

# THE FIXER

## PRODUCTION NOTES

### DEVELOPMENT

The original idea for *The Fixer* was spawned back in the Spring of 2004. The characters of Vic Simmons, X. Franklin, & Jack Logan had already been created a few years earlier. While X. & Logan existed in several comedic scripts, Vic Simmons had yet to be written into any script. With “The Fixer,” only vague details existed with Vic Simmons as the private investigator who helped people out where no one else could. The characters of X. Franklin & Jack Logan were indeed meant to be a part of it along with the now only mentioned Dave “Son of a Bitch” Masters. Though, there was no Caroline, no McManus, not even an antagonist.

Though, Jack Demerest was indeed there, but was originally envisioned as a much different character. Instead of being Vic’s emotional support, offering a brotherly friendship with Simmons, he was to be a much harsher person. While he was still to be someone who helped out Vic on a regular basis, the relationship was going to have significant friction, and his help was offered much more reluctantly (but monetarily compensated for). Furthermore, Jack was meant to have become increasingly more annoyed at how often Vic asked for his help, and was obviously not all that much of a friend to begin with. Demerest was going to be hanging out in a bar, but wasn’t a bartender. No profession had really been developed for him. Still, his look was the same – long black hair, black leather jacket, hard rocker appearance. A back story for how two guys such as these became allies was never delved into. Ultimately, after only a few short months, the character of Jack Demerest became a more compassionate and upbeat fellow, and the harsher version of Jack Demerest was altered to become Kurt Demerest – Jack’s younger brother.

In 2004, there was no definite plot laid down. What problem Vic had to fix hadn’t even been figured out, yet. It was all very vague, and the Michael Mann influence was still a long, long time away. Vic’s back story still had his two best friends dying in an auto accident fifteen years earlier, and him vowing to take care of the younger sister. Though, she was originally named Sandra Wilder, and remained so all the way up until casting began for *The Fixer* in September, 2006. The name was re-used when a new part was written in to add Heather A. Schlitt to the cast. At the time of the original brainstorming, the only scenes written were the opening train station scene with Vic Simmons & X. Franklin as well as the Logan/Franklin apartment scene. When developing *The Fixer* came to an impasse, these scenes were transplanted into the script for a comedic short which ultimately went nowhere in the casting stage. Vic’s involvement was very minimal as it was mainly an X. Franklin / Jack Logan story, and Jack Demerest appeared in only one scene outside of the office complex (with almost zero mention of Sandra / Katie). These building blocks would collect dust, but not be forgotten.

In the intervening years, the films of Michael Mann became a stronger and stronger influence on filmmaker Nicholas J. Michalak. Beginning with *Thief* to *Collateral* to *Heat*, and even later during production, *Manhunter* and *The Insider*, inspiration was sparked. Though, the biggest influence was *Miami Vice*. Never watched during the 1980s, Nick Michalak bought the season one DVD blind in September, 2005, and from the pilot episode, was hooked forever. The vibe, style, and cinematography of the ground-breaking series influence so many details in *The Fixer* that it was scripted while listening to many of the songs featured in the series.

Another influence that stemmed back some time, in concept only, was the 1980s television series *The Equalizer*. Though, like *Miami Vice*, Nick Michalak had never seen the show, but was familiar with the premise of a highly skilled man who helps out people in trouble where no one else can. Though, the character of Robert McCall, portrayed by Edward Woodward, was a retired government agent skilled in the usual spy trades. He armed himself with an array of weapons (mostly firearms) as well as resources still within “The Company” including trusted operatives, and not-so-trusted political figures. On the other hand, Vic Simmons is not someone who was ever trained or employed by the government, and most importantly, Vic would never use a gun. As he would say, “I’m in the business of helping the innocent, not punishing the guilty.” He would try to resolve issues without violent means, and even if it comes to that, he would never use lethal force. Plus, the two characters have a quarter-century difference in age. While *The Equalizer* and *The Fixer* have similar lines of work, they are two completely different characters under the surface. Ironically, Michalak would not see a single episode of the series until he was almost finished with the original draft of the script. The series premiered on SpikeTV on Monday, October 1<sup>st</sup> 2006, and there were striking, yet unexpected similarities with the pilot episode of *The Equalizer* and that of *The Fixer*. If for nothing else, Vic Simmons shares more in common with Bruce Wayne / Batman, and Christian Bale’s performance in *Batman Begins* was suggested as a character reference for actor Nick Doetsch. Whatever the case, all this influence and inspiration would come out in the third quarter of 2006.

For more than two years, the idea for “The Fixer” laid dormant. Though, with failed attempts to resurrect one unfinished 2005 project, and the go-nowhere casting of another in mid-2006 made filmmaker Nick Michalak dig back into the archives. “The Fixer” was chosen to be developed once again, but it would not be an easy task. It took two months to finish the initial draft of the script, and casting began before it was even complete. The story was further fleshed out giving Vic an ex-romantic interest in Caroline Burnett. Comments were made about her name being ‘Carol Burnett,’ but she was named as an homage to Caroline Crockett, the wife of *Miami Vice* character Detective James “Sonny” Crockett (whose undercover name is “Sonny” Burnett). Jack Demerest had already been re-imagined into the character he became, and originally, Kurt was not to appear despite Vic having a phone conversation with him.

Victor Jason Simmons was not particularly difficult to develop as he had been around for many years, but not utilized much. There was the idea for a comedic script set

in 1989 with an 18 year old Vic facing his last, difficult days in high school, and dealing with some of his grief. Though, he would've been one of many characters the script would've centered around. The only other script would've had Vic in a brief cameo, in the shadows, helping out an old high school friend, Rob Detroit, out in L.A. on the run from criminal elements. Nothing was ever written of that script, but remains as part of Vic's canon. It was the only time Vic ever went on anything resembling a vacation.

Again, nothing much changed about Vic over time. His emotional state, his history, and line of work all remained the same. Though, elements such as Caroline were added into his life, showing that he hadn't spent all these years alone. Still, the relationship was not meant to last, and even in the partially developed sequel script, the effort has been made to keep them apart. Though, they eventually evolve and mature further, but in "The Fixer," it takes a long, hard road to get there. Nothing in Vic's life was ever meant to be easy, and even his friendships carried special baggage.

The character of X. Franklin had been constantly developed since late 1999 in a series of comedic scripts, and his character profile ran five pages long. X. became the most complex character created by Nick Michalak. While he presents himself in a very straight forward fashion, the reasons behind his attitude and outlook on life is not simple. His friendships are also unique in contrast to how he treats everything and everyone else.

The flip side of that is Jack Logan, who also has a profile that runs several pages long. Though, Logan was never meant to have an active part in the plot. The intention was that Vic had separated himself from the life he had before he disappeared following his 1989 high school graduation. People in Ravenswood just figured he vanished and never came back. This is ironic since Jack Logan's older brother Jason did the same thing, but for very different reasons to different places. Thus, Logan has no knowledge of who their 'secret supplier' of concert tickets happens to be; let alone that X. Franklin is friends with Vic Simmons. Still, Logan & Franklin are characters like Riggs & Murtaugh or even Crockett & Tubbs at the very start. They might not mesh 100%, personality-wise, but you can't have one without the other. They define each other. You come to understand one because of the other.

Though, while many of the characters developed rather smoothly, there was the issue of the main antagonist. The character of Luther Resnick was a difficult one from development to casting. Originally, he was to be a dangerous, drug addicted, abusive bad ass. Simply, the jacked up, bloodshot, psycho that has probably been seen far too many times, and which wouldn't have offered much fertile ground for exploration. So, it was later decided that making him into someone that is just "naturally fucked up in the head" would be more interesting from a character, acting, and story standpoint. He would be far more intimidating as man in complete control of his wits, and being very conscious to his actions. He became a much more dangerous individual because of this, and a more formidable adversary to Simmons. Though, there was never a set "look" for Resnick. It was open to interpretation to whoever might want to tackle the role, but the casting of this role would prove to be a major obstacle in and of itself.

The final major choice of developing the script centered around the ending. How Vic would resolve the problem that is Luther Resnick had two options, but only one seemed any bit satisfying from a storytelling, logic, and character standpoint. Maybe in a script with not as much depth, one might go for the crowd pleasing popcorn movie ending, but it would only cause more problems than it solved for Victor J. Simmons, P.I. The main consideration is that this story is mostly about Vic dealing with his own problems, and making the right choices for not only himself, but all others around him.

©2008 RavensFilm Productions  
<http://www.ravensfilm.com/fixer>