

THE CORDOF RINGS FAN CLUB OFFICIAL MOVIE MAGAZINE

ISSUE NO. 1 FEB-MAR 2002 EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH SEAN ASTIN A PROFILE OF ILLUSTRATOR ALAN LEE FORGING SWORDS WITH RICHARD TAYLOR

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ELIJAH WOOD

ON FRODO

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH

PETER JACKSON



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IGS

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING

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Relive the battles and adventures of The Fellowship of the Ring with The Lord of the Rings battle game - a tabletop strategy game for two or more players. In this box you'll find a full color 128 page rule book, 48 plastic models and scenic ruins to help you get started. Plus, Games Workshop has a whole line of Citadel Miniatures to support your adventures in Middle-earth!

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For customer information please call Games Workshop

For more information on the movie log on to:

AOL Keyword: Lord of the Rings

ORD-OF THE RINGS

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With over 100 million copies sold in over 40 languages, millions have grown up with "The Lord of the Rings," the classic epic tale considered by millions to be the greatest fantasy-adventure story ever told. J.R.R. Tolkien's phenomenal epic trilogy chronicles the struggle between good and evil for possession of a magical ring that can shift the balance of power in the world. The book trilogy will be presented in a trilogy of feature films from New Line Cinema, with the first film, "The Fellowship of the Ring,"

THE FELLOWSHIP
OF THE RING

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AOL Keyword: Lord of the Rings "Not only are Tolkien fanatics getting the first live-action movie based on Tolkien's world, but we are getting an incredible trading card game to help us relive that world...believe me, it is a winner in every sense of the word."

-Andrew Parks, longtime Tolkien gaming fan

"I truly believe it will go down as one of the best TCGs of all time... it will meet or surpass everyone's expectations."

-Nigel Jefferson, longtime Magic: The Gathering TCG player and high-level tournament judge

"GREAT GAME, SOLID MECHANICS,
FANTASTIC PICTURES..."

-JAMES KIGHT, #1 RANKED MIDDLE EARTH CCG PLAYER AND FOUNDER OF MECCG NEWSLETTER

"...The Lord of the Rings TCG is the best new game I've seen in a long, long time. Like the One Ring itself, once you have experienced its power, you cannot let it go!"

"...The Lord of the Rings TCG is a refreshingly creative game faithful to story and spirit of Tolkien's masterpiece. It is sure to put more than a few smiles on the faces of new and experienced gamers alike."

-David Akers, DeckTech.net





ISSUE #1 EERBIJARY MARCH 2002

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Cinema. The Lord of the Rings still photography by Pierre Vinet.

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Fascinating Construction

"What you will see I cannot tell for the mirror shows many things... things that were... things that are... and some things that have not yet come to pass." - Galadriel

A fan club is a fascinating construction. It allows individuals from all corners of the world to build relationships with one another. It provides a forum where hundreds, thousands, millions of passionate voices converge. It becomes a living thing that grows, learns, evolves and extends itself geographically and chronologically.

It establishes a "fan society."

However, a fan organization does not create the love that individuals feel for the object of their passion. Rather, it encourages fans to express their common interest and it helps them to do so. A fan club builds its power from that of its members. It's only as vibrant as the fans it unites.

The Lord of the Rings fans are some of the most dedicated and enduring fans the world has ever known. New Line Cinema has done an outstanding job developing the movies in a way that honors The Lord of the Rings and honors the fans. It's a joy for us to play a role in helping this community flourish by providing you with movie-related information through this magazine and being a gathering place for fans and their desire for information on Peter Jackson, his talented team and these motion pictures. It's also a challenge. The Lord of the Rings enthusiasts enjoy one of the greatest epic stories of all time, and they deserve nothing less than one of the best fan organizations of all time. Through our association with New Line Cinema, our North American club and via our network of licensed clubs in other languages and territories, we will support a fan society unlike any other in history.

In essence, the fan club is already here. We didn't invent the fans. We didn't create the community. We just open the doors a bit wider on the possibilities.

WARREN HOLLAND Chairman & CEO

Decipher Inc.

DAN MADSEN Vice President

Decipher's Fan Club Studio

P.S. And ... speaking of possibilities... New Line Cinema and Peter Jackson are supporting this fan club in unprecedented fashion, so we are going to be sharing some historic adventures together. Welcome to The Lord of the Rings Fan Club. Let us know what you think of the magazine; send your comments to: editor@lotrfanclub.com.

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PWS

FROM MIDDLE EARTH

Jackson's First Film Comes to DVD

On November 20, Anchor Bay Entertainment released a limited-edition, two-DVD set of Peter Jackson's very first film, *Bad Taste*.

Shot between 1983 and 1987, Bad Taste was completed only through the perseverance of Peter Jackson and his friends-turned-cast-and-crew-members, some of whom would later go on to work on The Lord of the Rings. Jackson describes his first theatrical release - he wrote, directed, and starred in the film and even created all the makeup and special effects for it as a live-action Tom and Jerry cartoon. The film, which features Jackson in a dual role as both alien and alien hunter, went on to become a huge cult classic among fans of the gore/humor sub-genre of horror films, but never got the home video treatment it deserved until now. Bad Taste is presented in widescreen with Dolby and DTS surround sound and the set is packed with extra features.





HOTO: FRANCIS K. Lal

Movie Exhibit Dazzles Fans

A two-week exhibit of props, weapons, costumes, and other "artifacts" created for *The Lord of the Rings* movie trilogy broke attendance records as fans flocked to Toronto to get a firsthand look at these film treasures.

A Journey to Middle-earth, which ran just two weeks (October 31 through November 11, 2001), was created by the film's Supervising Art Director Dan Hennah and Art Department Manager Chris Hennah.

The choice of location couldn't have been better: Toronto's landmark castle, Casa Loma (translation: "house on the hill"). Built in the 1910s by soldier and businessman Sir Henry Pellatt, Casa Loma features a blend of the ancient and the modern that is perfect for showcasing the high-tech production values of Tolkien's classic and traditional tale.

With long hallways, twisted stairways, and other castle rooms between the different spots used to present *The Lord of the Rings* artifacts, *Journey to Middle-earth* was a lot more akin to a walk through Grandpa's attic than a visit to a museum. It was the Bag End



room and the Dwarvish workshop. rather than the "weapons display case" or the "wall of banners." Every item had been placed in an area of the castle that appeared to have been designed around it. Elrond's intricate armor, for instance. stood in bright sunlight in front of a large castle window.

saruman's document-Laden study

The first floor was home to Bag End-not the actual set used in the movie, but a re-creation of the cozy Hobbit home using pieces of furniture and several props from the film, diminutive chair and all. Visitors were invited to take a close look at a series of personal items, from clay pots and pieces of parchment bearing bits of Hobbit poetry, to wooden toys and Bilbo's handwritten birthday party invitations.

One room featured an array of artifacts belonging to both the "good guys"—including Elrond's glinting armor and a series of colorful battle banners—and to their dark enemies. There was the tattered armor worn by Orc fighters, for instance, and the grimlooking banner of Sauron. The banner was scary enough in this innocuous setting, and, judging from the silent gazes of those passing through the room, it was easy to imagine how daunting it would be in context, with the accoutrements of battle surrounding it.

On the second floor, the exhibit occupied only a hallway, but a spectacular one. Still photographs of the main characters lined both walls-all executed by the French-Canadian stills photographer Pierre Vinet, who was present during production to document the whole process. Each photograph was a stunning portrait of one of the actors portraying the beloved Lord of the Rings

characters. Samples of Vinet's work were scattered throughout the exhibit to show what certain pieces looked like on the set, but this showcase was the photographic pièce de résistance.

And then there were the stables of Casa Loma. The stables are connected to the castle by a tunnel a couple of miles long. On their way there, visitors were treated to a series of design sketches by Alan Lee and John Howe. Miles of Howe and Lee is quite a treat for any fan of The Lord of the Rings - and an excellent crash course for everybody else.

At the end of the tunnel, before getting to the stables proper, visitors passed through two small rooms, one showcasing the impressive Gates of Moria, and the other representing the torture chamber of Barad-Dûr. An Orc stood behind the fencing, frozen in the act of hammering some twisted bit of metal on an anvil. He was surrounded by an awe-inspiring selection of grim tools and scary devices, all of Orcish origin. As was the case for many of the exhibits set up at Casa Loma, the special lighting and sound effects combined to create a very convincing scene. The stable halls featured many pieces related to Isengard, including Saruman's very own study, complete with a repulsive creature fetus in a dark glass jar, locked away behind heavy iron gates.

Visitors could find some relief and peace in the Lothlórien and Rivendell rooms, where scores of Elven objects and costumes were to be found: Galadriel's dresses, Legolas' bow and arrows, Elven glassware and pillows the list could go on and on. In Rivendell, most of the hero costumes were on display, as well as the weapons and props associated with them: Frodo's sword. Aragorn's sword. Boromir's horn, Gandalf's staff, The centerpiece of one room was a full-scale Elven boat (fully functional, like everything else), while the artifact occupying center stage in the other room was a stunning Elven telescope, exquisitely simple and elegant.

The last piece in the stables was Gandalf's large cart, visible at the end of a short hallway. But as visitors hurried to get closer to the wooden cart, they found themselves in a hobbit room at the Prancing Pony, darkly lit, with mattresses torn apart, feathers everywhere, and a dark, slender Ringwraith standing in the middle of it all. The cart was still visible at the end of the hallway, but



fans were forced to stop in midstride and take care of darker matters.

Whereas most movie props are designed to look good on camera, the artifacts created for The Lord of the Rings were designed as real objects existing in a real world. A chair is really a chair, hand-crafted out of solid wood, and the swords are real swords, leather pommel, steel blade, and all. If the artifacts of The Lord of the Rings were so stunning in person, visitors to Casa Loma could only imagine their larger-than-life quality on the big screen.



Trading Card Game and Roleplaying Game Launch

Decipher's The Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game (TCG) hit stores all over the world on November 6, 2001. Designed for both the Tolkien fan and the experienced gamer, the TCG transports players to Tolkien's "Middleearth", presenting them with the same challenges that Frodo Baggins faced on his fateful journey from Hobbiton to Mount Doom to destroy the One Ring.

The Lord of the Rings Trading Card Game is available in Starter Decks,

the moria orc

archer, from

series 4 By

sideshow

Deluxe Starter Sets, and 11-card booster packs. There are two 63-card Starter Decks-one deck contains Gandalf and Moria orc. while the other contains Aragorn and Uruk-hai warriors. The Deluxe Starter Set features playing stones, a collector storage box, a 63card Starter Deck (containing Hobbits and Ringwraiths), 31 glass playing stones, a rulebook, a collector card list, and a booster pack.

Decipher is publishing the game in

languages: English, French, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. There are nine expansion sets planned through July 2004, with the first set, The Mines of Moria, scheduled for release in March 2002.

Decipher's The Lord of the Rings Roleplaving Game line was launched in December with the release of The Lord of the Rings Adventure Game. The Roleplaying game is designed to transport players to J.R.R. Tolkien's Middle-earth for the ultimate fantasy gaming experience. Featuring in-depth information about the people, places, history, creatures, and magic of Middle-earth, combined with cuttingedge graphics and game design, these games were created with both gamers and Tolkien fans in mind.

The Roleplaying Adventure Game contains a complete adventure narrative titled "Through the Mines of Moria." The streamlined rules allow new players to get up and running in less than 30 minutes. The full The Lord of the Rings Roleplaying Game system is scheduled to launch in February 2002.

Merchandise Round-up

SIDESHOW-WETA: Series 3

from Sideshow-Weta shipped in December, with new figures, busts, and helmets. Some of the figures (1:6 scale statues) include Saruman the White and Bill the Pony. The new busts feature Bilbo Baggins, a

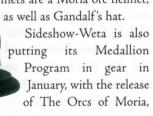
Nazgûl Steed, and more. Among the new helmets are a Moria orc helmet.

Sideshow-Weta is also putting its Medallion Program in gear in January, with the release the first medallion in the series. The program will last two years, with members receiving a new hand-finished, polystone medallion every month. The medallion for February is The Nazgûl, and for March, The Industry of Isengard.

> CEDCO PUBLISHING: In addition to their many The Lord of the Rings-themed journals and notebooks, Cedco is producing a Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring daily boxed calendar, as

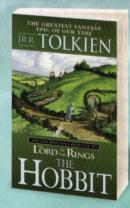
well as a 17-month locker calendar, thinner than most calendars in order to fit in those tight places.

GAMES WORKSHOP: The Fellowship of the Ring edition of Games Workshop's Lord of the Rings Tabletop Battle Game has been released, along





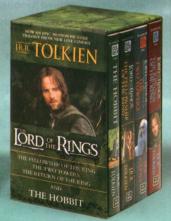
You're spellbound by Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings...











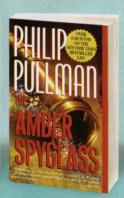
The classic, bestselling fantasy series is now available in stunning new movie tie-in editions—separately and in a boxed set.



Journey with us—beyond the marvels of Middle-earth—where other worlds, other quests, and other wonders await you.







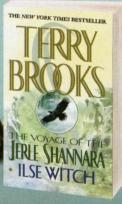
"Philip Pullman is quite possibly a genius...Like Harry Potter creator J. K. Rowling, [he] invents a world filled with strange divinations and wordplays."

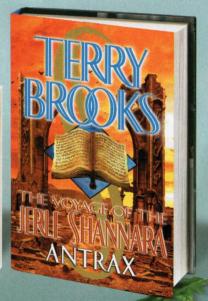
-Newsweek

"If...you have not discovered the magic of **Terry Brooks**, you are in for a treat."

-Rocky Mountain News







with individual blisters. The new miniatures for January include Twilight Ringwraith, Kings of Men, Arwen, Ringwraith, Moria Armored Goblins, and Moria Armored Goblin Bowmen. February will see the launch of the Battle at Khazad-Dûm set, as well as individual figures such as Galadriel, Celeborn, and Gil-Galad.

HARPERCOLLINS PUBLISH-ERS: Their line of *The Lord of the Rings* products features a 2002 calendar, the Official Movie Guide, the Insider's Guide, and two books for younger readers, the Photo Guide and the Visual Companion.

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COM-PANY: Houghton Mifflin has published two new boxed-set editions of *The Lord of the Rings*, one hardback and the other paperback. These are movie tie-in editions, with the covers graced by images pulled from the films.

RIOT-E: Riot-E is offering mobile phone users an opportunity to step into the world of Middle-earth in an unusual way. In addition to being able to play simple *The Lord of the Rings* games and receiving information on their wireless, users will have access to *The Battle of Middle-earth*, a multi-player adventure game where players use their mobile phones in a quest to defeat Sauron.

TOPPS: Topps released its first series of The Lord of the Rings movie

cards in December. Additional series are in development.

TOY BIZ: Toy Biz has released two assortments of 6" fully-posable action figures and one assortment of 12" multi-jointed figures, as well as special packs such as a 10" Cave Troll. For these figures, actors were laser-scanned to ensure the best likeness possible.

UNITED CUTLERY: Launching their line of *The Lord of the Rings* sword replicas, United Cutlery released its first three swords in December: Sting (Frodo's sword), Glamdring (Gandalf's sword), and the Sword of the Witch King. More swords are planned, continuing into 2002 and 2003.

Celebrity Tracks

JOHN RHYS-DAVIES (Gimli) and Dominic Monaghan (Merry) attended the opening of A Journey to Middle-earth, the exclusive The Lord of the Rings exhibit held in Toronto's landmark castle, Casa Loma, from October 31 to November 11, 2001 (see article page 8).

ELIJAH WOOD (Frodo Baggins) stars in *Ash Wednesday*, directed by Edward Burns and tentatively scheduled for a February 2002 release. Set in the 1980s, this is the story of a man who tried to save his younger brother from Italian and Irish gangsters.

CATE BLANCHETT'S new film is the WWII-era Charlotte Gray. Blanchett (Galadriel in The Lord of the Rings) plays the title character, a Scottish woman who joins the French resistance in an attempt to find her lover, who was shot down over France. The movie is directed by Gillian Armstrong and had a limited release at the end of December. A wider release was

Blanchett stars in another movie that had a limited release in December and a wider release in January: The Shipping News. Here she plays the wife of a struggling newspaper writer in Newfoundland. The movie is directed by Lasse Halström.

IAN HOLM (Bilbo Baggins) stars in The Emperor's New Clothes. Holm plays Napoléon Bonaparte, who returns from his exile on Elba only to find that France has changed in strange ways. Directed by Alan Taylor, The Emperor's New Clothes should be released in the United States in early 2002. Holm also played the infamous French emperor in a 1974 British television mini-series.

SIR IAN MCKELLEN (Gandalf) made a triumphant return to Broadway with the opening of August Strindberg's

> ance of Death on October 11, 2001, at the Broadhurst Theater. McKellen plays an infirm army captain locked away with his wife on an

island outpost off the coast of Sweden. The play, which also stars Helen Mirren and David Strathairn, will end its run in March 2002.

Around that time, McKellen is also scheduled to start filming his new movie, *The Assumption*, in Florence, Italy. McKellen will share the screen with Benicio Del Toro, Juliette Binoche, and Geoffrey Rush.

Multi-talented VIGGO MORTENSEN
(Aragorn) will be exhibiting some of
his photographs at Track 16
Gallery in Santa Monica,
California, from February
2-March 30, 2002. Mortensen
shares the exhibit, titled
Signlanguage, with one of Mexico's leading photographers, Pedro Meyer.

For his services to Film and Drama, Christopher Lee (Saruman) was honored with the tirle of Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) by Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace on November 20, 2001. Lee joins the likes of director Sam Mendes and actor Dudley Moore. After more than 50 years in the industry, Lee holds the record for the most screen appearances in the history of motion picture. To date, he has played nearly 300 roles.

scheduled for January.



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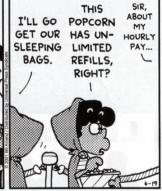
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FAMOUS FAN | BILL AMEND

Bill

If you're an avid reader of daily comic strips, you may have noticed the good-natured needling aimed at The Lord of the Rings fans (a.k.a. "Lord of the Onion Rings" fans) in FoxTrot, one of America's most popular comic strips.

BY ION B. SNYDER

AFoxTrot creator Amend

Making its debut in 1988, Bill Amend's light-hearted strip has grown to be one of the most successful in the world, appearing in more than 1,000 newspapers worldwide and spawning 23 books, the latest of which is titled Encyclopedias Brown and White.

Bill Amend was born in North-hampton, Mass., but spent much of his formative years in the San Francisco Bay area, where he had many of the family life experiences that would later provide inspiration for FoxTrot. Amend took a few minutes recently to let The Official Fan Club Movie Magazine fire off a few questions about The Lord of the Rings and what inspires FoxTrot's main character, Jason.

What was your first exposure to J.R.R. Tolkien and Middle-earth? How would you describe its impact on you?

When I was 14, I went on a Boy Scout camping trip, and while most of us were goofing around, climbing rocks and things, a friend was spending the whole time in his tent reading a book called *The Hobbit*. He went on and on about how great it was, and so I rushed to a bookstore the day we got back, picked up a copy for myself, and have been a Tolkien fan ever since.

I grew up in boring suburbia, USA, so a grand and magical world like Middle-earth was a very attractive place to escape to as a kid. Still is, actually, although as I get older, it'd be nice if the mountains weren't quite so steep.









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WHY DO YOU THINK The Lord of the Rings HAS CONTINUED TO INSPIRE NEW GENERATIONS OF READERS?

There's a timelessness to the work. so it doesn't show its age. And it's so well done and perfectly self-contained.

THE FoxTrot CHARACTER OF JASON HAS WELL-ESTABLISHED AFFINITIES FOR COMPUTERS AND SCIENCE FICTION. HOW DID YOU DECIDE THAT BEING A FAN OF The Lord of the Rings WOULD BE A GOOD ADDITION TO HIS CHARACTER?

To a large extent, Jason's interests are amplified representations of my own, so as my own excitement about these films grew, his grew even more so. understanding their meaning, but to make their meaning add to the joke.

YOU MADE A JOKE IN THE STRIP ABOUT PEOPLE LINING UP SIX MONTHS IN ADVANCE FOR The Lord of the Rings MOVIE. DID YOU KNOW THAT, AS WE SPEAK—A MONTH AND A HALF BEFORE THE OPENING OF THE FILM—FANS IN NORWAY ARE ALREADY LINING UP?

And if I didn't have this stupid job, I might be lining up with them. OK, maybe flying to Norway would be a little much.

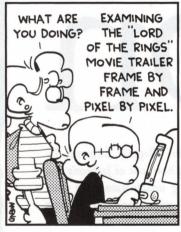
As a cartoonist, you work in a SOMEWHAT SIMILAR MANNER TO AN

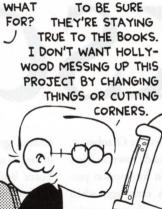
SEE ALL THE LOTR Fox Trots ONLINE!

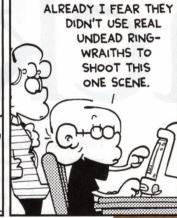
Go to the Universal Syndicate website to see any FoxTrot cartoon. Here's the URL: http://www.ucomics.com/foxtrot/. Use the handy calendar on this web page date. These dates all have LOTR-related

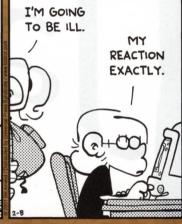
SHOOTING THE FILM:

4/17/00 4/18/00 4/19/00 (this strip contains a small Tolkien typo that has since been 4/20/00 4/21/00 4/22/00









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Also, he's played Dungeons & Dragons a lot in the strip, so The Lord of the Rings seemed perfectly in character.

CLEARLY, YOU ARE A MASTER AT SKILLFULLY USING POP CULTURE REFERENCES IN YOUR STRIP. DO YOU EVER CATCH YOURSELF GOING, "I CAN'T DO THAT-THAT'S TOO OB-SCURE A REFERENCE"? COULD YOU HAVE DONE A JOKE ABOUT TOM BOMBADIL INSTEAD OF THE ONE YOU DID ON RINGWRAITHS, FOR EXAMPLE?

You must have missed the strips I did mentioning mithril armor and Elvenhithlain rope.

The trick to using obscure references is to not make the joke hinge on

AUTHOR SUCH AS TOLKIEN, IN THAT YOU WORK ALONE WITH COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THE WORLD YOU CREATE. COULD YOU IMAGINE WORKING ON A COLLABORATIVE PRODUCTION AS LARGE AS The Lord of the Rings FILMS?

Being a cartoonist is very solitary and isolating, and I often think it would be fun to collaborate and work with other creative people on a film project. But then I read about the seventeen-gajillion details and people and decisions Peter Jackson and crew have had to deal with making these LOTR movies, and my simple little comic strip job doesn't seem quite so bad!

Real undead ringwraiths

STANDING IN LINE

6/19/01

Onion rings

GANDALF COSTUME

10/29/01

LOTR vs. Harry Potter

11/16/01 11/17/01

U P D A T E with

Tackson

This is the first of a series of regular updates with the director.

BY JON B. SNYDER

Peter Jackson was born on October 31, 1961, in a small coast-side town in New Zealand. His passion for motion pictures surfaced at an early age, when Peter started making home movies with friends. In 1987, moviegoers took a sip of Jackson's talent with Bad Taste, the young director's first theatrical release. Jackson then unleashed Meet the Feebles and Braindead, two movies that cemented his position as a master of zany violence and good old-fashioned gore. Heavenly Creatures, Jackson's next offering, brought the director a whole new kind of audience. The movie earned Jackson the 1996 Director of the Year award from the London Critics Circle and an Oscar nomination for Best Original Screenplay (shared with Frances Walsh). Jackson's next feature (co-written and co-directed by Costa Botes) was Forgotten Silver, a television mock documentary about New Zealander Colin McKenzie, a

cinema genius allegedly forgotten by history - and born out of Jackson's and Botes' boiling imaginations. He then teamed up with producer Robert Zemeckis to create the dark comedy The Frighteners, which many considered the best ghost movie since Ghostbusters. And then came The Lord of the Rings.

Jackson had been a long-time fan of *The Lord of the Rings*. Reading the books for the first time at 18, he became hooked and started waiting for someone to turn the words on the page into images on the screen. In the end, intent on seeing *The Lord of the Rings* in a movie theater before he died of old age, Jackson decided to make the movies himself. The story of how he came to make these epic films is almost as amazing as the films themselves—but that's another article for another time.

We caught up with Jackson as he was putting the finishing touches on *The Fellowship of the Ring.*





"Bag End... was the one set on the movie that I actually wanted to keep... I've got it dismantled... and I fully intend to put it inside a hill somewhere. It's incredibly comfortable."

DATE FAST APPROACH-ING. WHAT ARE YOU WORKING ON RIGHT NOW?

Right now I'm driving in my car; it's the morning here and I'm heading out to the sound mixing stage. We are in the middle of our final sound mix, which basically involves combining all the music, all the sound effects and all the dialogue. We have the cut movie and we are now going through reel by reel-and a reel is about 20 minutes long-slowly mixing it all together to get the right balance of music, effects, and dialogue. That's been happening as a three-week process because we usually do about 10 minutes a day, and then we have time at the end of it to do fix-ups. We listen to things, we change things we don't like, or we change things that we feel should be different. We sometimes add more sound effects. You know. 'The Wraith horse needs more of a snort here or we need another noise there.' So the sound effects guys go and create that noise and put it in. It's literally the last thing you do, the last opportunity you have to be creative and inventive and add new things to the film in the areas of sound before it's all finished. It's going to be finished in about two weeks. It will be done, Finished, Over.

WHEN WE INTERVIEWED DAN HENNAH [SUPERVISING ART DIRECTOR], HE SAID THAT WHEN THEY WERE FIN-ISHED CREATING HOBBITON, HE "WANTED TO GO ON HOLIDAY THERE." How important was it to you to CREATE A PLEASANT, TRANQUIL FEEL-ING AT HOBBITON IN THE BEGINNING OF THE FILM?

Well, obviously Hobbiton is really what's at stake in the story. Frodo-as I'm sure the fans all know from reading the books-basically commits the supreme act of self-sacrifice in order to preserve his home and the way of life and the freedom of his people. Hobbiton represents the values of the story. It's why Frodo and Sam and the others do what they need to do. Aragorn has his reasons to be part of this, as do Legolas and Gimli, but the hobbits are there because of the love for their homeland

We wanted to create a Hobbiton that was very close to what you would imagine from reading the books. We also wanted to make it feel as warm and comfortable as possible, and it certainly is. What Dan was saying is true. We built an entire village a year before we were due to start shooting there, so that the gardens could grow and the hedges could grow, so the weeds could grow between the cracks in the paving stones. Everything could sort of germinate so it didn't feel like a film set. We ended up with this incredibly real, tranquil little valley of about 25 hobbit-holes. Little pathways, little gardens with cabbage patches and flowers. It felt really, really great. Especially Bag End. I fell in love with the set for Bag End.

The set of Bag End was in the studio; it wasn't part of the Hobbiton location, because once you go in the door of Bag End on the location you cut to inside a studio set. The studio set was so comfortable that I've actually kept it. It was the one set on the movie that I actually wanted to keep so I did a deal with the studio that let me hang onto it. I've got it dismantled and I've got it in storage and I fully intend to put it inside a hill somewhere. [Laughs.] I don't know where yet but I'll find a nice hillside and put Bag End inside the hill and create a little hobbit hole just as a little home away from home. The round doorways and the round passageways-it's completely different from any house you've ever been in obviously just because of the shape of it. It's incredibly comfortable. It feels very, very safe and peaceful. I love it.

Speaking of Frodo, I was WONDERING IF YOU FELT YOU DISCOVERED ANYTHING NEW ABOUT THE CHARACTER AFTER GOING THROUGH THE LONG PROCESS OF WRITING THE SCRIPT SHOOTING THE FILM?

Frodo's an interesting character because he is the absolute heart and soul of the movie. I always regard Frodo as being the audience—it's the same with the books as it is in the film. It's always useful in a movie to decide which character you are viewing the world through. Which point of view are you going to take when you direct a scene? It's one of the important things to figure out as you are planning how you are going to shoot something. It's obviously Frodo. He is the audience, essentially.

What's difficult with Frodo is that he's the one character from the books that I've found very hard to imagine an actor actually playing. You could imagine what Gandalf is like and you can then look at what actors around the world would be suitable for Gandalf. You can imagine Samwise Gamgee as a character and then you can start to visualize actors. But I found it very difficult with Frodo. Frodo to me has always been quite elusive in being able to put a face to him just from reading a book, or being able to imagine an actor and saying, 'Oh yeah, that guy would be a great Frodo.' He's not that obvious. A face and a body don't come to life in such a vivid way as maybe the other characters.

From that point of view we approached the casting process with a very open mind. We couldn't name an actor that would make a great Frodo, so we had to go out and hope that we'd find one-hoping someone would walk through the door. We ultimately auditioned over 200 actors for Frodo. We auditioned actors in New Zealand, Australia, the U.S., England, and Ireland. We went all over trying to find Frodo. You're sitting in a casting room hoping that the door will open and the next young actor you see will be itthat Frodo will just suddenly appear. You are actually hoping for that moment to arrive.

In our case it didn't happen like that. We were in England, casting the film, meeting actors every day for all

the different characters, including Frodo, and a videotape arrived from Elijah Wood. It was a VHS tape that he had shot himself on a camcorder with a friend of his, because he'd heard about the film and he wanted to be Frodo. We had never even considered Elijah. He was just an actor who hadn't entered our thought process. We put the videotape on and the phenomenon we were hoping for happened. We suddenly saw Frodo. Elijah was being videotaped by his friend and he was reading lines from the book. He didn't have the film script so he was acting scenes right out of the book. We just saw Frodo. We looked at Elijah and at that moment we knew. The role was decided when we saw that tape. It was just a wonderfully lucky break for us. We didn't find Frodo - he found us.



OME READERS FEEL SAM COULD BE CONSIDERED THE CENTRAL CHARACTER OF THE BOOK, THE ONE THEY RELATE TO. WE HAVEN'T HEARD MUCH ABOUT HOW SEAN ASTIN WAS CAST.

Sean was cast the more traditional way. We saw a whole lot of actors. We saw 100 to 150 'Sams.' We met Sean in Los Angeles and did an audition with him. He was cast because he was great. We saw his audition, watched everything and thought we'd found Sam.

I don't relate to Sam as much as I relate to Frodo when I read the books. I guess it's a personal thing. I'm sure there are a lot of people out there who would relate more to Sam. Sam's so solid and ultimately doesn't really change as a character. He's the stable, loyal, very brave companion who has to watch as Frodo undergoes this transformation in this tortuous, agonizing

fight with the Ring. I think it's true to say that the audience's sympathy, certainly in The Return of the King, swings somewhat more towards Sam, because Frodo does become a much more alienated type of character.

I WANT TO ASK ABOUT ANOTHER CHARACTER WHO'S OUITE STRIKING: LURTZ. He'S GOTTEN A LOT OF FAN REACTION. TELL ME HOW THAT CHARACTER WAS CREATED.

Lurtz is the only character we created that wasn't in the books, which is obviously something that we prefer not to do, to be completely honest. We are adapting The Lord of the Rings and we want to do it with a high degree of faithfulness to the books. But we found ourselves with a problem, which is actually a very movie-oriented problem. It's the sort of problem that you don't have when you read the books, but in the film it becomes very apparent. As in the books, the climax of The Fellowship of the Ring takes place when this force of Uruks basically ambushes the fellowship at Amon Hen. They've been sent by Saruman. While in the book you can just describe that and have all the excitement and the action, in the movie we felt just a group of Orcs was not focused enough. We had to single out one particular character within those Orcs who was their leader, the guy who gives the orders, the guy who ultimately confronts Aragorn. Again as a movie convention, separate from the book, we wanted Aragorn to confront a particular Uruk-hai and have a good fight with him. We wanted to create a character who could be that henchman, that Uruk leader. We also have scenes earlier in the film between him and Saruman, when Saruman gives these guys their instructions. He's addressing the group but he's also giving the responsibility of achieving the mission to this one particular character, who's the leader. It was a movie convention, really. We just decided from an

anonymous group of Orcs we had to create their boss.

That's the problem with adapting The Fellowship. Your primary villain in The Fellowship of the Ring is Saruman. Sauron doesn't feature enormously within the context of the story and actual screen time. And the problem ultimately with Saruman is that he doesn't go out to Amon Hen. So you have a climax where your goodies and baddies are facing up against each other and your primary villain, Saruman, isn't a part of that. So really that explains why we thought it was important for the movie to create this additional character.



HAT CREATURE WAS THE MOST DIFFICULT VISUALIZE?

It's definitely the Balrog. The Balrog is very difficult to visualize partly because of the descriptions in the book, and also because of the expectations that he is more than just a monster: he represents pure evil. Tolkien describes him as a creature of shadow and flame. It's a very evocative description, one of the reasons why the Balrog has made such a huge impression on people despite having a relatively small role in the story-but a very significant one with the way he kills Gandalf. It's often the way with books that the most memorable characters or the aspects that are the most intangible, are the most evocative, because the author describes just enough for the imagination of the reader to take over and fill in all the gaps. The Balrog is very much like that. Tolkien hints at enough things to get your imagination running and everyone imagines their own Balrog.

It's a difficult creature to create in that sense because so much of him is made up of imagination rather than a hard description.

We based our entire thinking, planning, and design of the Balrog on shadow and flame. We actually tried to create a creature that feels like he is shadow and flame. We had to create a creature that was physical, that had skin and a body in order to be able to animate him in the computer. But once he was animated, we tried to obscure him in shadow and flame as much as we could so he somehow represents that creature in our imagination.

He's difficult. He's going to be one of those creatures that some people will see and think 'Yeah, that's great' and other people will feel 'No, no. They didn't get the Balrog right.' It's inevitable that he's going to fall into that category.

I'M SURE YOU EXPECTED KEEN INTEREST FROM FANS ABOUT THE SUCCESS OF THE FILM, BUT DID YOU EVER EXPECT THIS PROJECT TO BECOME SUCH A BIG DEAL FOR THE GENERAL PUBLIC IN NEW ZEALAND?

Not really, no. It's sort of gradually grown into something that I never really predicted. It's great to be able to have something that the whole country can be proud of. In a way, I think it's a spirit that has translated onto the screen. I do honestly think that these movies feel a little more special because it's not just a group of filmmakers and actors getting together for a few weeks and shooting a movie, one of two or three films that they might make that year. This is a film that some people have devoted four or five years to, that the cast devoted 18 months to; they didn't do any other films for over a year and a half because they were down here working on this. The entire country sort of rallied behind the film. We had huge cooperation from everybody that we came across, from government departments that we had to get location film-



"We wanted Aragorn to confront a particular Uruk-hai and have a good fight with him. We wanted to create a character who could be that henchman, that Uruk leader."

ing permits from, to extras, to farmers, to people who helped make things for the film, people who had special skills in certain areas that we needed. You can't go through that and not have something of that spirit embed itself into the body of the film, into the fabric of the movie. I think you feel it, it's really interesting. It makes the film a little bit different than a normal movie.

SINCE THE EVENTS OF SEPTEMBER IITH, PEOPLE IN AMERICA, AND ALL OVER THE WORLD, HAVE BEEN THINKING MORE ABOUT THE CONCEPT OF GOOD AND EVIL. THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL IS A MAJOR THEME IN The Lord of the Rings. I was wondering if you had ANY THOUGHTS ABOUT HOW Tolkien's theme of good versus EVIL RELATES TO OUR MODERN WORLD?

That's a difficult question. Obviously the books are all about good versus evil. What Tolkien's message was, that if you allow evil to exist, if you allow evil to flourish, you will ultimately suffer from it.

But at the end of the day, a movie is just a movie, and it pales in significance when compared to what happened on that day. To somehow run around and try to justify things in the movie, that they are somehow important and relevant following those terrible events—that's not something I care to do.

MAKING MOVIES ON SUCH AN EXPONENTIALLY LARGER SCALE?

I'm extremely fond of the film. It has extremely happy memories because it represents for me what I ultimately love about filmmaking. It was a pure film in the sense that I was paying for it myself; I was working with very good friends who were doing the film for free, they weren't being paid. We were just having fun. It was the innocence and fun of filmmaking for the sheer joy



A videotape arrived from Elijah Wood... that he had shot himself on a camcorder... He didn't have the film script so he was acting scenes right out of the book... We looked at Elijah and at that moment, we knew.

of doing it and the excitement of making a film. Professional filmmaking is a very different experience.

In a way, The Lord of the Rings is the closest I've come to recapturing that spirit. It was equally unusual in the sense that we had cast and crew together for nearly a year and a half. Certainly in the spirit of Bad Taste and the spirit of working with things over a long period of time there were definitely similarities with the Lord of the Rings experience. I'm extremely proud of the film. It's the type of film I would love to do again. I do have a real desire to make a film again as sort of a home movie, filming it on the weekends, not having a studio, or not having a release date and expectations.

Just having fun making a film again. It is such an enjoyable memory for me that it is something that I would like to repeat again in the future.

NE LAST QUESTION FOR YOU: WILL YOU BE ABLE TO REST AT ALL ONCE The Fellowship of the Ring is released, or is it straight INTO 18-HOUR DAYS OF POST-PRODUC-TION ON The Two Towers?

I will get a little break. I'm forcing myself and everyone else to have a break. When we deliver this film, I will have a few weeks off, then I will be doing a little bit more cutting in November on The Two Towers; we've obviously done quite a bit of work on that one already, and visual effects are underway for that. I'm already well involved in that movie. Then in December, it will be press junkets and press premieres. I'm sure next year is going to be just as crazy as this year. I'm sort of in this three-year cycle, which is a very interesting period.

THANKS SO MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO TALK TO US.

Thank you.

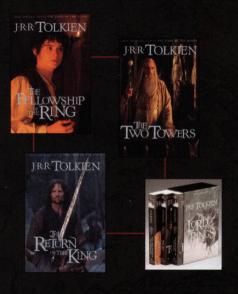
Do you have a question you would like to ask Peter Jackson? E-mail questions to PETERJACKSON@LOTRFANCLUB.COM. We'll ask at least one question from readers every issue.

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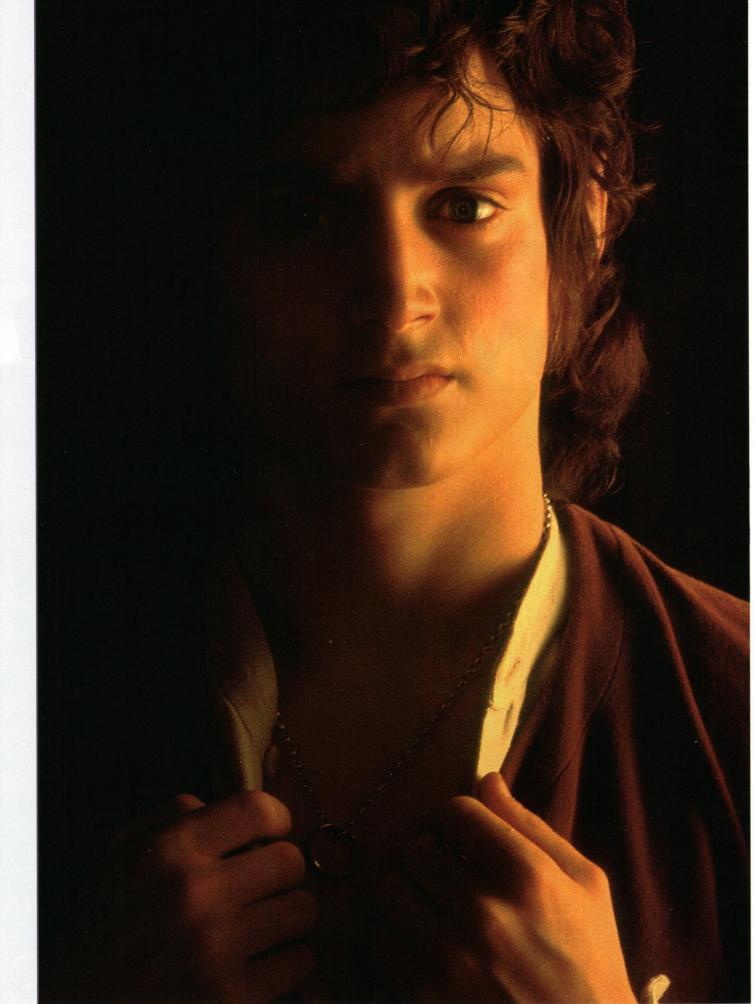
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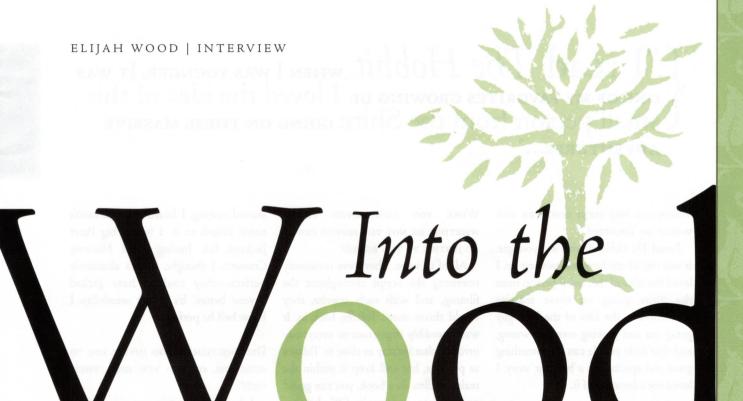


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capable of pivoting from the guileless wonder to the intense determination demanded of Frodo Baggins, the beloved hobbit who takes center stage in the first installment of The Lord of the Rings film trilogy, it's got to be Elijah Wood. From crowd pleasers such as Deep Impact and The Faculty to edgy independent fare such as Ang Lee's The Ice Storm or Ed Burns' upcoming Ash Wednesday, Wood infuses his parts with his own natural curiosity and laser focus—all the while creating a career that has defied the odds against a child star maturing into an accomplished adult actor.

Wood, 20, went from a modeling class in his hometown of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, to getting his first Hollywood role—in a David Fincher-directed music video for Paula Abdul—when he was just seven years old. Bit parts in Back to the Future Part II and Internal Affairs soon led to major roles in films by well known directors, such as Barry Levinson's Avalon, Richard Donner's Radio Flyer, and Steve Miner's Forever Young. Wood got even more attention for starring opposite Macaulay Culkin in The Good Son and as the title character in Rob Reiner's North. But it was his unforgettable performance as Mikey, the lost, wide-eyed boy next door in The Ice Storm that announced Wood's arrival as a serious actor.

While the success of Deep Impact and his lead role in Robert Rodriguez's horror hit The Faculty exposed Wood to a wider audience, The Lord of the Rings promises to shine the brightest spotlight yet on the actor, who not only graduates to a more adult role as Frodo but also shoulders much of the action in the first film, The Fellowship of the Ring. He also takes on the daunting task of bringing to life a classic literary character that readers have held close to their hearts for more than half a century. Wood says it's a challenge he takes seriously.

Elijah Wood, star of Deep Impact and The Ice Storm, talks about making a homemade audition video, being all ears, and taking on his greatest challenge yet—the journey of Frodo Baggins in The Lord of the Rings trilogy

BY SCOTT CHERNOFF

"I read The Hobbit when I was younger. It was ONE OF MY FAVORITES GROWING UP. I loved the idea of this small person from the Shire going on these massive ADVENTURES..."

WHEN DID YOU FIRST DISCOVER THE WORLD OF TOLKIEN?

I read The Hobbit when I was younger. It was one of my favorites growing up. I loved the idea of this small person from the Shire going on these massive adventures - the idea of the little guy going out and proving everyone wrong, and that little people can do something great and special. It's a brilliant story. I loved the adventure of it.

EVEN THOUGH YOU WERE WORKING FROM A SCREENPLAY, HOW MUCH OF YOUR PERFORMANCE AS FRODO WAS INFORMED BY The Lord of the Rings BOOKS?

All of us were really thrust into the world of Tolkien by going to New Zealand and being surrounded by constant conversation about the world and the characters. I had a great understanding for everything that was involved in the film and the story, because the book was constantly referenced. Every scene was enriched with knowledge of the book, or someone reading a passage aloud. It was always around. I didn't feel like I was working just from the script-there were always outer influences.

DID THE FILMS HAVE A LOT OF BIG The Lord of the Rings FANS WORKING ON

Oh yeah! Especially the people in the Weta [special effects] Workshop they're nuts for it. They love The Lord of the Rings, and that's actually our strongest asset ... it's where the fans of the work should be, because the Weta Workshop brings all of the most artistic and detailed elements to our world.

CONCERNED WHETHER OR NOT THE MOVIES COULD DO JUSTICE TO THE BOOKS?

All of us were. They were constantly rewriting the script throughout the filming, and with each rewrite, they would throw more Tolkien back in. It was incredibly important to everybody involved that we stay as close to Tolkien as possible, but still keep it within the realm of film. In a book, you can go off on tangents, and you're OK, because within a novel, you're on this mental journey. But unfortunately, you have to think of the movies in terms of people sitting in a theater. Often with Tolkien, there are tangents that are incredibly interesting to read, and enjoyable from the reader's standpoint, but not necessarily germane to the story.

There were things we took out of the film, but we were constantly putting back specific dialogue and character moments that were very Tolkien. Everyone, including Pete [Jackson], was a fan of the books. I think people will understand if things were changed although there isn't a whole lot that has been. I think we've captured the spirit of Tolkien—and that's more important than anything.

How did you find out about The Lord of the Rings MOVIES?

The first time I heard about it was on the set of The Faculty. Harry Knowles [the founder of aintitcoolnews.com] was there, and he came up to me and said, "Dude, they're making a Lord of the Rings movie—you gotta be Frodo." Then a year later, when they were getting serious about the film and

started casting, I heard Peter Jackson's name linked to it. I was a big Peter Jackson fan, having loved Heavenly Creatures. I thought, 'That's absolutely perfect—they couldn't have picked anyone better.' It's so his sensibility. I knew he'd be perfect.

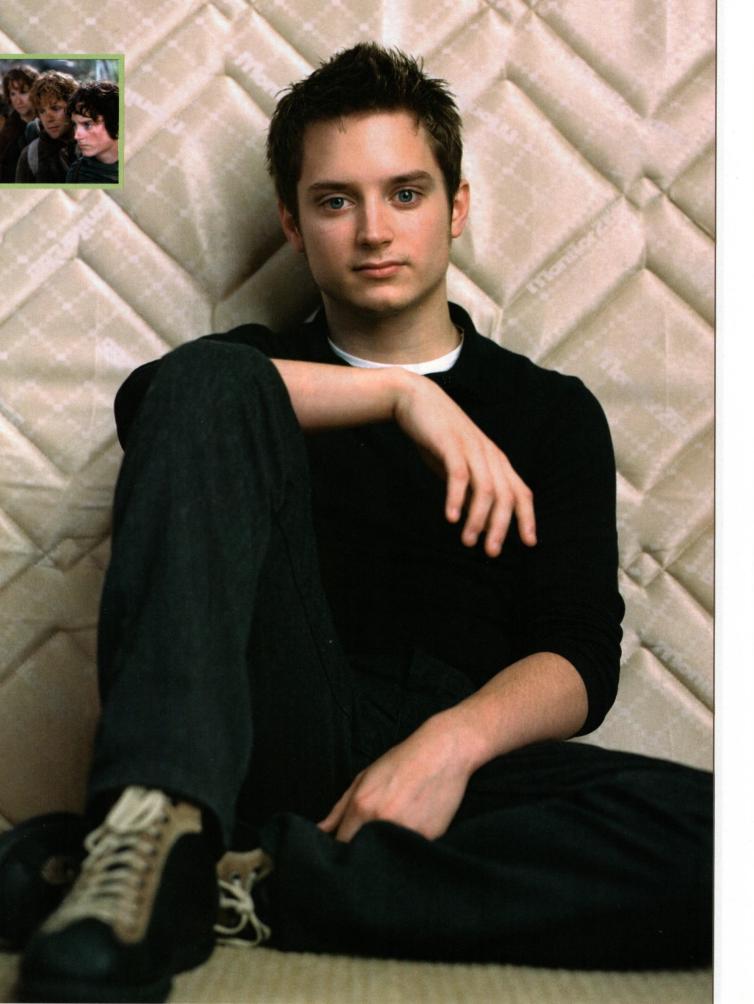
DID THE FILMMAKERS INVITE YOU TO AUDITION, OR DID YOU SEEK THEM

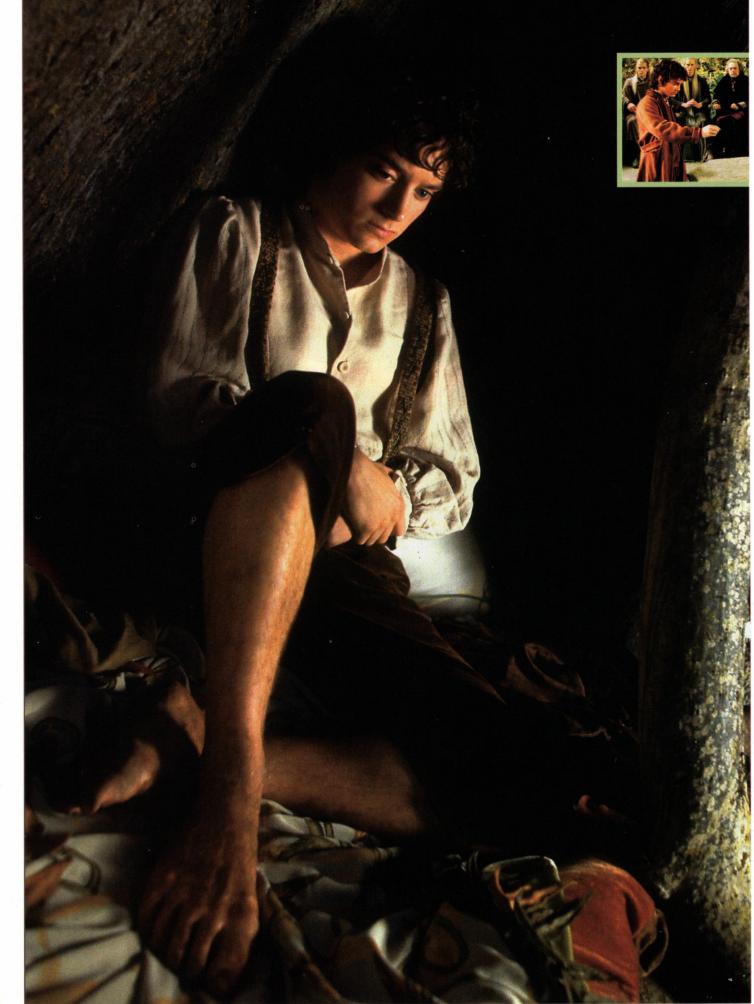
I decided to do my own video. I had a few sessions with a dialect coach and worked on my accent, and then I went to Western Costume here in L.A. I got some Hobbit clothes and some Orc armor. Then I did a few of the scenes in the Hollywood Hills, and one at my house. My friend George [Huang, who directed Swimming with Sharks] filmed them, at various angles, and we edited it together that night.

I brought the tape into the casting office the next day, and waited a month or more before I heard anything solid. Then I heard Pete loved it and wanted to meet with me. It was a fantastic day—he had this big book full of pictures, and he showed me sketches, and pictures of locations, and ideas for sets. It was really cool. But I left the office not knowing if I'd gotten the part or not. I waited another month, and then I got a phone call from Peter Jackson, asking me if I wanted to come to New Zealand and be Frodo.

How DID YOU REACT?

Oh man, words can't describe. I freaked out, totally. I mean, it's the ultimate job. It's not even a job. It's someone handing you the opportunity





"The idea of living in New Zealand, for one, was incredible. But it was also the idea of taking this journey with everyone involved. We were all going to take a journey that would mirror the journey of the

for the ultimate experience—and it was that. It was positive and negative. It was difficult and easy. It encapsulated every emotion and difficulty, and also every reward and payback. It was an incredible experience, and the idea, before going down there, to be able to do all of that, and be handed that opportunity, was just indescribable.

DID YOU HAVE ANY TREPIDATION ABOUT COMMITTING SO MUCH TIME—AND SO MUCH OF YOUR CAREER—TO THIS PROJECT?

No. I was just really excited. When I met with Pete, he said, "Are you ready to make a commitment like this, to go live in New Zealand for over a year with all of us, making three pictures?" And I said, "Absolutely!" I had no hesitation. The idea of living in New Zealand, for one, was incredible. But it was also the idea of taking this journey with everyone involved. We were all going to take a journey that would mirror the journey of the characters in the book. It takes place over a similar amount of time [as the shooting], and I knew the kinds of struggles we could go through would not be dissimilar to those of the book. So in some ways, we were going to New Zealand to live out the story, and live out the journey.

In what ways did the trials of making the movies mirror the story they tell?

There were some incredible trials. The fellowship breaks in the book. For a while, the fellowship was together when we were making the movie, and

then we actually did separate physically, because people had to go on location to different parts of the island. Suddenly, Viggo [Mortensen, who plays Aragorn] and a bunch of the other guys went off to the south island to film scenes while we had to stay in Wellington. We had all become such great friends—it was hard when people had to go off and do their own thing. Sean [Astin, a.k.a. Frodo's friend Samwise Gamgee] and I were left on our own, so our relationship became really good.

DID YOU SHOOT THE MOVIES ONE AT A TIME, OR WERE THERE DAYS YOU WERE FILMING A SCENE FROM ONE FILM IN THE MORNING AND ANOTHER IN THE AFTERNOON?

We started with just the first film for the first couple of months, and then things started to get mixed up. Basically, if a location served films two and three, then we would shoot bits from those films. It was dependent on where we were, and who was available.

Initially, the switch to another film was slightly strange and abrupt, but we got used to it, since we knew so much about the characters and their journeys. That was one of the most challenging things about making these three films—not only did it take place over such a long period of time, but we were constantly going back and forth, trying to keep everything straight. How Pete kept everything straight, I have no idea! It became quite stressful for everyone, but he kept his cool and handled it with real grace. I was quite impressed by that.

Were you over in New Zealand for the entire 15-month shoot?

Yes—I was actually there for about two months before we started filming, and then we shot for 15 months. I came home about three times, but it was only for a couple weeks at a time. Most of my time was spent in New Zealand, which was great. It became home to me.

Early on, I expected it to be a challenge. But I don't think anyone can prepare you for something that challenging. Most often when I talk about the experience, I don't immediately think about how hard it was, because the positives far outweigh the negatives. But it was the most difficult experience of my life. I've never been so tired. At its most difficult, we were filming up to four units [four separate shooting teams working simultaneously] a day, requiring the actors to go from unit to unit, six days a week.

How long was a typical day, including shooting and makeup?

The shooting averaged maybe 12 hours. They were long hours. Plus, the hobbits had to come in much earlier than anyone else, because we had to have our feet put on, so our hours were ridiculous.

The feet took an hour-and-a-half, and that was generally within the 5 o'clock hour of the morning. I'd stand up for the better part of an hour while Marjory Hamlin [the trilogy's On-Set Prosthetic Supervisor] would put my feet on. They were form-fitted prosthetics that my feet fit into, like a slipper. They would glue my feet into them, and paint around to

"Everybody working on this film was so incredibly in love with the project that they poured their hearts into it, and every detail is fully realized."

blend my skin color with the color of the feet. Then they would glue wig hair onto the top of the feet. After that, we would go to regular makeup to get our wigs and ears put on, which would generally take another hour.

Those feet were the bane of our existence as Hobbits. The one thing that actually makes us Hobbits is the one thing that we couldn't bloody standmainly because it robbed us of an hourand-a-half of sleep in the morning. However, the feet were uncomfortable to wear, they looked incredible, and they made us feel like Hobbits.

DID THEY HINDER YOUR ABILITY TO WALK?

No. not at all.

How long would it take to REMOVE THEM?

About 20 to 30 minutes. The hobbits got to work earlier than most people, and we also left later. We spent about 40 minutes getting our makeup taken off. When we wrapped, we couldn't just leave. It became a process that we were all so used to, but we had long days.

Sounds like you had no choice but TO BOND WITH THE OTHER HOBBITS.

Yeah, totally! It was all good fun. Those moments in the trailer after work were great moments.

I HEARD YOU AND THE OTHER Hobbits did a lot of surfing.

We did. There is good surfing in New Zealand. We picked up surfing for the first time, all four of us, and Orlando [Bloom, who plays the Elf Legolas]. It was pretty incredible. We'd never surfed before. We didn't take lessons, but there were a few surfers working on the film, and we hung out with a few of those guys, so we got tips from them. They were crew members—lighting technicians and grips, and one of the production runners. We formed a group, and we took a group photo of all of us standing with our boards, wearing sunglasses. We call it the Nine Black Riders, or the Ring Race Surfing Club.

Speaking of New Experiences, DID YOU HAVE ANY EXPERIENCE ON PAST FILMS WITH BLUE SCREEN AND CGI [COMPUTER-GENERATED IMAGERY]?

Not really. The Faculty was the only thing I've worked on that had special effects like that. Deep Impact had special effects, but I wasn't involved with them so much. The entire battle that took place in Balin's Tomb was one of our first experiences working with a CG character, and for all of us to be involved in a battle sequence together. The cave troll is completely CG, so that was a mode of filmmaking that we all had to get used to-but something that was old hat to all of us by the end.

Is it hard reacting to a cave troll THAT ISN'T REALLY THERE?

Oddly enough, it's not. We all had such strong ideas as to what we were seeing, because we saw conceptual drawings. [Conceptual Designer] Alan Lee would bring a sketch to the set and say, "This is what you're looking at." We were constantly shown these drawings

and references of the CG monsters or beasts to give us a clearer vision of what we were supposed to see before we had to conjure them in our minds for the camera. It was almost fully realized in our minds.

DESPITE CREATING MORE THAN 200,000 CG CHARACTERS, THE CREW TOOK THE OLD-FASHIONED APPROACH FOR MOST OF THE SETS, CREATING ENORMOUS ENVIRONMENTS FROM THE GROUND UP IN THE NEW ZEALAND COUNTRYSIDE. DID THE REALITY OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS HELP YOU AS AN

It was great being able to exist in an environment that seemed so realistic. We had sets, primarily the ones on location, that were so rooted within the land, that they could have existed. It's hard to create that kind of authenticity for something that is so steeped in fantasy. I speak mostly from my memory of working in Hobbiton, which was literally built into the ground in Hamilton, New Zealand. We traveled to Hobbiton, and it was real. We could walk around the streets. We could go up to each of the Hobbit holes, and walk through the gardens. I mean, it was there. For all of us Hobbits, it felt like we were home.

I remember working on the blue screen unit and working with the special effects, but the most memorable parts of the film, and the most memorable experiences, were working on sets that made us feel like we were actually there. Bag End existed—it was there. You don't have to question. It's all there for you. The history is there. They worked



on every tiny little detail, most of which you won't actually see in the film—that's how passionate everyone was.

Everybody working on this film was so incredibly in love with the project that they poured their hearts into it, and every detail is fully realized. Everything was built by hand. They manufactured all the armor and leather, and all the swords were made

Normally with ADR, you try and replicate the performance of the day. But we approached ADR this time around in a much more artistic way, and tried to breathe different life into things that may not have been there, or enhance things that were. We played around with things a little bit more. The most difficult thing for an actor is having to go back and re-do a moment BECOMING WIDELY KNOWN AS FRODO MIGHT HINDER YOUR ABILITY TO GET OTHER PARTS?

No, I don't feel that trepidation at all. I think that the Hobbits are portrayed in such a realistic way, and I think we as people shine though, as opposed to it being us covered in make-up. Had it been any other way, we could have easily been typecast. But I'm not worried.



by people in the Weta Workshop. There is Elvish written on swords that you won't even read.

WILL THERE BE ANY ADDITIONAL FILMING FOR The Two Towers OR The Return of the King?

The principal photography is finished on all of them, and the pickups and re-shoots for film one are finished. But films two and three will have pick-ups and re-shoots, and ADR [additional dialogue recording]. Most of us had to re-do all of our dialogue, because in most scenes there was either a fan, or a wind machine, or a smoke machine, or something creating noise. We knew from the beginning that what we were doing was recording a guide track to later be re-dubbed.

How do you re-create your PERFORMANCE MONTHS LATER IN THE RECORDING STUDIO?

that was relevant to that day. But it was fantastic to go back on this film and look at it from a completely different perspective.

WHAT WAS THE BEST PART OF BEING FRODO BAGGINS?

Frodo is a brilliant character to play, mainly for the arc that the character takes throughout the journey. He starts as an innocent hobbit in the Shire, albeit quite curious and knowledgeable about the outside world, to a Ring-obsessed shadow of his former self at the end, before he destroys the Ring. Taking the character to that extreme over the process of three films was a great challenge, and a lot of fun. It was something I really looked forward to at the beginning of filming-figuring out how to get the character there, and all the scenarios that would affect Frodo and the Ring.

Do you have any workies that

With the movies released over three years, we're all going to work on other things in between, so it won't be the only thing you'll see any of us in over the next three years.

Do you see Frodo as a bridge for YOU TO MORE ADULT ROLES?

Yes. Frodo is actually 30-some-odd years old when he goes on the journey, which in Hobbit years is quite young. But the hobbits in this film are quite older and mature, and Frodo is actually a mature adult character, especially with the responsibilities that he's handed, and the tragic journey that he takes to Mordor. So luckily, it has worked out like that, where it is a nice bridge to more mature roles, hopefully.

You were discovered out of A CHILD MODELING CLASS. DID YOU ACTUALLY DO ANY MODELING, OR DID YOU GO STRAIGHT TO ACTING?

I did that class for a little while. There are pictures of me walking on some stage in a mall, which are quite funny. But I fell in love with acting immediately.

WHAT DID YOU FALL IN LOVE WITH ABOUT IT?

It was a variety of things. It still is a variety of things. It's being surrounded by a group of people who are all up, and we would sit and talk about our relationships, and the different character traits we had. I remember doing a bit of Tai Chi at times. It was relaxing, a real mental exploration. I'm so glad I got a chance to work with such brilliantly talented people.

I can look at The Lord of the Rings and say the same thing, in terms of the actors and the filmmakers. It's comparable on

the strongest actresses working today.

HAVE YOU BEEN RELAXING SINCE YOU GOT BACK TO THE STATES?

I tried to start up my car yesterday — I've got an old 1972 BMW, and that car has been sitting in the garage for two vears, so it's time to breathe some life back into it. I go to movies a lot, and I've been playing a lot of PS2 games lately.



involved in one project together there's that camaraderie of the group. It's being surrounded by incredibly talented people whom you learn from. It's the ability to travel to new places and learn new things. It's also exciting and wonderful to be able to approach a character, or your idea of a character, and flesh that out on screen, to experience that character, and make that experience come across on film.

A LOT OF The Lord of the Rings FANS ARE MEETING YOU FOR THE FIRST TIME AS Frodo. If you could point them TOWARD ONE OF YOUR PREVIOUS PERFORMANCES TO GET A SENSE OF YOUR ACTING, WHICH WOULD YOU WANT THEM TO SEE?

The Ice Storm. It's such a great movie. It was completely different from anything I'd ever experienced before. We went to this rehearsal space, a dance studio in New York, and Ang Lee would pair us

that level. It's a completely different film, but I'm working with such a talented filmmaker again, and some of my favorite actors, people I've really admired-and with whom I now have such incredible friendships.

Which actor were you most JAZZED TO WORK WITH BEFORE YOU STARTED FILMING?

Oh, man, Ian McKellen. I'm a huge Ian McKellen fan, so the prospect of working with him was incredibly exciting. And Cate Blanchett—oh man, what a day that was! The idea of working with her was so exciting—I was a giddy geek that day. She's amazing. Not only is she stunningly beautiful-and even more so in person... it's kind of staggering... and she was all elfin, which was quite lovely -also, she's such a powerful actress, and it's kind of nerve-wracking to be in a scene just with her. I think she's one of

I'm really interested in photography, and I worked a lot on that in New Zealand—I got some great pictures. I also want to learn how to cook. For a while, I was thinking of going to culinary school, but so much of it revolves around business, and there wasn't enough cooking. So I might just learn by trial and error.

I went to New York and did a film with Ed Burns called Ash Wednesday, which was completely opposite [The Lord of the Rings]-eight days of work for me. Huge change. But I feel like I'm still in decompression mode from The Lord of the Rings. It's been quite a long time-almost a year since we wrapped-but I still feel like I just got back. I spent so much time there. The Lord of the Rings was my life, and I've gone back twice now for pick-ups, so I don't quite know what my life yet holds.

am

From Goonie to Hobbit—Sean Astin talks about transforming into the classic character he says he was "destined" to play.

To metamorphose into Frodo Baggins' loyal and true Hobbit sidekick Samwise "Sam" Gamgee, actor Sean Astin had to undergo a complete physical make-over, adding everything from prosthetic feet to dozens of extra pounds to his body. But while Astin's look changed to fit the part, the actor says his mind was already in tune with Sam, the character he knew he had to play in the Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings trilogy.

Transforming himself into Sam turned out to be an extraordinary commitment for the 29-year-old actor. Because Sam is a portly hobbit, Astin pulled a Robert De Niro, gaining weight for the part even as he immersed himself in the literary world of Tolkien. The quest also meant uprooting his family, moving his wife and infant daughter, now five, to New Zealand for more than 15 months. But the unusual demands of filmmaking are nothing new to Astin, who grew up around show business-his mother is the

Oscar-winning actress Patty Duke (The Miracle Worker, The Patty Duke Show), and his father is legendary TV star John Astin (The Addams Family, Batman), who appeared as Judge in Peter Jackson's The Frighteners.

Like his onscreen partner Elijah Wood, Sean Astin started as a child actor. When he was 14, he made his mark on a generation of '80s kids by starring in the Steven Spielbergproduced adventure The Goonies, which still has a huge following. He's perhaps best known for starring in the title role of Rudy, the inspiring tale of a smalltown underdog determined to play college football.

After youthful parts in The War of the Roses, Memphis Belle, and Toy Soldiers, Astin began to get adult roles in critically acclaimed films such as Bulworth, Courage Under Fire, Where the Day Takes You, and The Low Life. In 1995, he was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Short Film





for Kanoaroo Court, which he directed. and, with his wife Christine, produced.

Now Astin is poised to shed his images as football hero Rudy and Goonie hero Mikey. Both are sure to be eclipsed by the epic The Lord of the Rings trilogy and his fateful role as Sam. He's also hard at work on shedding something else—those extra pounds he picked up on his journey to Middle-earth.

YOU WENT THROUGH QUITE A TRANSFORMATION TO PLAY SAM. FROM THE PROSTHETIC FEET, EARS, AND HAIR YOU WORE EVERY DAY TO THE DIALECT IN WHICH YOU SPOKE. BUT MOST NOTABLY, YOU CHANGED YOUR BODY TO FIT THE ROLE. HOW MUCH WEIGHT DID YOU GAIN?

I gained 20 pounds for the part of Sam.

Was that a requirement for the ROLE?

It was between me, who had just run the L.A. Marathon at a trim 160 pounds, and a heavyset actor in England whom they also liked for the part. So I convinced them I was capable of transforming into a bigger version of myself. I committed to it and I did it. But I must say that the hardest part of being involved with the trilogy was putting that weight on, and living with this extra blubber for a year and a half. I became this big, bulky, stocky, heavyset guy, and it was hard. It was hard on my back, my knees, and my heart, I'm sure. And it was hard to get back down. I got back to about 168 by the time we went to Cannes, and then I've crept back up to 180. It's a hard thing on the human body to vacillate with weight. It's really unhealthy. I'm trying now to design a lifestyle that will have me at a good weight that I can sustain over the long haul. But I became Sam!

OUITE LITERALLY, HOW DID YOU GO ABOUT GAINING THE WEIGHT?

I just didn't watch what I ate. I ate anything and everything that I wanted. I did a lot of weight-lifting right away, and didn't run a lot. But I stopped weight-lifting, because once you have the prosthetic feet and ears on, you don't want to move around too much, because your sweat can loosen the glue. and the feet can come off. So I had 15hour days of sitting still and eating.

All the actors took up surfing, and I was just hopeless. I loved trying, but I was like this big seal trying to stand on top of a toothpick. There are some shots in the movies where I just look at myself and go, "Wow, that's me?"

DID YOU HAVE ANY QUALMS ABOUT GAINING THOSE 20 POUNDS?

No. It wasn't even an intellectual thing. It was like it was destined to happen, and I was destined to do it. It wasn't that I wanted to do it-it was that I had to do it. Of course I was going to do whatever I had to do to get that part, because there are very few times when there's a perfect marriage of an actor and a part.

WHY IS THE PART OF SAM SO PERFECT FOR YOU?

Well, a lot of people ask me, "Was it hard to play someone who's quiet and loyal, who's patient and perseveres, and who is decent and good?" The genuine, honest answer in my heart is no, it's not hard, because I feel like that's who I am. The qualities in Sam that I so admire are qualities that I think everybody has in them, and they are certainly the parts of myself that I'd want to focus on.

I also knew from the beginning that Elijah Wood was playing Frodo, so I never looked at the stories and wondered, 'Who could I be? Could I be Aragorn, or Frodo, or Legolas?' That was never a question. They saw me as Sam, and that's how I was introduced

"All the actors took up surfing, and I was just hopeless. I loved trying, but I was like this big seal trying to stand on top of a toothpick".



to this world, so it's almost like that's the only thing I ever could be.

I was a little nervous when I saw the Ralph Bakshi cartoon, and I saw how the Hobbits were portrayed as these bumbling, fumbling little things. I wanted to make sure that we didn't sacrifice the credibility of the heroism by making it too roly-poly and comedic, and I think we struck that balance. I didn't want Sam to be too fat. I think there's a very valid reading of the character that is a stocky, portly yeoman character who isn't just a roly-poly fat boy.

Frodo and Sam are little. Because as the reader, vou're identifying with them. The audience will hopefully identify with us, because we're human-like.

In fact, you could say Hobbits are the essence of all that's beautiful and poetic about the human form—as the Orcs are all that is ugly and bestial about the human form. The Hobbits are diminutive [compared] to the humans they stand next to, or the Elves that are fighting on their behalf, but once that gets stripped away, and you really live as a hobbit - as I have - you fear, and the nature of greed, and people's thirst for power for power's sake. But Sam isn't interested in any of that. When most people would give way to legitimate fear, insecurity, or terror. Sam doesn't even know how to give way. He just knows how to be honest and loyal. And when somebody embodies those qualities, and they happen to exist in a time of great peril, they shine and become a beacon of hope for other folks.

So even though Sam is just a little hobbit, and there are much more



How did you strike that balance?

Sam is, as are all Hobbits, very emotionally available—they're constantly referred to as bursting into tears, and they shudder in fear when there's a huge nine-foot-tall thing coming at them, as anybody would. Yet that doesn't undermine their heroism. They still rise to the challenge of the moment—battling against a cave troll, or enduring near-starvation and continuing to move forward because they have to.

I was very careful in learning how to walk like a Hobbit, that it didn't get goofy. Hobbits aren't goofy-Hobbits are real. They're an earth-loving people. Tolkien was raging against the industrial revolution. The Hobbits are a species of the earth, and there's something magical that should be celebrated about that. To me, when you read the books, you forget about the Hobbits' diminutive size. Halfway through the first book, I forgot that forget about being diminutive. The Hobbits have a kind of heroism. strength, and size that's exactly the opposite of their physical description.

How would you describe Sam FOR SOMEONE WHO'S MEETING HIM FOR THE FIRST TIME?

The best way to understand Sam is to think of the most loyal, obedient puppy dog that you could ever have. But Sam also is a particular fellow. He likes things to be in order. He likes to have all of his pots and pans and sausages and food, and if things don't go his way, he gets frustrated, because he takes his job of providing for Mr. Frodo very seriously. He's a very earnest fellow.

HIS EARNEST, STEADFAST DEVOTION SEEMS AT TIMES TO BE THE ONLY THING HOLDING THE FELLOWSHIP TOGETHER. WOULD YOU AGREE?

Well, you know, the books are so amazing. They deal with the nature of powerful characters than him throughout the whole story, it's his simplicity that is his strength. When being a sword master, or being incredible with a crossbow, or all the different talents, techniques, tools, and weapons that all of the other characters can employ in the battle against evil, become meaningless, what are you left with? Your own sense of self, your integrity, and your character. I think that's Sam's function in the story, and it's very heroic.

YOU MENTIONED HIRING A DIALECT COACH FOR YOUR AUDITION. How HARD DID YOU WORK TO NAIL SAM'S SPEAKING STYLE?

For the audition, I worked very hard. Then, when I got the part and we went down to New Zealand six weeks in advance of filming, there were two dialect coaches, Andrew Jack and Roisin Carty. They put us through our paces and we went through a couple hours a day, every day for six weeks, where we





learned not just how to do the dialect, but we got a crash course in the palate, the tongue, the lips-how to speak. It felt like the golden age of Hollywood.

The dialect was really hard for me. It wasn't just a straight Cockney accent. It became a West Country-inspired hybrid of working class and rural English. It was hard. Roisin and Andrew were there for every shot, and I leaned on them a lot. They set the bar high, and most of the time I barely made it over the top. A couple times I came crashing right back down on the side!

PROSTHETIC FEET, EARS, AND HAIR. HAD YOU EVER PLAYED A PART THAT REQUIRED SO MUCH MAKEUP?

No, this was my first experience. But it became like a suit that you just put on everyday. It was two and a half hours every day. You show up and it's dark out, and you transmogrify into this different character by having cold, wet, sticky, uncomfortable glue put all over your skin. Actually, the feet were quite comfortable—except when we were running on the shale of Mount Doom, an active volcano [called Ngauruhoe] we filmed on for six weeks. Everybody ended up with cut feet.

After a while, I started to take for granted the mastery, the real artistry that was involved in creating the feet. Each day, each pair of feet was its own work of art that these artists would hand-paint. The guy who put mine on-his name was Sean Foot! You got very close with your Weta prosthetics folks and makeup folks. It was like a traveling circus.

I'll never forget when they took the mold of my head. I get claustrophobic, and the idea that they were going to put this compound all over my face, plug up my ears and eyes, and almost my nose and mouth, so I can just barely breathe, and then not remove it until it's completely hardened—I was just thinking, "What if there's an earthquake or a power failure, and they all run for the hills?"

Right before he put the stuff on me, Howard at KMB gave me this nice little bit of psychology. He put his hand in the gloop and said, "You know, some people tell me this can be quite a soothing experience," and he put it right on my face. So the whole time it was on, I was like, "OK somebody thinks this is soothing." I just kept telling myself, "Don't worry—it's a soothing experience."

That turned out to be a great metaphor for the whole year and a half. At times when you were ready to go mad, you'd realize, "Wait a minutewhy not give myself over to this process and enjoy it?"

What was your first encounter WITH THE CHARACTER OF SAM? HAD YOU READ The Lord of the Rings BEFORE YOU GOT THE PART?

Answering your second question first-no. My whole experience of the trilogy was through the prism of preparing for the role of Sam. The first I ever heard of J.R.R. Tolkien, or of The Lord of the Rings trilogy, was when my agent called to tell me there was a part in the new Peter Jackson film. She said, "It's The Lord of the Rings! You know—they're the sequels to The Hobbit!" Somewhere in the back of my consciousness, I knew the word Hobbit, but I couldn't tell you what a hobbit was. I could have guessed it was a short-ish Smurf or dwarf or something, but I didn't even know that for sure.

But somehow, I knew it was something I wanted to do. She said, "Peter Jackson's The Lord of the Rings trilogy for New Line." I heard, "Peter Jackson," "trilogy," and "New Line." I knew they were feature films and they were filming all three of them at once. I knew it was going to be a huge, epic adventure. I just instantly got it. I didn't need to have it explained to me. There's a phrase, "There's nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has

"I ended up taking on the role of Elijah's protectoreven though he didn't really need it! I kept wanting to take him under my wing, and he kept dragging me into different adventures."



come," and that's how I felt. It was like someone turned on the light and I was already standing in the room. There are very few times in life when things are laid out for you like that.

So I turned my car around and went to Barnes & Noble, and I said, "Do you guys know who J.R.R. Tolkien is?" And they were like, "Aisle Four." I went to Aisle Four, and all of Aisle Four was J.R.R. Tolkien. So before even looking at the specific Tolkien titles, I looked around the rest of the bookstore—trying to figure out what else I didn't know about! Because clearly I was in the dark.

I purchased a copy of the trilogy, illustrated by Alan Lee, powered through 175 pages of *The Fellowship of the Ring*, and hired a dialect coach to prepare for my audition. Honestly, I didn't enjoy it at first. I got how powerful a piece of literature it was, and I was impressed by the poetry, and I was trying to glean everything I could from the character, but it was almost like a biblical student would go to the Bible: this is the source material, so what do I need to do to figure it out?

YET IT'S CLEAR FROM TALKING TO YOU THAT YOU'RE NOW PASSIONATE ABOUT TOLKIEN'S WORK. WHAT HAPPENED TO TURN YOU AROUND?

I didn't love it until I read *The Hobbit*. When I was down in New Zealand, I was halfway through *The Two Towers*, and I wasn't enjoying it. It was work going through it, and I didn't know why I didn't embrace the world. So I bought *The Hobbit*—and I read it in four hours. I just loved it. Then I started the trilogy over again. I started with *The Fellowship*, and it was a lot easier. *The Hobbit* was the gateway to the experience for me. I think you need to understand Bilbo's story. The world of the Shire is laid out with such elegance and simplicity that you're drawn right into it.

Now, of course, I am very grateful to Professor Tolkien, and to the millions



"You show up and it's dark out, and you transmogrify into this different character by having cold, wet, sticky, uncomfortable glue put all over your skin."



of people around the world who've been absorbed in his life's project because basically it helped me orient a couple years of my life.

So how would you recommend that people who haven't read The Hobbit or The Lord of the Rings go into this movie? Will they get it?

Well, it would be cool if you read *The Hobbit* before you saw the movie—it's such a great story! It's a classic story. But coming to the movie, as the audience, your big job is just to show up. Once you're sitting in the movie theater, it's an opportunity to really go to the world, quickly and easily. You show up at the movie, and—bam!—you get sucked into Middle-earth. It's like going to another place and another time.

Is that what going to New Zealand to make the trilogy was like for you—like a journey to Middle-Earth?

Yes, and you've got to start with New Zealand itself—two tiny islands in the middle of the South Pacific. You can't go any further south without reaching Antarctica. So it was literally going to another world, a world of clean air, the most crystal-clear water, and the richest of greens in the trees. There are these huge, towering summits and volcanoes, and rivers and streams. It's like Tolkien walked across New Zealand and then sat down to write the trilogy.

Plus, we had the costumes and the props, and the sets that all seemed to seamlessly grow out of the environment. So yeah, that's exactly what it was like—it was like going to Middle-earth.

Is it tough getting into the blue screen work after you've spent time on those spectacular sets?

There was a lot of blue and green screen work, tons of that. As an actor, it was almost easier to do that stuff than it was to do some of the other location

work, which was really physically demanding. You cross an imaginative Rubicon, where you commit to this idea of being in an imaginative space. Peter describes the environment of Balin's Tomb. He describes this cave troll, and what the cave troll is going to be doing to you, and he shows you a drawing of it. So you close your eyes and picture it, and then it's about continuing to really believe that's in your mind's eye.

Once you give yourself over to that, it becomes fun. It's where you're really

DID YOU DEVELOP AS CLOSE A RELATIONSHIP WITH ELIJAH AS SAM HAS WITH FRODO?

Life imitated art, completely, I ended up taking on the role of Elijah's protector-even though he didn't really need it! I kept wanting to take him under my wing, and he kept dragging me into different adventures.

He's an amazing young man. He's genuinely filled with energy. I'm 10 years older than he is, and I had a lot of energy when I was his age, but he's like a cat. He's undaunted. They would tie

get tattoos. We decided that it wasn't going to be a publicity thing. We did it for us. I am so not the tattoo guy. If you would have asked me two years ago, would I ever get a tattoo, I would have said absolutely, unequivocally, there will never be a tattoo on my body. But Elijah had this idea that the nine of us should do it, and I just couldn't believe that I was going to get on a plane and leave, and not have any physical record of this experience. It was a great bonding thing for the nine.



allowed to soar. It's what readers get to enjoy—their own imaginative space. As an actor, you go into that same space.

WHAT WAS THE MOST FUN PART OF YOUR The Lord of the Rings EXPERIENCE?

Probably all the helicopter rides! On any given day, there were five helicopters ferrying us to the tops of these mountains.

The most rewarding thing was gaining a whole new family, the family of actors and crew. Everybody was so close, and then we'd get sick of each other after four months of working together, and we'd go away for two weeks, and then we'd come back and it was this huge happy reunion, with hugs and a whole new battery of "let'sgo-out-to-dinner-after-work." Then four more months would go by and we're sick of each other again—it's like a family!

him up and whip him around off these cherry pickers, and he was just game. He would go for it. And I was this Nervous Nelly of an old granny. I was like, "Is that safe? Have you gotten something to eat?" I was like the grandma—or the big brother is really how it felt. We became very, very close. It's hard to put into words. I don't see him as a friend or a colleague. I see him as a brother.

ON WHAT ADVENTURES DID HE DRAG YOU?

We did everything—bungee jumping, surfing, motorcycle riding, we did it all. Sightseeing, taking in the America's Cup regatta—we were the Fellowship around town in New Zealand.

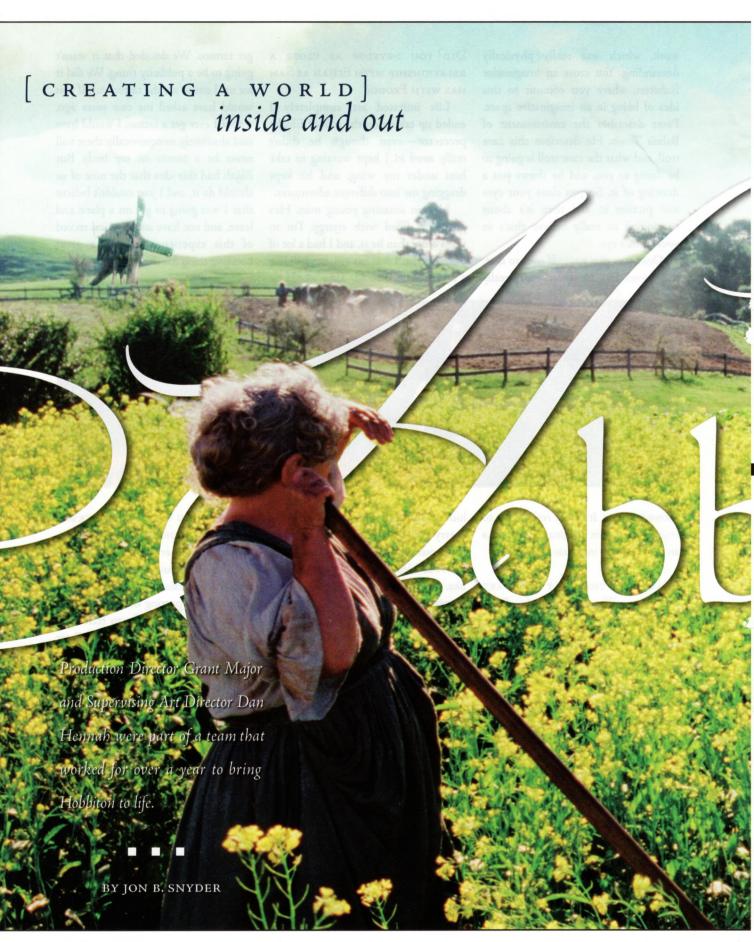
I've heard you even got tattoos TO CEMENT YOUR FELLOWSHIP.

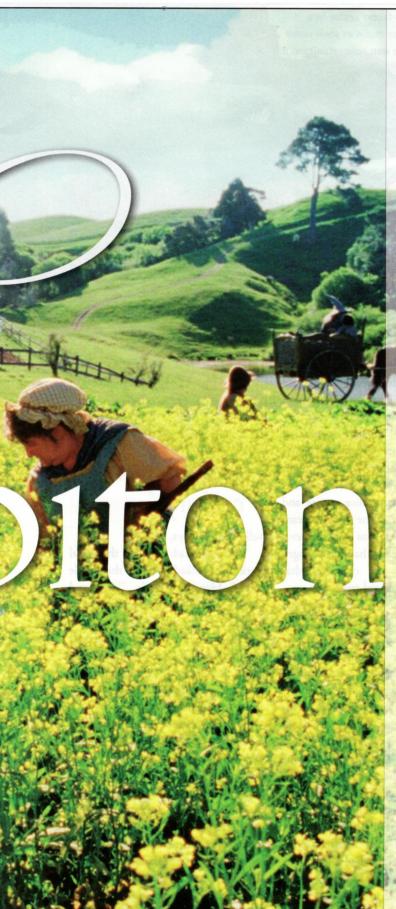
I can confirm that I have a tattoo. Nine members of the Fellowship did

DID WORKING WITH PETER JACKSON LIVE UP TO YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

Yes. My father worked for him on The Frighteners, and when he got back from New Zealand, he described this experience of putting these prosthetics on, and what it was like to transform into the Judge. Then he described Peter and Fran, these two really cool artists who have the world by the tail, and he created in my mind's eye this idyllic working environment.

I learned so much from Peter. He's truly a genius. I think he and I saw Sam a little bit differently, ultimately. But it was my job to give him what he wanted, and I think I was able to do that, and make sure I was reconciling that with my own vision. I think he pushed me into places I didn't expect to go, and I'm glad he did.





PROFILE | DAN HENNAH & GRANT MAJOR

he mission:

Transform a

New Zealand sheep farm into the cinematic version of Hobbiton, the beloved hamlet where J.R.R. Tolkien both began and ended his tale of The Lord of the Rings. Make Tolkien fans feel as if they are gazing upon the true Hobbiton when the set is unveiled in New Line's The Lord of the Rings film trilogy.

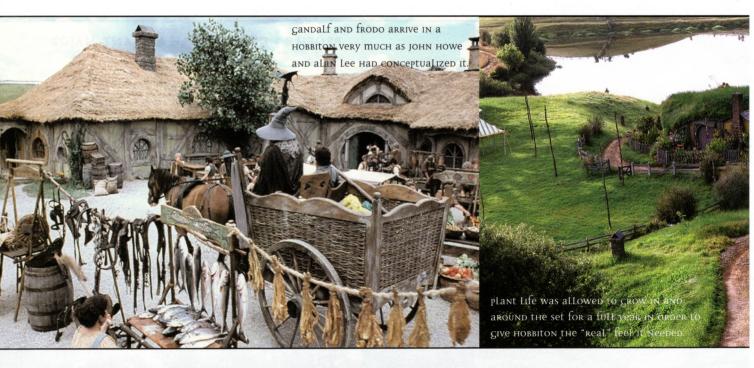
The magicians in charge of this mission? Production Designer Grant Major, Supervising Art Director Dan Hennah, and virtually an army of artists, craftsmen, gardeners, and other experts.

The result of their ingenuity and imagination was a Hobbiton so real that the digital effects regularly used to create fantastic film locations were rendered unnecessary.

Elijah Wood, the actor who portrays Frodo Baggins, says he had a dramatic response to visiting the Hobbiton location for the first time.

"We traveled to Hobbiton, and it was real," Wood says. "We could walk around in the streets. We could go up to each of the hobbit-holes. We could walk through the gardens. I mean, it was there. For all of us as hobbits, it felt like we were home. It's hard to articulate, because it's hard to create a feeling like that, or create that kind of authenticity and that kind of realism of something that is so steeped in fantasy, but also steeped in reality. It was just incredible."

In a recent interview, Grant Major and Dan Hennah talked about the work that went into creating a Hobbiton that would be embraced by exacting Tolkien fans and moviegoers.



THE SEARCH FOR HOBBITON

The path to constructing this magical place began not with finding the right physical location, but with finding people who had the vision to transform a simple landscape into the haven of Hobbiton.

Along with Major and Hennah, Conceptual Artists Alan Lee and John Howe took on much of the responsibility for Hobbiton. Lee and Howe are highly regarded fantasy illustrators who created many of the Middle-earth paintings that accompany well-known editions of Tolkien's work.

"Alan and John's work had set the stage for people's expectations," Major says. But paintings are one thing; visualizing a complete three-dimensional environment was quite another.

Tolkien wrote his great story from an Anglo and Northern European perspective, Major says, and the expectation was that the historical motifs would come from that part of the world."The architecture of the front



of the hobbit-holes was made using this sort of Tudor-ish exposed timber and plaster look with lead-like windows and polished brass doorknobs," he says.

"The way he [Tolkien] describes it suggests levels of technology somewhere around the 17th century," notes Major. "They have a postal service. They have a quasi-police service and things like that." The creative team looked back as far as the medieval period, as technology had not changed significantly in the centuries that preceded the industrial revolution.

"Tolkien wrote about the Hobbit's world being an ideal world—an ideal world in a pre-industrial time, before the industrial revolution when things were a lot simpler and a lot closer to nature," Major says.

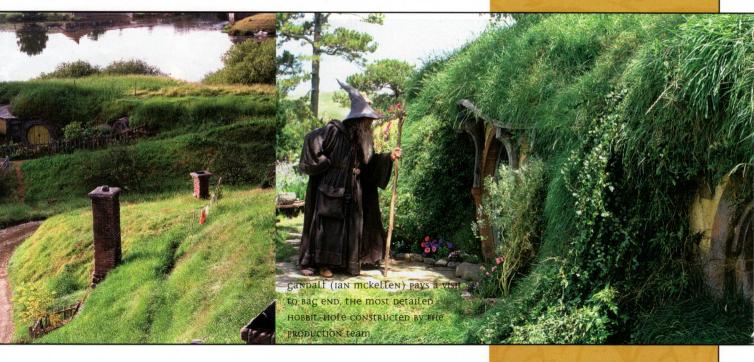
Once they had settled on the artistic vision of Hobbiton, it was time to lock down a location. Scouting was done primarily by air—partly for speed, and partly because the script called for an aerial shot of Hobbiton. Peter Jackson and company eventually settled on a sheep farm near Hamilton on the North Island of New Zealand as the site for Hobbiton. "It had a wonderful hill for Bag End and it had a lake beside it that looked like it would work very

"The way Tolkien describes it suggests levels of technology around the 17th century.

well." Hennah savs.

"Once we had done all the aerial work, we walked around the whole thing," Hennah recalls. "[Lee and Howe] were madly sketching the contours of the place. They put the existing contours onto their sketch pads and then came back to Wellington and spent the next two weeks sketching where particular hobbit-holes would go and where roads might be."

At the same time, computer modeling was under way, beginning with a topographic scan of the whole location. "We got a series of heights on a meter grid and we were able to build that into a 3-D landscape in the computer," Major says. "Then we put the roads in. Some of the roads needed to be cut into the landscape; others needed to be raised slightly. We prebuilt the big landscaping in computing



before we actually executed it—the New Zealand army did [that] later. We dealt with all the hobbit-holes and doorways and things like that. Peter was able to do an animated 'walk-through', if you like, of the Hobbiton sets prior to our actually building them. We also built a three-dimensional model of it for much the same sort of reason, for Peter to be able to storyboard from and to get a feeling for the finished set."

BUILDING IT

eanwhile, not a single blade of grass had been moved at the Hamilton site.

"It became evident that Hobbiton needed to be keyed off first of all because of the long period it took for nature to do its work," says Major.

"Peter particularly wanted it to look as though it had been there a hundred years," says Dan Hennah. That meant preparations for the site were to begin a year in advance, in order to give added earth and greenery time to mature and look as though they had been there forever.

"We were dealing with 350 people in the art department, using skills that don't often get used in a film," says Major. "Having a greens department with a dozen guys was very new. Even though we employ greens people on other films, it's nowhere near on that scale ... [We were] buying trees, cutting



them down into their composite pieces and re-assembling them to form trees and forests in the studio and on location."

"We shifted 5,000 cubic meters of earth to create the contours that we wanted," Hennah adds. "We put in about a kilometer of hedges. The ideal position for the party scene was in a gully [but it had] a swamp in the bottom of it. We had to fill the gully in before we could do anything else at all."

Hennah visited the site at least once a week in the year leading up to filming, to make sure "every garden had flowers and vegetables interspersed" and that "the grass was green enough and long enough." Soon he had to turn his attention to the monumental task of set-decorating

Dan Hennah

The Lord of the Rings TITLE:

Supervising Art Director

EDUCATION:

Architectural Drafting, Wellington Polytechnic School of Architecture

FIRST PRODUCTION:

Nate and Hayes a.k.a. Savage Islands (1983)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

The Bounty (1984), Mesmerized (1986), Sinking of the Rainbow Warrior (1992), The Frighteners (1996).

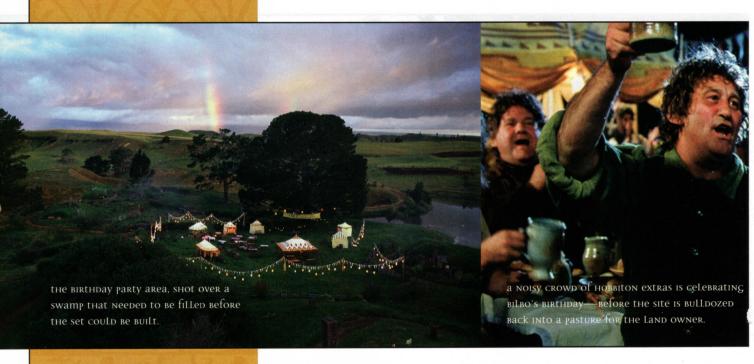
CURRENT PROJECTS:

Pick-ups and re-shoots on The Two Towers and The Return of the King.



On ART DIRECTION: "I
really want to see a movie
... that I can lose myself
in. If I can't lose myself in
it, it's because the art direction is less than perfect.

Something catches your eye and you go 'Oh my God, why did they do that?' The opposite doesn't really apply. If it's done well, I just go with it. I even want to see this movie [The Lord of the Rings] and get caught up in the story and carried away, not saying 'Oh we could have done that better,' or, 'Oh that looks great.'"



GRANT MAJOR

The Lord of the Rings TITLE:

Production Designer

BACKGROUND:

Art school graduate. Received television experience with the BBC and Television New Zealand.

FIRST PRODUCTION:

The Invisible Man (1984, TV)

CAREER AT A GLANCE:

An Angel at My Table (1990), Heavenly Creatures (1994), The Frighteners (1996), The Ugly (1997)

CURRENT PROJECTS:

The Whale Riders, an adaptation of the book by New Zealand author Witi Imahera.



On The Lord of the Rings' IMPACT IN ZEALAND: "It's created a huge amount of excitement. You can't run across anybody

who doesn't know somebody who was an extra or somebody who has been on the crew. The New Zealand government's involvement means that success will mean a lot to this country as well. We've done a lot of films before that we've had a lot of hopes for that have disappeared, and [then there were] other ones like Heavenly Creatures that have conversely come out of nowhere and done very well. I think everyone is wishing it well and bracing themselves to see what is going to happen."

the entire 10-acre site, an assignment that took two full weeks to complete. The crew tackled everything from placing wheelbarrows to tying beans on bean-poles. Nearly every prop was created by the production, except for the odd homemade garden implement found at a second-hand store.

"There was no random hobbit-hole." Hennah says of the attention to detail that went into the creation of hobbit homes. "One hobbit-hole was the woodworker's-he had a hundred woodworker tools, and bits of furniture half finished. Another one was [for] a fisherman, with nets and rods outside his place... [others were for] a gardener... and the guy who cures tobacco. Every hobbit-hole had an identity—every hobbit something as a part of Hobbiton."

THE CAMERAS ROLL

s the start of filming neared, Major and Hennah had to Locus on keeping the set fresh. "It did take a lot of maintenance,"

says Major. "The intended shoot date for Hobbiton was pushed back by a month or six weeks. At that time the weather was going from early summer to fall/summer, and as is typical in the

North Island, the grassland dries off and goes from green to a sort of brown color. So we found ourselves having to re-phosphate the soil and get ahold of huge water sprinklers to keep the grass green around that area."



Once shooting began, maintenance was even more difficult.

"We actually had to shoot progressively because having a crew of 300-400 people on a site that's essentially a greens set meant all the grass would have been trampled, and all the roadways too, which were actually quite narrow considering everything is scaled down," Major says. "Just getting grip equipment into the set meant we had to drive over these hobbit roads, which would get rutted. So what we had to do was shoot wide shots first and then progress through the shoot time and to close-ups later."

Alan Lee, who did the main master layout sketch for Hobbiton, said that the end result of all the planting, roadbuilding, and earth-moving "was very



"I wanted to just kick back there for a few months. What a nice place to go on holiday."

close to that original sketch. It was carried through very successfully. It was a beautiful set."

Based on the glimpses they have gotten so far, fans seem to agree with Lee. Last year, when New Line released Hobbiton set photos through its official Web site, showing lush, emerald-rolling hills rising from the New Zealand mist, the Tolkien fan community appeared to breathe a collective sigh of relief.

Filmgoers can be certain that the Hobbiton they see on screen is not the result of sleight-of-hand special effects. "It's all for real," Major says. "We may have changed the sky [digitally] once or twice for the purposes of dawn or dusk [but that's it]."

"When you see Hobbiton, you see what was [really] there," Hennah says.

THE END OF HOBBITON

ooking back, Major admits that there are a few differences be-Itween the Hobbiton of the book and the Hobbiton of the movie.

"Hobbiton at the end of the book is slightly different from the Hobbiton at the end of our film," Major says. "There are sequences of Hobbiton being turned over and trashed by the Orcs; in effect, it's a dream sequence of Frodo's. At the end of the movie it actually has [the hobbits] coming back to a Hobbiton that's slightly on the wane, but not ruined. ... Sam becomes the mayor of Hobbiton, which we don't go into in our film. ... Frodo can't stay there for various reasons. It's the same, but different. We're trying to get that flavor to it—that a lot has happened in the years since they've been away."

Once these final sequences had been filmed, it was time to turn the Hamilton site into a sheep farm again. The agreement with the private landowner was to restore everything to its original condition—which was also in keeping



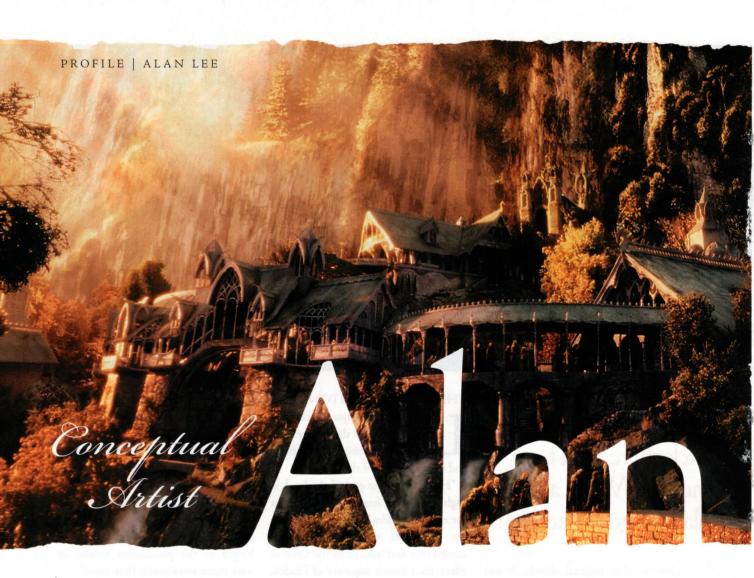
with the production's desire to have as little effect as possible on the environment at all its location sites.

"Certainly we had to behave ourselves and do things the right way," says Hennah, who had seen other movie productions treat locations badly. "That's the way we want to be anyway. I think more than anything the length of the production meant we were more accountable than most."

The owner of the land needed the site turned back into a pasture for his sheep, so every single plant and hedge planted for the film was removed. "He was sort of baffled and amazed." Hennah remembers. "He was certainly impressed."

In the end, Hennah was almost reluctant to see Hobbiton go. After so much effort, Hobbiton had come to feel like something more than just a movie set for the cast and crew.

"The reflection was, 'What would it be like to live here?" Hennah says. "It was such a beautiful, gentle place. I was sitting up outside Bag End and just looking down at all the work and had this wonderful feeling that this is a safe and beautiful place, this is the place that the book tells about. I wanted to just kick back there for a few months. What a nice place to go on holiday."



Renowned Tolkien illustrator Alan Lee talks about his early years in the illustration business and his stepping inside The Lord of the Rings movie trilogy.

BY FRANCIS K. LALUMIÈRE



Alan Lee's journey to Middle-earth began without fanfare on an ordinary day.

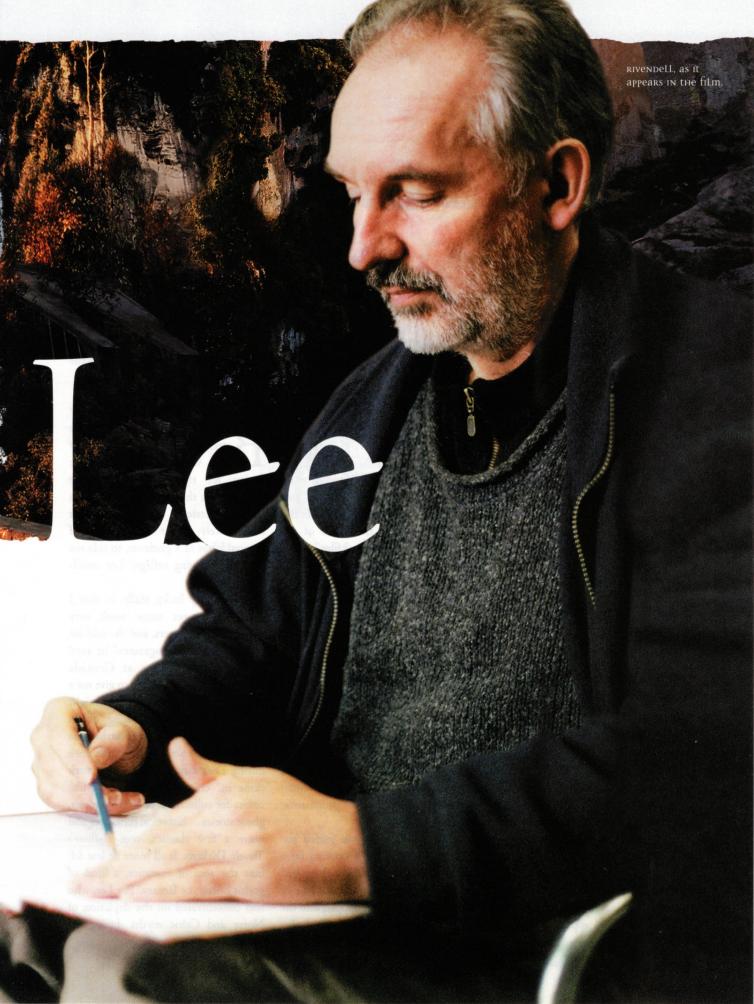
"One day while I was sitting in my studio, I got a parcel from New Zealand," he says. "It contained a couple of tapes of Peter Jackson's earlier movies, and a letter from him asking if I would like to come out and help."

"The project took me by complete surprise," recalls Lee, who knew nothing about Jackson's plans to bring The Lord of the Rings to the silver screen. Jackson's courting of Alan Lee for his design team was no surprise, however: Lee had illustrated several well known Tolkien volumes, including the 1992 centenary edition of The Lord of the Rings trilogy commemorating the 100th anniversary of J.R.R. Tolkien's birth.

Alan Lee didn't exactly have to agonize over whether he should join

Jackson's crew-shortly after getting the invitation, he packed up and left behind his life in London for an assignment that could mean spending years away from home. In New Zealand, he and John Howe-the other conceptual artist Jackson recruited for the trilogy-joined the team at Weta and went to work.

"This was in advance of the film actually getting the go-ahead," says Lee, who is perhaps best known for his illustrations in the landmark book Faeries. "It was quite speculative, really; we didn't know from one day to another how much longer we were going to work before we'd get the green light. It was a very exciting period, and we had the benefit of having a lot of Peter's time."





"I'm doing a drawing of Bree that is going to be part of a matte painting. And although it's just a two-dimensional picture, I want people to believe that they could actually come and make their way through the streets."

THE BRIGHTER SIDE

ee was no newcomer to the world of cinema, having done Idesign work on Legend, Erik the Viking, and Hallmark's Merlin TV series. "Legend was another thing that came out of Faeries," explains Lee. "Ridley Scott had seen the book while he was planning Legend, and some of the characters had appealed to him. I joined him at Pinewood Studios as he was finishing off Blade Runner and working on the script for Legend. In the end, something of the mood of my drawings got into the final film."

Lee was accustomed to movie preproduction, but those early days in New Zealand were unfolding on a much grander scale. "We had a design meeting with Peter every day," he says, "and we would just go through everything that had been drawn that day by the designers at Weta and by myself and John. At that stage, Production Designer Grant Major and Dan Hennah, who was going to supervise the art direction of the films, were involved-and of course Richard Taylor, who runs Weta and was going to be doing all the armor, creatures, miniatures, prosthetics, makeup, weapons."

When Lee and Howe joined the Weta team, "they'd been working for a few months already, and they had designs for the cave troll and some of the orcs," Lee says. "We dipped into the areas they were working on and also

started to develop the looks of the environment. The division between John and myself was very easily established. John's pictures of some of the darker areas of Middle-earth had already made quite an impression on Peter, so he kind of concentrated on that area. I guess I stayed mainly on the brighter side of things."

FAERIES, CASTLES, AND., SCI-FI?

orn in England in 1947, Alan Lee attended the Ealing School of Arts, where he studied graphic design for three years. After he graduated at the age of 22, Lee began his professional career almost immediately ("after a short bit of manual labor as a gardener, to tide me over after leaving college," Lee recalls with a grin).

"I was very lucky, really, in that I managed to get some work very quickly—book covers, and the odd bit of advertising for magazines," he says. "David Larkin, editor at Granada Books, was the first person to give me a job - six book covers to do straight away." It was the beginning of an important business relationship, as Larkin would turn up more than once during Lee's career. "Then more work came in," continues Lee, "things like covers for collections of horror stories, ghost stories... historical romances and quite a few classics, too: Gulliver's Travels, Dickens. It all more or less fell into the area of romance, a kind of gothic horror, or fantasy." For Lee, who had concentrated on the depiction of Norse and Celtic myths during his



studies, the assignments were a perfect fit... unlike his tries at science fiction illustrations. "I wasn't very good at that, I'm afraid," Lee admits with a laugh. "It doesn't work too well in watercolor [his favorite medium]!"

"I was taking in more or less what I could, trying to earn a living as an illustrator," he says. "I had this ambition to get into children's books, but that didn't happen immediately." Years later, Lee would realize that dream, illustrating highly regarded books such as Black Ships Before Troy: The Story of the Iliad, for which the artist won the Kate Greenaway Award for children's book illustration in 1993.

In 1978, Alan Lee began a project that would transform his career, bringing him both popular success and critical acclaim. Together with friend and fellow illustrator Brian Froud, Lee created the popular book *Faeries*. "We did *Faeries* together shortly after we moved down to a small town in Devon," says Lee. "We both wanted to concentrate on getting away from commercial work, doing our own stuff, and hopefully getting some book work.

We contributed to Once Upon a Time for Ian Ballantine. That was edited by David Larkin, who would also edit Faeries. The book happened because Ian and Betty [Ballantine] had published the very successful Book of Gnomes, and they wanted something to follow it with. They were familiar with Brian's material and mine, and we decided to get together. We very quickly settled on fairies [as the theme]. The work divided up really naturally between us. It was a very good collaboration, although we didn't confer that much during the course of it. We sat down and decided who would do what, and then we went away, and we just caught up a few times during the course of the project - and it all came together very well."

The success of Faeries brought Lee more work and more freedom, and allowed him to tackle projects very dear to him. "It enabled me to concentrate on the book that I had wanted to do for quite a long time," recalls Lee. "The

Mabinogion, my collection of Welsh legends, [is] my favorite book, I think. Faeries gave me enough financial support to spend two years on the Mabinogion, which was a real luxury. I never had so much time for one project."

Given his portfolio, it was hardly surprising that Lee would be sought out for Tolkien projects. Following *The Mabinogion*, he took on several Middle-earth assignments, painting a few book covers for *The Lord of the Rings*, illustrating a Tolkien calendar, and producing a *The Lord of the Rings/The Hobbit* boxed set for Houghton Mifflin.

His crowning Tolkien achievement, however, was the group of 50 paintings he executed for the centenary edition of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. It was *Castles*, another of Lee's books that was in part responsible for this opportunity. "It's a look at castles in literature, myth, and legend, and of course we included a section on Tolkien's castles," Lee says. "The book was published in Britain by



Unwin Hyman, Tolkien's publishers, so I formed a friendship with people there. They suggested, quite a few years before it actually happened, that [the centenary edition] would be a nice thing to do one day. Eventually they worked it out with the Tolkien Estate, I submitted sample drawings, and we did it."

FROM ART TO FILM

ot only did Alan Lee know exactly how to approach Middle-earth designs and illustrations for Jackson's films, but some of his previous works were drawn into the whirlwind of ideas constantly circling through the Weta studios.

"There were a couple of things that Peter really liked in the books that I'd done," says Lee. "He really liked Orthanc [Saruman's tower]. I had done a big picture of Orthanc, but it was only the bottom third of it. So I designed the rest of it to match up. And then I knew that the interior would need to be a reflection of the exterior, but more finely detailed." However, most of the designs, drawings, and paintings that existed before the movies will not be seen onscreen. "Existing designs

were a

starting point, a point of reference," Lee says. There were a few exceptions, such as Lee's depiction of Orthanc, as well as an atmospheric painting by John Howe of Gandalf striding through the Shire, which Peter Jackson liked very much. But on the whole, Jackson wanted the illustrators' previous designs to serve merely as inspiration. "Peter wanted people to kind of be surprised [by the designs] to a certain extent," Lee says.

Once the movie officially got under way, speculation ended and things quickly fell into place. "[John Howe and I] were very much working as a team," says Lee. "I was having input into what he was doing, and he was commenting on what I would do. Basically, we'd all just be drawing all day long, and then we'd get feedback from Peter so that we'd get a better idea of what direction to take. We got on really well, and it was very enjoyable working with [Howe]. I mean, there was such a huge amount to do that it was very easy to share the workload! At some stage, as we honed in

on the final look, we would separate and I would concentrate on Helm's Deep and Rivendell, while John would concentrate on what he was doing. John was more involved than I was with the creatures, in particular the Balrog. And he was heavily involved in the development of the weapons and armor."

Still, the work of the two artists continued to intertwine. "I did most of the conceptual drawings for Hobbiton," says Lee, "except that John designed Bag End and the Green Dragon. I did everything else in Hobbiton and Bree. John did a beautiful job with Bag End; his conceptual drawings are very precise and detailed. And it was carried through very successfully. It's a very beautiful set—well, really two sets, because it was done on two different scales [to create the illusion of Hobbits' small stature]."

Lee didn't have to change his style very much to adapt to the film industry. "It's not that huge of a difference for me," he explains, "because when I'm doing a drawing I like to think of it as a real place, try to give it a kind of three-dimensional quality. At the moment, I'm doing a drawing of Bree that is

petail of one of the frescos (by alan lee) in elrond's home



going to be part of a matte painting. And although it's just a two-dimensional picture, I want people to believe that they could actually come and make their way through the streets. And even if I was drawing it for a set, I'd be thinking the same way: What's the most exciting and interesting route that you take through this group of buildings? But obviously when designing a set, you have to make

production. "We had a very nice, easygoing, relaxed attitude about getting input and people crossing over to different areas," he says. "I did some paint finishing on some of the sets some of them are just so huge, and there were so many of them: 350. We'd be there when the greens crew would come and put in the finishing touches, late at night. Those are the finishing touches lovely place to be and [these are] wonderful people to work with; it's been a very, very pleasurable experience. I just hope it won't be too long before I can do some more books. That's my main passion."

In the meantime, however, Lee keeps working like a warhorse on its way to Mount Doom. Jumping from one department to another, he helps

"I really wanted to follow [my sketches] through. This morning, I was arranging some fish heads that are going to be in the foreground of a shot in Gollum's cave."

things work from different angles, so there's more to it. And it's very exciting."

This excitement motivated Lee to cross the customary boundaries that can keep conceptual artists away from the actual sets and post-production work. "I really wanted to follow it through," says Lee. "This morning, I was arranging some fish heads that are going to be in the foreground of a shot in Gollum's cave."

Above all, Lee feels responsible for his input. "It's fairly important to me not just to do drawings and then hand them over and sit passively by while other people struggle to interpret them," he says. "There are so many things that would crop up in the course of putting together something like Bree, which was shot on location, actually built around the buildings of an old army base. You can't envision all the questions that will come up in the course of construction."

No one was offended by Lee's involvement in several aspects of the

that can really benefit from an art point of view." Lee stays involved as much as he can for various reasons, one of them being the overall vision of the film. "Following through with the original conception so that it doesn't drift off into a different area" is paramount, says Lee. "It's really important to keep the look that you have established going all the way through."

LETTING GO

Thile Lee is enjoying his stay in New Zealand, he is beginning to think about future projects.

"I'm not quite sure how involved I'm going to be with films two and three," says Lee. "I'd like to stay in touch with it but I'd be reluctant to say, 'Yes, I'm going to be doing New Zealand for the next two years.' I mean I've already been here for nearly four years! So I know I'll be here in June next year and I'll see how I can start slowly removing myself. It will be quite a pull because it's a

out in any way he can with the miniature shots and the visual effects department, commenting and offering input as each piece of the puzzle is composited into the films.

"It's a hugely challenging project," admits Lee. "I suppose to me the biggest challenge was going from being in my studio, drawing pictures over which I have total control-finishing them off to the point that I want to finish them-to letting go of that, and taking on the movie input. I guess it's letting go, really, allowing hundreds of other people to get involved.

"Probably, in a way, that's what's changed my life the most," concludes Lee, smiling. "It's kind of forced me to be more sociable and to communicate in other ways, not just through drawings."





SPINNING THE LORD OF THE RINGS WEB

[A look at some of the biggest, strongest, and deepest fan sites on the Net]

Tolkien fans have re-defined fandom on the Internet. The Official Movie Magazine tracked down the stories behind three of the biggest and best The Lord of the Rings sites.

BY FRANCIS K. LALUMIÈRE & JON B. SNYDER

Behind the Forge at TheOneRing.net

Citting comfortably at home in Montreal, Canada, Michael Regina monitors TheOneRing.net and performs the myriad updates required on a daily basis. Launched in May 1999, TheOneRing.net has quickly grown to be regarded as the international hub for the The Lord of the Rings online community, which has thrived on the anticipation of the movie trilogy currently in the making. However, Regina is quick to point out that he didn't get to the top alone.

"I heard about the [movie] project when it was in its initial stages, probably in early spring of '99," recalls

Challis if she'd like to work on a fan website with him.

"She told me that they were filming very close to where she was," says Regina. "I told her, 'I'll set up this small website and you can take photos, or newspaper clippings, whatever's covered by the local press." Regina and Challis proceeded with their plan, and their Lord of the Rings efforts were noticed almost right away by some of the big movie sites. "That was about May of '99," continues Regina, "and right around June or July, Chris [Pirrotta] and Bill [Thomas] emailed us and made us an offer, saying we could make a more professional-looking site, with a lot more space and a lot more graphics. So we all hooked up together and formed TheOneRing.net."

When TheOneRing.net was created, each of the four founders brought something unique to the virtual table. Michael Regina was one of the editors and was responsible for keeping everything organized; Erica Challis was the other editor and had access to first-hand material related to the movie production of The Lord of the Rings; Chris Pirrotta was the graphic designer, charged with making the site look as good as possible; and Bill Thomas was the network specialist, taking care of servers and keeping the site running. The four team members-who are from Canada, New Zealand, California,



Regina. At the time, he was chatting with Erica Challis, a New Zealander friend he'd met online. He asked

Wisconsin, respectively—retained the same roles over the time, but the site began growing exponentially, and nowadays, roughly 50 people from the four corners of the world help out in various capacities. "They gather news from their part of the world," Regina explains, "or they're in charge of certain parts of the site, or they're responsible for just updating certain things like the Frequently Asked Questions. And some people are in charge of doing artwork... all kinds of different things."

Regina's typical day sounds like that of a marketing exec. "I get up fairly early in the day, and I check my email to see what's going on around the Internet. Then I check my daytimer to see who I have to call and what I have to do. Depending on what's going on, I either try to promote contests or try to get our name out there, or make phone calls to arrange interviews [with various people related in some way to LOTR], and so on. I work maybe six or seven hours a day on the site, until late in the day, sometimes well past midnight, checking everything that's going on and making sure everything's up to date." When he's not at his keyboard, Regina tries to fit in media requests for interviews and photo shoots. "Initially it was little waves that would come and go," he says, "and now it's pretty much a steady flow, with two or three requests a week."

TheOneRing.net's other contacts involve many fan sites and publications, but also several official voices. One of those is the production company behind The Lord of the Rings trilogy itself. "We deal with New Line all the time and they're great," says Regina with enthusiasm. "They've really adopted TheOneRing.net as the flagship for the fans. Since the fans respect what we do, people at New Line treat us really well and they consider us. Peter Jackson and his crew down in New Zealand [think of] us as part of the family—it's a good feeling to have." New Line even extended an

invitation to TheOneRing.net to come to France and see their Lord of the Rings presentation in May 2001. Unfortunately, Regina couldn't go, but his partner Chris Pirrotta made the trip. The whole team was very grateful for the invitation, which seemed to recognize the important part they play in the Lord of the Rings phenomenon. And New Line is not the only one to recognize that role. As part of the promotion for his new Broadway play, Dance of Death, actor Ian McKellen (who portrays Gandalf in The Lord of the Rings) turned to TheOneRing.net as a partner for the giveaway of two tickets to the play and a chance to meet McKellen backstage after the show.

However, preeminence comes with a price: the pressure Regina and his partners feel to be on top of every story. As example), and of course, the four founders. In that last category, the hot new thing is the Line Party idea. "We knew from the experience of Star Wars that fans would be lining up to buy tickets and see the films," explains Regina. "And we knew that we wanted to do something special." But with a fan base scattered throughout the world, there's no practical way to get everyone together for a night at the movies, or a week at the box-office (sleeping bags and all). So the team behind TheOneRing.net had the idea of setting up pages where people could sign up for movie release gatherings, calling them Line Parties. "It's basically just an agreement to meet somewhere at some cinema, and camp out and wait for the movies to come out," Regina continues. "Then we thought, 'What cities should

"We deal with New Line all the time and they're great... Peter Jackson and his crew down in New Zealand [think of] us as part of the family-it's a good feeling to have." [Michael Regina]

the flagship Lord of the Rings fan site, TheOneRing.net now has responsibilities toward its readers. But the team fares well in that environment. "I think we all thrive under that pressure," says Regina. "I think we all enjoy it. Sure, there are a lot of times when you have a hundred email messages to answer, so many things to deal with, 20 stories to write... all you want to do is just go to bed, and you know you can't. But I really thrive under that kind of pressure. And I think each individual person [on the team] loves the responsibility because we made it ourselves, we built the site up from nothing. It's not like someone handed us this and said, 'You have to do this.' We've done it because we wanted to do it."

The result of all that hard work is a huge amount of fascinating, up-to-date content, supplied by contributors, readers (the message boards are a good

we do?' And someone came up with this idea of having a large database where any city, any cinema, any street corner in the world could be chosen for a Line Party. People could just search for their city and find a line and join it; or, if they don't see anything, they can create a line close to them." As of this writing, a month before the movie opens, there are already hundreds of Line Parties forming around the world. "I plan to start a Line Party in Montreal, too!" says Regina, who between media screenings and generaladmission screenings - obviously plans to see The Fellowship of the Ring quite a few times.

The future looks bright for TheOneRing.net, with two more movies to cover after the release of the first chapter in the trilogy. Beyond that? It's anyone's guess."We'll probably keep doing the same thing for the next three years," Regina says. "But as far as what we plan on doing [long-term], it's really undecided. We're just taking it day by day, I guess. Right now, the site is working really well - we get 110,000 hits a day from interested people from all over the world. So we really don't want to tweak it too much. Everything we do change or move around is always done with a lot of thought put into it.

And right now there's really no time to think about anything except for the 19th of December, release date for The Fellowship of the Ring]. That's really what's on our mind."

fans can rest TheOneRing.net has no plans to slow down any time soon. If anything, the site will keep picking up speed as the trilogy heads toward its conclusion, at the end of 2003. "I think the fans really reflect the love for the books back to E the people responsible for making these films," says Regina. "The community needs to express its genuine love for the story, the characters. And I think that's the importance of fans having a voice, being able to talk and listen. And, hopefully, we give them what they need to be able to do that."



Ioram Manka, the ringbearer.org

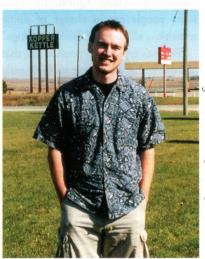
hen the Official The Lord of the Rings Magazine contacted Joram Manka, he was on a cordless phone chasing an escaped cow down the road ... Just a typical day for the Webmaster. Manka lives on rural outside St. farmland Cloud. Minnesota-far from the hubs of technology that you would expect to spawn an Internet wiz. But St. Cloud, where Manka started his website in 1996 at the ripe old age of 16, turns out to be the perfect place for someone with an active Internet life. Manka affectionately refers to his home as "the middle of nowhere;" his nearest neighbor is a mile away and everyone's a farmer. When the middle of nowhere is loaded in snow and gets a scant eight hours of sunlight in the winter, it's easier to see how the Net would start to look real interesting, real quick.

The site that would eventually become ringbearer.org—and anchor a large entertainment startup company in L.A.—had humble beginnings. Created in Manka's basement, it began as a personal web page with a Lord of the Rings informational section devoted to his love of the books. He worked with a modem that "could never hit 28.8- it

was always at about 26.4," Manka remembers. In 1998, he found out about Peter Jackson's project to bring The Lord of the Rings to the screen. Not able to find much information on the Web devoted to the films, he decided to turn his site into one exclusively devoted to The Lord of the Rings. Manka says of ringbearer.org's start, "Back in the day the site had this huge URL. It was WWW.UPSELL.NET/~MANKA/HOME-PAGEI.HTML. To this day I still don't know how people found it."

"No matter how glitzy or powerful a company is, they'll never equal the passion of some guy in his basement working 80 hours a week on his site." [Joram Manka]

Manka's website and his interest in The Lord of the Rings paralleled a great change in the world of fandom itself. Fan communication was migrating from its traditional home in printed fanzines and letters to websites and online message boards. The popular Star Wars



fan site, theforce.net-cited by Manka as an inspiration for his own site—has shown that fans in cyberspace can create a powerful community.

"It's good to have a strong community of sites," points out Manka, drawing a distinction between Star Wars sites and Tolkien-related sites. "Star Wars fandom just has a couple sites really, but The Lord of the Rings fandom has a good five or six solid sites." And those are just the ones following the films.

With all this interest, it's no surprise that the business world would come sniffing around the scene of online fandom. Soon Manka found himself courted by a company actually called what else?—Fandom Inc. Fandom asked Manka to bring his site into the Fandom fold and become one of the first in Fandom's swift aggregation of fan sites. They liked working with Manka so much that they invited him to come to

oram manka, the Lone creative force behind www.ringbearer.

work for the company in L.A., overseeing all their sites. Manka dropped out of college and went to pursue the Internet professionally, an experience he recalls now as "very strange."

"At that point I was putting in about 80 hours a week, making no money," he says. "And I was happy with it. I would go to bed at four in the morning working on it and then wake up a couple hours later and there would be a couple emails from people saying 'Thanks for doing this.' That was all I really needed." When Fandom extended an offer to him, Manka thought, "Wow, people are willing to pay me for this? Sure, I'll join up."

While the move was great professionally for Manka, he believes that ringbearer.org ultimately suffered. Manka had a message board that was doing thousands of posts a day and it dropped to 50 a week once he moved the site to Fandom. Fandom, despite having a great business plan that believed in genre media, soon succumbed to the fate of many young entertainment and technology startups: it went bankrupt.

Are websites such as ringbearer.org better off as passion-fueled fan enterprises instead of bottom-line businesses? Manka seems to think so. "No matter how glitzy or powerful a company is, they'll never equal the passion of some guy in his basement working 80 hours a week on his site."

Manka admits he has been a bit burned out by the whole experience. He never expected the site to get as huge as it did. He has since moved back to Minnesota to finish school and work as a carpenter on the side. "It feels great just to go out and hammer some nails," he says, especially after running the site completely by himself for so long. Ringbearer.org, unlike other sites, is maintained top to bottom by just one person. Coming full circle, Manka now runs his site from Minnesota again and is anxiously awaiting the fans.

12330 SILVERE

Bringing www.tolkienonline.com

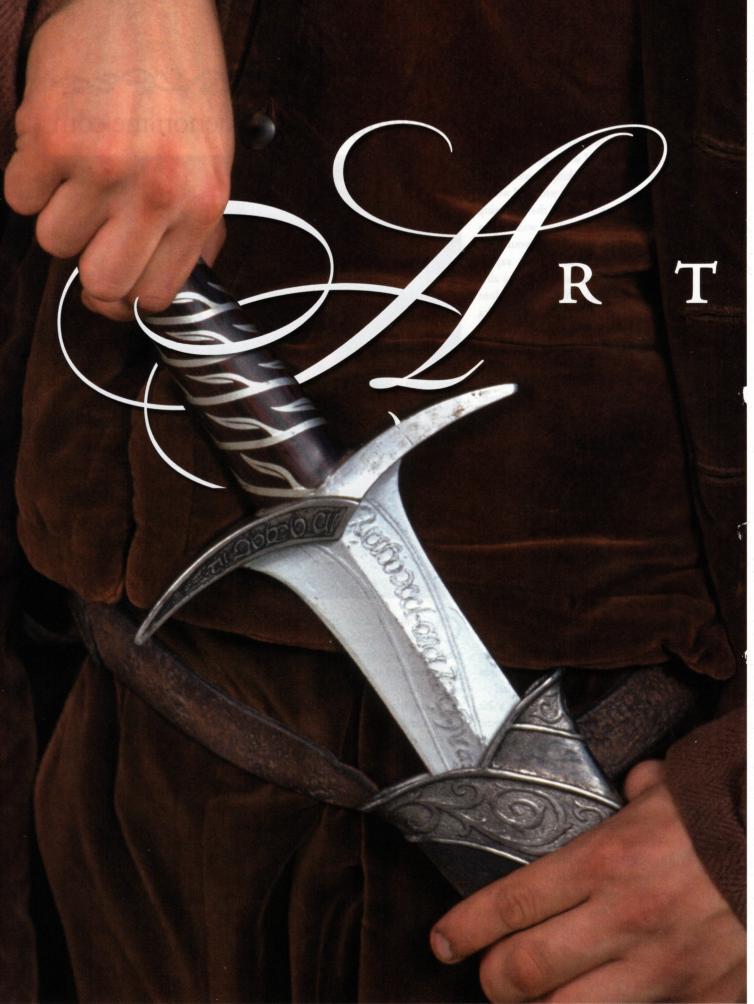


ne month after its inception, www.tolkienonline.com was already attracting the attention of a company interested in buying the site from its founders-a powerful testament to the strength and endurance of Tolkien fandom around the world.

"One thing we've found is that there are definitely bigger fans of The Lord of the Rings across the world than we are," says Jonathan Watson, one of the cofounders of Tolkien Online. "There's no doubt we're big fans, but to meet folks who have written dissertations on Tolkien's work or have read [the books] every year for the last 30 years is rather humbling."

Jonathan Watson and Ted Tschopp launched their site in April 1999, right after seeing The Matrix together on opening night at Grauman's Chinese Theater in Hollywood. "We saw that film with a bunch of folks who were going to line up for the new Star Wars film," recalls Watson, "and we had such a great time with them that we decided to build a community that could be similar, but around a deeper passion of our own -Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings."

Tolkien Online quickly developed a dedicated following, with fans from all over the globe constantly tapping into the site. Then came the offer. "One month into Tolkien Online's existence, a company offered to purchase it from us, obviously trying to get in on the upcoming hype surrounding the films," says Watson. "It was really sort of oddcontinued on page 72





→ o you're doing the biggest film production of all time-you need tens of thousands of props, objects, and physical effectseverything from Elven swords to orc ears. Whom do you turn to? If there is a man on this planet better suited than Richard Taylor to supervise the craftsmanship necessary to bring Middle-earth to life, we've never heard of him. Peter Jackson clearly feels the same way. Taylor and his Weta Workshop have worked on every movie Jackson has done following his first film, Bad Taste.

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In 1994, Taylor and his partner Tania Rodger teamed up with Jackson and filmmaker Jamie Selkirk to expand the special effects studio Taylor and Rodger had been running since the mid-1980s. The four New Zealand natives created Weta Ltd., so that the New Zealand film industry would have access to a complete special-effects house, which includes Weta Digital, a BY JON B. SNYDER



major player in The Lord of the Rings trilogy.

The work of Richard Taylor and Weta Workshop has won many international awards. It can be seen in films such as The Ugly, Once Were Warriors, Jack Brown Genius, The Tommyknockers, and A Bright Shining Lie; for television, Taylor created creature

and makeup effects for fan favorites "Hercules" and "Xena: Warrior Princess."

Taylor started his career fashioning all manner of prosthetics and props himself for films such as Dead Alive before going on to supervise the small army that worked on The Lord of the Rings. Weta Workshop had a hand in almost everything that wasn't digitally created for The Lord of the Rings (digital work was handled by Weta Digital).

Taylor knows how props such as the swords were made, but he also knows the importance of these props to the characters who wield them. Taylor has spent a lot of time on research in order to help convey the importance of the swords and other props to the actors: by the time he finished with actor Viggo Mortensen (Aragorn), Mortensen was about ready to try a new career as a professional swordsman!

TELL ME ABOUT THE SWORDS YOU CREATED FOR THIS FILM. NOT ONLY ARE THERE SWORDS THAT ARE



CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF THE STORY. BUT I UNDERSTAND THAT FOR BATTLE SCENES, YOU HAD TO CREATE SWORDS THAT WOULD WITHSTAND TAKE AFTER TAKE AFTER TAKE OF COMBAT.

Correct. We'd appreciated from the very beginning that we had a significant number of military weapons and armors to build, and we obviously had to build more than just swords: the bows, the associated arrows, spears, polearms, halberts, crossbows, and an extensive number of things like clubs. In total, we built over 2,000 background weapons, and over 200 hero/foreground weapons. In association with the design beginning, we also had to begin our research because we appreciated that we weren't going to have the funds to build multiple copies to allow for breakage. We had to come up with a way to actually produce the things so that they would survive. So a series of tests began in the workshop, and at the same time I was very lucky to find Peter Lyon, a self-trained, highly-skilled sword maker, and he set about developing the hero weapons while a small team led by John Harvey set about trying to develop the background weapons.

At the same time, of course, we began to try to come up with the overall look, the aesthetics of the weapons. At all times, the overriding design ethic was to never approach The Lord of the Rings as if it was a fantasy. So, no spikes bursting out of the sides of the shields, as some of the actors requested. The weapons would be

made as if they could have been physically made in the medieval era 500 years ago on Earth. To that end, we set up a blacksmithing shop where we could forge the steel and so on. Obviously the first port of call in any design is for us to talk to the director extensively. Peter Jackson is blessed with a very strong vision, and we talked with him and developed numerous and extensive illustrative concept designs of the different swords.

Was it your team at Weta that DEVELOPED THOSE DESIGNS OR DID JOHN HOWE OR ALAN LEE HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH THAT?

This was our task at Weta. Then, through great fortune, John Howe came to join us as well, about a third of the way into our pre-production period. John Howe has an immense understanding of the medieval era, specifically through one period, and he





brought an incredible strength of teaching to myself and the technicians that we employ in the workshop, but also-and more importantly-to our designers. He really honed our appreciation of what a military weapon in the medieval era was about. With that education, the designers at Weta then went on to design the different weaponry. John Howe did design, or heavily influenced, specific designs. But for the most part, that design work fell on the shoulders of Ben Wootten, Warren Mahy, and Daniel Falconer, who are the three specific weapon designers at Weta. Then we began to break them into selective departments, or selective cultures, with the overlying aesthetic of, say, the good, or the Elveninfluenced weaponry, being heavily influenced by nature and by the more sophisticated fighting cultures of our Earth 500 years ago. Like the samurai soldier. We obviously were happy to draw influence from our own culture and heritage on our own Earth, rather than try to create a fantastical culture straight off.

I'M ASSUMING THAT THIS WAS PART OF THE GUIDANCE THAT PETER JACKSON GAVE YOU FOR CREATING THE SWORDS?

Correct. Approaching Middle-earth as if it were in an alternate time, somewhere 7,000 years ago in our past, with all the technologies that would have existed at that stage.

An interesting little aside is that three weeks before [Jackson] started filming, Bob Anderson turned up in

New Zealand—he is the gentleman who was hired to train the actors in the art of swordplay. He is a multiple-time world champion in fencing and has been working in the film industry for as long as almost anyone who is alive today. He trained Errol Flynn, he trained [Antonio] Banderas for The Mask of Zorro, [and he was involved in] a phenomenal [number] of other films. He came to our workshop three weeks before he started filming and saw the weapons we were making and he was pleased with the look of them. But he advised us that we would need to make a considerably higher number to allow for the significant number of breakages that happen in sword-fighting from his experience.

Now by no means did we disbelieve that this was indeed the case, but we had neither the time nor the money to [make more weapons], and we felt confident to assure him-to even contradict him—to please be confident in our work, because we had built unbreakable weapons. He found this highly unlikely and was relatively pessimistic about this being true. Over 15 months of filming [and] possibly millions of active blows, we had almost zero breakage on the film, and we achieved this through the very, very clever manufacturing techniques of the sword makers.

TELL ME A BIT ABOUT HOW PETER LYON CREATED THE BLADES.

All of the blades are toleranced by eye to a tenth of a millimeter in thickness. So if you were to run a caliper down the blades-down the fuller or down the edge of the blade you would be able to tolerance them to approximately a tenth of a millimeter. Now that has been done by the sword maker by eye, standing in front of a grinding bench, or a grinding linisher. Basically, he rocks from the ankles backwards and forwards, with immense patience, slowly stroking the blade along

the edge of the linishing belt, going through multiple levels of different cutting strength on the belt, until he finally strips away all the materials. Of course he also has to go through significantly different diameters of linishing machine diameter wheels, so that he can cut different bits for the fullers and the blade edges and so on.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD A CHANCE TO WITNESS HIS DOING THIS?

Oh, every day! Because it's a subtle adjustment to get exactly the right aesthetic to the blade that the designers and I want.

THE SWORDS ARE FEATURED IN CLOSE-UP SHOTS IN THE FILM-HOW DID THIS AFFECT THE WAY YOU WENT ABOUT MAKING THEM?

A lot of films will not bother making spring steel weapons; they'll just go with aluminum because of the speed, the cost, and the weight. The weight is extremely heavy for the hero swords compared to the incredible lightness you can get out of an aluminum sword; therefore it's not comfortable for the actors. But the fundamental difference -and the reason I was adamant that we would do them in spring steel regardless of all of those overriding negatives-is that you can't get aluminum to take on that subtle blue hue of forged spring steel. And in closeups where the actors are drawing swords or holding them up near their faces, it's imperative that the metal gives off the correct color hue so that they look as they would have looked five or six hundred years ago.

I UNDERSTAND THE NON-HERO SWORDS WERE MADE MOSTLY FROM A SPECIAL CHEMICAL COMPOUND?

Correct. It's a blend of different urethanes. In respect to the swords, we still impregnate the end of the pommel and the handgrip with a considerable quantity of lead shot, which creates the

"We were happy to draw influence from our own culture and heritage on our own Earth, rather than try to create a fantastical culture straight off...



Approaching Middleearth as if it were in an alternate time. somewhere 7,000 years ago in our past, with all the technologies that would have existed at that stage."

correct balance but also acts as a shock absorption system. So when a weapon is struck, by what is often huge and intense aggression, that shock wave will absorb through the aeropol and be carried into the lead shot and suitably dissipated through the rubber.

Now does this urethane com-POUND FEEL HEAVY LIKE ACTUAL METAT

It doesn't feel heavy like metal-it feels more like aluminum. All of the



indeed adopt that culture of his sword like no actor we've ever experienced before. It was such a wonderful and incredible thing for Weta because we certainly had an actor on the stage who respected the weapon-not that the others didn't, everyone was very respectful of the associated props-but Viggo, as Aragorn, took on an attitude toward his props equivalent to a person born in the medieval era who would live or die by the weapon. It was a lovely

"You can't get aluminum to take on that subtle blue hue of forged spring steel. And in close-ups, it's imperative that the metal gives off the correct color hue so that they look as they would have looked five or six hundred years ago."

fighting weapons that the lead actors used-and there were about 28 leads in the film if you actually go through and count them all up-[were] fighting weapons ... they're non-hero fighting weapons, which, other than the blueness of the blade, are exact copies of the hero weapon but are made in aluminum and urethane. They are five times lighter than the hero weapons, and therefore these are the weapons that people like Arwen and King Theoden and so on would use for all fighting shots.

So they were using a urethane VERSION OF THEIR HERO WEAPONS FOR THE MAIN FIGHTING SHOTS?

No, they were using an aluminum version with a urethane hilt. Except for Viggo Mortensen. who would frequently use the hero weapon because he became so skilled in the art of swordfighting. He was strong enough to be able to wield these weapons with incredible skill and dexterity, so he would frequently utilize the hero versions of the weapons.

As an aside, when Viggo first joined us, it appeared that he hadn't been heavily absorbed in the culture of swords on films before, so he came and saw us and we told him about it. I said to him that understandably in the medieval era, a soldier who lives with the sword will also die by the sword unless he is highly skilled in the use of swordplay. So therefore, other than his health, a sword is the most important thing in his life. And he needs to treat it as such—treat it with a level of respect and courtesy and almost religious fervor that would come through the worship of any religious icon that you would consider to be helpful in your life. And so to that end, Viggo did

thing to see, a really uplifting, heartening thing to see.

HOW MANY DIFFERENT VERSIONS DID YOU HAVE TO MAKE OF A HERO WEAPON IN GENERAL? WAS IT ALWAYS THE SAME PAINSTAKING PROCESS?

Definitely. As a regular occurrence, for the leads we did between one and two hero weapons... depending on how busy the actor was, five aluminum weapons, then a variety of urethane-cast weaponry of just the hilt and the scabbard. So those were used for any



THREE SWORDS

FROM The Fellowship of the Rings WITH COMMENTS BY RICHARD TAYLOR

A detailed look at the amazing swords crafted for New Line's The Lord of the Rings, with commentary by Richard Taylor, who oversaw the creation of these and many of the other props that play such a central role in the trilogy...

STING

ting is the short sword carried by Frodo; it was given to him by Bilbo. It is an Elven weapon and the runes on the blade spell out, "Sting is my name—I am the spider's bane."

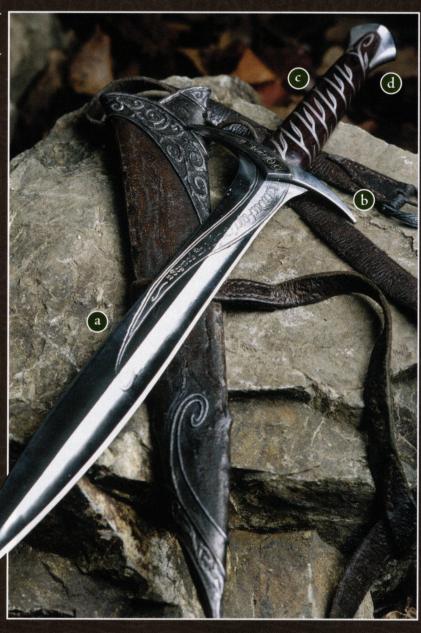
"We wanted Sting to both be utilitarian and actually viable as a fighting weapon. It's a very dangerous fighting sword, capable of defending the owner. But it also has to look beautiful and elegant."

(a) BLADE "The primary design element in any item, whether it's a sword or not, in my consideration, is its iconographic silhouette-what the silhouette of the weapon depicts. With Sting, the blade shape depicts a subtle leaf form. It tapers from one end, expands through the waist, and then drops back again slimmer, towards the hilt. The blade was born around the form of a leaf, with the spine being the fuller at the center. Then there was an Elven inscription written on the blade. All the acid-etched blades have inscriptions on them. An incantation to strengthen and give magic to the blade."

(b)GUARD"The crossbars crossbars. acid-etched the

inscription continues into the crossbar to strengthen that as well."

(c) HANDLE "As for all the swords where we used wooden handgrips, we tried to use an exotic timber from every continent in the world, to add a universal, worldwide, crosscultural flavor to the swords. And Sting has a cocobola handle; I think [cocobola] is from South Africa. Extremely dark, with a very, very tight, incredibly hard grain. It's incredibly hard timber."



(d)POMMEL "The pommel is a hand-ground steel pommel. Then up the length of the handgrip is an inset of silver stylized plants and leaves that twist up the handgrip in laid-in silver. The linking of the elements of metal is to create strength."

THREE SWORDS COMMENTS BY RICHARD TAYLOR

GLAMDRING

lamdring is another Elven weapon and is wielded by Gandalf. The runes on its blade spell out, "Turgon king of Gondolin wields, Has and holds the sword Glamdring, Foe of Morgoth's realm, hammer to the Orcs."

"Using a similar motif, Glamdring has a similar blade form as well; the long drawn-out leaf form of nature was in the blade of Gandalf's sword. It is a very aesthetically sumptuous, long, fine fighting weapon, highly sophisticated for its time. [Although it is] twohanded, it needs to be light enough to be held [in one hand] for a strike of the blade. As in reality, the most important thing adding strength to a sword is its balance so it can flow in the hand of the user. There is no difference with filmmaking, as the actors—who have been trained well in sword-fighting but haven't had a cultural growing-up with swords-need a sword that is beautifully balanced so that they're able to wield it with a suitable strength and accuracy and delicacy and beauty that you would get from a highly skilled swordmaster."

(a) BLADE "Ground steel, temper in heat, quench in oil to harden at red hot, gently reheat to a blue hue, and rehammer to straighten the cutting edge."

"All the hero blades are handground out of a plate of spring steel, tempered in a forge, quenched in hot oil, re-hammered to a perfect flat shape, and then quenched in water. Then the handgrip, crossbar, and pommel are hand-ground and then



swaged with the use of heat and heatwelding onto the tang."

(b) GUARD "There's an incantation across the crossbar as a strengthening spell to protect the user's hand when an actual blow hits the crossbar, as well as ensuring a level of Elven charmery or magic into the blade."

(c) HANDLE "The handgrip is actually wet-formed leather. There is a wooden understructure in the handgrip that then has a brass ring swaged onto it, the heat burned into the timber. And then a heavy layer of calf skin is wetformed around the handgrip."

(d)POMMEL "It's a heavy pommel counterweight. The pommel is actually ground out of a solid block of steel. It's an extremely difficult shape to freehand grind: you can appreciate that it's got a domed top, with a subtly fluted understructure, to its underside. It's a pretty tricky form to do as a free-hand study piece. You can't use a lathe or mill at all to turn it because it's an elliptical form."

time that the actor was on horseback or running through the forest or running across rough terrain. If they fell, the fall wouldn't be broken by a rigid cross-hilt or a rigid blade associated with the weapon at their side; they would fall on a flexible and very durable urethane weapon. Although it would bruise them, it wouldn't puncture their skin, and so these weapons became an absolutely essential part of the repertoire of the armorer on set. The combination and choices of weapons for each shot became quite crucial to getting it right because once you start filming you can't go, "Oh, hang on a moment, Peter, I've cocked it up, can we please put this weapon in." We had very, very diligent armorers on set who looked after all of the military weaponry that was available for the actors. We carried them around the country in massive 20-foot-long shipping containers on the back of trucks. We had five armory trucks that had every piece of equipment that you would need for servicing, repairing, or rebuilding weapons, or building weapons from scratch. You can be in the depths of the South Island, a hundred miles away from the nearest habitation, and the director—as he should rightly be able to-could ask for a specific sort of weapon. He may have an idea for a particular scene in which an orc would have a short dagger or a stunt guy should have a large axe, something in the middle of his back or something like this, so these trucks carried enough material and enough equipment, so that people like Dominic Taylor, one of our most skilled technicians, could very quickly fabricate any of these weapons that may be asked for. They wouldn't be as beautiful as what we could make back in the workshop, but certainly they would suffice for that period of time.

So you essentially had a mobile WORKSHOP?

Totally. We had five mobile

workshops on location around New Zealand at any one time, servicing the five shooting units.

DID YOU HAVE TO MAKE A BIG VERSION AND A SMALL VERSION OF STING

Yes. Everything that we made for the hero lead actors, we had to make twice. Either 1.38 times bigger, or 1.38 times smaller-1.38 being the dividing or multiplying ratio between the size of a hobbit in the film and the size of a human in the film.

WITH THE SWORDS BEING SO STRONG AND SO WELL BUILT, DID THAT HEIGHTEN THE DANGER OF SOMEBODY GETTING HURT?

The injuries were extremely light. On the biggest day [of filming], we had over 500 actors in prosthetics and/or armor, fully armed with weapons, spears, swords, clubs, axes, morning stars, polearms, pikes, halberts, shields, bows, arrows ... a hundred of them were on horseback at full gallop, all with wooden spears in their hands. Over the length of the film, we had no serious injury and only minor injuries to the actors. That has to be attributed to [several] things: the good training by the stunts and sword department, and the good choreography

from the IST or 2ND unit directors... and most importantly, [there was] the attitude of the production—that safety needs to come before anything else, no matter how badly you want to get the shot. The [priority] of [producer] Barrie Osborne and the production company in general was first and foremost the safety of the personnel that they

see.

had employed on the film. That can quite often be a rare thing, but it was a good thing to

THE WITCH-KING SWORD AND WRAITH SWORDS

The Witch-king Sword is carried by the leader of the Black Riders, or Nazgûl, whom the hobbits and Aragorn encounter at Weathertop. There are no runes on this weapon.

"With weapons such as the Wraith weapons, if we wanted them to be more dramatic, we would actually acidetch them."

(a)BLADE "These blades don't have runes on them. It's just part of the aging. One of the Wraith blades has ivy acid-etched into the crossed hilt, but it is almost deleted through the overacid aging to try and strip it back to a weapon that looks like it's a thousand years old. And in doing so the ivy etching just becomes the subtlest under-pattern-as if you'd found a relic at the bottom of the sea, that was once beautifully decorated by a craft person of that era,

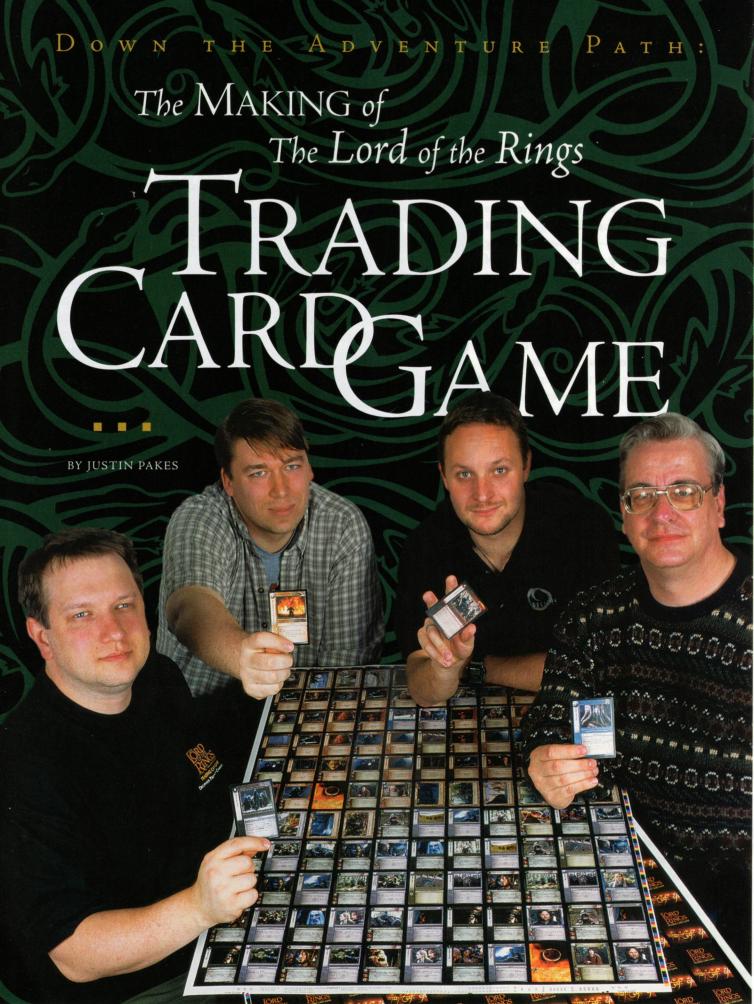
but now that decoration has just become the faintest memory on the surface of the piece. That's the feeling that we wanted to get for a lot of those weapons. There's a natural tendency on film to want to show off all the work you've done and try to make sure the people can appreciate it, but that doesn't happen in reality. Reality is often subtle and understated, and almost completely deleted at times. That's indeed what we endeavored to achieve with things like the Wraith weapons."

(b) HANDLE "Essentially, it's a classical handgrip shape. Swaged brass rings hold the timber on, but also create ridges that, once you lay the leather—the black vegetable-tanned, wet-molded leather—over the top, you create a suitable handgrip that will be held comfortably in the hand."

(c) POMMEL "The hilt is ground to look like a loose depiction of a crown, of a religious or heralded crown, with the spikes coming off the end of it. That's the motif that we were trying to achieve with the hilt."









As a result of the momentum

surrounding the films, a number of people across the world are hard at work creating. The Lord of the Rings games and collectibles. In a recurring feature, the Official Lord of the Rings Fan Club Movie Magazine will talk with some of the people who are creating these products. In this issue, Decipher Game Designer Justin Pakes recalls the experiences that his fellow game designers at Decipher Inc. encountered while bringing The Lord of The Rings Trading Card Game to life.

estled in the gentle downtown of Norfolk, Virginia, there's an unmarked door. It's not round. It's not four feet tall. Apparently no Hobbits live there. In fact, the sheer lack of features is probably the most remarkable thing about this door. Local legend has its own story about this door. The comings-and-goings of people and equipment at strange hours has led many to believe that behind this door hums the dark machinery of a shady Internet operation. Perhaps a company that creates spam-mailings or maybe those nefarious pop-up banners that plague the innocent travelers of the

Web. Little do they realize their real peril. How close they pass each day to true danger. Behind that door lurk... game designers.

So what's behind that door? A worn path stretches down to a desolate plain where towering spires of black rock jut from the barren landscape. Noxious gases steam from sulphurous pools of dark liquid to sting the eyes and claw at the throat. Decipher employees scurry back and forth carrying unspeakable burdens as they slave to complete the shadowy errands of their Dark Master.

Actually, Decipher looks kind of like most other buildings on the planet.

And like most other buildings on the planet, there are many people there who are aficionados of Tolkien's masterpiece. Game Designers Tom Lischke, Mike Reynolds, Chuck Kallenbach, and myself, along with Project Manager Tim Ellington, are certainly listed among them.

"I was introduced to *The Lord of the Rings* through *The Hobbit* when I was in 8th grade," Ellington remembers. "My all-time favorite teacher saw how interested I was and loaned me his copy of *The Lord of the Rings* to read. It was a great thrill when I saw him recently." I asked him if his teacher approached him 25 years later simply because he wanted his books back. Ellington refutes the claim. "It meant a lot to me to show him how his generosity to a young reader had made a difference years later."

So you'd think that the opportunity to design a trading card game from what is one of the most eagerly anticipated movies for many years would be like a dream come true. Look a little deeper though, and you'll find that like the secret weight that Frodo bore, what looks too good to be true often carries a hidden price.

WHAT IS a TRADING CARD GAME?

The simplest explanation is this: if a board game is a game played on a board, then a trading card game is a game played with trading cards. Baseball cards are the best-known variety of trading cards, but you can also find cards for movies, TV shows, recording artists... just about anything popular in today's culture. To understand trading card games, begin by considering traditional card games...



A standard deck of playing cards has 52 cards. It includes the same 13 cards in the four familiar flavors... hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades. And while there are many games you can play with this standard deck-poker, rummy, bridge, spades, go fish, etc.-you always use the same deck of cards.

That's where a trading card game is different. A standard TCG deck will have about 60 cards (some have more, others less). But you get to pick which 60 cards go into your deck from all the cards that exist in the entire game (that can range from a few hundred to a few thousand). It all depends on which cards you own—and how many.

When you buy a regular deck of cards, you get all 52 in one pack. When you buy a pack of TCG cards, you get just a few cards at a time—typically there are 11 to 15 cards per pack. Each pack contains a random selection of cards from the total number of cards in that particular set. A set can vary













"Of course, it's all well and good to be tasked with making a game based on the works of Professor Tolkien, but there is a big burden there," states Designer Tom Lischke. "I know how I think of The Lord of the Rings, and I'd hate to have someone ruin what has been such an important part of my life. I definitely felt that burden when working on this project."

But many fans would gladly bear this weight if it got them an early peek at the movie...

"Everyone thinks we got to see the movie during design, and that's not actually the case," Chuck Kallenbach says, crushing the hopes and dreams of scores of future game designers. "But we did get to see some extremely cool images before the general public did."

Those cool images were retrieved in

person by Decipher CEO Warren Holland and Creative Director Dan Burns, who traveled to New Zealand last summer and met most of the major talent behind The Lord of the Rings trilogy. They reviewed countless film images, toured the famous Weta special effects studio, and had dinner with Weta wizards Richard Taylor and Tania Rodger, among other adventures.

Decipher's art department then spent hour upon hour poring over the thousands of breathtaking images Holland and Burns brought back to Norfolk. Combining the inspiration of these pictures with the game design, the artists created a host of beautiful card templates to represent the cultures of Middle-earth: Hobbits, Men, Dwarves, and Elves. The Orcs of Mordor, the goblins of Moria, and the Uruk-hai of Isengard-all are meticulously depicted to bring to life the detail and flavor that Jackson's movies have achieved.

Meanwhile, the designers slaved like Orcs over the feel, balance, game play, and strategy. But joining their love of the property, their desire for a fantastic game, and the schedule demands of their Dark Master certainly makes for a volatile mix... one that has explosive properties when combined with the concept of "spare time."

"I normally see my wife every weekend because we live in different cities," says designer Mike Reynolds. "There were five weekends during a threemonth stretch when I did not see her-we typically worked ten-plushour days, including weekends, for months."

from around 100 cards to more than 350! You never know what cards you're going to get, which is where the "trading card" aspect of the game comes in: You collect them, just as you would baseball cards.

To play a trading card game, you build your own deck, from your own collection, as does your opponent. As a result, you never know exactly what cards your opponent will play, and yours will be a surprise as well. You can also change your deck each time you play, so it's unlikely you'll ever have a game turn out exactly the same way twice.

When you play an opponent in a TCG, you are usually trying to accomplish two things. You want to come up with a winning strategy, while simultaneously preventing your opponent from winning. Compare this to chess. You can't just try to capture

your opponent's King-you have to keep your King alive too. But you can't win by just keeping your King alive. Along the same lines, when you build your TCG deck, you want to include cards that help you win, but also hinder your opponent. It may sound complex ... and, to be honest, it is! This isn't "Go Fish," and it takes some time to learn thoroughly. But once you do, the payoff is worth it. It's this strategy and diversity in deck-building that makes TCGs so much fun. There are so many different types of decks you can create from the hundreds of cards to choose from that every game is a new experience. As the game unfolds, you start to see what your opponent is trying to do, and what he's trying to do to thwart you. You have to make decisions as the game progresses... just as in chess.

There are 365 cards in the The Fellowship of the Ring set of The Lord of the Rings TCG. You collect them just as you would any other trading cards. Each card is beautifully designed: the images have been pulled straight from the The Fellowship of the Ring motion picture, then retouched and refined by Decipher's Art Department. The cards are printed on the highest-quality cardstock















"I know how I think of The Lord of the Rings, and I'd hate to have someone ruin what has been such an important part of my life. I definitely felt that burden when working on this project." [Designer Tom Lischke]

And if the game designers are Orcs, then Tim Ellington is Shagrat. His free time suffered just as much as that of all the others immersed in this project. "I didn't want to watch TV because I was afraid I'd see my wife on an episode of 'Divorce Court," he jokes.

But time heals all wounds. Talk to those designers now, and they will tell you how worthwhile it all was. Forgotten is the two-hour discussion on using "archer" instead of "bowman." Gone is the heated debate regarding

whether this should be a "one-deck" or "two-deck" game. Unremembered are the days and days spent debating the pros and cons of allies and how to utilize their home sites. All just water under the bridge of Khazad-dûm.

The TCG Studio team signed off on the last set of press proofs in early October, on target for the November 6th release of the 365-card premiere set named The Fellowship of the Ring. Breathing a collective sigh of relief, and temporarily placing all that inspiration,

perspiration, and playtesting aside, do the designers think this is a game that will appeal to fans and hard-core gamers alike?

"The game closely follows the dramatic structure of Tolkien's story," says Kallenbach. "It is focused on the journey of the Ring-bearer and the story of the Fellowship," he says. "We're recreating the dramatic scenes you'll see in the movie, while still allowing you to choose the Company and your strategy for eluding the forces of The Enemy."

"One of the overriding themes in our final design," Kallenbach adds, "is that feeling of progression into the unknown. That is the essence of adventure: taking a risk to gain some reward. That's why the Adventure Path along which players travel is built gradually from the decks of all players,

continued from page 71 available, and most have "lore" explaining the character or situation featured on the card. Even characters only glimpsed for a few seconds have lore officially approved by New Line Cinema. In addition to the artwork, each card from The Lord of the Rings TCG contains game text that tells you what that card does in the game. The games really do play like a movie: you will be playing with all your favorite characters and places from these amazing films, putting them in impossible situations and getting them out of those tight spots—time after time.

"One of the overriding themes in our final design is that feeling of progression into the unknown. That is the essence of adventure: taking a risk to gain some reward."

[Chuck Kallenbach]

so that you can never be sure exactly where the game will take you."

And then there's our reward. Seeing the final product. Watching someone take what we have created and have fun with it. Seeing players or fans plan their deck, plot their strategy, and then battle their way down the Adventure Path against a friend or rival to complete the Ring-bearer's task-or to watch them return to the drawing board with new vigor. All are signs of success for the humble game designer.

"The first time we see a card, with the final template, and a final image, all printed in glorious color-that's when it starts to feel 'real'," says the stillmarried Ellington.

continued from page 59

Ted and I started this without any express intentions of making it the huge site it's become, so to get this offer so soon after we started was a little eveopening... and tempting." Watson adds with a grin, "After a brief moment of weakness, we didn't accept the offer."

Several of the visitors on Tolkien Online are of a slightly different ilk, as third partner David Mullich explains. "Because our website's focus is Tolkien first and movies second, and because our message boards are so popular, our website is home to more 'purist' fans than some of the other sites," he says. Not to be confused with the - false - idea, rampant in some circles, that Tolkien Online is only home to purists. Fans of all types converge on the site. Many purists just feel more at home at www.tolkienonline.com than at the site next door.

A fan himself, Mullich joined Tolkien Online in 2000, roughly a year after the birth of the website. "Jonathan and Ted asked for volunteers to help out with news reporting," he says. "Since I had long been reading everything I could about the films and sharing it with others on various Tolkien message boards, I jumped at the chance to have a more focused outlet for my enthusiasm for the films."

This kind of pure enthusiasm has branded many fans as "maniacs" in the eyes of individuals who don't care for Tolkien, or who only appreciate his work en passant. Biased media coverage doesn't help, either, but unbiased pieces do come along every once in a while and help deflate the stereotypes. Watson says he appreciated the indepth article "The Fellowship of the Ring," written by Erik Davis and published in the October 2001 issue of Wired. "It really attempted to reach a deeper understanding of the passion people have for Tolkien and The Lord of the Rings, beyond the attempts of today's usual pop-culture media," he says. "They did an admirable job of focusing on all aspects of Tolkien fandom, addressing it from a serious and intellectual level, instead of trying to portray all of us as the socially inept and mildly insane fans that many news outlets want to see." While commentaries of this sort on The Lord of the Rings fandom are few and far between, no amount of bad press will deter fans from enjoying their favorite book - and now their favorite movie.

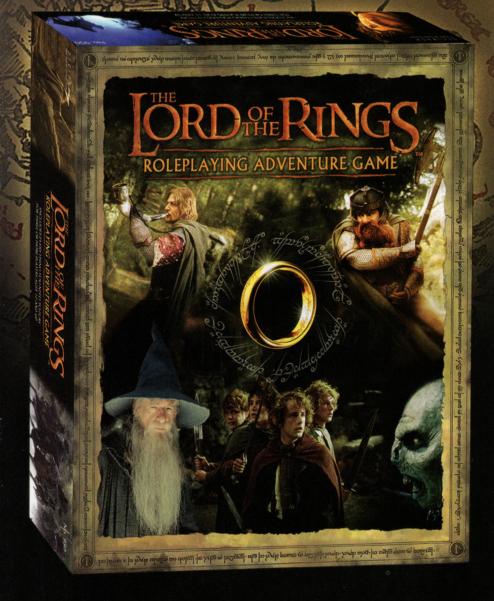
Despite all the buzz surrounding The Lord of the Rings and powerhouses

"At night, when I check my emails, there's usually that one that says, 'I really love the site! I check it every day. 'And that's what keeps us wanting to work on the site every night and weekend." [Jonathan Watson]

such as Tolkien Online, Watson admits that running a website of this magnitude is not always fun and games. "The hardest part these days is the financial status of the site advertising on the Internet is nearly non-existent," Watson says. "So it takes a substantial amount of our 'day-job' pay to keep the site functional. Monthly, it costs us the mortgage of a mid-size house to keep it running, but we're crossing our fingers that Internet advertising will start rising again." But as a hobby, maintaining a haven where people from all walks of life can come and share their passion in a climatecontrolled environment can be its own reward. "At night," says Watson, "when I check my dozens of emails, there's usually that one email that says, 'I really love the site! I check it every day. Thanks so much for giving me such a great place to share my love of The Lord of the Rings.' And that's what keeps us wanting to work on the site every night and weekend."



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CARUMAN STATUE

Saruman was one of those who sought to assist Sauron's dominion of Middle-earth. Lured by the lust for power, Saruman became one of the principal adversaries of the Fellowship of the Ring, sending his Uruk-Hai soldiers against them to gain the Ring for Sauron. Statue is made of polystone and measures 12.75 inches high. [A] Saruman statue:

LLC 7000 \$150.00

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LLC 7000 M \$135.00

RC SOLDIER BUST
Deep in the ancient past,
captured Elves were tortured and
corrupted by evil into hideous, hunched
forms. These foul, black-blooded creatures
were driven to ruin and destroy all fair
things. The Dark Lord, Sauron, bred great
armies of Orc soldiers for his war against
the good peoples of Middle-earth. Bust is
made of polystone and measures 7.25
inches high.

[B] Orc bust:

LLC 7002 \$60.00

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AZGÛL BUST
Feverish and wild with terror, the nine horse steeds of the Ringwraiths were driven relentlessly by their corrupted, unfeeling masters, the Nazgûl. Bust is made of polystone and measures 12 inches high. [C] Nazgûl bust:

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[A] Visual Companion: TPB 2000 \$20.00 Members' Price: TPB 2000 M \$18.00

THE LORD OF THE RINGS OFFICIAL MOVIE GUIDE

In full color throughout, including lavish production stills, with exclusive biographies of the stars and filmmakers, this book gives readers privileged access to behind-the-scenes material found nowhere else. Featuring color photos of the cast, locations, sets, costumes, and creatures of the films, the book includes an overview of the conception, design, and logistical challenges of a film project of epic scale and grandeur. Hardcover, 120 pages

[B] Official Movie Guide: TPB 2001 \$25.00

Members' Price: TPB 2001 M \$22.50

TRODO LIVES CAP

□ Black, brushed twill cap has "Frodo Lives" embroidered on the
 front in gray, with The Lord of the Rings movie logo on the back.
 Hat has adjustable cloth strap with metal clasp.

[C] Frodo cap: LCL 0000 \$15.00 Members' Price: LCL 0000 M \$13.50

■ OBBIT TREE CAP

1 Forest green, brushed twill cap has the Hobbit Tree logo embroidered on the front with *The Lord of the Rings* movie logo on the back. Hat has adjustable cloth strap with metal clasp.

[D] Hobbit cap: LCL 0001 \$15.00 Members' Price: LCL 0001 M \$13.50

RC FLAG CAP

Black, brushed twill cap has an ominous-gray Orc logo embroidered on the front with the Lord of the Rings movie logo on the back. Hat has adjustable cloth strap with metal clasp.

[E] Orc cap: LCL 0002 \$15.00 Members' Price: LCL 0002 M \$13.50

THE LORD OF THE RINGS RPG ADVENTURE GAME BOXED SET

Featuring in-depth information about the people, places, history, creatures, and magic of Middle-earth, combined with cutting-edge graphics and game design, *The Lord of the Rings* role-playing game has something to offer both gamers and Tolkien fans alike. Adventure game includes a complete narrative, "Through the Mines of Moria," drawn from *The Fellowship of the Ring* movie. Players who choose to travel through the Mines of Moria assume the roles of the members of The Fellowship of the Ring, and relive their dangerous and legendary adventures.

[A] Boxed Set: LCG 4000 \$30.00 Members' Price: LCG 4000 M \$27.00

THE LORD OF THE RINGS TRADING CARD GAME

This all-new, fast-paced strategy, *The Lord of the Rings* trading card game focuses on the Fellowship's desperate quest to take the One Ring to Mordor. Each player attempts to move their Fellowship along the adventure path toward the final goal, while their opponent tries to kill or corrupt the Ring-bearer using Sauron's evil minions. Cards are limited edition.

PACK: One rare, three uncommon, and seven common cards

[B] Game Pack: LCG 4001 PACK \$3.29 Members' Price: LCG 4001 PACK M \$2.96

BOX: 36 limited-edition booster packs

[C] Game Box: LCG 4001 BOX \$118.44 Members' Price: LCG 4001 M BOX \$106.59

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING STARTER DECKS

Starter decks contain 60 fixed cards, including two copies of an exclusive premium version of either Aragorn or Gandalf; three randomly inserted rare cards, and a rulebook.

[D] Aragorn Deck: LCG 4002 \$10.99 Members' Price: LCG 4002 M \$9.89

 [E] Gandalf Deck:
 LCG 4003
 \$10.99

 Members' Price:
 LCG 4003 M
 \$9.89

Display Box contains 12 starter decks, six each of Aragon and Gandalf decks.

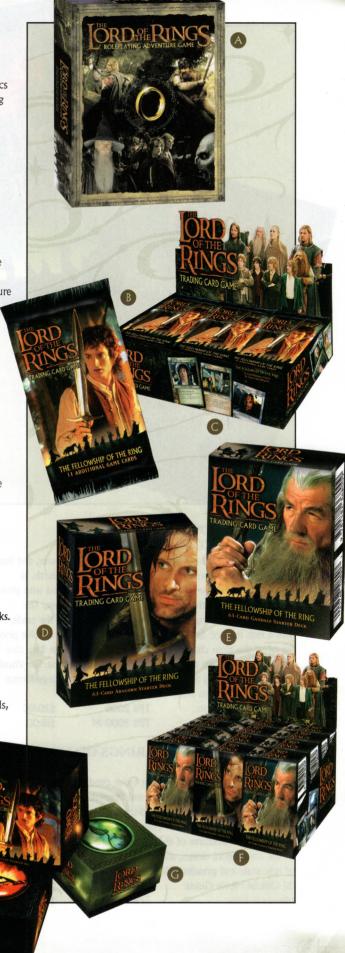
[F] Display Box: LCG 4004 \$131.88 Members' Price: LCG 4004 M \$118.69

The fellowship of the ring deluxe starter sets

Deluxe starter sets contains 60 fixed cards, 3 randomly inserted rare cards, one Il-card booster pack, a rulebook, a generous supply of glass bead tokens, collector's card list, and a handy deck storage box with three different cover designs representing the Gandalf, Sauron, or Shire

culture.

LCG 4005 [G] Gandalf: \$20.00 Members' Price: LCG 4005 M \$18.00 LCG 4006 Sauron: \$20.00 Members' Price: LCG 4006 M \$18.00 LCG 4007 \$20.00 Members' Price: LCG 4006 M \$18.00



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L \$45,000-\$54,999	☐ Playing fantasy-related	ITEMS DO YOU PLAN ON BUY-	☐ ISDN, T1 or higher
\$55,000-\$64,999	games, such as The	ING IN THE NEXT 12 MONTHS?	(SARS TRAKS) parties black to be made to
□ \$65,000 +	LOTR TCG, Dungeons		18. How do you prefer to order
the president doll the extra sign of models	& Dragons, Magic: The	□ Books	MAIL-ORDER PRODUCTS?
8. How were you first	Gathering, etc.	☐ Swords	
INTRODUCED TO The Lord of	☐ Watching the animated	☐ Chess Sets	☐ Over the phone
the Rings?	films.	☐ Jewelry	Over the Internet
he made as painting along it into the about one order	as may be the	☐ Playing Cards	□ By fax
□ Books	II. WHAT FEATURE OF The Lord of	☐ Calendar	☐ Through the mail
☐ Audio Books	the Rings FAN CLUB WAS most	☐ Stationery	
☐ Animated Films	IMPORTANT IN MAKING YOUR	□ Journals	19. Do you own a video game
☐ New Live Action Film	DECISION TO JOIN? IF YOU	□ Wall Scrolls	CONSOLE? (PLAYSTATION,
□ other	WERE GIVEN A GIFT MEMBER-	□ Pins	X-Box, GameCube etc)
and the property west discount of the probability o	SHIP, THEN PLEASE LIST YOUR	☐ Paperweight	☐ Yes ☐ No
9. Which description most	FAVORITE ASPECT OF THE CLUB.	☐ Trading Card Games	
CLOSELY DEFINES YOUR FAN	Leave by American Company	☐ Miniature Buildings	20.Do YOU READ OTHER
ASSOCIATION TO The Lord of	☐ The bi-monthly magazine.	☐ Christmas Ornaments	FANTASY AUTHORS BESIDE
the Rings?	☐ The chance to buy exclu-	☐ Giftware	J.R.R. TOLKIEN?
and competitives may see our as	sive merchandise.	☐ Interactive Games	☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ A passionate fan willing to	☐ Getting your name listed	□ Posters	Commence and the second and the second and the second and

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Dear Charter Fan Club Member.

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We at The Lord of the Rings Fan Club would like to thank you for your valued membership, and provide you with Issue #1 of the Fan Club Official Movie Magazine, as well as an update on what is coming up for our members!

On the address label of this package you will find your Fan Club Member Number. Keep that number handy! By the time you receive this, the Fan Club Store will be open for business and accessible to you at www.LOTRfanclub.com. There you will find an initial offering of *The Lord of the Rings* merchandise, a selection that we will be expanding upon greatly in the coming months!

On your first visit, use the forgotten password option to have your randomly-generated password sent to the email address we have on file for you. Log-in using your Member Number and password, and reap the benefits of membership with 10% off all items in the store, and charter member-only advance purchase periods on selected items.

Finally, your Membership Portfolio containing a charter membership card, exclusive lithograph(s), and a welcome letter from Peter Jackson is being mailed separately. You should receive your portfolio within one to three weeks. We apologize for the delay, but we felt it was necessary to improve the packaging and ensure that your items arrived in perfect condition.

I am also very happy to announce that we are including an extra lithograph in all Charter Membership Portfolios! This will be the same lithograph that is included in the standard membership portfolios, and is our way of thanking you for your membership and continued patience!

If you have any further questions, please contact customer service help@lotrfanclub.com, or call: 1-800-451-6381 (USA & Canada) or 1-303-856-2201 (outside USA & Canada).

Thank you, **Justin Pakes** Director of Fan Services Decipher Inc.

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