice-principal in a high school and an English teacher. Considering the circumstances in which the whole story takes place, I thought it would be a good idea for him to look fit, so in my biography I wrote that he was a football coach.

*- Have you ever experienced such catastrophic events in your life?*

**RA:** In 2012, when the hurricane Sandy hit New York, I was there, but I left the city immediately and I went towards Upstate. However, later, I decided to come back to the city and I found myself in the middle of Manhattan, half plunged into darkness, at least from the 63rd street to the southern part of the city.

It was interesting to see the community gather together in such a difficult moment.

*- Were you attracted by the idea of being in the middle of a cataclysm?*

**RA:** I have to admit that I was tempted to remain there, but, eventually, I preferred going away because that was the emergency teams' advice. If you remain, you make a selfish and silly decision because you put other people in danger, since then they would have to come and save you.

*- I know you were helped by special wind machines that were used on set to recreate the effects of the hurricane.*

**RA:** We were very lucky because the production has made a great effort to recreate the effect of a hurricane and make us understand that kind of emotion and impact. This helped us a lot in our performance. but it was complicated to understand the plot of the story: finding the right shades was quite complex from a story-telling point of view when you have to face one and then five tornados, concluding with an even bigger one.

*- In the movie, the tornado is one of the protagonists and it is interesting how the viewers are frightened but fascinated at the same time, as well as some of the characters.*

**RA:** I think it's a very natural phenomenon. It often happens that people are almost galvanized by its terrifying beauty instead of running away. This is the reason why many people go and film them. I think it's because you can barely believe what you see.

*Interview from Best Movie Italy (August 28, 2014)  
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