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Return to NARNIA

KNB's
Oscar-winning
team
reunites
for
*Prince
Caspian*

By Joe Nazzaro
Illustration by Kyle Shold

When Disney and Walden Films decided to adapt the classic C.S. Lewis fantasy novel *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (profiled in *MA* #57) for the big screen, the result was one of the top-grossing films of 2005. It also earned Oscars for KNB EFX Group co-founder Howard Berger and key prosthetic make-up artist Tami Lane. So when plans for a sequel began taking shape, it's not surprising that Berger was only too happy to reassemble his team for a second outing.

In *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, the four Pevensie children return to the magical land of Narnia, where they had once ruled as kings and queens; several hundred years have passed since their departure. As they soon discover, the young Prince Caspian has gone into exile to avoid being executed by his scheming uncle, King Miraz, and in order to take back his throne, he has to team up with the four Pevensies as well as a hastily assembled army of talking animals and magical creatures to take on Miraz and his army of Telmarine warriors.

For Berger, one of the first steps in preparing for the sequel was sitting down with partner Greg Nicotero and evaluating the lessons they had learned on the first film. "I remember sitting on set with Tami and saying, 'If we ever have the opportunity to do it again, this is what I'd do,' so we made a list and every day, we'd write something else down.

"When this film came up, Greg and I went through that list and I'd say, 'This is what I want to do differently...'





Left: As Asterius, leader of the minotaurs, Shane Rhangi wears a full hand-tied suit and a radio-controlled mechanical head; **right:** Howard Berger with the Aslan suit Rhangi wore; **middle:** Jeremy Ailleo sculpts the Asterius head. **bottom:** Tami Lane touches up a test faun make-up on KNB's Mark Ballou.



Top: KNB studio-employees had to finish everything within the five-month prep period; **bottom:** Paul Katte works on an old-age centaur make-up.

It was just about trying to find ways of making things more accommodating on set for us, for the people in production and for the people in the make-ups and suits.

"Looking at some of those make-ups, we tried to simplify them the best we could. With Mr. Tumnus, for example, his hair was completely hand-laid, so with the fauns in this film, we ended up making a lot more hand-tied lace pieces that we were able to put down and added a layer of hand-laid hair over everything. That saved a tremendous amount of time, so where it used to take three and a half hours to do one faun, it only took two and a half hours. That time adds up when you have 30 bare-chested fauns every day!"

One of the biggest differences on the sequel was that the KNB team was able to generate its own creature designs, as opposed to the first film, in which most of those concepts were originally created by New Zealand-based effects studio Weta Workshop and subsequently had to be redone. As Berger recalls, "That was something we discussed with [Weta chief] Richard Taylor. It made sense for us to do them, because we were building everything too, and he agreed. They already had their hands full with all the armor and weaponry, and they were handling the miniatures as well, so Andrew Adamson, the director, said, 'Why don't you just design all the creature stuff?'"

"With characters like the dwarves, which are my

favorite characters in the movie, we really got to do them right this time. On the first film, we ended up casting little people from India

and Thailand and they just didn't look right to me; they looked like little people in make-up. This time, Peter Dinklage and Warwick Davis really set the bar, because they're both so awesome-looking. We also found some outstanding character faces in the Czech Republic, which gave us the opportunity to do some really fantastic make-ups on them and really make these characters stand out, so I was very happy about that.

"The other characters we got to redesign were the satyrs, because I wasn't 100 percent happy with the satyrs in the first film, only because that was an eleventh-hour decision where they were supposed to be all digital and eight weeks before we were going to get to the first scene, Andrew said, 'I think I want to do these practically,' so he grabbed a Weta design, which had to be reconfigured to fit



Photos courtesy of Howard Berger





a human being.
 “This time around, Aaron Sims designed a new satyr for us that Andrew really loved and it was far more animalistic and really goat-like. We extended the head out so we weren’t as married to the human anatomy, and I thought it looked far superior to what we did in the first film.”

Although *Prince Caspian* still featured a veritable army of non-human creatures, the build time was significantly less than on the first film. “I would say that we had maybe four months that I was in the shop, and once I left, Greg took over and finished the build along with Alex Diaz, our key art director on the film.

“After I left, they kept building and building, because we shot the first part of the film in New Zealand and we only had two make-ups to do, which were Trumpkin and Nikabrik, and then we had the Aslan puppet that we had built for reference, so those were the only three things we had playing in the first two months. That worked out great, because it gave us another two months to build all the other stuff.”

Another major difference with the new film is the significant number of ‘hero’ make-ups that had to be created this time, as opposed to huge groups of background characters. “We have Peter Dinklage who plays Trumpkin the red dwarf,” explains Berger, “which is a huge make-up that Tami Lane handled; and Warwick Davis plays Nikabrik the black dwarf, with Sarah Rubano handling his make-up, so those were two huge make-ups. I think Tami started Peter’s make-up at three hours and got it down to about two, while Sarah started her make-up at four hours and got it down to three, so they’re extremely extensive.”

For the character of Trumpkin, designer John Wheaton actually based his initial concepts for the



Top left: Trumpkin design by John Wheaton; **middle:** Peter Dinklage as Trumpkin, with make-up applied by Lane and Berger; **top right:** Dinklage in make-up for the first time; **bottom:** Lane touches up Dinklage.



“Andrew got a call from the heads of Disney, who said, ‘That is the best make-up we’ve ever seen!’”

—Howard Berger

Below left: Nikabrik design by Wheaton; **middle:** Warwick Davis being made up as Nikabrik by make-up artist Sarah Rubano; **bottom right:** Rubano handled the day-to-day application of Warwick’s make-up.

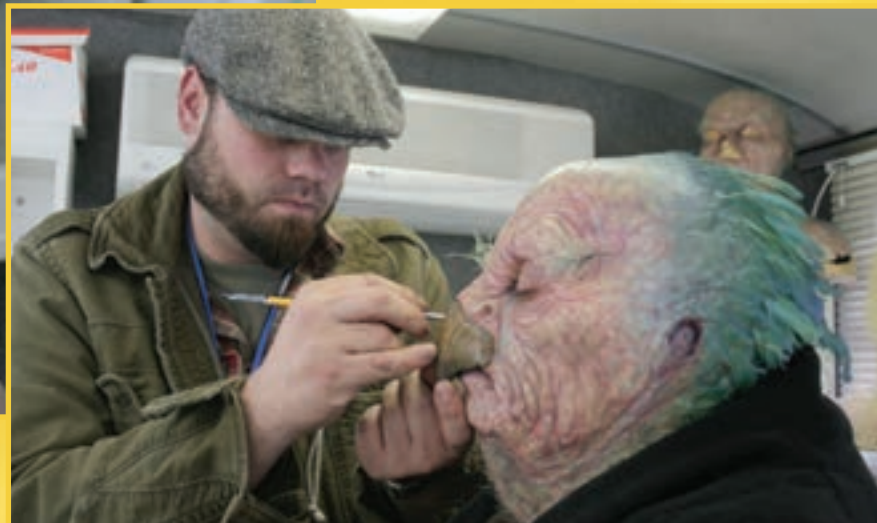




Left: Hag make-up applied by Kevin Wasner and Berger consisted of a full over-the-head cowl, a sides-of-face horseshoe piece, forehead, acrylic beaks and PVC contact lenses; **above:** Czech make-up artist Ivo Strangmuller and one of the many dwarves in *Prince Caspian*; **below:** Wasner touches up the Hag.



Top left: Michael Feilds applies the Glenstorm make-up to actor Cornel S. John; **top right:** Jordu Schell's concept sculptures for the fauns; **middle left:** Wheaton's design for Glenstorm, leader of the centaurs; **middle:** One of the background satyrs in the forests of Poland; **bottom:** Wheaton works on a full-size concept for the new satyrs.



character on photographs of Peter Dinklage, which Berger was then able to bring to the producers. "I can't say enough about Peter, who I've always admired, so to work with him was really spectacular. The first order of business was that Peter has really thick black hair, so I said, 'Pete, I want to shave your head for the next nine months!' and he agreed. I said, 'We can bald-cap you, but it's going to suck eggs,' so we shaved his head and he's got a gelatin nose and ears and a hell of a lot of beautiful hair work that Mark Boley and his team handled.

"Tami applied that make-up 92 times and it's a very intricate look, right down to painting Peter's 5 o'clock shadow out every day. She would have to base him all out on top with Latona Tattoo paint and work the colors back in, and

his hands are all painted up. Trumpkin goes through a lot of different continuity, but the beard is very specific. Since he's a red dwarf, I didn't want it to be *red*, so I went to Mark Boley and said, 'I want all these different colors and maybe make the last hand-laid layer to be blonde.' I didn't want to go with red-red so that somebody would look at it and say, 'Oh, that's a red dwarf!' so we dyed Peter's eyebrows to match and it looked absolutely beautiful, to the point where when the first dailies came back, Andrew got a call from the heads of Disney, who said, 'That is the best make-up we've ever seen!'"

With Warwick Davis, who plays Nikabrik the morally





Top: Czech artist Andrea McDonald sits on the castle with some of the satyr and minotaur heads KNB created; **middle:** Schell's werewolf maquette; **bottom left:** Wasner puts the final touches on the radio-controlled werewolf head; **bottom right:** The final werewolf head Rhangi wore was designed and sculpted by Wheaton and the suit was supervised by Beth Hathaway.



ambiguous black dwarf, Berger wanted to significantly change the actor's distinctive features. "We did four or five tests, younger, older, more scars, but really different from one end of the spectrum to the other, and what we ended up with was exactly what John Wheaton's design was. The make-up is extremely elaborate, so he's got a full-face gelatin piece that blends off around his eyes and mouth. There are also ears and he has pieces on his hands, because he's a pretty gnarly-looking guy and then we used his own teeth but painted them up every day. Warwick has a beautiful wig, but we didn't shave Warwick's head; we just cut his hair down and put a stocking cap on and then wigged him from there.

"Nikabrik is a big job, so if I finished my make-ups for the day, I would hop in and help Sarah apply the ears just to speed it up a little bit, plus try and keep Warwick's mind off of things, because he hates the hair work. Gluing the beard down drove him crazy, so I tried to keep him occupied by making fun of



Rubano and Berger with Davis (Nikabrik) on the set of *Prince Caspian*.

him and asking stupid questions about *Willow*. He was made up in the same trailer that I was in, so I would put the iPod on and I downloaded the Ewok song and had it blaring one day when he walked in, and then we had stuff from *Willow*, so there was always something playing. I think he really found it fun that we had spent so much time thinking about how to make fun of him, so that made him feel good."

Aside from the principal characters, Berger and his team

one, and on this one maybe half that, and I felt that we didn't utilize that many of them.

"I think maybe we'll back off the mechanical stuff on the next one, because nowadays, even though it's mechanical, they end up digitally augmenting it, so the director can make it do whatever it wants. I'd still make mechanical heads because we do have some characters that are going to need mechanical heads on *Dawn Treader*, but we're not going to do any

"One thing I learned is that our industry is changing, so I think we're going to see a lot less puppets and mechanical creatures." –Howard Berger

were responsible for a wide range of magical creatures including centaurs, fauns, hags, satyrs and werewolves. Creating a massive 4,600 make-ups over the course of the shoot meant assembling a crew of 45 on-set artists from 10 different countries, including most of his Australian team from the first film. "I think we hired 10 Czech make-up artists, and we also had new people from Canada and New Zealand, so we mixed it up a bit this time. The Czech make-up artists are really fantastic about hair work, so after they finished their make-ups, I would have them tying hair pieces, which we used for the fauns and dwarves, and that worked out really well."

Looking back over his team's work on *Prince Caspian*, Berger believes there are a number of important lessons to be taken from their work on the film just as there were on the original. "One thing I learned is that our industry is changing, so I think we're going to see a lot less puppets and mechanical creatures. I think we had something like 25 mechanical heads on the first

background mechanical stuff, so our hero characters, the four creatures that will be there all the time, will have mechanical heads and we'll utilize them when we can. For directors nowadays, it's easier to do it digitally than to build mechanical puppets, so that end is phasing out very quickly."

Although the team at KNB is already hard at work on a number of different projects, they'll eventually be gearing up for the third Narnia film, *Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, which is expected to go into production by the end of the year. According to Berger, "Right before we wrapped up *Prince Caspian's* nine-month shoot, Greg supervised a team of sculptors to design some of the new and exciting creatures, so we look forward to being able to walk through the wardrobe for the third time with hopefully the same great team that has been with us on the past two films."

The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian opens May 16. **MA**