

MOVIES

Tales from

Depositions in Sharon Stone's 'Basic Instinct 2' 1

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SHARON STONE'S legal dispute with producers Mario Kassar and Andy Vajna over "Basic Instinct 2" has ended. A trial averted. And the possibility that a sequel to the 1992 thriller, "Basic Instinct," which rocketed Stone to stardom, might actually be made is back on the table.

News of a tentative settlement landed just as the 46-year-old actress is in the throes of a publicity whirl tied to her latest film, "Catwoman," in which she plays the villainous cosmetic conglomerate queen, Laurel Hedare.

During the lengthy run-up to trial, both sides inundated the court with volumes of legal arguments. Among those files were portions of depositions given by Stone, Kassar, Vajna and John McTiernan, who had been under consideration to direct the sequel. The excerpts below give a rare glimpse into the minds, egos and Hollywood realities involved in assembling a film like "Basic Instinct 2."

'10,000 people were chanting my name.'

In a Nov. 14, 2002, deposition in San Francisco, Stone was asked by attorneys about the first time she had discussed the possibility of doing a sequel to "Basic Instinct" and why she thought the movie had become a blockbuster.

Stone: "Oh, I don't know. This is so crazy. We were in Cannes, everyone had had too much Champagne. I had gone from being an actress no one had ever heard of to the most famous person in the world in about 20 minutes. No, realistically, in about 3 1/2 hours. We were on the Riviera, 10,000 people were chanting my name. It was all very overwhelming. Mario was deliriously happy. He was calling me 'My star, my star.'"

Q: "What was there about 'Basic Instinct,' the original, in your view, that enabled you to turn yourself from an unknown into a major star in 3 1/2 hours?"

Stone: "Oh, I don't know if we ever really know what makes any movie a hit. But I think that the material was good. Michael Douglas is extraordinarily attractive as a broken romantic hero. We had the best cinematographer in the business do-



ing his swan song as a cinematographer before he became a director. So it was his greatest moment in cinematography. Paul Verhoeven is a director of great magnitude... and I think that there was a subliminal, strange quality to this type of sex and violence at that really strange moment just when the AIDS crisis was scaring people..."

'I put up the naked scene, froze it, took off my clothes.'

Q: "Do you believe that the nudity and sex as portrayed in the film was in part central to its success in the context that you have described?"

Stone: "Well, I think that it broke barriers in commercial filmmaking that had not been broken before and in a way that had not been broken before. Never had a star of Michael Douglas' magnitude participated in a film that had that sort of graphic violence and sexuality."

Stone is asked about whether there was concern about how her breasts and posterior might appear on screen given her present age.

Q: "Did they also tell you that they would work with you in terms of lighting and makeup so as to improve your physical appearance as it might appear nude on the screen?"

Stone: "Yes. And then I put up 'Basic Instinct I' in my projection room in L.A., put up the naked scene, froze it, took off my clothes. I had my best friend come over, stood in front of it and she said, 'You look fabulous, you're ready to go.' And I felt great."

'I said, "OK. I'm trusting you with this." And then you saw my crotch.'

Stone recalled how she came to be filmed without underwear in the now-famous shot in which she uncrosses her legs in "Basic Instinct."

Stone: "I didn't know what was happening. [Verhoeven, the director] told me that I needed to take my underwear off because they were reflecting light and that if we reflected the light off the underwear, you would know I had them on, but if I take them off it would just be a shadow and you wouldn't know."

"I said, 'OK. I'm trusting you with this.' And then you saw my crotch. And I didn't know that until I was at a screening of the movie. I was pretty darned surprised."

'Took me the day to talk him into letting me be nude in the scene.'

In a Nov. 15, 2002, deposition, Stone discussed whether she had ever been requested to acknowledge in writing that she would appear nude in a particular scene.

Stone: "It's been different from movie to movie

BREAKOUT ROLE: Stone, who sued for \$1 million over "Basic Instinct," saw her career skyrocket upon the release of the film.

A partial cast of notable characters



Reuters

MARIO KASSAR

A major figure in Hollywood for decades, as a studio head and producer.



F. MICCLOTTA/Getty Images

ANDY VAJNA

A partner with Kassar, the pair produced the "Rambo" films.



SEAN GALLUP/Getty Images

BENJAMIN BRATT

Stone rejected him for a leading role in "Basic Instinct 2."



Reuters

ALBERT BROOKS

Stone said he was uncomfortable with her being nude as a costar in "The Muse."



Reuters

MICHAEL DOUGLAS

The "Basic Instinct" star didn't want to reprise his part.



Agence France-Presse

AARON ECKHART

He made it on Stone's "approved" list of costar candidates.

and situation to situation. In "The Muse," for example, I had to talk Albert Brooks into it. 'Please, Albert, I would like to be nude in this scene.' Took me the day to talk him into letting me be nude in the scene.

"What would it look like?"

"Well, Albert, it would look like me naked."

"He was very uncomfortable with it."

"It just depends on the circumstance of how it goes. So sometimes if the people are selling the

the hot seat

lawsuit expose just how the Hollywood mind works.



on the trail of a bisexual ice pick murderess, Stone and the producers set out to cast a new male lead. Stone OK'd a list of more than 10 actors, including Robert Downey Jr., Rupert Everett, Javier Bardem, Gabriel Byrne, Benicio Del Toro, Viggo Mortensen, Aaron Eckhart, Jude Law, Ewan McGregor and Kurt Russell. In their 2002 depositions, Vajna and Kassar discuss parts of this process.

Vajna: "I think there were very few actors approved by Miss Stone. I think MGM tried to put forth a fairly broad list of actors, and they were all rejected out of hand by Sharon, and those were actors that would have been OK with us and the director, or there were actors that just rejected the role even before or even if Sharon would approve."

Q: "... There were actors who were approved by everybody, meaning the director, the producers, Sharon and MGM?"

Vajna: "There were moments in time where actors were approved by all of us, and then on some of them Sharon changed her mind. On some of them the actor rejected it."

Q: "Who do you recall was approved by all those people?"

Vajna: "I think Kurt Russell was approved by everybody, even though Sharon had some real reservations and strange comments about him. . . ."

"Benicio Del Toro was approved by all and he rejected the role. Benjamin Bratt was approved by all for a moment in time and then rejected by Sharon."

Q: "How about Viggo Mortensen?"

Vajna: "Viggo Mortensen had just come off a long shoot of 'Lord of the Rings' and wanted to have nothing to do with the motion picture business."

Kassar said Aaron Eckhart was approached about the male lead but he turned down the offer.

Kassar: "We made him a huge offer."

Q: "How much?"

Kassar: "I wish I never have to say it, a lot of money."

Q: "How much?"

Kassar: "Six million dollars."

Q: "And he said no?"

A: "He said no."

'She thought that she would look too old compared to him.'

million when MGM axed the sequel to "Basic Instinct" and its infamous scene.

... And a rental car for my hairstylist

Snagging a star for a movie involves more than salaries and points. There are also "perks." Sharon Stone submitted a lengthy list, excerpted below, detailing what she would require to star in "Basic Instinct 2."

Travel & expenses: One first-class round-trip ticket plus six additional first-class round-trip tickets for family, staff and companions. (A handwritten notation reads: "If no use of private jet.")

Private and securable home acceptable to Sharon, plus \$200 per week for maid service, or first-class hotel suite (must be presidential suite with two bedrooms) with fax and room for nanny and baby, plus \$3,500 per week per diem.

First-class car with an exclusive, non-smoking driver (to be approved by Sharon) to and from airports and the set; first-class convertible, sedan rental car for Sharon's personal use. (A handwritten notation reads: "rental car for hairstylist; dresser & makeup artist can share rental car if they agree.")

Nanny: Three at \$1,500/week each

Security: 24-hour armed bodyguard

Dressing facilities: First-class, exclusive "pop-out" motor home (not a Star Waggon) with a fifth wheel (if available) and first-class amenities, and no one receives better facilities: to be equipped with air conditioning, heating, bed, private bathroom, shower, television, VCR, refrigerator, stove, couch, stereo and a cellular fax machine and cellular telephone; two separate trailers to be approved by Sharon for her exclusive use for makeup and hairstyling and for her nanny and baby.

Assistants: Two exclusive assistants to be designated by Sharon; two round-trip coach airfares for each assistant if traveling separately from Sharon.

Rental phones: Two rental cellphones and two pagers; all phone bills and expenses covered by producer.

movie based on the fact that they have Sharon Stone naked, they get very, very nervous and they want it in writing that I will be naked. . . ."

'Six million dollars.' 'And he said no?'

When Michael Douglas declined to reprise his starring role as a San Francisco police detective

In a May 23, 2003, deposition, McTiernan recalled Stone's concern about casting Benjamin Bratt, the costar of "Traffic," as the male lead in "Basic Instinct 2." (Stone and Bratt ultimately would appear together in "Catwoman.")

McTiernan: "She said that she had met with Benjamin and that she thought he wasn't a good enough actor. She said she was going to call her agent and not approve him. She said she thought that she would look too old compared to him, that he would make her look — that he looked too young and consequently it might make her look old. She then went on at some length about perhaps she shouldn't be doing the movie at all, that she was too old, that it was — one couldn't get lightning in a bottle twice. Now, did you ask me what I said to her?"

Q: "Yes."

McTiernan: "I tried to encourage her and that she shouldn't despair, that she wouldn't in the least look too old, and that she should have a little bit of faith in me that I could make her look like she worked with him and that he would not look younger than her at all, that it would never, ever come up and that she was not in the least too old, but in fact she was — she was emotionally in far better shape now to play that role, to be that alluring, sexual creature than she was when she did the first movie and that she — you know, that her despair was nonsense. She didn't agree with me."

'Bad old history.'

Kassar was asked if Verhoeven expressed an interest in making the sequel.

Kassar: "At some point in time, yes."

Q: "And did you at some point go to Miss Stone and ask her if she would be agreeable to having him direct the movie?"

Kassar: "Yes."

Q: "And she said yes; is that right?"

Kassar: "No."

Q: "She said no?"

Kassar: "She said that she has a problem with Mr. Verhoeven of the past. She's not sure, there's some bad, old history and I suggested 'Why don't you guys have a lunch or dinner, get together and see if you can work things out.'"

'He never made any sexy pictures.'

Kassar said Stone initially approved of hiring John Frankenheimer, the director of the 1960 political thriller "The Manchurian Candidate," to helm the sequel to "Basic Instinct." But she changed her mind. Frankenheimer has since died.

Q: "Did she tell you why she had changed her mind?"

Kassar: "Yes."

Q: "What did she say?"

Kassar: "He never made any sexy pictures or all his pictures are with men or something like this."