

Acting with A-listers on Captain America

Erich Redman plays a Nazi in this summer's blockbuster film. He talks to **Melanie Dakin** about the filming and mixing with Hollywood stars

Film

BLOCKBUSTER sets, famous faces and exotic locations, Abbotts Langley actor Erich Redman has seen them all. His latest role is in this summer's smash hit *Captain America: The First Avenger*, which has already knocked *Harry Potter* off the top of the box office ratings in the US. The Russian-born German actor plays the character of Schneider, one of a handful of Nazi baddies in the Paramount blockbuster based on the famous cult *Marvel* comic book character Captain America.

Erich appears in scenes with Toby Jones (*Frost/Nixon*, *Harry Potter*, *W*) and Hugo Weaving (*Matrix*, *Lord of the Rings*, *V for Vendetta*), who plays the main villain Johann Schmidt aka The Red Skull.

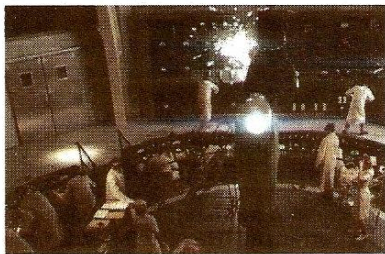
Naturally on set there's a lot of waiting around which has enabled Erich to spend time with the A-listers.

"Because of the technical requirements of the shoot, Hugo and I were able to get acquainted. He had no airs and graces, he's a charming guy."

Erich speaks equally highly of Tom Hanks, Cate Blanchett, Sandra Bullock and Matt Damon whom he met on *Saving Private Ryan*. "We had a couple of lunches together as you tend to get booked according to scenes. It was before he was really famous with the *Bourne* trilogy. It's very hard to retain friendships though as they are so very busy."

Not that Erich has been idle either. His other credits include the BAFTA-Award winning *United 93*, *Charlotte Gray*, *The Illusionist*, and the U-boat film *U-571*.

His first ever TV role was in *The Good Guys* with Keith Barron and Nigel Havers in 1993 where he played a troubled Moldavian monarchist. More recently, he was a regular in the BBC sitcom *TLC*, playing German anaesthetist the Gasman. His characters have ranged from terrorists and soldiers to psychic



Above: Erich Redman in *Saving Private Ryan*. Right: Erich in the *Illusionist*. Below: A scene in *Captain America: The First Avenger*



investigators, secret agents and explorers. I ask if he feels stereotyped by the roles he is offered.

"Very much so," Erich admits. "I have a slight accent, so I'm predetermined to play Germans and Russians. I had elocution lessons but I ended up speaking a kind of 1930s English. It's impossible for me to get theatre work where they use received pronunciation. I've resigned myself to the fact that I'll be playing foreigners all my life."

"In Hollywood it's very black and white, they have a clear picture of the enemy. Of course, if you're playing a bad Nazi that's to be expected because they committed horrendous crimes but sometimes it's nice to play a Mafioso-type who is more multifaceted than the stereotypical bad guy German."

Captain America's filming locations included Shepperton Studios, Los Angeles, New York City, and Universal Studios. Uniforms for cast were meticulously tailor-made from scratch with numerous costume fittings that

included measuring foot-height and knee-depth for custom-made riding boots and breeches.

"I wore an authentic black SS uniform that was made from scratch at film costumier Angels in Hendon. It was unbelievable. There were four or five people working on my outfit and it was the best fitting jacket I've ever worn. I asked if I could buy it after the film and they said yes, if I had £2,000 to pay for it."

"The budget for the set was enormous. My scenes were filmed in a top notch 1930s-style lab and when I saw the film at Paramount it looked even better on the big screen. A large part of entertainment is the visual pleasure. If you're interested in visual design it's pretty damned fantastic."

● *Captain America: The First Avenger* is at cinemas nationwide from today

Read Erich's anecdotes about his time spent with celebrities
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