

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: The Curse of the Black Pearl

PRODUCTION INFORMATION

For the roguish yet charming Captain Jack Sparrow (JOHNNY DEPP), the crystalline waters of the Caribbean, like the high seas the world over, present a vast playground where adventure and mystery abound. But Jack's idyllic pirate life capsizes after his nemesis, the wily Captain Barbossa (GEOFFREY RUSH), steals his ship, the *Black Pearl*, and later attacks the town of Port Royal, kidnapping the Governor's (JONATHAN PRYCE) beautiful daughter, Elizabeth Swann (KEIRA KNIGHTLEY). Elizabeth's childhood friend, Will Turner (ORLANDO BLOOM), joins forces with Jack to commandeer the fastest ship in the British fleet, the *H.M.S. Interceptor*, in a gallant attempt to rescue her and recapture the *Black Pearl*. The duo and their ragtag crew are pursued by Elizabeth's betrothed, the debonair, ambitious Commodore Norrington (JACK DAVENPORT), aboard the *H.M.S. Dauntless*.

Unbeknownst to Will, a cursed treasure has doomed Barbossa and his crew to live forever as the undead, the moonlight eerily transforming them into living skeletons. The curse they carry can be broken only if the plundered treasure is restored in total and a blood debt repaid.

Against all odds, the *Interceptor* and *Dauntless* race toward a thrilling confrontation with Barbossa's pirates on the mysterious Isla de Muerta. At stake is Jack Sparrow's revenge, the *Black Pearl*, a fortune in forbidden treasure, the lifting of the pirates' curse that has doomed Barbossa and his crew to live forever as skeletons, the fate of the British navy, and the lives of our valiant heroes as they clash their swords in fierce combat against the dreaded Pirates of the Caribbean.

From producer Jerry Bruckheimer comes the thrilling live-action adventure, Walt Disney Pictures' "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl," directed by Gore Verbinski. Screenplay by Ted Elliott & Terry Rossio. Screen Story by Ted Elliott & Terry Rossio and Stuart Beattie and Jay Wolpert. Executive Producers are Mike Stenson, Chad Oman, Bruce Hendricks and Paul Deason. The film stars Johnny Depp, Geoffrey Rush, Orlando Bloom, Keira

Knightley, Jack Davenport, Kevin R. McNally, Zoe Saldana and Jonathan Pryce. Buena Vista Pictures distributes.

ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

The thrilling tale of a daring rescue mission aimed at reversing an ancient curse, "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" is an irreverent wink at the famous Disney theme park attraction. When the idea was first presented to the production executives at Disney Studios, they could think of only one producer able to handle the scope and intricacies of such an undertaking. Michael Eisner, Chairman and CEO of the Walt Disney Company, Dick Cook, Chairman of Walt Disney Studios, and Nina Jacobson, President of the Buena Vista Motion Pictures Group, initially approached Jerry Bruckheimer to orchestrate this extravaganza, and Jerry was only too anxious to get underway. He has always wanted to make a motion picture about pirates.

"I loved watching pirate pictures as a kid," says Bruckheimer. "'Treasure Island,' 'Captain Blood' and 'The Black Pirate' were some of my favorites. Errol Flynn and Douglas Fairbanks were formidable, and although their movies are still exciting and very watchable today, I thought we could add some extra pizzazz to a popular theme.

"I think we take the swashbuckler genre to a new level," he adds. "This has all the thrills and romance that you would expect from a big adventure."

Bruckheimer—who knows better than anyone what it takes to bring 'big adventure' to the big screen—began assembling his team. "We brought in Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio, two wonderful writers who created a hit with 'Shrek,'" he continues. "They brought in the element of the supernatural, which gave the story an edge that interested me. Anything I'm interested in seeing, I'm interested in making."

A trademark of Jerry Bruckheimer Films productions, writers are involved in every step of the production process. Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio were on set at all times during production.

"The experience Terry and I had is what every single writer dreams of," Ted Elliott says. "For a writer, being on set every day is unheard of. From beginning to end, it was terrific. To be able to talk to the director, the producer, the actors and even someone like the

makeup artist, to ask questions and find out why things are done a certain way, was such a wonderful education. It was gratifying to realize the imagination and creativity each crew member put into the movie. From set design to costumes and makeup, seeing the production unfold on set was better than anything we made up and put on paper.”

His partner agrees. “Jerry gave Gore such freedom, and Gore was confident enough with his ideas that he had no problem being collaborative,” says Terry Rossio. “We just knew the approach we wanted to take; we knew we wanted these characters and these specific moments in the story. We wanted it to be a very classic, Jane Austen-style, bodice-ripping romance.

“Ted and I actually worked very closely with Jerry, Mike Stenson and Chad Oman; they were instrumental in developing the story,” recalls Rossio. “Writers don’t often have that kind of consistent, involved access to producers, and producers are not necessarily as knowledgeable as these guys are about structure and dialogue.”

“This project was charmed from the beginning,” says Mike Stenson. “Ted and Terry are the absolute masters of this type of storytelling, and it turned out they had always wanted to do the feature version of ‘Pirates.’ They even sang the theme song the first time we met.”

Elliott and Rossio will tell you that timing is everything. They pitched an idea for a pirate movie almost ten years earlier after completing work on “Aladdin,” but there was no interest from any studio. Undeterred, the writing team refused to give up the dream, keeping their concept on a back burner, convinced that the combination of romance, adventure and mystery would one day become popular again.

Actor Johnny Depp was unhesitatingly confident that the writing duo could handle the job and make a childhood dream come true. “Isn’t it every boy’s dream to be a pirate and get away with basically anything?” Depp asks rhetorically. “Who wouldn’t want to play a pirate?”

It wasn’t purely boyish exuberance that factored into Depp’s decision to accept the role of Captain Jack Sparrow; he was wholeheartedly confident in the quality of the project when he learned of Elliott and Rossio’s participation. “The second I heard that Ted

and Terry were writing the script, I knew we were in good shape,” Depp says. “With Jerry’s background and Gore’s intense focus, I knew the film had strong shoulders to stand on. When I read Ted and Terry’s screenplay, I was pleasantly surprised; they’d exceeded my expectations. They brought a great amount of humor to the story and created building blocks for the actors to elaborate, to really stretch the character.”

With a script in place, Bruckheimer was now on the hunt for a director. “My agent called and said, ‘How do you feel about a pirate movie?’ I mean, how often are you going to get that call?,” recalls Gore Verbinski, who most recently directed “The Ring.”

Bruckheimer had attempted to hire Verbinski several years earlier, but schedules would not allow. “I had met him early on in his career and thought he was very talented after seeing his commercial reel,” says the producer. “But somebody got to him before I could and he went off to make ‘Mouse Hunt.’”

“We talked quite a bit over the last few years about trying to find a project to work on together,” adds Verbinski. “I am thoroughly entertained by his films. I am there with the popcorn, getting my money’s worth every time I go to a Jerry Bruckheimer picture.”

“We were lucky to sign Gore right before ‘The Ring’ came out,” comments Bruckheimer. “This film is perfect for him because we encouraged him to use his wonderful sense of humor and his great storytelling skills. And because it has elements of the supernatural, Gore got to use lots of visual effects. His enthusiasm is like a little kid’s. He loves to work with actors, and actors love him. We were fortunate because he really was the perfect director for this project.”

Mike Stenson echoes Bruckheimer’s praise. “Gore’s combination of visual style, technical expertise and humor made him our first and only choice as a director. He said yes the first meeting as well.”

A fan of “Captain Blood,” “The Crimson Pirate,” “The Black Pirate” and other pirate movies in his younger days, Verbinski was sold on the concept. “There’s something rebellious and revolutionary about piracy,” he says. “Pirates came out of a time when things were oppressive and people were hung for simply stealing a piece of bread, so what have you got to lose. For me, the film’s about breaking the rules, and when it’s appropriate to break the rules to get what you want. All the characters ultimately try to obtain their

desires through piracy, through the good and the bad aspects of that.”

Elliott and Rossio presented Verbinski their outline, and the director liked what he heard. It was the element of the curse in the story that, in Verbinski’s words, “was really an opportunity to turn the movie on its head and open it up as a genre.

“When I first heard the pitch from Ted and Terry, what I liked about it was that it was a terrific perversion of the classic tale,” says Verbinski. “I came in asking, ‘What is the standard plot structure? Is it a kidnapping? Is it buried treasure?’ When actually, it has all of these qualities, yet the principle one is reversed. It is a film about finding the last piece of treasure and putting it back. Barbossa and his pirates need to return the last piece of cursed treasure so they can feel the pleasures of the flesh-and-blood world. The curse has allowed Barbossa and his pirates to keep the currency and to continue their villainy, but they’re not able to enjoy it.”

Verbinski began prepping and storyboarding the movie from Elliott and Rossio’s outline. “It’s no way to prep a movie, especially one that’s shot on water,” the director laughs. “We just kind of hit the ground running. It was chaos.”

Casting was the next step for the production. “We always try to populate our movies with great talent,” says Jerry Bruckheimer. “And in this one we were lucky enough to combine respected, well-known veterans with several up-and-coming actors. Excellence begets excellence, and with every additional actor we signed, the bar just moved higher and higher.”

“We have a dream cast,” says Verbinski. “It’s not often that a director has an opportunity like this. To work with a cast of this caliber on a pirate movie is a chance of a lifetime.”

“The way you get an audience to really embrace a movie is to cast against the grain,” explains Bruckheimer. “You find someone the audience would never expect to see in a Disney movie.

“I went after Johnny Depp,” he says with a knowing grin. “Johnny is an artist who’s known to take on quirkier projects. He’s a brilliant actor. He’s not out to create a fan base for himself, or to simply select

work based on salary; it’s clear he needs to find a role that gives back to him artistically. I think he also wanted to do something specifically for his kids.”

Ironically, Depp’s character isn’t exactly the kind of guy you’d want your kids to emulate. “Jack Sparrow’s the type of character that you enjoy watching steal money from a little old lady,” says Verbinski. “He is basically a con man—he’s lazy, he’s a great pirate, but he is not going to fight if he doesn’t have to. He’s always going to take a shortcut. I think the big thing for Captain Jack Sparrow is his myth. He’s kind of his own best agent—he markets himself very well.”

“Jack Sparrow’s a rogue, but he doesn’t have a dark heart,” adds Orlando Bloom, who plays the role of Will Turner. “He’s a man trying to live with integrity.”

Depp was attracted by the opportunity to create a totally new character from scratch. “It was a different kind of role for me. It was a great opportunity to invent this pirate from the ground up, to create a different kind of pirate than you have seen before.”

The filmmakers gave the actor free reign to be creative with the character. “Johnny’s known for creating his own characters,” says Bruckheimer. “He had a definite vision for Jack Sparrow which is completely unique. We just let him go and he came up with this off-center, yet very shrewd pirate. He can’t quite hold his balance, his speech is a bit slurred, so you assume he’s either drunk, seasick or he’s been on a ship too long. But it’s all an act perpetrated for effect. And strange as it seems, it’s also part of Captain Jack’s charm.”

Depp also appreciated the mischievous nature and never-say-die attitude of his character. “In Jack, I saw a guy who was able to run between the raindrops. He can walk across the DMZ, entertain a troop and then sashay back to the other side and tell the enemy another story. He tries to stay on everyone’s good side because he’s wise enough to know he might need them in the future.

“No matter how bad things got, there was always this sort of bizarre optimism about him,” continues the actor. “I also thought there was something beautiful and poignant about the idea of his objective. All he wants is to get his ship back, which represents nothing more than pure freedom to him. Of course he’ll thief and do whatever it takes, especially

when the opportunity arises, but his main focus is just to get the *Black Pearl* back at whatever cost.”

“Jack’s one mission is to get back his ship,” echoes Verbinski. “Again, it’s about the simplicity of the character: his great love and his great freedom are his ship. He’s not the villain and he’s not the love interest, although he does think he’s got a chance with Elizabeth. Jack Sparrow is a bit of an oddball. Johnny’s character is not unlike Lee Marvin’s in ‘Cat Ballou.’ He really just floats through the story affecting all around him while pursuing his goal.”

Depp, who developed his ideas for the character of Jack while reading the script in his sauna, had strong ideas about Jack’s attitude and appearance. His inspirations for the character were diverse: Depp says he modeled a large part of the character after legendary Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards, added a bit of the cartoon character Pepe Le Pew and tossed in some modern day Rastafarian. “Pirates were the rock stars of their day,” says the actor.

“Jack’s got little trinkets hanging in his hair, so that was one of the inspirations. I like the idea that each one of these little pieces is a very vivid and extremely important memory for Jack,” says Depp.

Still in his thirties, Depp also found himself in the unusual role of elder statesman to his younger co-stars, who grew up watching the actor in such films as “Cry-Baby,” “Edward Scissorhands” and “What’s Eating Gilbert Grape.”

“I can’t say enough good things about Johnny,” says Keira Knightley, who plays Elizabeth. “It was a dream, it was a pleasure. I mean, he was wicked. Really cool.”

“Johnny is a wonderful human being,” says Orlando Bloom. “I would go to him for advice on all sorts of things. I felt really privileged to work so closely with somebody who I’ve admired from afar throughout his career.”

Geoffrey Rush stars opposite Johnny Depp as Jack Sparrow’s nemesis, the dastardly Captain Barbossa. An Academy Award® winner heralded for tackling profound characters in momentous projects, Rush enhanced the entire project by taking on the mantle of Barbossa, a scheming brigand with a pompous air, forced to live in a netherworld between human life and skeletal demise.

“We needed an equally accomplished actor to play Johnny’s adversary,” explains Bruckheimer.

“Geoffrey Rush is enormously talented and is known for playing a vast array of characters. We were lucky that he had a break in his schedule and wanted to be part of this project. Geoffrey’s Barbossa is the quintessential villain; it’s a treat to watch him become the character.”

In an effort to find out what makes the wicked Barbossa tick, Rush created a rich backstory for the character as he prepared for the role. “He achieved the position of captain by being a mutinous first mate, and taking over the *Black Pearl* and claiming it as his own,” he says. “I thought, this guy has got to be a crack swordsman, and a very nasty, dirty fighter. He didn’t go to finishing school with an *épée*; he probably had a sword on his belt from the time he was about 13, and he just knew how to hack off heads.

“I think Barbossa is actually quite smart,” Rush continues. “That’s probably why he’s survived, because he used preemptive logic to map out his plans and deceive people. He pretends to be a gentleman of the sea, but he is a dirty old cunning rogue.”

Rush speculates that Barbossa may have, at one time early in his life, had “very earnest desires to be a man of the sea. But he realized pretty quickly that you could actually get a lot more if you broke the rules, lied to people, killed a few people and took over. Maybe that’s the innate fantasy people have about being a pirate.”

Rush and Johnny Depp had similar styles in their approach to the material, and both actors took full advantage of the screenwriters’ availability on set. The two actors, unrecognizable to passersby in their pirate garb, spent most of their time between camera set-ups outside the stage door, hashing through scenes with Elliott and Rossio.

Although Depp and Rush had only a handful of scenes with one another during the six-month shoot, it is immediately clear from their interaction that there is a long and sordid history between Jack Sparrow and Barbossa—and a mutual admiration between the actors. “Geoffrey’s a very interesting actor, a renegade,” says Depp. “I love his work. He never sticks his neck out in quite the same way. He likes to throw ideas out there and try new things, and so do I. This was just as important as any other truly serious, heavy film for Geoffrey; he didn’t hold anything back. He’s deeply committed, which is one of the reasons I was excited to work with him.”

“Jack is probably the pirate that everyone wants to be; he is freewheeling, he is absolutely his own man, he’s hilarious—he’s like Johnny,” comments Rush. “It was extraordinary to watch Johnny create this character. It was such a cool performance, very masterfully done. He is a brilliant actor.”

Bruckheimer cast Orlando Bloom in the role of handsome blacksmith Will Turner after meeting him on his film “Black Hawk Down.” As “Pirates of the Caribbean” opens, 10-year-old Will is pulled from the Caribbean Sea drifting amidst the murdered crew and burning wreckage of a British ship attacked by pirates. That day, aboard the *H.M.S. Dauntless*, Elizabeth takes from the unconscious Will a souvenir—a medallion bearing the skull of a pirate’s Jolly Roger—hoping to save his life. This event sets the whole story in motion.

“When we first cast him in ‘Black Hawk Down,’ I knew his time would come,” says Bruckheimer. “I just didn’t know how lucky we’d be to grab him before all the frenzy started with the two ‘Lord of the Rings’ films. I actually talked to him about this role while we were on ‘Black Hawk’ and he thought it sounded like a wonderful character.”

Bloom recalls that at a wrap party for the forthcoming film “Ned Kelly,” in which he and Geoffrey Rush performed, he had a curious conversation with the Oscar®-winning actor about pirates in Australia. “Geoffrey said he was involved with this movie,” says Bloom, “and then I found out Johnny was doing it. I was like, where do I sign?”

Bloom saw the film as a way to further open the door to audiences that are still just getting to know him as an actor. He also was enthusiastic about working with Jerry Bruckheimer again. “I’m trying to make smart choices,” he acknowledges. “I was already familiar with the way Jerry does business—it’s very slick, very tight and he does his best to cover every detail and make sure everything is done the right way. You see the same work ethic in everyone at his company; it’s amazing and it’s a trait that gives an actor security. This project just had the right elements.”

Like Depp, the young actor also saw the role of Turner as a way to fulfill a childhood fantasy. “It’s so exciting to work on a pirate movie. It’s every boy’s dream,” he raves. “To actually be living the dream out on the open seas has been great fun.”

Although Bloom sees young Will as quite straitlaced at first, “he really does develop. He’s very earnest, very true blue—then, without warning, he finds himself thrown into the middle of an exciting yet dangerous adventure. This is a coming of age story for Will.”

“Orlando was amazing,” Depp asserts. “He probably had the most difficult role in the film because he plays the straight, earnest, uptight character who, in a lot of ways, is the eyes and the ears of the audience. I thought he pulled it off beautifully.”

The casting of Depp and Bloom in the roles of Jack and Will, respectively, helped emphasize the interesting dynamic that develops between the characters. “Jack and Will are definitely an odd couple,” Jerry Bruckheimer says. “But Will inadvertently learns a lot from spending time with a pirate. Despite Will’s best efforts to adhere to the social class structure, he realizes that some rules are meant to be broken.”

Orlando Bloom agrees. “Will has grown up without a father figure, so he has to look to the role models around him, and in Port Royal, those are naval officers. When Will and Jack are thrown together, Jack opens Will’s eyes to what it means to be a man. He teaches him that he can’t just blindly follow nonsensical rules; a man has to make his own decisions, right or wrong, and go after what he wants in life.”

Johnny Depp sees the relationship between Jack and Will plainly as “two characters that make a whole.”

Both Jack Sparrow and Will Turner change Elizabeth Swann’s notions of romance and adventure forever. The daughter of Port Royal’s governor, Elizabeth can date her aristocratic lineage back hundreds of years. She is more than a station or two above a simple blacksmith’s apprentice. But contrary to her patrician and fairly sheltered upbringing, Elizabeth is no shrinking violet. As actress Keira Knightley is fond of saying, “Elizabeth is a 21st century girl stuck in an 18th century world.”

“She is amazing,” declares Knightley. “Elizabeth has a modern outlook. She is strong and very independent, and when she’s faced with some terrifying obstacles and daunting choices, she kicks ass!”

Bruckheimer and Verbinski took great care in selecting just the right actress for the role of Elizabeth Swann. They considered every imaginable female lead, from famous faces to complete unknowns. But after meeting Knightley, they saw in her that certain something, an indescribable quality that radiated from the 17-year-old, reminiscent of motion picture stars from Hollywood's heyday.

"Obviously we were looking for a beautiful young woman," acknowledges Bruckheimer, "but beauty alone was not enough. Like many of the characters in this film, Elizabeth is complex, and what you see on the surface isn't everything. It was imperative that the actress understood the many facets of her character, not just the love story between Elizabeth and Will."

"As a London girl, it was kind of nice for my first Hollywood experience to be the full Jerry Bruckheimer Hollywood experience," gushes Knightley. "It was incredible. I really enjoyed it."

"Keira liked to joke that 'Pirates' was 'a movie about Elizabeth and her boys,'" Bruckheimer laughs. "And to an extent, she's right. Elizabeth has a connection to each of the main male characters, and even finds herself in some pretty precarious situations with a few of Barbosa's henchmen. She's used to getting her way, but she quickly realizes that her usual direct, outspoken approach doesn't work, so she's not averse to using her feminine wiles when she has to; Elizabeth can be quite the little actress when necessary. It was wonderful to watch her work; it seems so effortless. Keira is truly gifted."

"Keira steps into the ring and attacks," says Depp of the actress's approach on set. "She's just as sweet as she can be and has a great sense of humor. Her work is right on the money, totally professional; she's amazing. I was very impressed."

"Elizabeth has a morbid curiosity about pirates," says Verbinski. "She reads too many books on the subject and she's become a sort of pirate groupie. But instead of getting to meet the Jon Bon Jovi of pirates, she ends up with the Sid Vicious, and even though she thinks she knows a lot about pirates, she soon learns that all the rules she believes in are meant to be broken."

Knightley agrees with her director. "She romanticizes the entire pirate thing; it's an obsession really. So it's an interesting transition for Elizabeth to

go from her romantic notions to the cutthroat, dirty reality of piracy. But she has a little pirate in herself," Knightley says with a twinkle in her eye. "Don't we all?"

Knightley was disappointed, however, that she never got to undergo sword training like her fencing co-stars. "The one thing I asked for was a sword," she complains with a smile. "I fight with candlesticks, poles, even with a bedpan... but no sword. Nobody gives me a sword!" She adds playfully: "I managed to coax promises from Jerry and Gore that if we do another film together, they will give me a sword."

Governor Weatherby Swann, portrayed by veteran actor Jonathan Pryce, has his hands full trying to raise his rather unconventional, bold and sometimes downright audacious daughter. He copes by arranging her marriage to the newly appointed commander of the British Naval Fleet in Port Royal, Commodore Norrington, played by Jack Davenport.

"Elizabeth's father expects her to marry someone of her own stature," says Verbinski. "Jonathan Pryce does an excellent job. He's not just the arrogant British governor, he's also the concerned father who's trying to do the best he can for his daughter."

"It's clear I haven't brought her up very well," says Pryce in the regretful voice of his character. "Elizabeth is adventurous and refuses to toe the line, and for some unknown reason, she's very attracted to pirates. Will Turner's prospects aren't very good and I'd be much happier if she married Norrington because she'd have a great future as a commodore's wife."

Like many of the actors involved in the film, Pryce was attracted by the script, which he says contained "a good deal of wit and intelligence... a great story," and by the Caribbean location. "I've vacationed here over the years. It's a delight to work in," he says. "And the Golden Age of Piracy happened right here."

Tall, dark and handsome, Jack Davenport is the epitome of the dashing soldier in his role as Commodore Norrington. The English actor has gained a following for his role as Steve Taylor in the popular U.K. comedy series "Coupling."

"Jack Davenport really caught the nuance of what it is to conspire to do the right thing, but know that it's not being done under the right circumstances," says Verbinski. "He's actually one of

the strongest characters in the movie and also plays the foil in many comedic moments.”

Davenport was impressed with the complexities of what could have easily become a stereotypic, one-sided character. “Norrington is basically the scourge of piracy in the eastern Caribbean. If you’re a pirate and you see me coming, you’d better be scared,” he explains. “What I liked about my character was that he wasn’t just a snarling English villain. There was more to him than just looking fierce.”

Davenport, always quick with a joke, allows, “brocade is hard to make fierce,” referring to his costume. “I saw this picture of Johnny with his bandana and dreadlocks. The pirates just looked so cool,” he laughs. “I’ve got this ridiculous garb on; I look like an ice cream.”

With the principal actors in place, the filmmakers then rounded out the cast with an assortment of colorful supporting players. During the casting process, it is commonplace for filmmakers to receive many inquiries from agents and managers soliciting work on behalf of their clientele, but in casting a pirate movie, the level of interest seemed to increase exponentially. Casting Barbossa’s crew was particularly time consuming and took the filmmakers and casting director Ronna Kress halfway around the world, from Los Angeles to New York to London.

“Ronna has a knack not only for finding interesting faces, but for discovering raw talent,” says Bruckheimer. “She is meticulous in casting every character and puts the utmost care and effort into even the smallest roles. Ronna’s been an invaluable asset on many of our projects and continues to introduce us to promising new actors.”

“We got a lot of phone calls,” says Verbinski. “We wanted fresh faces because these characters give a richness to the entire film. When you watch each of these guys, you feel like the film could just take off and start telling that person’s story.”

Barbossa’s crew includes Isaac C. Singleton, Jr. as Bo’sun, Lee Arenberg as Pintel, and Mackenzie Crook as Pintel’s cohort, Ragetti. Treva Etienne plays Koehler alongside his murderous partner, Twigg, portrayed by Michael Berry Jr. Trevor Goddard is Grapple and his sidekick, Mallot, is played by Brye Cooper.

Similar to the actors themselves, Barbossa’s crew is an assembly of mischief-makers from all over the

globe. A talented and fun group, they spent countless hours together on and off screen. “They were great. Every time I was on set, there were 20 pirates with me,” explains Geoffrey Rush. “We were a kind of mad gang while shooting. A lot of these guys stayed together in one apartment block in the Caribbean. They lived like pirates.”

Barbossa assembles his henchmen from the dangerous ports he visits and the mysterious islands he invades. They’ve floated up from all over the place: one character is from the Orient, another is from the Caribbean, one is from Dover and yet another is from West Africa—the list goes on and on.

“Casting a group like this is akin to creating a bouillabaisse,” continues Verbinski. “Each character is distinct and adds to the overall flavor.

“Because of the curse they’re forced to live under, their frustration brings out a football-hooligan, glue-sniffing type of madness,” he adds.

“Pintel and Ragetti are Laurel and Hardy on acid; they’re dangerous villains, but you like them because they’re funny,” the director laughs. “Koehler and Twigg are a pair of assassins, and Mallot and Grapple round out the core. Bo’sun is Barbossa’s first mate; he runs the ship. They’re all demented in their own way.”

Jack’s crew is a sight more obscure. His intrepid team includes Kevin R. McNally as Joshamee Gibbs, David Bailie as Cotton (along with his better half, his parrot), and Zoe Saldana is Anamaria. “They’re the dregs,” says Verbinski. “It’s like ‘One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest.’ They’re not about to kick any serious hiney or compete with Barbossa. They’re just a great contrast to Barbossa’s motley group.”

For some inexplicable reason Norrington selects Lieutenant Gillette, played by actor Damian O’Hare, and a pair of bumbling subordinates, Mr. Mullroy and Mr. Murtogg, portrayed by Angus Barnett and Giles New, respectively. Although Barnett and New had never met before, the two actors clicked immediately and a comedy team was born.

Then, of course, there were the animal actors, who had their own special requirements. Barbossa’s monkey is played by two identical Cabochon monkeys, a female and a male, whose naturally white faces had to be darkened with vegetable dye to make them look more evil and spooky.

“The monkey was sort of like my id,” laughs Geoffrey Rush. “The monkey is actually the smartest person in the film, because he never loses sight of the goal. Everyone else has human frailty and betrayal and jealousy and vanity; but the monkey knows we need to get each and every last medallion back into that case.”

But the monkey had to do more than just spend time with Rush. Watching the actor at every stage as he got into his costume so that the animal understood that he was still working with Geoffrey, but just in character, was just one part of a very specific training process.

“I was trained to have no relationship with the monkey, even though on film it looks as though we actually have a deep, rather symbiotic rapport,” explains Rush. “The monkey worked always with the trainer—she didn’t care that I existed. I thought, great, my co-star is difficult!”

The parrot that sits on the shoulder of the mute pirate Cotton, played by David Bailie, was played by three birds: a sitter, a talker and a flyer. One of them was particularly fond of nibbling Bailie’s ear because he liked the texture.

Days before the chartered flight was scheduled to leave Los Angeles, the production was stunned to learn that customs officials would not permit the parrots to travel to the Caribbean because of a deadly disease which had recently decimated the bird population in that part of the world, tainting their entire poultry industry as well. Although further contamination has been contained, the risk was too great to travel the production’s feathered friends south.

Animal trainers Mark Harden and Ursula Brauner scrambled to locate even one bird already in the West Indies with similar color markings to their own. Animals, like humans, need time to build trust; therefore Harden sped up the bonding process as much as possible by holding the new bird non-stop, carrying him on his shoulder or forearm everywhere all day and night, stroking him and talking to him and soothing him continuously. It worked—Harden walked away with the talon scars and poop-covered shirts to prove it. Always good-natured and concerned for the animal, he didn’t care because he’s made a new friend.

HISTORY AND PIRATE SCHOOL

Despite the fact that “Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl” is a tale of fantasy, the filmmakers were no less resolute in their quest to learn as much as they could about real pirates. To that end the studio hired respected historian Peter Twist.

Twist is particularly interested in and knowledgeable about the years 1500 to 1900. He offered direction and advice, educating every department in production with general historical information: from customs of the day, to details regarding the style of dress and simple aspects of everyday life, to nautical minutiae and military history.

“A pirate is anybody who commits a crime on the high seas, so it’s a very broad term,” notes Twist. “Theft, destruction of property, anything like that done on open water qualifies as piracy.” Although the pirate characters aren’t based on any real pirates, the movie is “a compilation of a lot of the things that were done by real pirates, and pirate codes, and so it is fact based,” he stresses.

“Piracy has been around since man first put to sea,” asserts Twist. “Julius Caesar was captured by pirates, the histories of all ancient cultures refer to pirates, the Egyptians and so on. They’ve always existed.

“The original pirates operated as individuals, they were haphazard and undisciplined,” he says. “Over time piracy became more sophisticated. For example, in a war a government would grant ‘letters of mark’ to people who would then go and attack the enemy’s shipping. The sailors and the government would basically split the money, and this was quite legal.” A great many ship owners and sailors found this a profitable way to make a living... so profitable that they would continue the practice after the war ended and it was no longer legal. “That’s piracy,” says Twist.

The islands in the Caribbean were particularly valuable, he explains. “Aside from the gold and silver, the crops and the goods produced there were highly valued and well worth stealing. So it was a natural place for pirates to operate.”

Twist says that the legendary pirate booty of buried treasure is simply a myth. “Buried treasure was something that virtually never happened. History tells us that typical pirates, after taking a prize, would

divide the money and then head into a relatively pirate-friendly port for a drinking and womanizing binge that would make the Romans blush, so there was nothing left to bury.”

The most famous pirates had “rather short and violent careers,” according to Twist, “but they did amass huge amounts of money. It was the allure of the fast buck that made people turn to piracy.”

Despite the live-fast, die-young reputation of pirates, Verbinski sees some moral ambiguity in their trade. “It’s illustrated when you look at the core of what piracy is,” says Verbinski. “Whose rules does society live by? Who are the people who created those rules? Are they simply rules created to keep the masses in their place and the ruling class in theirs? And ultimately for the pirate, what has he got to lose?”

The filmmakers made no secret about taking liberties with the time period in which their story takes place. “It’s a fantasy, so we weren’t married to any specific period,” explains Bruckheimer, “but we did want to be true to the overall feel of the era. We paid particular attention to the years between 1720 and 1750 in an effort to find an approximation.”

“I think it takes place roughly at the tail end of the Golden Age of Piracy, when the Morgans lived,” Verbinski asserts. “Maybe the late 1720s. Barbossa is one of the last dregs of piracy that needs to be removed and consequently he’s the most difficult to get rid of. So we come into a world where the myth of pirates is way ahead of the actual characters, which was fun to play with.”

To maximize authenticity in the film, all of the actors playing pirates and some playing British naval officers spent weeks training with stunt coordinator George Marshall Ruge and his sword masters, Robert Anderson and Mark Ivie. Ruge originally met Anderson and Anderson’s protégé, Ivie, while working on “The Mask of Zorro.”

“Bob is a legendary sword master,” says Ruge. “When he arrived in Los Angeles, the fight choreography was basically done, but I wanted the actors to have a chance to meet him and work with him just to give them that extra ten percent that only Bob can give because he’s been doing it for 50 years. No one else has that expertise or spark. It was well worthwhile. Just the idea that the actors knew Bob’s history and the fact that he’s the best in the business,

a legendary sword master, made them excited about training.”

Any pirate worth his salt has the scars, and oft times a missing body part or two, to prove his prowess with a sword. For the actors portraying pirates, the sessions with the sword masters were crucial, something akin to “Pirate School 101.”

Having starred in “Don Juan DeMarco” several years earlier, Johnny Depp had already received some training in the art of fencing. “I remembered the fencing I’d done as a total body workout,” recalls Depp. “It’s a beautiful sport, very balletic and precise. On this film, the sword work, putting the ‘umph’ into the attack, was much more involved. It was a lot more work and more moves to learn. Some of the fights felt like they lasted ten minutes. It was all about the choreography in those scenes, the words came later.”

As luck would have it, Orlando Bloom had already spent time with both Ruge and Anderson on “Lord of the Rings.” “It was great to work with Bob again,” says Bloom. “I’d done some fencing when I was in drama school in London, but working with someone as proficient as Bob is quite a different matter. I mean, this is the guy who trained Errol Flynn!

“I watched ‘The Master of Ballantrae,’ where he doubled Errol,” Bloom continues. “It was awesome. What’s so great about Bob is that he knows character; he understands the necessity of getting a fight to look slick and clean without losing the sense of character.”

“Bob understood acting with the sword,” agrees Geoffrey Rush, who primarily trained with a cutlass. “He said, ‘Just because it gets faster doesn’t mean it’s better.’ The beats in between and the games that you play eyeball to eyeball are just as important as fast, dazzling work. He was great to have around.”

During Anderson’s brief time with the actors, Ruge made certain he went over the fundamentals and imparted as much of his technical skill as possible. Learning to be a pirate was not only about imitating the swagger and demeanor of a brigand, it was a serious study in brandishing a boarding cutlass or rapier. “Pirates films are my favorite,” says Anderson. “But modern fencing, like the competitions you see in the Olympic Games, is highly technical and very precise in its actions, unlike screen fighting which is choreographed in such a way that the combatants make the action as large as they can for the camera.

But whether it's ancient or modern swordplay, you start by learning to hold the sword properly and to manipulate it for attack and defense. And even though we use aluminum replicas, I'm religious about safety because working with any sword is dangerous.

"Swordplay is a conversation," he explains. "The opponents talk to each other with their blades. The style of fighting varies with each character. If I can make the sword work talk about what's happening in the script in the same way the dialogue conveys the story, then I feel I've succeeded."

PRODUCTION BEGINS

Principal photography on "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl" commenced on Wednesday, October 9, 2002. The first two weeks of production were spent on stages. The construction and art departments had erected the moody interior of the captain's cabin on the *Black Pearl* at KABC, a local news affiliate in Glendale, California. At Raleigh Studios in Manhattan Beach, they built a sizable portion of the Governor's elaborate mansion—dining room, bedrooms, hallways, linen closet, a first and second floor foyer and staircase—which the crew promptly destroyed with cannon blasts.

The three-acre bluff in Palos Verdes where Marineland, a popular southern California tourist attraction, once stood is now an empty, graded lot atop a spectacular hillside offering 180-degree, million-dollar views of the Pacific. Since the park's demise, and to the consternation of many area neighbors, every major studio has taken full advantage of the space and its breathtaking vistas. Massive suburban sprawl has made it next to impossible for productions to find undeveloped land with panoramic backdrops suitable for any historical reference. Because there are no electrical wires, no buildings standing tall against the horizon, no visible roadways, it was the perfect spot to build Port Royal's Fort Charles.

With grand parapets atop her imposing stone walls and a beautiful arched bell tower designed with a distinct Spanish flair to showcase each and every radiant sunset, what in actual fact was an 18th century military base felt more like a day camp. The immense faux fortress also included the Commodore's office, a dank prison cellblock and, in the center courtyard of

the fort, a gallows to remind the townspeople just where they were.

This same location also accommodated several other set pieces including interiors and exteriors of the Governor's mansion, The Bay of Port Royal and room for background blue screen work.

The collective imagination, skill and technical expertise of production designer Brian Morris and his executive team of supervising art director Derek R. Hill, construction coordinator Bob Blackburn and set decorator Larry Dias, plus their dedicated crew of artisans, never ceased to amaze their colleagues on the shooting crew. Walking onto a set for the first time was tantamount to crossing the threshold of a time continuum and discovering a new world.

For the tropical scenes, filmmakers initially considered trying to save time and money by shooting on Catalina Island off the Long Beach coast. They soon realized, however, that they wanted a more realistic look and feel to their backdrop.

"We could have considered looking at Australia and Thailand," says executive producer Bruce Hendricks. "But it would have looked like what it is—the South China Sea. We really wanted to maintain the look of the Caribbean, similar to the way we made 'Pearl Harbor'—you have to go to Pearl Harbor. We're shooting 'The Alamo' right now and it would be a cheat if we didn't go to Texas. We always want to be faithful and accurate to the subject matter because it shows on screen."

"There's a quality to the water, sand and palm trees in the Caribbean—so we knew we wanted to go there," says Verbinski.

"We ended up searching around the entire Caribbean for months," he continues. "I'm sure we looked at a minimum of 20 different islands."

"It's amazing when you scout a film like this how quickly you realize that the world is insanely overpopulated," laughs the director. "You go out looking for a lush, deepwater, cul-de-sac-shaped bay, one that doesn't have a hotel sitting right in the middle of your shot. There aren't any unpopulated islands out there anymore. They just don't exist."

St. Vincent became an obvious choice for the base of operations for the production because of its geographical aspects. While it doesn't have white sand beaches, filmmakers were able to go to Petite Tabac and Grenadines to achieve that look for certain

scenes. The outer islands of the Grenadines served particularly well for the abandoned island where Jack and Elizabeth are left by Captain Barbosa.

In August 2002 a small contingent of 30 left to set up offices and begin construction in the Caribbean. The main cast and crew did not follow this first wave until January 18, 2003 when everyone packed up, boarded a chartered 747, transferred to a wild ferry ride and headed south—way south. St. Vincent is not a major resort location; when the company booked every hotel room—numbering well over 325—as well as every available vacant apartment and house on the island, the production became the main attraction in town.

The people and the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines were incredibly accommodating and supportive. It didn't take long for the crew from Hollywood (made up of Americans and Brits) to relax and adopt the pace of life in the islands. To do otherwise would prove a waste of time. Life in the West Indies simply does not revolve around agendas or deadlines. Even the local airlines run on their own timetable; cabbies charge whatever they like or whatever loose change you can dig up; most businesses close at four in the afternoon and many vendors do not open at all on either Saturday or Sunday.

The hospitality of the location, however, made the prospect of filming a movie that takes place primarily in, on, or around water no less daunting. The Caribbean sets were spread over essentially 36 miles of open sea, so boats were not only used for filming, diving and working, but for transportation. Up to 400 people a day made the hour and a half round trip trek to the Wallilabu and its surrounding inlets by boat.

For a particular two-week stretch, the company put out to sea, filming on the open waters of the Caribbean, eight to thirteen miles from the reassuring shores of Wallilabu where the art department had recreated Port Royal's harbor and a comfortable base camp for the crew. With waves swelling six to eight feet, most of the cast and crew swallowed pills to combat seasickness.

From sunrise to sunset, with no land in sight, even the most fundamental aspects of life became a major aggravation and impediment for production. "It's all true what they say about shooting in water!" exclaims Verbinski. "Everything that can go wrong will go wrong, that's just the way it works. As soon as

you get a boat in position the wind changes. Even if you anchor things down, everything is moving, relationships are moving. The camera is here, and we frame a shot of the actor, everything is drifting away, so either the wind is right to fill the sails, but then, the sun is in the wrong direction and if you want a good backlight then the sails are negative..."

"You would be waiting to do a really substantial, meaty, dialogue-driven scene on the deck," explains Geoffrey Rush, "and then the wind would change and the smoke would blow in the wrong direction. You would have to wait for seven boats to come around. It was painstaking... as it needs to be."

"You start shooting in the morning," explains Verbinski, "and you're four miles out by the afternoon. Suddenly you've got this armada behind you trying to catch up, chasing you with sandwiches."

PRODUCTION DESIGN AND CINEMATOGRAPHY: FROM LOS ANGELES HARBOR TO ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Produced under rather unconventional circumstances, the filmmakers began designing and building many set pieces as well as scouting for locations before a script was complete. "I was able to do storyboards before many of the scenes were in place because a lot of the bones were already there," says Verbinski. "Brian Morris [production designer] and I would start exploring ideas, we'd discuss it with the writers, and some of them would end up in the script."

Morris enjoyed collaborating with his director. "The scale of Gore's moviemaking was very attractive and appropriate to this piece," he says. "Gore is incredibly visual. Even in his personal environment, you can tell immediately that he's got style and taste. He gave me a feeling that he trusted me to handle the job, which is always great."

The story presented contrasting motifs. On one hand, the curse and an overall sense of villainy were the most prevailing themes. On the flip side was the spit-and-polish order of the stiff, uppercrust Brits.

Dariusz Wolski, who had worked with Gore Verbinski before on "The Mexican," handled cinematography chores once again on "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl."

“He was the perfect choice,” says Verbinski of Wolski. “I’ve worked with him before but in a completely different way. ‘Pirates’ is about creating a definite style and design; ‘The Mexican’ was about the absence of style.”

Like most of the crew, Wolski found shooting on water a formidable challenge. “The hardest part from a director of photography point of view was when we shot day exteriors,” explains Wolski. “Normally when you shoot day exteriors, you know where the sun travels and you turn yourself around accordingly to maintain some continuity in lighting throughout the day. Now you’re adding another element, which is a boat. And a boat is only going to go a certain way. It’s going to go the way the wind blows.”

But Wolski enjoyed the work. “It’s fantastic. It’s challenging—you’re going out of your way to make it as good as possible; it’s a big movie. But I’m really happy I’ve done it.”

While Morris pored over paintings from the period, Wolski and Verbinski spent as much time as possible looking at old pirate movies and studying story elements and visual aspects of great adventure films. They decided to go in an even more majestic and embellished direction than their predecessors.

One of the examples of this extravagance is the pirate cave where Barbossa stashes the many riches he and his crew have plundered. It was the centerpiece of the many sets constructed at Walt Disney Studios in Burbank. The largest stage on the Disney lot, Stage #2 was the same space the studio had redesigned in 1997 to accommodate Bruckheimer’s enormous asteroid set for “Armageddon.” The newly enlarged stage was the perfect location to build a lavishly adorned cavern complete with winding waterways, a moat, little grottos and treacherous rocky terrain.

Production designer Brian Morris was given total freedom to create the perfect pirate hideout. “Brian and Gore swung from one end of the spectrum to the other,” says Bruckheimer. “A pirate lair is an utterly mythical place; creating a location like that is a dream come true for any creative mind. Of course Brian and Gore had to consider specific action and story points, but as long as the cave was built as a workable space, they had carte blanche.”

It took 100 craftsmen five months to build the cave set. It was then filled with 300,000 gallons of

water, a process that took three to four days, and dressed over a period of three weeks.

Set decorator Larry Dias and his staff spent a considerable amount of time researching the era and hunting for appropriate items to decorate the vast set. “It was a big job just trying to stay true to the period and to the style of movie Gore was making,” says Dias. “We had to make the sets look authentic because the film has a dramatic flair, but it’s also comedic; we tried to set a mood so that the atmosphere would be realistic yet theatrical at the same time.

“The treasure cave was very large and very dark,” Dias describes further, “so getting the quantity and the quality of stuff these pirates have been dumping there for years was quite an undertaking.”

Verbinski wanted gold everywhere. He repeated his mantra to his art department at every turn: Pirates are not art collectors—they’re just after the money. “Gore would remind us that pirates are only interested in the face value of any given item,” recalls Dias. “We painted hundreds of cubic feet of rock to look like gold nuggets and collected hundreds of yards of fake pearls and beads. We found a mass of odd objects that would have been looted by pirates. It was tricky; we tried to get a certain texture going without becoming too ridiculous. We were very careful in creating disorder and making the cave look haphazard, as though the pirates had taken boat loads of their loot and just dumped it in heaps wherever they found space.”

Dias found two manufacturers of imitation coins, one in New Orleans used to turning out trinkets for Mardi Gras, and another company in Canada. He ordered close to a million doubloons minted in three different colors, all replicas of the “piece of eight,” or Spanish silver dollar.

THE SHIPS: REAL AND IMAGINED

No pirate movie is complete without the proper pirate ships. Three ships dominate the action in “Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl.” Filmmakers focused on two ships within the British armada—the *Interceptor*, a sleek two-masted clipper purported to be the fastest vessel commissioned to His Majesty’s Service; and the *H.M.S. Dauntless*, one of the Empire’s premiere warships—and a third, with a mysterious past, starring in the title role; the

Black Pearl, a galleon stolen from Captain Jack by Barbosa and his evil crew several years earlier.

Few ships in existence today could pass for a vessel dating back to the 18th century. The studio and the producers initially assumed they would have to build every ship featured in the story, never imagining they would stumble across a virtual treasure trove of information and contacts who knew just where to find viable stand-ins when they hired Marine coordinator Matt O'Connor. A boating enthusiast and a marine specialist working in the film industry for over 15 years, O'Connor contacted an associate in Seattle and persuaded him to convince his board of directors to allow the production company to use their prized tall ship, along with a fully staffed crew, for an unprecedented amount of time, in a location halfway around the world from her home port, but only after making substantial structural modifications to the vessel. Les Bolton, executive director of Grace Harbor Historical Seaport Authority, which owns and operates the *Lady Washington*, embraced the challenge, undeterred by the obstacles such an undertaking presented. The offer was too exciting to pass up, and so the *Lady Washington* became a valued member of the cast, 'starring' as the *Interceptor*.

The *Lady Washington* is a full-scale period reproduction of the first American vessel to make landfall on the Pacific Northwest Coast in 1789. According to Bolton, the *Lady Washington* was a very appropriate choice to star as the *Interceptor*. "Vessels of her type were considered very handy and maneuverable, and quick to accelerate. They'd move in quickly and easily harass larger, more powerful ships, which is exactly how the *Interceptor* is used in the movie."

Various modifications were necessary not only to transform the *Lady Washington* into the *Interceptor* but also to make the vessel seaworthy enough to tackle the 4,500-mile trip from Port Townsend, Washington to Long Beach and then to the Caribbean. These changes included everything from re-planking sections of the deck and installing traditional grated hatch covers intended to provide ventilation for sailing in warmer climates to increasing the number of gun ports and giving the ship a fresh paint job.

The *Lady Washington* departed Long Beach for St. Vincent and the Grenadines on December 2nd, stopping first in Acapulco to refuel and restock. On

Christmas Day they made their way through the locks of the Panama Canal. Traveling against heavy trade winds at the worst time of year, sailing through some of the very roughest weather, the ship's jib boom was completely sheared off. Once the crew retrieved the equipment that went over the side, the ship headed for the nearest port, which was Cartagena, Columbia. Once the *Lady Washington* was again seaworthy, they sailed on to St. Vincent, arriving on January 12th, 2003.

The *Lady Washington*'s crew was also used in front of the camera. The crew was a combination of men and women, experienced professionals as well as trainees, ranging in age from 16 to mid-50s, all of whom can now claim to have appeared as a pirate in a major motion picture, the ladies even on occasion sporting facial hair.

Stranded with no apparent way to pursue Barbosa, Jack and Will Turner have no choice but to 'borrow' a vessel, so they jump aboard the *Interceptor* to make way for open water. As the crew filmed running shots of the *Interceptor* from the deck of the *Dauntless*, Verbinski decided Jack Sparrow should be at the wheel, captaining the ship, while Will hoisted and trimmed the sails. Unfortunately, the actors had no clue how to do any of these things. Verbinski yelled across to the *Lady Washington* crew who were actually sailing the *Interceptor* to duck and hide so that only the two actors were visible on deck as the two ships passed one another.

"The cameras were rolling, they'd just done the sticks and next thing I know, the captain kind of disappears and it was just me by the ship's wheel, so I had to grab it," says Depp incredulously. "No one told me I'd be steering the ship. It was trial by fire. On the second take, I thought we were going to hit the *Dauntless* barge, and then Gore says to me, 'Johnny, come closer, bring the boat closer.' And I thought, 'Oh man, I just steered a massive ship for the first time at what felt like breakneck speed! Come closer?'" he laughs. "But we survived."

Orlando Bloom recalls the scene as well. "We were just sailing this huge ship on the open seas," he says. "I looked over my shoulder one time and there's Johnny at the wheel with the hat and the gold teeth, and there's me just yanking on a rope going, 'I can't believe I'm doing this.'"

Commodore Norrington's ship, the *Dauntless*, was constructed to resemble the British warship, the

Victory. A famous 100-gun ship that won countless battles during its heyday, the *Victory* was the pride of the British fleet. Because no such ships exist today, the company was forced to recreate portions of the vessel using models of its vintage predecessor.

To create the ship, they ended up building sections of it on a floating barge docked at Pier C in Long Beach. Construction Coordinator Bob Blackburn and his crew began building the *Dauntless* here before moving the launch to the Port of Los Angeles for filming.

The *Dauntless* was one of the most innovative movie sets ever produced. Construction began before plans for the vessel were even complete. At one point, 150 people worked on construction of the floating set, which took about three and a half months to build, rain or shine. The set itself looked like a partially dissected ship with a section cut out of its port side. At completion, the ship measured 170 feet long, 34 feet wide and consisted of approximately 40,000 pounds of steel and 1,000 square feet of sails. Seven cell phones, five men, three welding hoods, two dozen tape measures, one metal cutting saw and countless tools fell overboard during construction.

Fabrication of the *Black Pearl* in the Long Beach Dome next to the Queen Mary was a little tamer. This stationary set was built on a moving gimbal. Blackburn's crew worked on the set for three months.

Says Gore Verbinski: "The *Black Pearl* is a ghost ship. We shot it in sections; some on stage and some on a barge that was towed in open water." Often, the *Black Pearl* had a tugboat pulling it, which had to be painted out during the visual effects process.

Like any tricked-out luxury sports car on the road today, the *Black Pearl* is 'loaded,' equipped with all the bells and whistles, all the appropriate accoutrements of any good pirate ship. There's a good reason why both Captain Jack and Captain Barbossa lay claim to the vessel.

"The *Black Pearl* had to be the quintessential pirate ship," says Bruckheimer. "Gore and I agreed it had to be iconic. Because this is the ship that's caused the lifelong feud between Jack and Barbossa, to the victor go the spoils. The ship is a symbol of every treasure they've targeted."

VISUAL EFFECTS: CREATING THE LIVING UNDEAD

"We have an added ingredient in this film," says Bruckheimer. "And that's the supernatural aspect of the story. It lends itself to incredible visual effects, so we went to ILM because they've done a great job for us in the past."

"The effect of the pirates turning into living skeletons in the moonlight adds to the level of excitement on screen," says Verbinski. "It allowed us to have even more fun with the genre and the characters."

"The first time animatronics were used was in the Disney ride," the director continues. "Seeing the barking dog and the talking skeletons made you question whether or not it was real. But today's audiences are savvier because of effects. We are using computer-generated animation to achieve that same reality for today's audience."

John Knoll and a team of experts at Industrial Light & Magic were entrusted with the job of bringing the skeletal pirates to life. Under an unheard of deadline, Knoll and animation supervisor Hal Hickel started with sketches and an animatronic sample. Knoll, Bruckheimer, Verbinski and Bruce Hendricks spent countless hours discussing just how to go about illustrating the pirates to find the perfect balance between being alive yet decomposing.

Visual effects are used not only when the actors are seen transforming into skeletons, but also when each character becomes a completely animated skeleton. The filmmakers did not want to use stop-motion or other similar effects used so frequently in mythical stories.

"John Knoll and his team came up with some unique images that really impressed us," says Bruckheimer. "The time constraints ILM had to work under were unspeakable. It's amazing the detail and care that's been taken."

For Knoll and his crew, the visual effects on the picture fell into three categories: the matte paintings that are for establishing environments, the ships at sea (since there weren't complete ships for the *Black Pearl* and the *Dauntless*), and the skeletal pirates.

Creating the skeletal pirates was the most exciting aspect of the job for Knoll. "It's such a bold image. You only see them as skeletons in the

moonlight, so it's always very spooky circumstances to begin with. These are cool shots."

The process of designing the skeleton pirate characters began with taking photographs of the actors in wardrobe and makeup. "Then VFX Art Director Aaron McBride spent time painting a version of each of them in skeletal form," says Knoll. "We went through a couple of revisions until we got approval from Gore on what these characters should look like."

From there, the team got 3-D scans of all the actors. "So for each of the actors we've got a full body scan and we have a more detailed head scan," continues Knoll. "We built one very detailed skeleton that has all the right bones in it. Since everyone's skeleton is a little bit different from everyone else's, the first step is to take the skeleton and kind of fit it properly inside the particular person's envelope, or 3-D scan. There's a lot of scaling and smushing to get it to fit."

A few layers of skin are then built; designers scanned turkey jerky to help them replicate what McBride calls "the dried and desiccated meat look" of the skin of the skeleton pirates. The skin is then painted with different textures and transparencies for a complex look.

Of course, all of the characters have hair, clothing and props. "The wardrobe is multi-layered, and so we need to simulate that so it all folds properly and interacts with all their props. A lot of them have sashes and muskets and swords and necklaces and all sorts of things that the cloth has to properly behave around," says Knoll.

A lot of work went into designing the individual characters so that they are recognizable in both live action and as skeletons. "Some of them have particular bits of wardrobe or particular facial features that we try to carry through," says Knoll. "Ragetti's got a wooden eye and he's skinny with bags under his eyes. Pintel has got long hair and he's bald on top, so he's got a lot of exposed skull up top. Koehler's got these really interesting dreadlocks; when he moves they sway all around. Twigg has got a beard, and he has this knit cap with a big hole exposing skull through it. Jacoby has got this very long beard—kind of in the form of dreadlocks—and he's got fuses woven into his beard. When he is fighting they are lit, so they are smoking."

"When you see the characters as skeletons, you'll know immediately which pirate is which," says

Verbinski. "Even when they're 100 percent computer generated and their clothing is in shreds, you'll know. Not just from the actor's voice, but from every nuance, which is why we shot entire scenes only as reference."

The most problematical challenge for filmmakers was illustrating the fight sequences; Verbinski and director of photography Dariusz Wolski were forced to rely on a combination of skill and guesswork.

"It wasn't only difficult for us, it was equally demanding for our stuntmen, our stunt coordinator, and ultimately for our cameramen," says Verbinski. "They had to do a lot of handheld composition during the swordplay. First we'd photograph the British Navy and the pirates fighting. Then we'd do another reference pass with just the Navy, followed by another with just the pirates. The guys are essentially fighting air, which looks pretty silly by itself."

"We'd be photographing air," the director continues, "and then pan over to a skeleton that wasn't there, saying his line of dialogue, and panning back to another skeleton. We had a lot of technical discussions about how to pull focus to a fictional point of reference while still keeping the excitement of a combat scene. We really didn't want to get into motion control and that sort of static, sterile composition."

Always on the cutting edge, the artisans at ILM rose to the challenge.

THE STUNTS

"The biggest trick for George and the stunt team was how early on we had to shoot the skeletons," says Verbinski. "Because our delivery schedule was so insane, we had to shoot completely out of order and begin even before we were able to figure out exactly how we wanted the fight sequences to fit into the rest of the action. That's also why we had to build some ships on stage and some down in the Caribbean. All of those factors presented a lot of challenges in terms of rehearsal time."

In early November 2002, production moved to San Pedro to begin shooting in the Port of Los Angeles and dockside with the *Interceptor* and the *Dauntless*. Portions of intricate ship-to-ship battles and elaborate fight scenes were staged in the South Bay, some of which were then completed in the Caribbean. For close to two weeks, shooting at night with the temperature dipping into the 40s, stuntmen and actors

alike scaled the ship's rigging, climbing over her bulwark and onto the deck, in a surprise attack. Suddenly dozens of pirates and sailors were dueling to the death, dueling over and over again, until Verbinski, his cinematographer and stunt coordinator were satisfied. Then Verbinski would find a new angle for his camera, and the action would start again and keep going until sunrise.

"There are moments when the pirates get involved where it gets a bit vicious," Verbinski says, "but it's a tricky balance because I want my seven-year-old son to be able to see this."

When Keira Knightley first glanced at the script, she had no idea what physical feats would be demanded of her. "I remember thinking to myself, 'Oh, this is going to be easy! I'll sit in the back of carriages, I'll wear pretty dresses, I'll pout a bit; it will be fun,'" she jokes at her own expense. "I never imagined the amount of stunt work I'd do, and for someone as lazy as I am, it was rather challenging."

Every pirate movie requires that someone "walk the plank." In "Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl," Johnny Depp and Keira Knightley spent almost three entire shooting days standing at the end of a long two-by-four, protruding from the side of the *Black Pearl's* deck, 15 feet over the rolling ocean waves. No stunt person, no body double, no look-alike or dead ringer need apply; it was Johnny and Keira balancing at the end of that plank.

"I'd been standing on that plank for two days, with nothing but air around me and water below. I was absolutely petrified," recalls Knightley. "The plank is quite narrow like a diving board, so it bounces up and down when you move and even when you just stand there."

"When it came time to jump off the board, Gore told me I didn't have to do it, that he'd have my stunt double, Sonia, do it," she continues. "I said, 'I've been standing up here for two days! Do you really think I'm not going to jump off this thing?' So I jumped in that long dress. I was terrified. I asked Gore if he wanted me to scream and he just said, 'Whatever comes out.' I screamed my head off. The only interesting bit was when I hit the water and the dress went over my head, I showed off my knickers. I was so girly, but I was proud of myself. I don't know what I must have looked like," she laughs. Despite her initial fear, Knightley came up smiling, unscathed by the experience.

"Attempting to swim fully clothed in pirate gear with boots strapped to your legs was more difficult than I'd imagined," agrees Johnny Depp. "The stunt work on this film was infinitely more intense than other stunts I've done, and I was dragged on the ground for blocks by a team of horses in 'Sleepy Hollow!'" he jokes. "Luckily I had a great stunt double in Tony Angelotti who took care of me and made me look good. I just stepped in and made faces."

COSTUMES, MAKEUP AND HAIR: THE PIRATE LOOK

Gore Verbinski knew exactly what he wanted his Pirates of the Caribbean to look—and smell—like. "I didn't want these pirates to look similar to what we've all seen before," Verbinski explains. "No hooks for hands or eye patches everywhere. I didn't want to see trick-or-treat belts or striped shirts. In reading about that period, it's clear that people didn't live very long; they were essentially rotting away. Ships leaked, there was nothing in the way of medical attention, and not a lot of personal hygiene. Things were pretty disgusting. Strange as it may seem, it was fun finding that disgusting quality and texture as we began casting extras and creating the looks of all the pirates. Some of the extras were so dedicated, you could smell it," he laughs.

"It's ultimately about the teeth," the director continues. "If you get the teeth right, you're okay."

On his own, Johnny Depp had his dentist cap four teeth: one in 14 karat gold, one in 18 karat gold, another in 22 karat gold, and the last in platinum. "It's mathematics. He's a pirate. You expect it. I wanted more, but Jerry wasn't particularly enthused," he laughs.

Costume designer Penny Rose went to portrait galleries, maritime museums and other resources to learn about costumes from the period. "I spent three weeks just absorbing the ideas," she explains. She also consulted with British pirate expert David Cordingly, author of such books as *Under the Black Flag: The Romance and the Reality of Life Among the Pirates*.

"David came in and spent the day with us, and we just fired questions at him like, 'Port Royal, Jamaica—who would have lived there?' Well, out of his wallet comes a list of how many blacksmiths, how many this, how many that—he had already done this

material over and over again! He had also worked on several films, so he understood that we weren't going for historic reproduction. It's the little nuances that he was really helpful with."

Rose wanted lots of movement in the costumes, since there is so much action in the movie. Some of the film's signature costume pieces included full shirts with very big sleeves, which echoed the Errol Flynn look. In addition, "The coats all had six or eight pleats in the back, so they had plenty of movement, but they actually fit," Rose explains. Rose was also concerned about the Caribbean heat during filming, so "everything was made out of silk or linen or cotton so nobody had anything scratchy or heavy on. And they move. You see them during film fighting, and they've got a lot of movement."

The crew went to great lengths to maintain authenticity from head to toe—Jack Sparrow's sword is an original that dates from the 1750s. Many of the swords used in the film are originals, purchased in London.

For Johnny Depp, his character came together in every respect during the costume fittings and makeup/hair tests that traditionally take place a few weeks prior to filming on every movie. "The first day I was in full makeup and wardrobe, seeing the guy for the first time, I was very pleased because I knew it was Captain Jack," he says. "Gore came in, looked and said, 'Yeah, that's it.' He got it immediately; he knew where I was going with the character. He supported it, he understood it and he got the humor. It was the beginning of a great relationship."

Jack Davenport, in the self-described "ice cream" costume, admits, "my costume did do a lot of the work for me. It's a cheap laugh, especially when you play an authority figure who constantly loses authority."

Will Turner, as the blacksmith, has a simpler, cleaner look, although his overall appearance transforms by the end of the film. "Will has an identity crisis," explains Verbinski. "When he encounters Jack Sparrow, he turns from this lovable, earnest dork into a romantic leading man. His hair comes down, his body language changes, all due to his interaction with Jack and the effect they have on each other."

Elizabeth Swann not only makes an emotional transition throughout the course of the film, she also makes the most dramatic physical change. "I've got the best of both worlds," says Keira Knightley. "I get to look

every bit the prim and proper young lady in beautiful dresses, albeit tied up in a corset; then I get to wear a sexier, looser gown that's been hand-selected by Barbossa; and by the end I'm barely in a shift, wet and freezing; and then I had the opportunity to wear a soldier's uniform. My costumes ran the gamut. Poor boys, they wore the same outfit every day for six months," she laughs.

Nearly 400 London-made wigs and hairpieces were used in the film. Orlando Bloom was the only major actor who didn't wear a wig, but he wasn't entirely spared—he was given hair extensions that took between 5 and 6 hours to attach.

THE DISNEY RIDE

"I grew up in San Diego and all five of us kids would load into the station wagon and my parents would drive us up to Anaheim," says Verbinski. "Back then you could see the Matterhorn from the freeway, and the big thing would be who could see it first. The first ride we would always go on was *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Something in the song and in the images of the ride is ingrained in our collective psyche. It was very scary when I was young, yet we celebrate that macabre sensibility. We're trying to do a contemporary version of that while keeping the same spirit of the ride."

The filmmakers are quick to point out that the film is an homage to the popular Disney ride, not a direct interpretation of the attraction itself, although they did rely on sketches and original concept drawings by Mark Davis, one of the ride's innovators, for reference points.

"Since we use the title of the ride, it's important to give an appreciative nod to the artistry of so many people who worked to put it together," says Bruckheimer. "If the ride itself weren't as good as it is, it wouldn't have stood the test of time and captivated so many of us for over 35 years. It's the seed from where the idea for the movie began."

"I remember being enthralled and completely buying the illusion of the sky and being outdoors as the ride begins," says Ted Elliott. "But the minute the skull started talking, and for the rest of the ride, I felt a combination of utter dread and excitement. I just knew that the scariest thing I was ever going to see was going

to pop out,” he recalls with a laugh. “It was frightening and fascinating at the same time; it’s an amazing ride.

“And that’s what we wanted to do with the script,” he explains. “We wanted to come up with a story that would affect people emotionally, so that audiences would feel something akin to what I felt as a kid the first time I experienced *Pirates of the Caribbean*, and we had to make it appeal to audiences across an entire age spectrum.”

“The ride provides a narrative,” Terry Rossio explains further. “It brings you in quietly, and then there’s a dramatic turn and escalating conflict. Mark Davis and, of course, Walt Disney did an amazing job. Serious fans of the ride will look for and recognize similarities, even in small details, such as the crab in the sand next to the back-stabbed skeleton. I couldn’t believe we actually had a crab wrangler on set, I was so pleased to see that attention to detail. So the movie offers plenty of vignettes and tributes to the ride. But more importantly, for us, we hope people will find the same spirit of excitement, fear and humor they experienced when they first plummeted down into those haunted caves.”

“I think this movie is for anyone who enjoys a sprawling adventure,” says Gore Verbinski. “It’s got action, romance, intrigue. I think there’s a child in all of us who enjoys these kinds of movies that are exciting, fun, with oddball characters, conflict and resolution.”

Funny as it may seem, the word ‘sprawling’ was a big surprise to Johnny Depp. Despite his fondness for the script and his devotion to the intricacies and idiosyncrasies of his character, he was utterly unaware of the production’s magnitude and the enthusiastic public response. “I actually never saw the project as particularly gigantic,” Depp admits. “Oddly, it wasn’t until I saw some rough cuts for the trailer that I suddenly realized, ‘Oh my God, this is huge!’ It felt like we were doing an intimate little pirate movie,” he laughs. “It was a friendly, easy set, very collaborative, and just didn’t give the impression of being some enormous production.”

After Depp’s four-year-old daughter saw the trailer, “She actually went around telling people what her father did for a living: ‘Yeah, my daddy’s a pirate!’ I was quite proud,” says Depp.

“The elements you need to produce a bigger-than-life adventure sometimes aren’t all that sexy on their own,” says Jerry Bruckheimer. “It’s our job to make the difficult, painstaking details appear effortless. We want to amaze the audience so that you can lose yourself and forget your troubles for just a little while.

And that’s just what audiences will enjoy. “There’s romance, there’s adventure and there’s a lot of humor in the film,” the producer raves. “You’re in for a terrific, romantic ride.”