

Brattle Theatre Film Notes: *The Lord of the Rings*

New Zealand/USA, 2001-03. Rated PG-13. 178, 179, 201 min; Cast: Elijah Wood, Sean Astin, Ian McKellen, Viggo Mortensen, and many, many more; Cinematography: Andrew Lesnie; Producers: Peter Jackson, Barrie M. Osborne, Tim Sanders, Frances Walsh; Director: Peter Jackson

Eight of the nine actors portraying the characters that are part of the Fellowship got a small tattoo of the Elvish symbol for the number nine to commemorate his experience in Peter Jackson's epic "Lord of the Rings" trilogy.

Actor Elijah Wood ("Frodo") got his tattoo on his lower stomach; Sean Astin ("Sam Gamgee") and Billy Boyd ("Pippin") have theirs on their ankles for all the hours in the hobbit feet; Orlando Bloom ("Legolas") got his on his forearm; and Ian McKellen ("Gandalf") and Dominic Monaghan ("Merry") got theirs on their shoulders, according to IMDB.com. Only John Rhys-Davies ("Gimli") declined, sending a stunt double in his place.

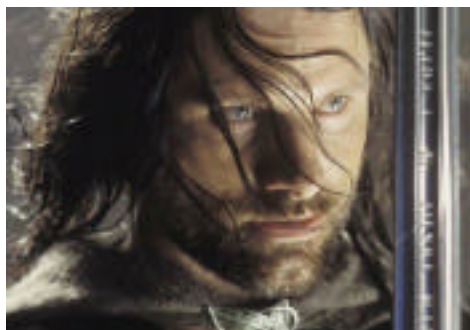
Wood, 23, told the U.K. newspaper The Guardian in 2001 that he knew the experience of making the films was going to be an adventure. He originally sent an audition tape to the film's casting agent of himself reciting lines dressed in a makeshift hobbit costume.

"I knew that I would have an adventure with these people and that I would be taking a journey that would mirror that of the book - and it did," said Wood. "I made life-long friends. I grew as an individual, and it was as much a life experience as it was a filmic one. God, if I had the chance to do it again tomorrow I would jump at it. It's really quite difficult to encapsulate in words, to describe how incredible it was. We saw parts of New Zealand that New Zealanders haven't seen."

The same adventure took place for millions of filmgoers as they shared the experience of viewing the three films that make up director

Peter Jackson's trilogy: "Fellowship of the Ring"; "The Two Towers"; and "The Return of the King." They will be screening at the Brattle Theater from Dec. 29, 2004 to Jan. 6, 2005.

While moviegoers are familiar with the stories, the three movies are filled with astounding facts and trivia. For instance, according to IMDB.com, the three films were all shot at once in New Zealand and used: more than six million feet of film during production; 48,000 swords, axes, shields and make-up prosthetics; 20,602 background actors; 19,000 costumes; 10,000 fans at a New Zealand cricket match that made the orc army grunts; 1,600 pairs of prosthetic hobbit feet;



250 horses in one scene; and 114 total speaking roles. The computer-generated effects also increased in every movie from 560 in the "Fellowship"; 800 in "Two Towers"; and 1,500 in "Return of the King." It took seven years to develop all three movies, and they grossed more than a billion dollars in domestic and international box office revenue.

In every one of the three movies, a character states the subtitle, according to IMDB.com: Elrond refers to the nine characters as the Fellowship of the ring; Saruman states "The Two Towers" during a voiceover; and in the last film, Gandalf says to the steward of Gondow that he can't refuse the return of the king.

In "The Two Towers," the battle of Helms Deep was compiled from 20 hours of footage during a three-month period, with a rain machine

being continuously used, according to IMDB.com. After the shooting, the principal cast and extras received shirts reading, "I survived Helms Deep." There were so many extras that they would recognize each other all over New Zealand wearing the T-shirts.

Scenes with the character Gollum would take as long as six hours to digitally render, according to IMDB.com. The Weta workshop that did a lot of the special effects would "leave the shot to render over night and check the results in the morning." Sometimes glitches would occur, like when every hair on Gollum's head stood upright in a punk-like mohawk. Interestingly, while one frame of Gollum would take eight minutes to render, one frame of Treebeard could take as long as 48 hours!

Director Peter Jackson said the definitive versions of the three movies are their theatrical releases. He explained to SciFi.com that the entire point of the "Lord of the Rings" series was the third film, "The Return of the King." He said that the final movie provides context to the earlier two.

"'Fellowship' was the beginning," said Jackson. "'Two Towers' was the difficult middle chapter. ... And now you have the third film. Suddenly, everything has a context now. ... It's tough for the actors as well, because they're feeling emotional seeing the movie, because the movie's emotional. The movie finishes it off, and it sort of represents the ending of all of our journeys. We've all become friends on this project. It's all finishing at the same time, both on-screen and off-screen. It's everything I hoped it would be. I hoped it would be sad, that it would capture something of that sadness of the book."

After the release of "The Fellowship of the Ring," director Peter Jackson also got a tattoo to commemorate his work on the project: the Elvish symbol for the number ten.

- Jason Nielsen