

SUCKER PUNCH

Close your eyes. Open your mind. *You will be unprepared.*

“Sucker Punch” is an epic action fantasy that takes us into the vivid imagination of a young girl whose dream world provides the ultimate escape from her darker reality. Unrestrained by the boundaries of time and place, she is free to go where her mind takes her, and her incredible adventures blur the lines between what’s real and what is imaginary.

She has been locked away against her will, but Babydoll (Emily Browning) has not lost her will to survive. Determined to fight for her freedom, she urges four other young girls—the reluctant Sweet Pea (Abbie Cornish), the outspoken Rocket (Jena Malone), the street-smart Blondie (Vanessa Hudgens) and the fiercely loyal Amber (Jamie Chung)—to band together and try to escape a terrible fate at the hands of their captors, Blue (Oscar Isaac) and Madam Gorski (Carla Gugino), before the mysterious High Roller (Jon Hamm) comes for Babydoll.

Led by Babydoll, the girls engage in fantastical warfare against everything from samurais to serpents, with a virtual arsenal at their disposal. Together, they must decide

what they are willing to sacrifice in order to stay alive. But with the help of a Wise Man (Scott Glenn), their unbelievable journey—if they succeed—will set them free.

Born from the creative vision of filmmaker Zack Snyder (“Watchmen,” “300”), “Sucker Punch” features an ensemble cast of young stars, including Emily Browning (“The Uninvited”), Abbie Cornish (“Bright Star”), Jena Malone (“Into the Wild”), Vanessa Hudgens (the “High School Musical” films) and Jamie Chung (“Sorority Row”). The film’s main cast also includes Carla Gugino (“Watchmen”) and Oscar Isaac (“Robin Hood”), with Jon Hamm (“The Town,” TV’s “Mad Men”) and Scott Glenn (“The Bourne Ultimatum”).

Zack Snyder directed “Sucker Punch” from a screenplay he wrote with Steve Shibuya, based on Snyder’s story. Snyder and Deborah Snyder produced, with Thomas Tull, Wesley Coller, Jon Jashni, Chris deFaria, Jim Rowe and William Fay serving as executive producers.

The behind-the-scenes creative team includes Academy Award®-winning production designer Rick Carter (“Avatar”) and “Watchmen” and “300” veterans director of photography Larry Fong, editor William Hoy and costume designer Michael Wilkinson. The music is by Tyler Bates and Marius DeVries.

Warner Bros. Pictures presents, in association with Legendary Pictures, a Cruel and Unusual Production, a Zack Snyder film, “Sucker Punch.” Opening nationwide in theaters and IMAX on March 25, 2011, the film will be distributed by Warner Bros. Pictures, a Warner Bros. Entertainment Company.

“Sucker Punch” has been rated PG-13 by the MPAA for thematic material involving sexuality, violence and combat sequences, and for language.

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ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

WHEN REALITY IS A PRISON, YOUR MIND CAN SET YOU FREE...

Filmmaker Zack Snyder wanted to push the envelope of what is fantasy versus reality in his first film to be based on his own wholly original concept, “Sucker Punch.”

Snyder, who conceived of the story and co-wrote, produced and directed the film, states, “Sucker Punch is a movie about escape, both literal and figurative. It shows how the mind can create an almost impenetrable barricade against the real world, and to what lengths we’re willing to go, what sacrifices we’re willing to make, to get out of a difficult situation.”

On the heels of “300” and “Watchmen,” the visually complex film is the result of an idea Snyder says “was an evolution for me. I’m inspired by fantasy art and magazines like *Heavy Metal*. It’s sort of a mash-up between those influences, as well as ‘Twilight Zone’ and the writings of Richard Bach.”

The full story was years in the making. “I’d written a short story a while ago, which included a character named Babydoll,” Snyder says. “As I worked on it further, the idea evolved and expanded, and took on a life of its own.”

Producer Deborah Snyder adds, “It was so liberating for Zack to create something for which there were no preconceived expectations. This movie could be whatever he wanted it to be, and even though the story changed over time, at its center it has always been about this young woman, Babydoll, who is faced with so much adversity that she retreats into these fantastical worlds in her mind in order to cope with what’s going on around her. In so doing, she finds great strength within. She’s a survivor.”

With a fair amount of the story and characters fleshed out, Zack Snyder turned to longtime friend Steve Shibuya to co-write the script. “Together, Steve and I worked through how it was all going to fit together.”

“When Zack first approached me, I thought his ideas for the film were so daring,” Shibuya offers. “He wanted to make a movie without any limitations on the action, to have an almost endless amount of space within these vastly different worlds to

push the on-screen battles as far as we could—or even farther—all within this story of a young woman literally fighting her own demons on a journey to redemption.”

Ironically, though the story has virtually no boundaries of time and space, it is set in one of the most confining places imaginable—a forbidding Vermont mental institution in the 1960s. Nonetheless, the film transports the viewer along with Babydoll as her fantasies take her to otherworldly places at once ancient and futuristic and everywhere in between. She and her fellow warriors, Sweet Pea, Rocket, Blondie and Amber, battle everything from gargantuan samurai beasts to reanimated zombie soldiers to fire-breathing dragons. At the girls’ disposal: their wits, an arsenal of deadly hardware, and their willingness to work together to survive.

It would seem that there are no limits to Babydoll’s imagination as she falls down a rabbit hole of her own making.

*Remember, if you don't stand for something, you'll fall for anything.
Oh, and one last thing—try and work together.*

—*Wise Man*

~ CASTING ~

In “Sucker Punch,” Babydoll pulls each of the key characters into her multiple fantasy worlds, which meant that each of the actors would have to play multiple roles, first as their characters in the asylum and then as heightened versions of themselves in her mind, some good, some evil.

Emily Browning took on the role of the young woman determined to be free at all costs. “The words ‘baby doll’ make you immediately think of something really fragile,” Browning says, “but she’s not at all. That’s what was so cool to me about this character—she’s actually pretty tough, with an unexpected stoicism.”

Delving inside Babydoll’s psyche led Browning to discover what might have influenced her and made her so resilient.

“I think the people in her fantasies represent her experiences, the oppression she has had to put up with throughout her life. She has this almost simplistic view of the good guys and the bad guys, the bad guys being men like her stepfather and, later, some

of the monsters in her fantasies. And the Wise Man in her dreams represents the ideal father figure, strong but really caring and able to guide her and help her make the right choices.”

“Babydoll symbolizes that transition between thinking like a child and thinking like an adult, when your perception of the world changes,” Zack Snyder says. “She is a warrior, both delicate and strong at the same moment, and Emily really personified everything I had envisioned about Babydoll. She has this mystic, timeless, almost unquantifiable look and completely brought the character to life for me.”

Browning felt the full support of Snyder as she worked to embody a character so dear to him. “Zack obviously had a clear vision and knew exactly what he wanted, but at the same time he was really collaborative and was totally open to other ideas,” she notes. “He always wanted to make sure that I was happy with my performance.”

The first friend that Babydoll makes in her new surroundings is Rocket, a strong-willed if somewhat naïve girl who, together with her older sister, Sweet Pea, have been at the asylum long enough to have learned the ropes.

Jena Malone plays the impetuous Rocket, whom she says “is sort of the archetype of the younger sibling—someone who is cared for and looked after, but doesn’t always appreciate it. I felt Rocket was very free in the way that she could see the world and not always be as affected by it, but feeling free in her world isn’t necessarily a positive thing. There’s a risk to having too much confidence, or a false sense of confidence, in her case.”

Rocket’s false sense of security comes in part from having a big sister who has always watched over her. As Babydoll gets to know the girls, it becomes clear to her that not only does Sweet Pea serve as a protector for her little sister, but as a leader of the group. Sweet Pea views Babydoll’s arrival as a threat to her authority and her position as the favorite of those in control.

Abbie Cornish, who plays Sweet Pea, instantly connected with the character. “When I initially read the script, Sweet Pea spoke to me the most. She’s a mother figure who looks out for Rocket, her wilder and unpredictable baby sister. Sweet Pea has good instincts and she heeds them. She understands how discipline works in their world and what she has to do to get through her everyday life. I think she really believes that if they

just put their heads down and work hard and do what they're told to do, that one day they'll walk out of there. The idea of trying to escape—the consequences of it—scares her more than it scares Rocket.”

One girl who definitely follows Sweet Pea's lead is Blondie, whose nickname belies her appearance. The part is played by the raven-haired Vanessa Hudgens, who offers, “Blondie is very sweet, if a little bit scared, and that fear can get the best of her. She has her ‘blonde’ moments every now and then, but when she jumps into the action scenes, she's a total badass.”

The experience was one she'll not soon forget. “This project was unlike anything I've ever done, and working on it felt so empowering. It's still rare for women in film to really kick butt, especially in a way that no one's ever seen before, and the fact that Zack did this and I got to be a part of it makes him my hero,” she smiles.

Another character to find her courage on the battlefield is Amber, who earns her wings piloting the other girls to safety on more than one occasion.

Jamie Chung, who plays the role, states, “Amber is the kind of girl who wants to fit in, to be accepted, so she's a people-pleaser and a little submissive. The idea of freedom, of actually escaping, riles her up and helps her find her courage. That newfound courage translates into Babydoll's fantasy worlds where she's the captain of her vessel. Whether it's a helicopter, a Meka or a B-25, her job is to make sure the others can accomplish their goals on the ground and in the air, and be lifted to safety when they're ready to get out of there. She has to do her job right, or everything will go wrong, and she cares too much about the others to fail them.”

The sense of devotion that develops between the characters was a direct reflection of the connections created between the actresses off screen.

“The chemistry that each of these five women had with each other was really obvious, both on and off the set,” Deborah Snyder observes. “That's something you can't make up; it's just something magical that happens. And in a film like this, where the characters have to create an unbreakable bond with each other, that magic really has to be there. We were so lucky that they each had such devotion to the project and to each other, and I think it really shows in the film.”

“I can’t imagine a different actress playing any one of these parts,” Zack Snyder adds. “They all perfectly embodied what I had envisioned when conceiving of these girls, and they all delivered in a way even I hadn’t imagined.”

Even more so than the five young rebels, the authority figures in the asylum appear distinctly different in Babydoll’s imagination.

Carla Gugino plays Dr. Vera Gorski, who goes from psychiatrist to Madam as fantasy takes over. Attempting to help the young women survive, if not escape, their surroundings, the character is also under the thumb of those in control and is deluded into thinking she has any authority of her own.

“This is a woman who feels a lot, but doesn’t express herself in that regard,” Gugino says of her character, whose accent reveals her Eastern European origins. “She’s very tough and, I felt, given when and where she probably grew up, has gone through a lot in her lifetime, much worse than these girls will ever know. She’s a part of the establishment, but she cares about them, too, so her tact is, ‘Let me figure out how to get them through this and empower them within this precarious world.’”

The man attempting to usurp any of their newfound power is Blue, who we first see as an orderly but who ultimately runs the show with an iron fist. Oscar Isaac plays the role.

“I think Blue is probably someone who has felt powerless in his life, and now he’s able to stake some claim to these girls,” Isaac comments. “He wants their respect and he wants to control them. Of course, he’s out for himself and whatever he can get. And if they don’t go along with him, the consequences are severe.”

One of the consequences for Babydoll lies in the hands of a character who is only referred to as the High Roller, a somewhat ambiguous man played by Jon Hamm. And the one true ally the girls have is the Wise Man, a part that Snyder created with his friend Scott Glenn in mind.

“The Wise Man really represents the voice inside your head,” the director says, “the one you wish you listened to more often. He is the mentor and the positive adult male energy in the film, and the perspective and the humor that Scott brought to the role were exactly what it needed.”

Glenn appreciated the film's eclectic style. "There's action, there's adventure, it's sexy and funny and scary." Referring to all the eras and settings in which his character pops up, he adds, "One of the main things that appealed to me was the challenge of inhabiting the film through all its different worlds. I'm in 15th-century Japan, I'm in World War I, I'm on an alien planet in the future... Through all this, the Wise Man acts as a guide for both the girls and the audience, like a sort of sensei warrior monk."

Snyder says that each of the characters offers the audience a different perspective of the story, declaring, "I couldn't have asked for a better or more committed group of actors to bring this story to life. On top of playing all the emotional dimensions of the characters, it was a very physical movie to make, and everybody brought their A game to the set, every day."

Your fight for survival starts right now.

—*Madam Gorski*

~ PREPARING FOR BATTLE ~

Prior to filming, the five young women of "Sucker Punch" had to prepare for the physical challenges presented by the demanding action sequences in the script. They found themselves pushed to their limits in the capable hands of stunt coordinator and action designer Damon Caro and training coordinator Logan Hood, both of whom had previously worked with Zack Snyder on "300." Caro supervised the girls' martial arts, fight and weapons training, while Hood oversaw their general body conditioning.

Though training would last throughout production, it began in Los Angeles about five weeks before the cast moved up to Vancouver to start principal photography. According to Caro and Hood, the first stage provided a foundation and included basic techniques in order to assess strength and build the girls' stamina. Caro started with them each morning, running them through martial arts and empty-hand weapons choreography, tailoring each actress's regimen to her character's needs. Hood and his team, including fellow former Navy Seal David Young, took over in the afternoon with functional training, including calisthenics, weights, body-weight pull ups and push ups,

jumping on and off boxes, pulling tires, dragging ropes and kettlebells and more, modulating the workouts on a daily basis. The overall focus was on strength and agility so that the girls would look more athletic in their scenes, again supporting the needs of their individual characters.

According to Abbie Cornish, “We all found this thing within us that we called ‘the beast.’ When you think you’ve reached your maximum effort, if you can just find that beast within yourself to push through, you go to a whole other level. It’s such an amazing feeling, that elation that comes over you.”

“I’m a very active person; I run, I play sports, but I’ve never pushed myself to the point where I couldn’t feel my arms,” Jamie Chung laughs. “We had fun together and we felt the pain together. It really brought us closer and gave us a sense of camaraderie, which we carried throughout filming.”

Jena Malone found a unique way to relate the training regimen to what her character would be going through. “Waking up early in the morning, doing four-to-five hours of martial arts, another two hours of strength training and then an hour or more of guns, plus fittings for corsets—another strange form of torture—that was our insane asylum,” she jokes. In reality, though, she acknowledges that it helped. “That process really contributed to how we thought about our characters, living together and sweating together, seeing what our bodies could do when we really pushed ourselves as far as we could go. It really helped us hone in on who we had to be on camera.”

“The great thing about all the training was that it gave us a new self-confidence, taking us to places we’d never been to before, both physically and mentally,” says Vanessa Hudgens. “You have a fire in your eyes. You tell yourself you can do anything.”

Because Emily Browning had to expertly handle multiple weapons simultaneously, the right-handed actress had to learn to shoot with her left hand so she could brandish a sword in her dominant hand. She relates that she felt especially empowered by the weapons training. “Learning to fight with Damon and the boys was the most fun I’ve had preparing for a film. The fact that I can wield a sword and fire a gun like it’s second-nature is a little scary but also pretty cool in a really unexpected way.”

These are your weapons. When you take them, you begin your journey to freedom.

—*Wise Man*

~ ARMED FOR BEAR ~

As the story unfolds, Babydoll’s fantasies take her and the other girls into vastly different worlds where they must fight adversaries ranging from armies of the undead, to dragons to cyborgs in order to retrieve the talismans—a map, fire, a knife, a key and a mysterious fifth item—that the Wise Man has advised Babydoll she’ll need to escape her captors. Of course, in order to fight these enemies, the girls had to be armed to the teeth, carrying an array of weapons, including fully automatic M4 assault rifles, a variety of machineguns and sub-machineguns, Remington 12-gauge shotguns, flintlock pistols, various handguns, WWI bayonets, broad swords and a tomahawk.

The most intricate weapon created for “Sucker Punch” is the first one Babydoll receives: her samurai sword. After much testing, the design team, led by property master Jimmy Chow, settled on a *wakizashi* blade with a *katana* handle reduced in girth to fit Emily Browning’s small hands and stature. The sword featured a handle of black rayskin (the belly of the Manta Ray, favored by the Japanese for its sandpaper-like quality that prevents slipping), covered with oiled brown leather, a hand-carved *tsuba*, or sword guard, and hand-sculpted bronze *menuki*, charms hidden beneath the leather. The *saya*, or scabbard, was made of lacquered wood festooned with snowflakes—another key symbol in the film—with a gold braid sash to fasten the sword to Babydoll’s leather shoulder holster rig.

Making the sword even more about design than function, however, Zack Snyder wanted the sides of the blade engraved with symbols that, when read chronologically, reveal the entire storyline of “Sucker Punch.”

Browning found that detail particularly compelling. “I thought it was so interesting that the whole story was represented along Baby’s sword, because it almost sets her fate from the very beginning,” she says. “She has the whole story in her hands...she just doesn’t know it.”

Designed by artist Alex Pardee, the engravings required a 40-hour process per blade. Two identical swords were made for the film, as well as several aluminum and bamboo replicas for the stunt fighting sequences.

“I was truly in awe of the design and workmanship that everyone put in to the making of this critical piece of not only weaponry, but storytelling,” Snyder commends. “It was precisely what I had envisioned and what the movie called for, both practically and aesthetically. I always love those symbolic touches in a film that you really have to look for, but that reveal so much when you do find them.”

The director’s call for symbolism required customization for many of the girls’ weapons, which were thus designed to relate back to the real world of each character. Blondie’s tomahawk and pistol, for example, were engraved with her signature heart, while Babydoll’s 1911 Colt .45 caliber handgun was carved on the slides with key symbols that appear throughout the story, such as the stuffed animal rabbit first seen in Babydoll’s home, and accessorized with charms similar to those used by Japanese girls on their cellphones. Here, symbols of youth and innocence—the bunny, a baby bottle, a teddy bear—become symbols of innocence lost: an hourglass and a skull with a bow.

Some of the major weapons in the film were not tangible, but were, rather, a creation of visual and special effects, most notably a 25-foot, machinegun-toting Meka. A Japanese anime-inspired, bipedal armored fighting vehicle capable of rocketing through the sky, it was created largely by visual effects supervisor John “D.J.” Des Jardins, with only a practical cockpit built for Jamie Chung’s Amber to pilot from.

Though the Meka is an imposing piece of machinery, Snyder and the designers weren’t without their sense of humor, painting a battle-faded pink bunny face on its front, along with the Japanese words that translated roughly to “Danger! Woman driver!”—a phrase that should be taken quite seriously as Amber fires the Meka’s multiple ammunition belts.

We can get lost in our worlds, we can believe that they're real.

—*Sweet Pea*

~ BRINGING FANTASY WORLDS TO LIFE ~

Before her fantasy worlds take Babydoll and her friends into battle, she first arrives at Lennox House for the Mentally Insane in Brattleboro, Vermont. The sets for the asylum and other actual locations were built on soundstages in Vancouver, Canada. Production designer Rick Carter created the sets with an eye toward merging Babydoll's real and imaginary worlds, allowing each set to be repurposed for multiple scenarios.

“If you're paying close attention,” producer Deborah Snyder says, “you can see, for example, that an archway that we used in the Lennox House appears as an archway in the dragon fantasy sequence, and again in the brothel. For the WWI fantasy, we start out in a burned-out cathedral, which mimics the shape of the asylum.”

“What intrigued me the most was the way that each place Babydoll travels to, whether it was the cathedral, the castle or the temple, reflected the architecture of the asylum itself, inside and out,” Carter says. “The moody color palette, even the shafts of light that come in through the windows, all suggest that sensibility, correlating the different places, subconsciously putting you into the same mental space and keeping you in touch with what has happened to Babydoll metaphorically.”

These visual similarities allude to the parallels created in Babydoll's mind between the real and imaginary. “Babydoll's fantasy world draws from the real world,” Deborah Snyder offers, “so when she first enters the theater in the institution and she sees these typical community theatre flats—a train, a castle, a charred landscape, a Japanese pagoda—they trigger the fantastical places of her imagination. But they're twisted in the way that only happens when you dream, where things get combined in your head and are not always in the right place.”

Carter and director of photography Larry Fong worked together to keep that hazy sense of time and place even in the scenes that occur in the film's “reality.” The story takes place in the 1960s, but, says Fong, “apart from some hints of it in the hair, makeup, wardrobe and set decoration, I wouldn't say it really looks like the '60s. We

wanted to evoke not so much a time, but a timelessness, a frame of mind. That was more important than reflecting a specific decade.”

Babydoll’s visions flow with abandon through time and space, and the film’s *mise-en-scène* reflects the journey. The film’s look is meant to simulate raw emotions that elicit and manipulate the viewer’s own. “We wanted something visceral, that was unsettling, where you weren’t sure what was reality and what was fantasy,” adds Fong.

To accomplish this, he says, “We used a lot of mirrors, creating reflections which echo the theme of dual reality, illusion, self-reflection. How does your memory serve you or betray you when you depend on it? We all have memories of events but then you look at a photo and that’s not how you remember it; perception and reality have become blurred. That’s partly what the movie is about: what is perception, what is imagination, what is memory, what is false memory?”

For director Zack Snyder, supporting the film’s aesthetic was far more critical than visual “truth.” “Finding the beauty in the harsh world of the asylum was especially important because, for me, the beauty of this film is perhaps its most interesting contradiction—a bleak story that is nevertheless visually arresting.”

Snyder says the essence of “Sucker Punch” is precisely these contradictions, the way the images and elements are juxtaposed, unrestrained by the dictates of realism or popular iconography. Costume designer Michael Wilkinson was drawn in particular to the paradox of the film’s “combination of traditionally submissive female archetypes with these incredibly dominant, very forceful female action hero characters. I immediately started drawing ideas that combined hints of the archetypes—the French maid cap or the school girl collar and scarf—with the silhouette and details of a battle-worn soldier.”

Wilkinson explains, “I enjoyed casting the net wide when it came to researching for the film. I pulled from all sorts of periods, all sorts of sources, whether historic or from pop culture—from music videos and videogames to a 16th century religious painting!”

Wilkinson occasionally worked in reverse, for example, reinventing the heroines’ fighting costumes as burlesque costumes. “I had fun creating ties between the worlds so there would be clever visual references between each layer of the story, little links that

get the audience thinking about possible themes and parallel messages. I think it helps the audience along the ride.”

Whether dressed to scrub the floors of the asylum or to disarm a bomb on a futuristic bullet train, the girls’ purpose of embarking on a life-and-death scavenger hunt is to obtain the items that will spell freedom for them—a map, fire, a knife, a key, and a mystery that represents the reason, the goal, a deep sacrifice. To mirror that journey, Snyder and his creative teams wanted to continually take the viewer on a visual scavenger hunt of sorts, by sprinkling the film with symbols that both spark, and become elements of, Babydoll’s fantasies.

These links between worlds necessitated a great many custom-designed elements, including some seemingly insignificant props. For example, the toys in the bedroom of Babydoll’s ill-fated little sister are unexpectedly dark and creepy, their bizarre expressions a reflection of the turmoil in Babydoll’s mind. An orderly’s cheap and otherwise innocuous butane lighter is decorated with a dragon decal that later manifests as the dragon the girls battle in the castle sequence, and even more significantly as a gold lighter, hand-crafted with a dragon figure, which figures prominently in Babydoll’s attempted escape.

I’m gonna escape from here, I’m gonna be free.

—*Babydoll*

~ THE MUSIC OF “SUCKER PUNCH” ~

The conduit between Babydoll’s life in the brothel and her escapist fantasies is music—Madam Gorski puts on a song, and Babydoll closes her eyes and is taken away, captivating everyone around her. Therefore, the “Sucker Punch” soundtrack had to convey exactly the right mood at every turn. Director Zack Snyder collaborated with Marius de Vries and Tyler Bates to compose the score and arrange and produce an eclectic collection of songs that would hit the right notes within the various realms of the story.

“I think one of the most powerful and important elements of cinema is the music,” Snyder asserts. “And because *Babydoll* accesses her fantasies through dance, the music in this movie was even more critical.”

“*Sucker Punch*” is a very dream-like movie, with themes of escape and hope, and redemption through the imagination,” says de Vries, who worked with Snyder for the first time on this film. “The music had to have a strong connection with those themes. And in many cases, Zack wanted to use songs in place of score, so that the lyrics could help navigate the way through the complex scenes and illuminate *Babydoll*’s state of mind. It was a really enjoyable challenge.”

Along with Bates, de Vries and Snyder chose evocative works that could be co-opted into doing the job of a traditional score, but also remain recognizable as they conveyed both the action and the psychology of the story. “*Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)*” was given a sultry, melancholy arrangement, and was performed by Emily Browning, who also contributed to two other songs in the film.

“Having Emily sing—essentially commenting in song on her character’s situation in the film—provided an interesting texture, real resonance and depth, and tied the music to the visuals in a way that might otherwise not have been so clearly defined,” de Vries observes.

In order to work with the actress between takes, de Vries brought a portable recording rig to the set and, as luck would have it, found a quiet space to work, that happened to house a piano. “It was a very distressed, out-of-tune, almost-unusable instrument,” he smiles, “but the first version of ‘*Asleep*’ that we recorded was me playing that beaten-up piano, which turned out to have real charm in it. Emily’s first few lines sung that day survived all the way through the postrecording and mixing process, and those opening lines are pretty much her first take on the song, so despite the difficult circumstances, we got great results.”

Another song performed by actors in the film is “*Love is The Drug*,” a duet by Carla Gugino and Oscar Isaac, heard over the end credits. The movie also features the haunting, psychedelic ‘60s song “*White Rabbit*.” Both songs were written into the original script by Snyder and co-writer Steve Shibuya.

“When Zack first explained the premise of ‘Sucker Punch,’ he talked a lot about the song ‘White Rabbit’ as being one that he wanted as part of the film,” recalls Bates, who played guitar on the track. “So I had a chance to think about how that could work, and by the time he was shooting, I could see how he wanted it to develop, going from Babydoll’s headspace into the mission of the fantasy. It starts out very ethereal, getting her into the mindset of the dance, and once the girls have their assignment, once they delve in with machineguns and other weapons, the song starts to bloom into this epic, rich, full orchestral choral fanfare.”

In addition to the headier numbers, the team selected some all-out rocking, pulsating tunes, including “Search and Destroy” and a mash-up of Queen’s “I Want It All” and “We Will Rock You.”

“Everything we chose is in support of the action on the screen and in service of the themes that Zack wanted to get across with this movie,” Bates says.

“Music is such a key way of expressing bottled-up emotions,” Deborah Snyder notes. “And what Marius and Tyler brought to the film was exactly the quality and the feeling that Zack had envisioned from the start.”

“The girls in this movie kick ass, so the soundtrack had to kick ass,” Zack Snyder states. “I really wanted every aspect of ‘Sucker Punch’ to feel unexpected—the look, the feel and the sound of what Babydoll and the others go through. I think that the music in this film turned out to be such a great surprise, and to really help tell the story in a way that only something as primitive and as much a part of the human experience as music can.”

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