Qantas flies nonstop to New Zealand.

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‘Dead Man Out’
Danny Glover and Rubén Blades go to jail for shooting a film

Bordeaux Detention Centre, Montreal, Canada. The moment you walk into this medium-security prison, you realize you are being watched. A burly guard in a blue uniform, his keys jangling from his belt, eyes you suspiciously as he unlocks the first of myriad steel gates. Ten feet above, another guard in a security tower stares coldly down at you. This is an eerie place to film a movie, as the cast and crew of HBO’s Dead Man Out have discovered. What unnerves you most—even more than the omnipresent security guards—are the angry stares from the 850 prisoners themselves. Even if you force yourself to look away, you can still feel their...
steely gaze as you walk by the rows of cramped, dreary cells—wild, desperate eyes that peer out from slits in the gray doors. (Bordeaux has cells with solid doors, not bars.) Continue walking and you pass the infirmary, where a prisoner, with his hand in a cast from a fight, gives you the once-over. He-whistles at a female member of the crew and mutters a crude comment in French that causes her to look down and pick up her pace.

“I go home drained, emotionally and physically,” says Danny Glover, who costars in this tense prison drama with Rubén Blades. “Whenever you look, there’s brick and steel—you get so sick of it. It’s like the fresh air can’t make it past the bars. The mice, the dirty bathrooms, the smell of vomit, the darkness that’s so heavy you can feel it—they all wear you down. And those endless corridors. I hate to walk down them just to get coffee.”

In Dead Man Out Glover plays a psychiatrist called in to treat a disturbed murderer (Blades). Forced to grapple with ethical dilemmas and gut-wrenching decisions, Glover is responsible for getting the irrational inmate insane enough to be executed—since it is unconstitutional to carry out the death penalty on anyone deemed insane.

Considering the disturbing nature of the movie, producer Forrest Murray knew he wanted to film in a prison. “I wanted to re-create that harrowing, claustrophobic feeling you get in jail, and you can’t do that on some set,” he says.

The Canadian authorities, after presenting a list of stipulations that entitled guards to search the crew’s cars and forbade the crew from associating with prisoners, agreed not only to let Murray film in Bordeaux but also to use some actual prisoners as extras.

Now, on the set, the crew is finding that if filming in jail for 20 days gives the movie greater realism, it also creates problems. First there is the noise—the constant din of prisoners shouting, announcements blaring over the loudspeaker, and food and laundry carts rumbling through the hallways. “The noise is all around you, in layers,” says Glover. “It becomes a part of you, like mildew on your clothes.” Since they’ve begun shooting, a prisoner has attempted to break out, and a riot in the mess hall was put down when guards fired warning shots that could be heard on the set.

Glover: “I heard the clang of that gate being locked behind me, and it hit home all over again. It’s a brutal sound.”

Perhaps no one has it harder than Rubén Blades, who often spends eight hours a day with chains around his wrists and ankles, and cannot even go to the bathroom unless someone unlocks his manacles.

Today, he and Glover are shooting a scene in which Blades is dragged into an interrogation room, kicking and fighting two security guards. For three hours, he is dragged back and forth until director Richard Pearce (No Mercy, Country) finds a series of camera angles that work. When the crew breaks for lunch, Blades, already weak with the flu, goes to the makeup room (a former men’s room) to have lotion spread on his wrists, red and chafed from the handcuffs, and Vapornyc smeared on his congested chest. Right now, Blades is not a happy camper.

“This is the most difficult shoot I’ve done,” says the Panamanian-born singer and star of Crossover Dreams and The Milagro Beanfield War, as he relaxes later (if you can call it relaxing) on the hard bed of a vacant cell. For Blades, the difficulties of filming in prison are compounded by the subtleties of playing an irritated man who had a chance to have an edge.” Blades is a young Harvander from the University of Panam.
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Blades—who has a law degree from Harvard and a degree in criminology from the University of Panama—was a lawyer for several years in Panama City. While writing his thesis, he lived on the Panamanian penal island of...
"Dead Man Out" premieres this month on HBO.

A painter's life is in turmoil as he tries to come to terms with his past and present in "Dead Man Out". The film explores themes of redemption and the struggle to find one's place in the world.

As the protagonist navigates the complexities of his life, he must confront the challenges of his past and the pressures of the present. Through a series of intense moments, he learns to find hope and forgiveness, even in the darkest of times.

With a cast of talented actors and a gripping storyline, "Dead Man Out" is a must-see for fans of drama and psychological thrillers. Don't miss it this month on HBO.