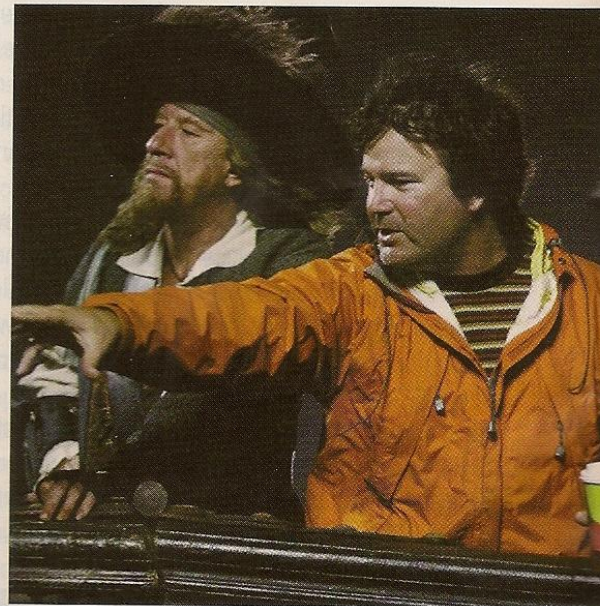


A Visual Treasure

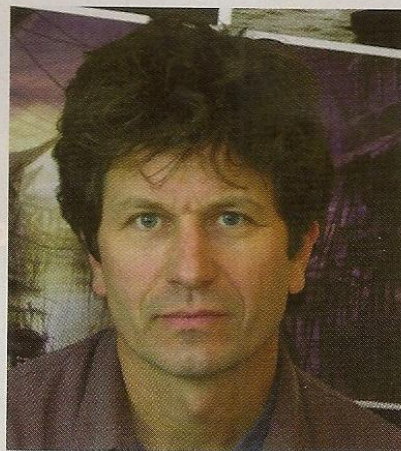
Cinematographer Dariusz Wolski, ASC, director Gore Verbinski and production designer Rick Heinrichs reteam for *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*.



Above, clockwise from left: Director of photography Dariusz Wolski and actor Chow Yun-Fat; actor Geoffrey Rush and director Gore Verbinski; production designer Rick Heinrichs.

For those personally involved in this production, it's hard to separate the making of the second installment of the *Pirates of the Caribbean* adventures of Captain Jack Sparrow and his swash-buckling crewmates, *Dead's Man Chest*, from the third, dubbed *At World's End*. Filmed back-to-back, it has been one arduous odyssey, with occasional breaks, that has stretched three years.

Production designer Rick Heinrichs first met with director Gore Verbinski in June 2004, and the two headed immediately to the Caribbean to scout locations. "We actually didn't start shooting until February 2005, so we had six or seven months of prep," says Heinrichs, who took over for Brian Morris, production designer on the first *Pirates* film, 2003's *The Curse of the Black Pearl*. "There was more of a formulated script for the second movie than there was for the third one. But Gore had kind of mapped everything out in his head, and a lot of it was about



having a sense of what the big visual effects and special effects sequences were going to be and what the major locations were going to be for the third one and making sure that we were planning ahead for those."

In preproduction, Verbinski extensively storyboarded the scripts with artist James Ward Byrkit, and then brought in Proof, Inc., to do extensive Maya pre-visualizations of the film's

more complex effects-heavy sequences, such as the three attacks by the Kraken sea monsters (designed by Mark "Crash" McCreery) in *P2*. Heinrichs also set up shop at Walt Disney Studios in Burbank with his art department bat-talion — which included supervising art director John Dexter, three other art directors, seven assistant art directors, nine set designers, a props set designer, three conceptual artists, six illustrators, three graphic model makers and various graphic designers, coordinators researchers and assistants.

Together, they assembled piles of research material, including old paintings and etchings of ships, seas and landscapes; ethnographic photographs; and reproductions of Howard Pyle illustrations from his classic tome *Book of Pirates*. There were also churned-out, detailed models; conceptual illustrations and elevations; and designs for the film's central sailing

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vessels, the *Flying Dutchman* and a new *Black Pearl*, which were both assembled in Alabama.

The franchise's sense of visual continuity was reinforced by the presence of cinematographer Dariusz Wolski, ASC, who, with director Verbinski, returned from the first two *Pirates* films to shoot the third. "Dariusz sort of came in after the pre-vis was built," the director says. "He would look at it and say, 'OK, how do we actually do this?'"

When it came to the dramatic climax of the trilogy — in which the *Flying Dutchman* and *Black Pearl* battle to the finish as they spin around in a giant swirling vortex in the middle of the ocean — Wolski initially doubted he could find a workable approach.

"It was pre-vis'ed like one of the most impossible things that had ever been done," the cinematographer says. "It has two ships and guys jumping up

from one yard-arm to another, falling in the water, cannons firing, people grabbing the sail and being flown up in the air and stuff. Then you take it step by step and start breaking down the shots and figure out the extent of what shots will have to be done fully digitally, how we're going to hook them up to live-action in one shot or how you're going to shoot the rest of the scenery."

The live-action portions of the sequence were shot in a massive aerospace hangar in Palmdale, Calif., which was once used to service the Space Shuttle and later housed the massive airport set seen in *The Terminal*.

"It was definitely the biggest set I've ever worked on," Wolski says. "But by the time you put the boats on the gimble, the ceiling was 75 feet high, and we were barely making it. We were still looking into the lights."

The cause was aided by Industrial Light + Magic visual effects supervisors John Knoll and Roger Guyett, who were responsible for

providing the extensive CG portions of the sequence.

"John Knoll was phenomenal with repeating my lighting," Wolski says. "He is a real cinematographer's friend, because he is one of the few visual effects people who has a great visual sense, photographically. He understands good images. He understands what shadow is. He understands how to light real objects and people."

While Heinrichs and Wolski have finished their work on *At World's End*, Verbinski expects to be on the job up until the film opens on May 25. And when it's all over, the one thing he doesn't want is a vacation in the Caribbean.

"Negative," the director says wearily. "You know what I want to do? I want stay home, fix the screen door and clean out the garage."

— Todd Longwell

Look for a complete *Pirates* production coverage in the June issue of *AC*.

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