

LEGEND

The director of ALIEN and BLADE RUNNER talks about bringing his multi-million dollar epic fantasy to the screen.

by Alan Jones

Although principal photography for the \$24.5 million production of LEGEND started at Pinewood Studios on March 26, 1984, for director Ridley Scott, one of the cinema's premier visual stylists, it was the culmination of almost four years of preparation. Between the completion of ALIEN and the start of BLADE RUNNER, Scott solidified plans to bring a fairy tale centering upon the eternal struggle between the powers of light and darkness to the screen.

Universal scheduled the film for release November 8, but scrapped those plans after unsatisfactory audience previews. Universal is tinkering with the film to make it more commercial—among other changes, replacing Jerry Goldsmith's lush symphonic score with electronic music—and plans to release the film sometime in 1986. LEGEND premiered in France in September and is scheduled to open in Britain and the rest of Europe in December through world distributor 20th Century-Fox.

The idea for a film like LEGEND was something Scott had toyed with while filming THE DUELLISTS in France seven years ago but at that point couldn't really make a clear cut decision about which route he wanted his directing career to take.

"One of the reasons I wanted to make LEGEND was because of my aborted project, TRISTAN AND ISOLDE," he said. "After THE DUELLISTS I couldn't see the point of spending another year of my life on what would essentially be another art movie that only a limited audience would see. For me it just wasn't enough—not in monetary terms but artistic ones. So I dropped the idea and did ALIEN instead. I was right to do that in retrospect.

"Then I prepared DUNE for a year," Scott continued. "All I saw with that project was another 2½ years stretching in front of me

"I wanted to do a fairy tale or mythological story. I'm one of those people who find the real world of no particular interest."



Above: Director Ridley Scott. Top Right: Mia Sara as Princess Lili and Tom Cruise as Jack. Bottom Left: As a ruse the Lord of Darkness shows Lili (Mia Sara) her true reflection in a magic mirror. Bottom Right: Annabelle Lanyon as winged fairy Oona.

before I even got behind the cameras. Filmmaking is actually going out and doing it and not spending 3 years in preproduction. But I always wanted to return to the mythological or fairy tale idea as I'm one of those people who find the real world of no particular interest."

To get inspiration and narrow the focus on what LEGEND should be about, Scott voraciously read all the established classic fairy-tales, such as the Brothers Grimm. Scott realized early on that the film would have to be an original screenplay. "I banned anything I considered too

sweet," he said. "It was far easier to design a story to fit the medium of cinema than bend the medium for an established story."

It was at this time that Scott chanced upon the books written by Montana-based American author William Hjortsberg. "I discovered Hjortsberg had already written screenplays for some unmade lower-budgeted films and we both seemed to share the same vision. I wanted something with a broad appeal. I didn't want to do anything overtly inaccessible which might have happened with a European writer. On our first meeting I ran Cocteau's BEAUTY

AND THE BEAST and based our working relationship on the fact that we were both wildly enthusiastic about it."

In January 1981, just prior to the principal shooting of BLADE RUNNER, Scott and Hjortsberg spent five weeks thrashing out a rough storyline which originally bore the title LEGEND OF DARKNESS. "Fifteen revisions later, we finally worked out what we both wanted," said Scott. "To begin with, I only had the vague notion of something in pursuit of the swiftest steed alive which, of course, was the unicorn. One aspect I was very definite about was that I wanted the outside world shown as economically as possible. To that end we settled on the solitary clockmaker's cottage. Originally the quests were more prolonged and involved the classic earning process but all these had to be substantially reduced.

"I was nervous about getting too complex in filmic terms," continued Scott. "Every quest story tends to have side quests that depart from the main thrust of the story in order to get a weapon or a super power. I wanted to give LEGEND a more contemporary movement, rather than get bogged down in too classical a format. With a budget of the scale we had, we had to look to a broader audience which just wouldn't tolerate that. Personally I love that approach, but apart from critics, most people don't."

For the look of LEGEND, Scott was influenced by the style of Disney animation and originally offered the project to the studio. "When we were trying to sell the project it was very dark in tone," said Scott. "I tend to lean in that direction, anyway. The fear of distributors at that time was extraordinary. When we submitted it to Disney I tried to reassure them that my intention was not to go too far in that direction, but they couldn't seem to understand such a change of pace, considering my



Tom Cruise as heroic warrior Jack.

previous work.

"I could have taken this same script and gone two ways," Scott continued. "One would have been dark and Celtic which would have limited it. The other was the Disney route and as I made *LEGEND* primarily for children, my children to be precise, that's the avenue I pursued. Having visual references to *SNOW WHITE*, *FANTASIA* and especially *PINOCCHIO* were clear cut decisions by me. This visual interest was necessary to carry the basic simplistic story."

Prior to Scott securing the services of production designer Assheton Gorton, artist Alan Lea worked on *LEGEND* as the initial visual consultant. Arthur Rackham and Heath Robinson's art also influenced the look of the film. "Lea drew some characters and sketched environments," said Scott. "But then I managed to get

Gorton, whom I wanted for both *ALIEN* and *BLADE RUNNER*. Because I'd spent 7 years at art school I was able to have some pretty dynamic conversations with Gorton. We would literally sketch at each other.

"One of the big fears of *LEGEND* being a totally stage bound film was striving for a believable reality," continued Scott. "I didn't want anyone to think they were watching anything phony. Gorton is sophisticated in this area because he knows all the pitfalls of shooting exteriors on a soundstage. We both knew that whatever we did would never look absolutely real, but would very quickly gain its own reality and dispense with any feeling of theatricality."

Scott employed every conceivable device known to him from his commercials career in order to make *LEGEND*'s atmosphere come alive. "The flurries of dandelion seeds used for atmosphere in many sequences were in fact loads of duck down being flung into lots of wind fans," he said. "When a huge blob went past the camera looking obviously like feathers, I yelled cut. It's a method I've used for years."

Preproduction on *LEGEND* included input from effects expert Richard Edlund whose involvement came about because Scott didn't want to be limited in the major character roles to the number of smaller people who could be found who could actually act. "At one stage I wanted Mickey Rooney to play one of the characters but at 5'2" next to 5'8" Tom Cruise he didn't look that tiny," said Scott. "Edlund came up with a method of shooting everything on 70mm and taking that negative and shrinking the actors to any size we wanted to make the illusion more realistic. The budget for this



Meg Mucklebones (Robert Picardo), the flesh-eating zombie servant of Darkness.

alone was enormous and affected everything so I had to axe it and take the gamble on finding an ensemble of good, small actors."

Scott had no preconceived ideas of who he actually wanted to star in *LEGEND* but, in his own words, he wanted people he hadn't seen before. "I had just seen *THE TIN DRUM* and found myself wondering if the star, David Bennent, had grown," said Scott. "Well he had, but not that much! For Princess Lili and Jack O' the Green, I wanted two characters who had to personify innocence." Scott chose Mia Sara as Lili, a sixteen year-old New Yorker, who makes her film debut in *LEGEND*. For Jack, Scott chose Tom Cruise, star of hit teen movies like *RISKY BUSINESS* and *ALL THE RIGHT MOVES*.

For the pivotal role of Darkness, Scott had the inspired idea of casting Tim Curry. Dr. Frank N' Furter himself from *THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW*. "What's so great about Curry as Darkness is, although I could see him internally panicking that there was nothing left of him, visually speaking, under Rob Bot-

tin's makeup, his personality is stamped on the role in the deftest way," said Scott. "I wanted exactly that controlled sense of theatricality."

All the principal players apart from Cruise and Sara spent hours in the makeup room every morning under the watchful eye of Bottin and his team of experts led by Peter Robb-King. Each person needed three makeup artists working on them, which is why Bottin's original menagerie of characters was honed-down to the minimum due to the expense. Scott saw the makeup as the actors' problem, not his. "They were all very tired before they even got to the soundstage," he said. "But once they all saw how good they looked, it pumped up their adrenalin and they tended to forget the whole boring process—until the next day of course!

"The average actor was in makeup for 3½ hours," Scott continued. "Tim Curry started out at 8 hours and got it down to 5½. Enclosing Curry's body totally in makeup meant that he had to be more than patient in getting it off. He had to sit in a bath for an hour to liquefy the soluble spirit gum. Unfortunately he got impatient and claustrophobic and too hurriedly pulled it off which meant he tore his skin off as well. We had to shoot around him for a week to calm him down."

According to Scott, the larger the production got, the less money he seemed to have, a feeling not helped by the fact that 16 weeks into production, and with 10 days left on the large 007 stage at Pine-wood, the entire set burned down. "I had started the snow scenes but still needed to get more shots," recalled Scott. "During the lunch break the fire broke out and all I could say was 'shit.' I hurried back to my office and set about re-juggling the schedule to get quickly onto another stage. I only lost 3 days in total by simply escalating the building on one of the other

David Bennent, diminutive star of *THE TIN DRUM*, as Gump, leader of the elves, cradling Oona, a Tinkerbell-like fairy.



stages and getting on with some editing in the interim."

Scott also credited his producer, Arnon Milchan, with getting a project the size of *LEGEND* completed smoothly. "Control is the key word in my vocabulary," said Scott. "The role of a good producer is to protect me from most of the outside pressures in order to keep my resources channeled into the film. If it hadn't been for Arnon, I doubt whether I'd have made *LEGEND*. He is so good at deals, and one of the few men who could have organized this project so well. He was totally supportive throughout and I feel his European attitude to film was a blessing counterbalancing Hjortsberg's input."

Scott doubts that *LEGEND* would have been a better film if it had been scaled down and had a smaller budget. "If that had been the case I would have had to have shot in an actual forest and we couldn't have stylized settings or characters," he said. "Actually, I was a bit envious of this year's *THE COMPANY OF WOLVES*. They did so much on a minuscule budget. But while that was an enormous success in England it closed in America after a week. American audiences couldn't seem to grasp the denseness of the plot or the sequential build-up of the story, which is one reason why I have eliminated a lot of the subtext and detailing from my original cut of *LEGEND*."

Scott's first cut of *LEGEND* was 125 minutes long, which he felt dwelt unnecessarily on minor plot points. The next cut was 113 minutes long, which was test marketed in Orange County and was considered perfect. Perfect that is for an audience who didn't mind working at being entertained. So



Tom Cruise, teen star of *RISKY BUSINESS*, as Jack O' the Green, a legendary green man of the forest who becomes a warrior.

another two reels were removed, totalling 20 minutes. In Great Britain, *LEGEND* will run 95 minutes long but before the film debuts in America it is going to lose even more footage, as Scott explained.

"European audiences are more sophisticated," he said. "They accept preambles and subtleties whereas the U.S. goes for a much broader stroke. Americans are governed by the media, which I consider totally unhealthy. On MTV the younger generation, especially, watches sub-par montages all day long which makes them impatient. Nowadays 16-22 year-olds seem to have missed the educational process that makes them aware of classical references enough to be attracted by them.

It's a sad fact of life but you are obliged to take note of that. You would be a fool not to.

"The American cut of *LEGEND* is much simpler," continued Scott. "The clockmaker's cottage sequence, showing the real world, is being removed so the film will open on Jack and Lili meeting in the glade. Therefore the comparison in really obvious terms of what Darkness' rule has meant before and after Lili enters the cottage will be lost. Also Darkness' entrance may be moved up to stop the audience from getting restless. Structurally I prefer holding him back as in the European print. Also on my insistence, part of the campaign for *LEGEND* will point out that it isn't my usual sort of film."

Despite rumors that Ridley Scott's next film will be a Duran Duran vehicle, he hasn't really decided what to do although a musical would seem a natural progression. One thing for certain, he has nothing whatsoever to do with Fox's upcoming sequel to *ALIEN*, titled *ALIENS*.

"I was slightly hurt that I wasn't even asked to be involved, even at a reduced fee," he said. "I'm sure the thinking behind the project is that they can rework the idea at a lower budget. I'm slightly surprised that none of the original personnel from this country are involved, but I'm sure director James Cameron will do a good job. *THE TERMINATOR* was an interesting item and shared with *ALIEN* a similar, relentless quality to my way of thinking." □

Makeup Credits

The Rob Bottin Productions makeup crew for *LEGEND* was the largest ever assembled:

Production manager, Richard White. Production auditor, Ralph Leo. Production assistant, Fernando Favila. Sculptural design, Henry Alvarez. Lead special makeup artist, Vince Prentice. Staff shop supervisor, Ralph Cobos. Lab technician supervisor, John Goodwin. Cosmetic paints supervisor, Margaret Beserra. Cosmetic hair supervisor, Becky Ochoa. Production coordinators, Mike Sorrentino, Ilya Labunka, Chuck Montoya.

England chief makeup supervisor, Peter Robb-King. Makeup artists, Nick Dudman, Linda Devetta, Jane Royale, Pauline Heys, Louis Burwell. Makeup laboratory, Sue Oakes, Verner Gresky, Sue Reynolds.

Technicians, Jarek Alfer, Max Alvarez, Don Angier, Bobby Belknap, Ed Branson, Patricia Brewer, Pat Cardamone, Roberto Carlos, Basil Casabona, Ron Castro, Jerry Chinn, Mike Cobos, Guy Deel, Ken Diaz, Katalin Elek, Dawn Evans, Ed Felix, Gunnar Ferdinandsen, Laura Filip, Tammy Fites, Art Flores, Camille Forgy, Susan Forrest, Eddie Garcia, Royanne Garrison, Rowena Gibbs, Kim Graham, Ginger Grieve, Joe Griffith, Mike Hill, Jack Johnson, Werner Keppler, Marty Kline, Sheri Koskie, Eric Kottner, Phil Mantione, Lauren Marems, Richard Medina, Ann Montoya, Greg Nelson, Robert Newman, Kyle Nicholson, Robert Olivias, Edie Panda, Dennis Pawlik, Alba Pedrola, Patrick Philbin, Art Pimental, John Rizzo, Richard Ruiz, Carol Schwartz, Ernie Shelton, Dwight Shundo, Mark Silver, Tom Small, Wayne Strong, Caryl Tharp, Jackie Tichenor, Steve Townsend, Josephine Turner.

Screwball (Billy Barty) catches the shield-size silver plates which Brown Tom frisbees across the kitchen past the sleeping bodies of two giant cooks.

