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INTERNATIONAL

Film News

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Dariusz Wolski: Bringing 3D to the table

Billion-Dollar Production Team: 'Prometheus' - The cinematographer

By THOMAS J. MCLEAN

When Ridley Scott had questions about shooting "Prometheus," his long-awaited return to science-fiction and the world of "Alien," in stereoscopic 3D, he turned to d.p. Dariusz Wolski for answers.

Wolski was then shooting his fourth "Pirates of the Caribbean" film -- and his first that incorporated 3D technology into the shoot -- when he came in to meet with Scott, a director whose work he has long admired.

"He was extremely influential when I was growing up, when I was trying to be a cameraman," says Wolski, citing in particular "Alien" and "Blade Runner." "His whole way of thinking is encoded in my brain, so when we met it was pretty natural to get along."

Scott asked Wolski on the spot to do the movie.

Knowing that Scott eschewed shooting conventional coverage and liked to run multiple cameras, Wolski said he could put together a 3D rig that would be compatible with the director's style.

Using 3ality Technica's Element rig and a prototype of the Red Epic camera that was "half the size of everything else," the cinematographer set up a test shoot in London. "For me, the most important thing is simplicity," says Wolski, a native of Poland whose credits included hundreds of musicvideos



Dariusz Wolski

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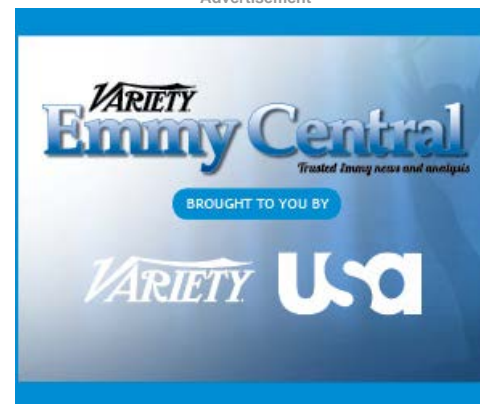
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before he moved on to features such as "The Crow," "Crimson Tide" (directed by Scott's brother, Tony Scott), "Dark City," "Sweeney Todd" and "Eagle Eye." "This rig was just much more-user friendly and required less technical crew and also gave the possibility for Ridley to shoot three to four cameras."

Scott loved the results, and extolled the benefits of 3D when he showed the first test to executives at Fox. "He stood up and he said, 'Guys, we've been shooting 3D all our lives,' " Wolski recounts. "We always think three-dimensional, now we just have a tool to enhance it."

The movie was shot over 82 days mostly at Pinewood Studios in England, with Iceland standing in for the alien planet, plus a one-day shoot during pickups on Scotland's remote Isle of Skye.

One day of the pickups involved a new scene to be shot on location at a cave in the Scottish mountains for which four full-on 3D rigs were flown in by helicopter. Wolski says "Prometheus" was a huge change from the last "Pirates," on which he says he was too scared to fly the complicated and expensive 3D rigs into a remote part of Hawaii.

The shoot was challenging in the best way possible, Wolski says, with Scott preparing each shot very thoroughly but also being open to collaboration, inspiration and improvisation on the set.

The main creative challenge was finding a look for the movie that pushes Scott's signature style into new territory. "There was a constant battle visually. I think we were in sync about it," says Wolski, citing Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A Space Odyssey" as one touchstone for the movie. "The look is a result of searching for something original yet maintaining stuff that's very classic."

While the film is full of CG visual effects and required several greenscreen shots, Scott and Wolski wanted to capture as much as they could in-camera. "There was a greenscreen only when it was absolutely necessary," he says. "With Ridley, you have to see it and, of course, that makes everything look much better."

Wolski says the rapid evolution of 3D technology is a huge challenge for cinematographers, but it's definitely not just a fad. "The technology is improving and, for certain movies with a huge visual scope, I think it's going to stay," he says.

FILMOGRAPHY

Dariusz Wolski, Cinematographer

The Rum Diary

2011

Bruce Robinson

Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides

2011

Rob Marshall

Alice in Wonderland

2010

Tim Burton

Eagle Eye

2008

D.J. Caruso

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street

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June 27, 2012

Los Angeles, CA

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September 19-20, 2012

Hollywood & Highland Center, Hollywood, CA

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2007

Tim Burton

Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End

2007

Gore Verbinski

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest

2006

Gore Verbinski

Hide and Seek

2005

John Polson

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl

2003

Gore Verbinski

Bad Company

2002

Joel Schumacher

The Mexican

2001

Gore Verbinski

A Perfect Murder

1998

Andrew Davis

Dark City

1998

Alex Proyas

The Fan

1996

Tony Scott

Crimson Tide

1995

Tony Scott

The Crow

1994

Alex Proyas

Romeo Is Bleeding

1993

Peter Medak

Chains of Gold (with Bruce Surtees)

1991

Rod Holcomb

Nightfall

1988

Paul Mayersberg

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Billion-Dollar Production Team: "Prometheus"

Great Scott's go-to crew

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