



AN INTERVIEW WITH “BRAVE” DIRECTOR MARK ANDREWS

WHAT MADE YOU GO INTO ANIMATION?

I kind of fell into animation ... I'd been driving toward it all my life because I like drawing. I didn't have my first actual art lesson until after high school while attending city college – that's where I studied perspective and life drawing. Originally I planned on joining the Marines, but friends convinced me to do something with my art. Back then, I didn't have computers or the Internet to see what was available. Because of a class at city college, I learned about Cal Arts, a Los Angeles-area school started by Walt Disney. It was unbelievable that I could actually have a career where I'd be drawing all the time. I said, “Done!” And that's where my inhibitions stopped. After school, doors just opened for me and I jumped through.

HOW DID YOU WORK ON “JOHN CARTER” AND “BRAVE” AT THE SAME TIME?

Well actually, one ended and then the other started, so it wasn't simultaneous. Live-action is so much faster [to shoot], and “Brave” began a year prior to working on “John Carter.” It just kind of happened that way. They moved up “John Carter's” schedule because it was supposed to come out in the summer (2012), which would have competed with “Brave.” Also, since the summer was crowded, they moved “John Carter” into the spring slot.

THIS FILM TOOK SEVEN YEARS TO MAKE ... WHAT DID YOU THINK GOING IN?

I go in full throttle ... I'm not timid. After watching the reels for each movie, everyone asks “What's wrong with it?” I'd try to figure out how to fix it and make suggestions to help the director navigate, because story's the hardest thing there is. It's tough coming up with a story that's compelling every time. All the ingredients need to make sense and make you believe and care and feel. It's really hard.

Every project gets bogged down with story -- every single one. The fastest film we ever made (from start to finish) was “The Incredibles,” with Brad Bird. Andrew Stanton was up against the line in “Wall-E” -- “Ratatouille” also took forever. It got bogged down in the storyboard phase and just got stuck ... same thing with “Brave.”

So something had to change. We've had directors replaced at Pixar before, and that was just the thing that needed to happen [with “Brave”] to free it up. So they asked me to take over. I looked at it and thought it's a great story with great characters. It's medieval (which I love), set in Scotland (which I love). I came in with an objective eye and said, “Okay, how do we fix this?”

The first (and easiest) thing I did was to kill everything I thought wasn't needed – I wanted to get down to the bare bones of the story. But it left lots of holes for the story team. [I give] kudos to them (and the entire crew) because it was really hard changing direction after years of developing and animating things like the snow that was never used.

Once you take away the clutter and see what's left, you have to rebuild the holes with new sets and new characters. I wanted weather in there so we added rain and stuff like that. There's one scene (it'll be on the DVD) that features snow in an alternative opening that I thought was fabulous. But since we didn't start with Merida and her mom right off the bat, we dumped it for story reasons. Yet even within my process, I got stuck as I went along with the story itself.

IS ANIMATION DIFFERENT THAN WORKING IN LIVE-ACTION?

Well, it is and it isn't because they run into the same problems ... even though most of the crew never sees it. The director and editor try to make the story work from everything filmed -- editing is where they actually make the movie. In animation, we make it all first and then put the pieces together because it's like an assembly line. First you go through the layout process, then animation, scenes, lighting, etc. Every department touches it as it goes downstream -- one shot at a time. Since we have to know the movie we're making [in animation], we're able to transfer over to live-action much faster. For "John Carter," Andrew and I knew exactly where the camera should be because we've already seen it. We've already shot and edited each scene in our heads because that's what we do in animation ... that's just where we come from.

WHAT WILL WE SEE ON THE DVD/BLU-RAY?

It's going to be awesome ... there are scenes that audiences won't see in theaters. In live-action, you've shot all the footage and stuff ends up on the floor all the time. No big deal -- you were there. In animation, we create everything from scratch, so it's a bit more costly to cut -- but we still have to. It's like, sorry we went down this path, but I need to make it shorter. So we lose it -- that's just the way it goes. But I want to honor all that hard work from the people who stayed and worked late and spent time away from their families. I want it out there for fans to see ... and that makes for great DVD extras.

DID YOU HAVE A LOT OF INPUT WITH MUSIC?

No, I inherited a lot on this film and one of the greatest things was composer Patrick Doyle. He's done several films -- "Henry Five," "Sense and Sensibility", and "Planet of the Apes" -- and is totally amazing. Patrick's just a jolly little fellow. We laugh and have a great time working together. He's a consummate professional and is really fantastic about getting to the heart.

When we sat down to watch the film and discuss the music, it wasn't so much about what I specifically wanted, because I didn't know. I talked about what we had, the theme, and reasons why I shot various scenes. So he's hearing theme, moment, accent ... you know what I mean? He incorporated everything into his orchestrations and returned several months later with the music. Then we scored it in London with the London Symphony Orchestra -- that's the "Star Wars" orchestra (John Williams' orchestra) and they were fantastic to work with.