



Production Information

From the studio that brought you “Shrek,” “Madagascar” and “Kung Fu Panda” comes **“How to Train Your Dragon”**—an adventure comedy set in the mythical world of burly Vikings and wild fire-breathing dragons, based on the book by Cressida Cowell. The story centers around a Viking teenager named Hiccup (JAY BARUCHEL), who lives on the Island of Berk, where fighting dragons is a way of life. The teen’s rather progressive views and offbeat sense of humor don’t sit too well with his tribe or its chief...who just happens to be Hiccup’s father, Stoick the Vast (GERARD BUTLER). When Hiccup is included in Dragon Training with the other Viking teens—Astrid (AMERICA FERRERA), Snotlout (JONAH HILL), Fishlegs (CHRISTOPHER MINTZ-PLASSE), and twins Ruffnut (KRISTEN WIIG) and Tuffnut (T.J. MILLER)—he sees his chance to prove he has what it takes to be a fighter. But when he encounters (and ultimately befriends) an injured dragon, his world is flipped upside down, and what started out as Hiccup’s one shot to prove himself turns into an opportunity to set a new course for the future of the entire tribe.

Also starring is CRAIG FERGUSON as Gobber, the village Blacksmith and Dragon Training instructor, who sees the potential in Hiccup’s unique skill set, even when Stoick does not.

“How to Train Your Dragon” is produced by BONNIE ARNOLD (“Toy Story,” “Tarzan,” “Over the Hedge”), written by WILL DAVIES and DEAN DeBLOIS & CHRIS SANDERS (“Lilo & Stitch,” “Mulan”), and based on the book by CRESSIDA COWELL.

DreamWorks Animation SKG Presents “How to Train Your Dragon,” a Paramount Pictures release—and DreamWorks Animation’s second InTru 3D Movie—featuring the voices of Jay Baruchel, Gerard Butler, Craig Ferguson, America Ferrera, Jonah Hill, Christopher Mintz-Plasse, Kristen Wiig and T.J. Miller. The film is directed by Chris Sanders & Dean DeBlois. The screenplay is by Will Davies and Dean DeBlois & Chris Sanders. The producer is Bonnie Arnold. The executive producers are Kristine Belson and Tim Johnson. “How to Train Your Dragon” has been rated PG by the MPAA for sequences of intense action and some scary images, and brief mild language.

GETTING READY FOR BATTLE

It was nearly six years ago when the book series of British author Cressida Cowell came to the attention of creative executives at DreamWorks Animation. With an established reputation for taking small but well-respected titles and spinning them into box office success, it didn’t take more than a Norse minute for them to see the cinematic potential in the exploits of a scrawny kid named Hiccup trying to find his niche in the brawny world of Vikings. “If you’re writing about Vikings and Dragons it has got to be something that is going to be on a grand scale,” says Cowell. “I was incredibly excited when DreamWorks expressed interest in the books, as I knew they could do the movie on a scale that I could barely even imagine!”

Coming off of her success of the DreamWorks suburban adventure comedy “Over the Hedge,” it also didn’t take long for producer Bonnie Arnold to become interested in the newly acquired property. She kept her eye on the project as it bubbled its way through the development process, and when DreamWorks Animation co-president of production Bill Damaschke asked her what she wanted to work on next, she chose “How to Train Your Dragon.”

For Arnold, one of the biggest challenges as a producer was taking an established world like the one created in Cowell’s books and adapting it into a full-length feature film. “We wanted to make the film a big event, a real action-adventure with great characters that would be appealing to a broad audience,” explains Arnold. “In all our other movies, the main characters are adults or animals, but in this film, we have a

teenager as our hero and that is a new direction for the studio. Hiccup’s personality and his interactions with the dragons and the different personalities of the Vikings are the basis for the humor in the story, versus humor that is more satire or topical. It’s got adventure and humor and heart, the elements were all there, but we just needed a strong writing/directing team to help shape it.”

To helm the project, the studio turned to Oscar[®]-nominated writer/director Chris Sanders and writer/director Dean DeBlois. For Sanders, the attraction to Hiccup’s tale was immediate: “I think the story inside this story is one of emotional depth, which I thought was exciting, but what piqued my interest were the flying sequences,” says Sanders. “For a very long time, I have wanted to do a film that somehow involved creatures, people or superheroes flying, so when I read an early version of this story, I thought, ‘Oh, my gosh! We can take that to places that you’ve never been before!’”

“Chris called me up on a weekend right after Jeffrey Katzenberg had talked to him,” adds writer/director Dean DeBlois, “and he mentioned that ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ was something that was really in my wheelhouse, specifically, a teenaged protagonist in a larger-than-life fantasy action-adventure. And that’s really something that I am drawn to—those are the stories that I write. I immediately was engaged and I read the book. I could see a lot of potential for what could be, and working with Chris again just sounded like an exciting thing.”

While the book picks up at a point where dragons have become integrated into the Vikings’ societal structure, the filmmakers saw that taking the timeline back a few years would prove to be key. Explains Arnold, “In terms of storytelling, I think our breakthrough was crafting an origin story—how Hiccup and his relationship with a dragon named Toothless really changed his world. It was this story we wanted to tell, about how he started the relationship between the Vikings and the dragons that led to the adventures in the books, the ones that we hear about, and know and love.”

Cowell’s books were loosely based on the author’s childhood experiences spent on a remote, uninhabited island off of the west coast of Scotland. Without roads, houses or electricity, it was the ideal setting for a young Cowell’s imagination to run wild, the backdrop that would later provide a foundation for the world of Vikings and dragons in her stories. It wasn’t much of a stretch to see herself in the scrappy Viking-in-training

named Hiccup, with a chief named Stoick for a father. Yet even though Hiccup is as far from the standard Viking physique as one can get, he still yearns and tries to become a fighter in a society of warriors.

“Vikings are tough, with a code and a creed,” explains Sanders. “Fighting is second nature to them. If you’re a Viking, you just don’t back down from a fight—you’re physically strong, you’re brave, you don’t flinch. The thing about Hiccup that we love is that he wants to be a Viking. It’s not like he woke up one day and said, ‘I wish I weren’t one of these guys.’ On the contrary, he desperately wants to be one of them.”

That perspective helped the filmmakers shape the motivation and personality of Hiccup into that of a teenager realizing his own potential. “He doesn’t quite understand everything that is going on around him, but one thing is clear—his perspective and abilities are different,” continues Sanders. “His dad doesn’t get it, the village doesn’t get it. But we do, and that’s what we love about the character.”

Head of story Alessandro Carloni offers, “There were many inspiring qualities in the book that we wanted to incorporate into the film. There was definitely a lot of charm in how the author described the everyday life of Vikings. We wanted to kick it all up a notch, age up the protagonist and set it firmly in the action-adventure genre. We wanted to keep the charm of the language, but show it in another way. How do Vikings live, travel, hunt? That’s where we began.”

“We really pushed it beyond the usual comfort zone of what we are used to doing,” interjects producer Bonnie Arnold, “and I have to give the studio credit for letting us do that.”

“And that comes from DreamWorks Animation’s own chief,” says Chris Sanders. “If you’re doing something halfway, he’ll catch it. He reminds you that while you’re solving story problems, you’re also making a movie. He always challenges you to be bold bold with what you’re doing. To never settle. To go all the way.”

But at the core of everything, as always, is the story, and in that the studio found its champions in the pairing of Sanders and DeBlois. As producer Bonnie Arnold observes, “Chris and Dean, at their core, are great storytellers. You can have all the great animation, music, sound effects, you name it, but it has to be supporting a great story. As directors and writers they had in their head a way to tell this story, a very specific

adaptation of a beloved book. They are particularly good at communicating that to everyone on the project. It’s my job, and the crew’s job, to realize that vision on the screen. They’re great at inspiring everyone, which, in turn, challenges all of us to bring back something better.”

Sanders and DeBlois met working on “Mulan,” and had their first collaboration writing and directing together on “Lilo & Stitch,” nominated for the Best Animated Feature of 2002 by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. The two found that working together improved their craft. Says DeBlois, “We seemed to connect on the same sorts of ideas—we can arrive at the same end result, but we come at it from different perspectives. I think that I’m able to take on his ideas and add to them without derailing them, and I think he does the same for me. So as we write or direct together, it turns out to be a really beneficial arrangement—there’s a sense of creative simpatico. We complement each other.”

“We have a good working relationship. For us, the trick is to be hard on the story and test it for weakness, but not go too far and end up with a movie that’s lost its delicate parts. You want to craft a tale that makes sense, but still retains its surprises and magic. The only way to do that is to trust each other, to really believe in each other’s instincts. Dean and I have the same overall sensibilities, and tend to strike the same tone with our storytelling. That said, we usually come at things from different directions, so we are very liable to write scenes differently than the other one would, but usually arrive in the right place. We outline the story together but then divvy up the scenes and dive into them individually. It’s how we cover the most ground. Then we read each other’s pages. I’m always surprised at the angle Dean takes, but I always like where he ends up, or where he’s heading. I make sure my notes concentrate on making his scenes work, and don’t try to change them into scenes I would have written. He does the same for me. Our movies are a true collaboration.”

In turn, the pair found their champion in Arnold. “Bonnie’s great—you can tell she’s done this many times before,” says Sanders. “She protects the film, and is totally onboard for what you as a director and a writer are trying to accomplish. She gives us a safe space in which to create. She fights for us as well, and the mostly wordless scenes of

Hiccup and Toothless beginning their friendship, they wouldn't be in the film, if we didn't feel like this was a safe environment.”

DeBlois seconds, “Bonnie really excels at taking any number of chaotic situations that arise during production and getting right to the heart of what's important. And that's the best thing—as a producer, that's what you really need in the filmmaking mix. So, I trust her, and know that she always has the film's best intentions at heart.”

THE VIKINGS WHO ATTACK...

In the screen adaptation of “How to Train Your Dragon,” the worlds of Vikings and dragons each have their separate domains—but when they cross, as they often do, the result is explosive and destructive. Dean DeBlois says, “We wanted to set the idea that there was a mythology to this place, and the Isle of Berk, where they live, had been sailed to many, many generations ago, about 300 years earlier. And from the first time they set foot on the island, it was beset by dragons. So, much in the way that ranchers dealt with wolves or any number of settlers dealt with perceived predators, the reaction is to fight back. These Vikings were being raided by dragons that would steal their food and damage their homes. And so, what we have is a conflict that is rooted in generations and generations of trying to cohabitate.”

It is in the midst of this world that we are introduced to Hiccup, the only son of chief Stoick, who, despite his earnest attempts, simply does not fit in. In fact, whenever he tries yet another plan to win the favor of his father and the other villagers, the results are invariably disastrous. To keep him out of the fray and hopefully avert additional calamitous schemes in the hopes of redemption, Hiccup—a constant source of Viking ridicule—is assigned as an apprentice to Gobber, the blacksmith and confidante of Stoick. Despite his love for his son, Stoick often feels ashamed that his one heir is (in his eyes, anyway) totally unfit to become a Viking, much less, its future Chief. Hiccup's brains are undervalued, and his lack of brawn is viewed as an insurmountable flaw.

“The most important quality of an actor in animation,” says Arnold, “is his ability to portray something in his voice. The thing I like so much about Hiccup is that his

perceived liabilities—his smarts and his offbeat viewpoint—become his greatest assets. We root for Hiccup. That quality comes through in spades in Jay Baruchel. He’s smart, he’s funny, and a little bit off-center in his humor.”

Arnold also credits writers Sanders and DeBlois—along with Baruchel’s performance—with creating an underdog character worthy of our support. “Hiccup is really the future leader, and this is something that the rest of the tribe has to come to terms with and understand.”

Chris Sanders says, “It’s just so much fun to work with Jay, because he really does bring your lines to life. And its more than that, he really inhabits his scenes. Showing him your material is like showing it to Hiccup himself. While we’re recording Jay would often pause and say, “I think he’d say it more like this,” and then take another run at it. Sure enough, it would always sound more comfortable. Sometimes it’s just a word, but it would make all the difference. It’s the part of the process where we give everything a final, custom fit. After every recording session with Jay we would learn a little more about the character of Hiccup, and apply those lessons to the next series of scenes.”

“On the Island of Berk, where the movie takes place, the rite of passage for every Viking is to go out and kill a dragon,” explains Baruchel. “The Vikings have been at the mercy of dragons for as long as they’ve been on the island. They are essentially the pests, the pigeons or the skunks or the raccoons the Vikings have to deal with—only, instead of messing up statues or tearing up gardens, they steal sheep and destroy entire villages. So for Hiccup to eventually develop something of a rapport, an affinity for a dragon, that’s blasphemy in the town. Not exactly something the son of their leader should be doing.”

For DeBlois, Baruchel not only sounds like what Hiccup should sound like, he brought to mind certain characteristics of him: “Jay himself kind of embodies a lot of what Hiccup is. He has a trim build, is very quick-witted, and very intelligent, and he brings that to the character, so that the lines that come out of Hiccup feel very genuine. They don’t feel scripted. You really feel like he’s a character who has moved past that yearning for his dad’s attention, and even for the town’s acceptance or admiration, in

general. He just feels like a character who has toughened himself up and developed a sense of comedy as a means of defense. I love that about Jay.”

Slight and funny may work for comedy, but it certainly does not work for the son of someone named “Stoick the Vast.” Per Baruchel: “Hiccup’s dad is warlord of the Vikings. And he’s just a tough son-of-a-gun—each of Stoick’s arms is about the size of two Hiccups put together. I think that it’s not too dissimilar from my father in real life—all he wanted was for me to play hockey, or maybe baseball, and neither of those was ever going to happen.”

So, if the slight Baruchel is voicing Hiccup, it makes perfect sense that an imposing actor, one that could believably sound like a Nordic commander-in-chief, would voice Stoick. How about the former King of Sparta?

Arnold says, “Gerry Butler became more well-known with his role in ‘300,’ and we looked at that film and thought, ‘Oh, my gosh, that is our Stoick.’ He’s got this great big booming voice that has to fill this giant of a man. We invited Gerry in to meet and show him what we had on the movie, and he was very interested and excited.”

And Butler came loaded with great work experience: “I’m very fortunate in that I’ve played a Viking before, and I’ve played a lot of these kinds of characters—I played Attila the Hun, I’ve done a movie set in the medieval period, so I’ve also used swords and shields and spears. As well as playing Leonidas [in ‘300’], I’ve actually made a movie in Iceland—I was there for three months playing Beowulf, maybe the most famous Viking story of all time, who was also pitted against a monster like we have in this movie. So, I feel like half of my career has led me to playing a role like this—being a leader, being powerful, being noble, but fighting a cause I’m not sure about, having some fear about something, but still fighting it anyway.”

“I think the most important conversation we had with any of the actors was a conference call we had with Gerard Butler a few days before we recorded him,” recalls DeBlois. “We talked with him a lot about Stoick, as he represents all things Viking. Gerard didn’t want this character to come off being mean or villainous, and we really got a chance to discuss this guy’s role in the film, and what his relationship to Hiccup is.”

That initial phone call with Butler provided the directors with additional insights into the character of Stoick and was a turning point in the development of the film. “We

decided that Stoick really loves his son, and that’s probably why he’s been hiding him away,” says Sanders. “It’s not out of shame, it’s out of protection. He’s so convinced that if he ever lets Hiccup out of the house, for any length of time, he’ll probably get himself killed, because the thing about Hiccup is that he really wants to be a Viking, so he’s going to get himself—in some way, shape or form—in front of a dragon, even if it kills him, which it will, if he doesn’t know what to do.”

As Butler recalls, “They said, ‘Let’s talk about your character, and where you think he fits in.’ I’ve never had the opportunity to take on a role for an animated movie—I thought that there was already something like 300 people working on the movie as it was and I was just a very small part. But as we talked, it became a very creative conversation, quite inspiring. They were so open to ideas, and I found myself encouraging them. It is great to see what we came up with figured into the story—for instance, the idea of Stoick speaking to Gobber about all his problems, and then a mirror scene with Gobber speaking to Hiccup, about their problems. We also turned Stoick a little the other way, turning some of the heaviness on its head. Obviously, he would still be a powerful character, but adding some humor, more concern for Hiccup, balancing that with the responsibilities of being a leader. It gave me further freedom to try things differently as we went along.”

The filmmakers also emphasized the quandary—with the potential for comedy, as well as pathos—of the most visible man on the island having the meekest, ‘problem’ child. Everyone who admires Stoick will also be painfully aware that he’s somewhat burdened with potentially the biggest problem in the village, that being Hiccup.

And, as with Baruchel, Butler’s physicality came to influence Stoick: “Kristof Serrand, who animated my character, cut together a piece about halfway through the process, which really inspired me. Everything I see on this project inspires me—one, because it’s great, and two, because I have the opportunity to see and hear what I have done. All the time I was recording, I wondered why they had cameras in the studio. The piece Kristof edited intercuts between the animated version of me, and me in the studio, recording, with almost exactly the same moves. I could see a lot of my characteristics in the way I express myself, in my relationship with Hiccup, and the way I move.”

And as animator inspired actor, actor inspired the filmmakers. Sanders offers, “Gerard is tireless, and really pulls us through the session. We have an entire film to record, but we’ll spend an hour on just one scene, because I have to say that Gerard is incredibly inventive. So, I think the first session we had with him was about four hours, which is very long for one of these sessions. But he ended the session with more energy than when he started. He was still coming up with stuff, but we had to just end it, because we were about to miss our flight back. I came to really look forward to these sessions with Gerard, because so much good material was created on the spot.”

DeBlois adds, “We’re very lucky to have an amazing cast on this movie, starting with Gerard, who brings so much weight and passion to this character. He’s the perfect casting for the über-Viking, who has a real heart of gold underneath it all. And given that he’s one of the characters that has the strongest arc of the movie, we’re doubly blessed, because his acting is just unbelievable. He brings so much to the character, so much thought to every session.”

Filmmakers were also incredibly lucky to welcome the talents of America Ferrera, an actress whom DreamWorks Animation’s Jeffrey Katzenberg had been courting to join in on a project since her series, “Ugly Betty,” had become a national phenomenon. And the character of Astrid, the most promising Viking teen on the island, was a great part.

“The character of Astrid, who’s voiced by America Ferrera, didn’t exist in the original book. But I think in discussing it with the filmmakers, we felt like it was important to have a strong female character in the story, something for our female viewers to latch on to, and aspire to,” says Bonnie Arnold.

And Astrid is just that kind of character. She’s the best in her class and the top dragon-fighting teen in all of Berk. “Hiccup is a nice contrast to her, because, in his mind, he can’t do anything right. The great thing about America is that she has a strong voice, but also has a lot of heart in it. So even though she’s tough on Hiccup in the beginning, there’s a warmth to her that makes her sympathetic. As she starts to understand him better and learn what Hiccup is all about, she softens a little bit, and I think America does that beautifully,” adds Arnold.

Dean DeBlois continues, “Astrid represents the ideal, young Viking. She embodies the beliefs of those who have come before her—dragons are the enemy, and

you have to take this seriously and work hard. She realizes that this war that her parents are currently fighting—that all of their parents are fighting—is about to be handed down to them. In that sense, there’s a great conflict with Hiccup when training begins, because he doesn’t seem to be taking this seriously at all. Astrid’s very focused, she works very hard and she’s constantly practicing. She doesn’t allow herself to have a lot of fun—we always kind of equated her with the star athlete in high school. Always focused, always practicing, doesn’t partake in a lot of the fun, doesn’t goof around. She just doesn’t appreciate people who aren’t pulling their weight. And Hiccup is definitely seen as that.

“Like the character she plays, America’s very focused,” continues DeBlois. “America would take the lines and color them in a way that just feels very specific to a real person. That’s what I love about the way she approached the role—not just coming in to read lines but rather coming in with a full understanding of the character. That makes all the difference onscreen.”

“Astrid’s not playing any games, you know, she’s there to be a good Viking and learn how to defeat dragons,” says Ferrera. “She’s that girl on the reality show, who shows up and says, ‘I’m not here to make any friends—I’m here to win.’ It was fun to get to play her—she’s not mean, and if she’s scared, she just channels it into productivity. She’s thinking, ‘Okay, I’m terrified of this dragon. How do I get out of this situation?’ While all of the other characters are fumbling and terrified at the sight of the dragon, she’s just all business. It was great to have the focus she has, and then to find the tender moments, where she puts that aside, as she gets to know Hiccup and comes to respect what he’s doing. She realizes that there’s a whole other side to bravery that she hadn’t considered.”

Not only did Ferrera come in respecting the project, she came with a great respect for the source material and the genre: “What I love about children’s books—and what Cressida is doing with these books—is giving kids permission to question things like, ‘What are the dragons in my life, and, if there is a reason to be afraid, is there a way to get beyond that, to deal with it?’ That’s the best of what these films and books can do—take really big issues on, and present them—sometimes quite unexpectedly—in ways that kids can understand and handle.”

As far as the others participating with Hiccup and Astrid in Dragon Training, while they may understand their foe, they certainly can't handle them...yet. Along for the ride are characters who are aptly named: Snotlout, played by Jonah Hill; Fishlegs, voiced by Christopher Mintz-Plasse; and the warring warrior twins Ruffnut (Kristen Wiig) and Tuffnut (T.J. Miller).

“They're all teenagers, but they couldn't be more different from Hiccup,” says Producer Bonnie Arnold. “Snotlout, Fishlegs and Tuffnut are actually characters from the books—but, again, we thought more female characters were needed, so we gave Tuffnut a twin, Ruffnut. And they look so much alike that it's sometimes hard to tell them apart. I think more on this film than any animated film that I've worked on, we actually got the actors together in a room doing the voices at the same time. I think a lot of the success of this ensemble is due to the fact that they had worked together before and knew each other. There was a lot of good material created by the actors on the spur of the moment.”

In order to play up the ‘which twin is that?’ gag, the “Saturday Night Live” star Kristen Wiig dropped her vocal range and graveled the sound. It didn't hurt that both Wiig and Miller are more than adept at comedy, with the chameleon-like Wiig and the stand-up Miller often veering off-page and discovering ad-libbed gems.

Kristen Wiig on the competitive Ruffnut: “I think that doing sketch comedy and voicing an animated character are very similar. Doing a sketch character, so much of who that character is is how they look, the clothes and the wig, and the same with an animated character like Ruffnut, she's just sort of hunched over and scruffy. She's got scabs on her arms, and she's beyond a tomboy. So, working with Chris and Dean, we found this very rough, scratchy voice for her. It seemed to fit—long braids, crooked teeth and all.”

“Watching these two record,” says DeBlois, “was a great opportunity. They're both hilarious. They have such a great vibe, and you feel that they are actually brother and sister, but are constantly at each other's throats. I mean, it just reminds me of growing up with my sisters!”

The accomplished comic Miller decided the cerebral approach was the way to go with Tuffnut: “I did do a little bit of Viking research. If I wore headwear, it would have

horns on it. I had horns affixed to all my baseball caps, and then, sometimes, I’d just wear horns on their own. I haven’t been traveling by car lately. I’ve only been using barges and large boats, which has been difficult in Los Angeles, for a number of reasons: one, there’s no water, and two, boats get terrible gas mileage. A lot of people don’t know that. I’ve also been fighting creatures. That’s been part of my research. I fought a raccoon yesterday, and a warthog the other day.”

Chris Sanders says, “The first time we heard Christopher Mintz-Plasse’s voice audition, we immediately thought of Fishlegs. Fishlegs is this giant character, and we absolutely needed something to contrast with that. And Christopher has this terrific, very squeaky, small voice. So we put the squeaky small voice with the giant character. I mean, Fishlegs is a guy who does not know his own strength. He’s really a great Viking, but he’s a little timid and not quite sure of himself.”

Mintz-Plasse counters, “I didn’t know I had a squeaky voice. I can’t tell when I hear it, because when you talk, in your mind, you sound like ‘the man’. So I think I sound like ‘the man’. But Fishlegs is very smart. He knows about every dragon, and he spits out that information at random points, which kind of annoys his friends, but in the end, it helps. He’s very strong and if I do my job correctly, hopefully, very funny.”

Dean DeBlois says, “The pairing of Christopher as Fishlegs and Jonah Hill as Snotlout is perfect. Having seen ‘Superbad,’ I knew that these two guys were great together, and I think they’re both hilarious. They both, once again, bring so much ad-libbing to the lines that actually, a lot of the time, we would pare away what the actual line was and just use the ad-libs—they felt so fresh and energetic. Everything that came out of their mouths had us all laughing.”

Hill’s reasons for signing on were multi-fold: “I think it seems like an awesome fantasy adventure, something really cool. I’ve never done a film with Vikings, or dragons, so the combo sounded exciting and fun. I think that’s kind of the joy of these movies is that they’re for everybody, and that’s really cool to be a part of something that I would go see and that little kids would see as well. My brother has kids, and he has to see all these movies, and I think if I can try and make those movies funnier for adults, then that’s a great thing.”

Certainly one source of laughter is the casting of the verbally facile Craig Ferguson as Gobber, the blacksmith charged with first keeping Hiccup out of harm’s way, and then leading him and the island’s teen Vikings in Dragon Training. “I think he’s Mr. Mom to Hiccup,” Arnold wryly observes. “Gobber gives Hiccup a hard time, but deep down he cares for him. He also stands as the mediator between Hiccup and his father, Stoick.”

Dean DeBlois thinks, “Stoick probably thought, ‘I’m going to put my son working with my best friend in the blacksmith shop, maybe he’ll bulk up, develop some muscles lifting iron.’ But Gobber’s the one real friend Hiccup has. He’s pretty tactless, but very honest in his advice to Hiccup. It’s usually not great advice, but it’s delivered with a bluntness and a lack of tact that is both comical and exactly what Hiccup needs to hear...most of the time.”

Ferguson says, “Gobber’s training style for the teenage Vikings is to just throw them at dragons, and the ones that survive are obviously the ones that will survive in battle. He’s not sentimental about any teenager. He feels that they’re fairly expendable, and I think that’s fair. Except for Hiccup. I think he’s rather fond of Hiccup.”

Having faced several dragons throughout his fighting career and losing a few limbs along the way, Gobber is both wiser and lighter because of it. Ferguson adds: “Gobber is missing a few important parts, unlike myself. I come complete, you know, with all the bells and whistles—all the required accoutrements, bits that a human being requires in their daily business. I have most of them. Gobber, on the other hand, he does not, but he’s very cheery about it. I think he views his wounds as mementos, rather affectionately, reminders of the glories of battle. But it’s very interesting and unusual to see your voice coming out of an animated character, lack of parts notwithstanding. And seeing animation being done at DreamWorks is fascinating. I mean, it’s an amazing building filled with very, very bright people who are very clever and they study, they are polite, and many of them smell acceptable, and that’s unusual in show business, too.”

...AND THE DRAGONS WHO FIGHT BACK

According to the myths put together by the filmmakers, the Vikings came to Berk about seven generations before the film takes place. With their first foot set on Berk’s soil, so came the first dragon attack. And Vikings being Vikings—meaning incredibly stubborn—they refused to leave their newly chosen homeland. So they’re determined to stay and fight, and fight to win, no matter how long it takes. The raids come mostly at night, and it stands to reason that the dragons go somewhere during the day. If they could just find their nest, they would stand a chance of eradicating the threat of nighttime attacks that have plagued them for more than 300 years.

“How to Train Your Dragon,” fittingly, begins with such a night attack, with hordes of dragons—and not just one breed, mind you—bombarding Berk, flying off with sheep, and destroying property. Dean DeBlois explains, “It was very important to Chris and me to start off with a big set piece, because we wanted to establish, right off the bat, the fantasy action-adventure element and to set up the conflict between the Vikings and dragons. We wanted to give audiences a big bang and set a tone, with lots of excitement, while letting them know that there will be a story with emotion and heart. But the film is bookended by really big, exciting action sequences.”

And so, dragons. Lots of dragons.

“In Cressida Cowell’s original book, the dragons did speak. They had their own language, but we made a choice early on to have the dragons be more animal-like, with nonverbal communication. I think part of the reason was that it felt like that made the dragons more beasts, difficult to conquer, giving Hiccup and the Vikings a bigger obstacle to overcome. And ultimately, I think it made it more interesting for the animators, as well, because it really challenged them to give the dragons their own personalities, without relying on a voice. There is a sound element to it, but it’s really about how they move and their facial expressions, and that is what animation and 3D do so well. In the end, I believe that’s what differentiates our film from all the other dragon movies,” comments Arnold.

Of the multiple breeds of dragons included in Cowell’s work, the filmmakers chose to focus on six individual, and very different, kinds of dragons—and while they each get brief introductions during the opening attack sequence, they are truly showcased during the sequences of Dragon Training, where a specimen from each breed is studied as

it is thrown into the ring on successive training sessions. The film also includes a scene where Hiccup is leafing through the *Dragon Handbook*, where literally page after page is filled with a myriad of dragons—“That was our way of letting the audience get an idea how extensive this whole vast network of dragons surrounding these Vikings is. Then, they can understand that when they go out fishing or hunting, there may be a dragon hiding, in the water or in a crevice in a wall. Or up in a tree. And that makes their world seem even more complex and dangerous than we were able to do in the time we had,” adds Chris Sanders.

The filmmakers were so committed to creating the rich mythology of Berk, the Vikings and the dragons, they went to great lengths to establish their own version of Norse reality. Per Sanders: “As a kid, I was fascinated by blueprints, and I’ve been drawn to knowing how things work ever since. And I may have gone a little too far with the dragons. At one point, I wanted to know which dragon was the biggest and heaviest and such, as they’re kind of deceptive, because some are very long, some are very compact. So I asked visual effects supervisor Craig Ring if there is a way for them to calculate the volumes of the dragons. And at first he said no, but I knew they could. And within 24 hours, he came back to me and said, ‘Okay, they figured a way to do it.’ What they did was put virtual ping pong balls inside each dragon. And they basically filled each dragon and then counted how many were in each. So they came up with a ratio of which dragon was the biggest, the longest, and all that. And in case you’re wondering, the two-headed Hideous Zippleback is the biggest dragon, and the Gronckle is second.”

After Hiccup manages to shoot down one of the attacking dragons—which goes unnoticed by everyone in the village, given the chaos of the attack—he believes that this is his chance to cross the threshold and become a man, a Viking man, by slaying one of their mortal enemies. Jay Baruchel recounts, “He thinks he’s supposed to kill the thing, but his gut tells him that he can’t, but because the Viking in him—namely, his dad—would want him to kill the dragon, I think he really makes an effort. He makes a go of it, but he just can’t bring himself to do it, especially when it looks as pathetic as it does. He looks up, and just stares at Hiccup. In that moment, he realizes that the dragons are as scared of the Vikings as they are of them. So instead of killing it, he sets it loose. And

little by little, he eventually forges a bond with it, almost like *Black Beauty* or *White Fang*. It’s really tense and tentative at first, but it becomes quite magical.”

Chris Sanders pinpoints the emotionality in the scene: “In releasing the dragon, he starts this whole ball rolling. But it’s also really about revealing to Hiccup the awful truth. He comes into that scene just like he’s lived his whole life up to that moment, saying, ‘I’m a Viking, I’m a Viking, I’m a Viking and I can do this.’ And then, when that scene is over, he has to go home, realizing he’ll never be that one thing that his dad wants him to be.”

Head of story Alessandro Carloni boils it down even further by adding, “The fascinating point of the movie, from that moment on, is that, during the day, Hiccup is going to try to become the Viking that everyone expects him to be by training to fight dragons. But by night, he’s going to befriend one and learn to love one. So the whole second act of the movie is about the contrast between loving your enemy and learning how to kill it.”

And that enemy-slash-friend comes in one of the most mysterious breeds of dragons, known as a **Night Fury**. These black creatures are probably the ones most feared by Vikings, as the beginning of their nighttime attacks is nearly undetectable—except for the ballistic noise the diving Night Fury makes, before it briefly halts to deliver one precise and highly destructive burst of flame. Think *Blitzkrieg with Brains*. Sanders explains, “The design of Toothless was governed by one need, which was that if you’re going to have Hiccup, a Viking, befriend a dragon, which was the most forbidden thing he could do, we had to create the ultimate dragon.”

“We definitely wanted to go with the darkest possible color,” continues DeBlois, “a character that kind of hides in the night. And he has a lot of lore behind him that the Vikings actually fear, because they’ve never seen one. And so, in that sense, he had to be different looking, as well. Many of the dragons have a kind of theme going on, with a horn right up front, and very dragon-like in their very cool designs with a lot of color and texture. But we thought that Toothless should be a little bit more of a departure—sleek, aerodynamic and graceful. We started thinking of things like black panthers or large cats, and not so much reptilian as maybe mammalian. That was a direction we began to explore. We also really liked the idea of a stare, the one that would really define their

relationship and cause Hiccup to free him. The closest equivalent we could find to that was a big stare from a cat or a wolf—stoic, penetrating and powerful. Those are the elements we started with, which allowed us to explore different ideas, feline, wolf-like, and combining those with a little bit of reptilian to keep it in the world of dragons. And, eventually, we arrived at Toothless.”

Head of character animation Simon Otto: “I take the vision of the directors and production designer, Kathy Altieri, which gives me what the film should look like. From there, I pick it up and at that point say, ‘What sort of animation would work best with that story in that world?’ In this case, we have humans and dragons. The humans are fantastic characters that are extremely entertaining, but that also have to deliver a believable storyline, and be the ones that the audience will become emotionally attached to. That was one challenge, the other was the dragons. I had to split my time between those two worlds, looking at everything I could in the animal world with any similarities to our dragons—birds, bats, reptiles, mammals. When the black cat/panther and wolf references were chosen, we began to include surprising references like kangaroos and wombats—slightly odd creatures that we may not be too familiar with, and eventually we came up with a very warm animal that Hiccup, and the audience, can connect to.”

Perhaps the most comical of the dragons is the **Gronckle**, which seemed to be universally considered as the production’s favorite dragon (outside of Toothless, naturally). Someone even referred to it as “crocodile meets Harley Davidson,” because of its cumbersome, hippo-like shape, topped off with relatively small, bumblebee-ish wings. According to backstory, these guys are so lazy that they might actually fall asleep while flying. Chris Sanders: “But they’re just these generally likable, gregarious-looking guys. You probably would like to hang out with a Gronckle after work, if you could, just because they seem somewhat friendly and nice.”

But don’t be fooled by its comic potential, adds Dean DeBlois: “He really packs a wallop by hurling molten slugs of lava that come from ingesting rocks. He barfs them out, kind of like a cannonball. He’s probably the slowest, most dim-witted of the dragons—and because of that, he’s lovable and a lot of fun.”

The **Deadly Nadder** is a star in flight, most resembling a parrot, with its bright colors, and somewhat-developed reasoning capabilities—for a dragon, it’s very sneaky

and smart. But they are also terribly vicious, and most like Raptors in their tendency to land and confront their prey. Like a bird, however, it has a narrow range of view, so it has a blind spot that can be exploited during attack—an attack which includes a magnesium-based blast that sparkles like fireworks. So, if you disregard the horrible destruction, in the Nadder’s case, pretty is as pretty does.

As noted, the instantly recognizable, two-headed **Hideous Zippleback** is the largest of the dragons in the film—also, probably the coolest, if you ask the filmmakers. And not unlike Sanders and DeBlois, the Zippleback divides its duties, with one head breathing explosive gas, and the other igniting it. Unfortunately, very unlike the directors, this dragon rarely agrees on anything, and since the two heads have to work in tandem for ultimate destruction, it can miss its mark, especially if quarreling or confused.

The Chihuahua of the dragon world, the **Terrible Terror** is the smallest and most plentiful—and dubbed crowd favorite by the production for its tiny size and huge attitude. Its group dynamic is closest to seagulls—despite their huge numbers, and the potential for a really frightening and effective mass attack, they mostly forage for food, because infighting prevents them from organizing on any kind of group level. Also incapable of flying long distances, they hitch rides on larger dragons.

Perhaps the most “classic” of the film’s creatures, the **Monstrous Nightmare** most closely resembles the dragons of yore. They are alpha dragons, belligerent, and will land and face any Viking they see. Their fire is also particularly pernicious, as it is a sticky, gel-based fuel that coats and ignites its target. Also showy and a bit rock star-ish in their demeanor, Nightmares will coat themselves in their own flaming goo while attacking, to amp up the fear factor (show-offs). Because of their status in the Dragon Training class, they are the last dragon faced, and only the best in the class is chosen to face this beast—alone, in the ring, and surrounded by the entire spectating village. And this is a position the Nightmare loves—a crowd favorite, it adores the adulation, and stokes the Vikings with its bravado and fierce screams.

Chris Sanders is quick to point out, “No dragon shares a trait with another dragon, from its characteristics, to its fire, to its armor, to its secret weaponry. No dragon is the same. And we worked very hard to make sure that no dragon has it all. Every dragon

can trump another dragon, in some way, and yet every dragon has a weakness as well. I have to admit, that’s the thing I totally geek out and totally love about this project.”

All this fire fell to head of effects Matt Baer to create. He says, “Our biggest challenge on this film, visually, has been coming up with all the different types of fire that we need for all the different dragons, and then trying to make them all feel like they’ve all evolved at some point to be different. We pitched to the directors that each dragon would have its own type of fire, but at the same time, we didn’t want them to be so different that it would seem like this random scattering of different ideas. And our visual effects supervisor Craig Ring said that he wanted our fire to be dangerous. When you watch a lot of live-action sets, their fire dissipates quickly or doesn’t generate a lot of smoke. He wanted our fire to be so flammable that it could set dirt or concrete or anything on fire. So you’ll see some of the fire that the dragons breathe is viscous, and it can stick, or bounce and slide off things. It’s incredibly dangerous.”

To keep the different flying habits of the six types of dragons separate, Simon Otto and his department built what they termed a “flap cycle. It’s sort of a pre-animated flight cycle that these dragons go through. It’s a fairly mechanical system that allows us to flap these dragons in the same way in every shot. And, so, in all of these hundreds and thousands of controls that we have in the rig, we can actually control the flapping wings with a very small set amount of controls.”

DESIGNS OF AN AGE

As proven with some of the dragons, there is strength in numbers. The same could be said for computer animation, and among the ranks of “How to Train Your Dragon” are some of the finest in the industry, including executive producers Kristine Belson and Tim Johnson.

“Kristine has unbelievable amounts of energy,” says director Chris Sanders. “It’s not unusual for you to be discussing something with Kristine and she just suddenly goes off in the corner and does a headstand. I know that sounds crazy, but she’s anything but—she just has tons of energy. She uses that energy as a great champion of the film and has great instincts. Tim is one of those guys who is so smart and so well-spoken that

you feel a little less smart around him. You’ll hunt for some way to say something, and he’ll pop up with the perfect words. He expresses himself so well. On top of that, he has a great heart, and he has a really long track record with DreamWorks, so he really knows the ins and outs of the place. He’s been a great help in just guiding us through the process here, because it’s a little bit different at every studio. He’s got great ideas, calm presence, and just expresses himself so beautifully.”

To Belson, one of the key issues was truth, specifically to the story the filmmakers wanted to tell, and the source from where it was drawn: “We went back to Cressida’s book, and there’s a lot of spirit in there, and I think that it remains in the movie, but we have definitely moved a lot of it and pieced it around. I think, in a lot of ways, the movie has actually wound up being somewhat of a prequel to Cressida’s book.”

Cowell’s book was also a big draw for Johnson: “I have two little boys, and we call this the sore throat book, because I can’t resist reading it out loud with every accent. By the end of two chapters, you can’t read anymore, because your throat is raw. It’s that kind of writing that makes you want to inhabit the characters, to give them an accent, to be an outrageous personality—that was so appealing in the books, and it told us right away there was a big movie here. The world of Vikings and the exotic setting of these North Sea islands, the world of dragons, all of those add up to something greater than the individual parts, and makes for a really unique fantasy experience.”

Although most would consider the job of a film editor to be a post-production position, in the land of animation, it is exactly the opposite. Editor Darren Holmes on his role in the “Dragon” hierarchy: “I start from the very beginning, with no picture or sound whatsoever, and based on a script, or even just an idea, the story artist will draw panels. Much like a Sunday comic strip, these include indications of action and the dialogue that’s involved for the idea of each scene. Those panels are given to us individually, and we will then record (usually temporary dialogue) with people around the studio here, and then cut those scenes together, to get a sense of how the scene is working—if the character moments are tracking, if the comedy is there. Unlike live action, you’re actually able to go back and re-write and re-cut things that you haven’t even shot yet. It’s a much more fluid process. I like to compare it to the ability to project your script, inasmuch as you’re still able to re-write it while you’re still editing. You aren’t given all

the footage after eight weeks of shooting and asked, ‘Well, how do you put this together?’ And you only have the capability to move things within the confines of continuity—wardrobe, location, day or night. In animation, you’re able to move anything, any story point, to where it will properly fit in the film. And this allows you to spot a lot of potential problems earlier without being locked into having shot the whole scene. It’s not actually post-production, inasmuch as all of production. We start at the very point where the directors start with their script—the only people that come on before us are the story department, who draw the panels that we need. And we will work all the way through the process, from the initial storyboarding, to the first phases of layout—where we start to explore camera angles and cutting patterns—through animation, visual effects, final lighting, and even the sound process, too.”

To establish a lot of the visuals of the film, some of the designers undertook research trips—travelling miles by highway and by Internet. Dean DeBlois also tried to re-create a vision from a particularly singular landscape: “I’ve traveled to Iceland several times, and we tried to bring a lot of the lighting that’s present in Iceland to the film. We wanted a sense that there’s something very special about this place, and it lets you know that you’re way up there, somewhere in the North. Everything is so larger-than-life, lush and impressive, and it’s finding a balance between a place that would be very hard-going if you lived there, and somewhere that you would absolutely want to visit—just because you know that the sights and the sensations of standing there, on those windblown cliffs, with the raging sea, would be unbelievable. It’s this kind of energetic, magical place.”

Production designer Kathy Altieri and a team travelled from the top of the Washington coast, and followed the coastline all the way down to Northern California, taking photographs along the way, particularly at Cannonball Beach on the Oregon coast: “The great thing about the landscape there is that it’s all volcanic, with these great sea stacks—we replicated them in our film, albeit on a grander scale. There are black beaches with hard, heavy black rocks that we used as reference for the dragon’s home. And the color variation that you get in the cliffs around there is just phenomenal. This is stuff you could never possibly dream up in the wildest, most creative parts of your imagination.”

Sanders and DeBlois were lucky to be the recipients of a great deal of artwork — everything from breathtaking vistas to astounding characters. Much of those early renderings proved a quite sturdy foundation on which to build the Viking world in their film. “Given all of this incredible artwork, we knew the size and scope of the world and how larger-than-life everything was, from a table to a battle tower, so there had to be a very visceral, exciting pace of life for these Vikings,” remembers DeBlois.

For Jay Baruchel, even having recorded Hiccup for nearly two years, seeing the character and his environment come together was eye-opening: “I’d like to think that, after playing Hiccup for the better part of two years, I knew him like the back of my hand. That being said, seeing the final finished product of what Hiccup looked like, it was almost a goose bump moment. I was beaming with pride.”

Part of what Baruchel no doubt found awe-inspiring was the detail that DreamWorks Animation’s proprietary software was able to produce in things long considered “problem areas” in computer-generated animation.

“I’d like to think that I’ve come to know that in the world of computer animation, things like fur, hair and water are really tough to pull off convincingly,” says Sanders. “These Vikings are practically all fur and they are nearly all beard. Stoick’s beard is amazing, because it’s huge, just like he is. It moves so convincingly, and it kind of catches your eye, once in a while, because you’re just drawn to it because of the way it looks and moves. The fur that he wears is a real breakthrough and I challenge anybody not to be fascinated with it at some point when you watch this movie. In fact, all of the materials, the fur, the metal, the leather, the texturing and lighting are just unbelievable.”

Character effects supervisor Damon Crowe seconds, “This project is unique in the amount of fur that we have. We have beards on everybody. All the hero characters have fur on their garments somewhere. We’re dealing with interaction with that fur when characters get touched or just touch anywhere on themselves, and in addition the beards need to interact with the garments. We’ve tried to come up with some really good solutions to make the fur process more efficient in character effects, and we have some proprietary tools in house that do that job really well for us which we’ve been honing since ‘Shrek 2.’ I would say this film represents the farthest that we’ve come in our ability to make fur interact better with the characters.”

Dean DeBlois is also quick to credit art director Pierre-Olivier Vincent (nicknamed P.O.V.). “We realized right away that this world was going to be something that had a level of caricature to it, but it needed to be rendered in a very realistic way. And our design team completely grabbed onto it right away. The textures are so rich, the detail is amazing. There is a rich sense of atmosphere—foggy woods, storm-bashed coastlines, houses built out of massive timbers and battlements. Everything has a crazy, larger-than-life feel, which is very ‘Pierre-Olivier Vincent’—his artwork is huge and over-the-top. It really complements the people who live there, these giant Vikings, and it really accentuates how out of place Hiccup is in his environment, in his own house, in the village and on the island at large. I loved the visual contrast right away—this tiny little character, our main character, set against these gigantic backdrops.”

Production designer Altieri was intent on capturing the spirit of the Viking energy, with its “testosterone—these guys are big, they’re brawny, they’re energetic, they’re used to fighting as a daily way of life. That kind of energy should be evident in the visuals that we have in the film. There are houses that are built, strong and tough, to withstand anything. Along with the hard edges and rocky surfaces, the landscapes are twisted and caricatured and turned in a way that’s unlike anything that we’ve previously created.”

The final battle and climax of the film finds Hiccup and Toothless flying vertically up into the sky, in the midst of the biggest battle in Berk’s history—the scale is perhaps larger than anything DreamWorks Animation has done. During the hero’s ascent, he’s blasted by a single, gigantic column of fire, “that must be the size of a football stadium really, in real life, it’s huge. And when we saw it the first time, Dean and I were both screaming, like three-year-olds...and in 3D, it’s only worse, I mean, better,” says Sanders.

Not only is the story of Hiccup and Toothless told in 3D, but the breathtaking lighting, camera moves and angles are largely thanks to one of the most accomplished and lauded live-action cinematographers in the business—Roger Deakins, eight-time Oscar®-nominated for his stunning photography in such films as “Doubt,” “No Country for Old Men” and “O Brother, Where Art Thou?.” After Deakins was invited by the studio, Sanders and DeBlois pitched him the project—and to their delight, he agreed to

take on the project, serving as consultant to Kathy Altieri (production designer), Craig Ring (visual effects supervisor) and Gil Zimmerman (head of layout). Per DeBlois: “Roger influenced the lens choices, the camera work, and also the lighting – its sophistication with rich blacks and minimalistic or natural lighting is not something that’s done very often in animation. So the cumulative effect is that this film feels—and kind of lives and breathes—like a live-action film, in the best possible sense. And one that’s been rendered with the kind of poetic simplicity that only Roger can really bring to the mix.”

And where there are dragons, there is fire—lots and lots of fire. Head of effects Matt Baer: “On this film, we had what we called an ‘effects day,’ so all of Redwood City and the Glendale effects teams came together. We also hired this classic film pyrotechnician, and we hung out with him in the back parking lot. And for each show that was in development, including ‘Dragon,’ we asked him to show us the actual effects of what we were trying to create. And so, all day, he did all sorts of explosions, created blue fire and red fire, along with assorted fire blasts, blowing up glass and that sort of thing. And the cool thing about it is that we shot it on these cameras that were capturing at four-hundred to a thousand frames-per-second. So once we had that all digitized and in stereo, it’s been a great resource for everyone to just go through and really see what kinds of different textures and colors that you see in the different types of fires.”

In keeping with the studio dictum that all films be created and released in stereoscopic 3D, filmmakers had yet another tool in their box to bring the over-sized and testosterone-charged world of the Vikings to cinematic life.

Executive producer Johnson observes, “Honestly, 3D is an incredibly elaborate part of the process. I don’t think we were naïve when we went into it. We knew it was going to be a challenge. At the same time, it’s much more all-encompassing than we’d ever imagined, because we are authoring these pictures using the 3D tools—we’re not slapping it on with a process after it’s done. You want to build it into the very DNA of the storytelling. You want to make sure that you’re not using it as a trick, but as a way to enrich an audience’s connection—seeing through the eyes of the character, and being with the character as they go through their adventures. From the start, ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ has always been envisioned as a 3D movie, and very early on we had a lot

of conversations about how to use this technology to make an audience feel like they were with Hiccup, at his side, and on his dragon, as he bonded and eventually flew in the air with this incredible animal.”

DreamWorks’ Stereoscopic Supervisor, Phil ‘Captain 3D’ McNally, worked with filmmakers from the beginning, continuing to share his expertise of the medium and aide them in thinking dimensionally at all times. “We had dailies in the main theater—it’s important to see the work on as big a screen as possible to get the 3D effect as strongly as possible—and we’d be sitting there looking at the shots, the composition, the camera positioning, and I’d be adding input: ‘What if we make the lens a little wider? We could go a little bit deeper—or do you want the motion of the camera to be stronger here?’ Ultimately, it’s a balancing act between motion, depth and acting.

“It’s a different type of discipline,” continues McNally, “because traditional filmmaking has been all about 3D composition, basically taking a 3D space and converting it into 2D art. Now, what we’re doing is we’re taking a 3D space—whether that’s in the computer or, if people are working on live action at other studios—and converting it into a theatrical fantasy 3D space. We’re not making it completely flat, and we’re not making it like real life, either. We’re re-creating a new 3D space for the purpose of the theater, so that’s a new discipline. We already have great skill in doing two dimensional composition, and now we’re developing great skill for the extra dimension—and that’s new to everyone.”

Chris Sanders is almost embarrassed to admit something, but he confesses, “When I first started on this film, I wasn’t really convinced that it would be a great 3D film, and I was actually very afraid that we were going to have to come up with moments, sort of manipulate moments, to get the 3D out of it. I could not have been more wrong. It’s actually an incredible experience to watch this film in 3D, the scope of it, and particularly the flying. There are scenes—like Hiccup’s first flight on Toothless, and the Dragon Training sequence with the Nadder, with the kids being chased through a maze by the dragon—that are inconceivable to me now without the jaw-dropping effect that 3D has on them.”

Dean DeBlois says, “We designed all of our flying sequences to take advantage of that depth and make you feel like you’re on the back of that dragon, moving through the

clouds, having the horizon turned on its ear. All of the experience is really pushed in 3D, because suddenly it's dimension without being gimmicky. Up there, in the clouds with all that separation, feeling that vertigo of the land way beneath and the sky up above—it's a perfect use of the tool. When I think of 3D, I think of the best moments I've ever had, and a lot of them are theme park attractions—they are experiences where you are traveling through something, and putting that camera on the back of the dragon with Hiccup is really the best way we could conceive of taking advantage of the technology.”

But for all of its advantageous use of the latest in computer animation and 3D stereoscopic technology—is the story of Hiccup and his battle against the norm still front and center, still the heart of the film? No better person to address that issue than the author of the source material herself, Cressida Cowell. Producer Bonnie Arnold offers, “The true test for us was when she came to the studio with her family during summer break, and they got to see a lot of the film. Her kids completely bought into it and were very excited about all the characters—both things that were similar in the book and things that were completely different. When she came to the campus, she admitted that she was a bit nervous, seeing all these people working on the film, but I think to actually see it in progress was really exciting and fantastic for her. It was also very inspirational to our crew, because they wanted to make sure that they were doing things that were loyal to the book, but, at the same time, making it a bigger and different experience than the book. She visited with the animators, the effects artists, the lighters, and all of our different crews, and spent a lot of time with Chris, Dean and myself. She was very gracious and happy.”

The voice of Gobber, Craig Ferguson, echoes that experience when he observes, “You know why I love this movie? I see a parallel between Hiccup and his story and all of us and our fear—that once we have a relationship with it, it may, in fact, be the gateway to a bigger, more beautiful and interesting world. That's why this is a great movie. All of the effects and the animation are fantastic, they really are. But the essence of a film is what it does to you inside, and that's what this does to me in here. It's a very powerful story.”

VIKINGS AND DRAGONS FOREVER

Those who came aboard for the ride of Hiccup and Toothless were just as effusive about their own experiences on the project, starting with executive producer Tim Johnson: “What’s fascinating about dragons is you pick almost any culture on Earth, the Far East, Europe, anywhere, and everybody has their own dragon mythology. It’s something that is built into mankind, creating these noble, savage, terrifying monsters. Monster stories are a part of every culture. Overcoming your fear of these things, of the unknown, as a child, that’s part of every culture’s storytelling. For us to be a part of that kind of tradition—taking an animal as far-reaching culturally as a dragon, deciding to tell our own story using Cressida Cowell’s books, and bringing it into a 21st century version of a dragon story—that’s been one of the biggest honors and challenges of working on the movie.”

“I want audiences to feel like they’ve been on a ride as good as in any theme park. But more importantly, the film, it’s inspirational, it’s got hope, it’s got laughs, it’s fun, it’s heartwarming,” says producer Bonnie Arnold. “In addition to that, it has a nice message. Hiccup is a hopeful character. He befriends the mortal enemy of his village and it’s that relationship, between Hiccup and Toothless, which actually changes the world for the better.”

“The special effects in this movie are unbelievable,” adds writer/director Dean DeBlois. “The animation, the acting, they’re incredible. The lighting and the textures and the designs, everything is just at such a top-notch level that I couldn’t be happier with it. I marvel every day at what we accomplished. I’m beyond proud of this film, and I hope people see the care we took to make it.”

Adding to that sentiment, writer/director Chris Sanders says, “We wanted ‘How to Train Your Dragon’ to be a mythic experience. It’s a world of Vikings and dragons, of scaled wings and iron swords. We lift our audience off the ground and up into the clear Arctic air on the backs of flying monsters. We journey into the heart of a dangerous world and an impossible relationship with ancient creatures that have only existed in the pages of books till now. You won’t forget these characters, and you won’t forget this place..”

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About the Voice Cast

JAY BARUCHEL (Hiccup) continues to cement his leading man status in 2010 with a slew of high-profile projects. He recently wrapped production on the Bruckheimer Films/Disney feature “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice,” directed by Jon Turteltaub, in which he stars as the “Apprentice” opposite Nicolas Cage. The film is set to release in July 2010. He will also be starring in the DreamWorks romantic comedy “She’s Out of My League,” as well as the DreamWorks animated feature “How to Train Your Dragon,” as the lead voice of ‘Hiccup Horrendous Haddock the Third.’ Both films will be released in March 2010.

Also in development for Baruchel is Universal and Red Hour’s “Johnny Klutz,” in which he will play the title role of ‘Johnny Klutz,’ a character which he created--- a loveable loser who is impervious to pain. In addition, he will begin production on “Jay and Seth vs. the Apocalypse,” a feature length film based on a short film of the same name that he completed with Seth Rogen.

Roles in the Academy Award®-winning movie “Million Dollar Baby” opposite Clint Eastwood, Hilary Swank and Morgan Freeman and the summer blockbuster hit “Tropic Thunder” opposite Ben Stiller, Jack Black and Robert Downey Jr. garnered Baruchel much praise for his versatility. Most recently he was seen starring in Jacob Tierney’s comedy “The Trotsky,” which premiered at the 2009 Toronto Film Festival to rave reviews.

Baruchel has a long list of additional feature credits, including “Nick & Norah’s Infinite Playlist” opposite Michael Cera and Kat Dennings, “Knocked Up” opposite Seth Rogen and Katherine Heigl, “Just Buried,” which premiered at the 2007 Toronto Film Festival, “Real Time” opposite Randy Quaid, and in the memorable role of “Vic Munoz,” the obsessed Led Zeppelin fan in “Almost Famous.”

Baruchel began acting at age 12 when he landed a job on the Nickelodeon hit television series “Are You Afraid of the Dark?,” transforming what was to be a one-time guest appearance into a recurring role. The role was a springboard for his career, leading to his first Canadian series, “My Hometown.” He then made his debut to American

audiences as the star of the critically acclaimed Judd Apatow television series “Undeclared” on Fox.

GERARD BUTLER (Stoick) made his mark in Hollywood in 2007 starring as Leonidas, the Spartan King, in Zack Snyder's blockbuster “300.” The film broke box office records in its opening weekend and went on to earn more than \$450 million worldwide. The project solidified Butler as a leading man.

Last summer, Butler starred in the worldwide hit romantic comedy “The Ugly Truth” opposite Katherine Heigl. He also recently starred in the thrillers “Law Abiding Citizen” (which he also produced) and “Gamer.” Butler is currently starring in “The Bounty Hunter” opposite Jennifer Aniston for director Andy Tennant. His upcoming projects include Ralph Fiennes’ directorial debut “Coriolanus,” an adaptation of Shakespeare’s play, and in “Machine Gun Preacher,” for director Marc Forster.

Butler’s other recent roles include the Guy Ritchie feature “RocknRolla,” which placed him in the middle of a criminal underworld alongside Thandie Newton. He also starred in the children’s adventure film “Nim’s Island” opposite Jodie Foster and Abigail Breslin. In December 2007, Butler starred in the romantic drama “P.S. I Love You” with Hilary Swank.

In 2004, Butler won the coveted title role in the film version of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s “The Phantom of the Opera.” He earned critical acclaim for his work opposite Emily Mortimer in the independent feature “Dear Frankie,” which screened at the 2004 Cannes Film Festival. He has also been seen in “Beowulf & Grendel,” “The Game of Their Lives,” “Timeline,” “Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life” and “Reign of Fire.”

In 1997, Butler made his feature film debut in John Madden’s award-winning drama “Her Majesty, Mrs. Brown,” starring Judi Dench. His early film work includes roles in “Fast Food,” “One More Kiss,” “Harrison’s Flowers” and the 1999 screen adaptation of Chekhov’s “The Cherry Orchard.”

Born in Scotland, Butler made his stage debut at the age of twelve in the musical “Oliver!” at Glasgow’s famous Kings Theatre. As a young man, his dreams of acting were temporarily deterred and he went on to study law for seven years before returning to

the stage in London. In 1996, he landed the lead role in the acclaimed stage production of “Trainspotting.” He later starred on the London Stage in such plays as “Snatch” and the Donmar Warehouse production of Tennessee Williams’ “Suddenly, Last Summer,” opposite Rachel Weisz.

CRAIG FERGUSON (Gobber) entered the world of late-night comedy following a diverse and eclectic career that encompasses film, television and the stage. Since he took the helm of “The Late Late Show” on January 3, 2005, the show has set all-time viewer records in the four years that it has been on the air. Born in Glasgow, Scotland, Ferguson got his start in the entertainment industry as a drummer for some of the worst punk bands in the U.K., a profession he held for several years. Following his musical stint, he began bartending in a local pub in Glasgow, where he was introduced to Michael Boyd, the artistic director of The Tron Theatre in Glasgow, who persuaded Ferguson to give acting a go. After several low-paying acting gigs, Ferguson discovered he had a knack for comedy and was soon the star of his own BBC television show, “The Ferguson Theory.”

Ferguson has written the feature films “The Big Tease” and “Saving Grace.” In 2003, he made his directorial debut with “I’ll Be There,” which he also wrote and starred in. “I’ll Be There” went on to receive the Audience Award for Best Film at the Aspen, Dallas, and Valencia Film Festivals. Ferguson was also named “best new director” at the Napa Valley Film Festival. Ferguson’s other film credits include “Niagra Motel,” “Lenny the Wonder Dog,” “Prendimi l’anima,” “Life Without Dick,” “Chain of Fools,” “Born Romantic” and “The Big Tease.” Since coming into his own on “The Late Late Show with Craig Ferguson” and earning his first Emmy nomination in 2006, Ferguson has seem to become the topic of conversation within the media and a growing trend of success in 2010.

In February 2008 he succeeded in becoming a US Citizen, mentioning that this is his home after thirteen years and “my heart is here.” Soon after, Ferguson landed himself the biggest date of all: a date with President Bush hosting the White House Correspondence Dinner. Critics raved about his witty and comical deliverance speech to the 3,000 attendees who included political journalists, celebrities, and Washington’s

power players. Last fall, Harper Collins published Ferguson’s memoir *America On Purpose*, a book about why and how late night funnyman Craig Ferguson became an American. The book was listed on the *New York Times* bestseller list and continues to sell well. Ferguson also serves on the board of the Lollipop Theater Network. The mission of the Lollipop Theater Network is to bring movies that are currently in theatrical release to hospitalized children facing chronic and life-threatening illness nationwide.

AMERICA FERRERA (Astrid) stars as the title character in the hit ABC series “Ugly Betty.” Ferrera’s portrayal of Betty has earned her an Emmy for Best Actress in a Comedy Series, a Golden Globe for Best Performance by an Actress in a Television Series-Musical or Comedy, and a Screen Actors Guild Award® for Outstanding Performance for a Lead Actress in a Comedy Series, as well as ALMA and Imagen Awards.

Ferrera secured her place as one of Hollywood’s most vibrant young talents with her starring role in the Patricia Cardoso film “Real Women Have Curves.” Her performance earned her a Sundance Jury Award for Best Actress, an Independent Spirit Award nomination for Best Debut Performance, and a Young Artist Award nomination for Best Performance for a Leading Young Actress. Ferrera stars in and executive produced “The Dry Land,” opposite Melissa Leo and Jason Ritter, which premiered at the 2010 Sundance Film Festival. She can next be seen in Rick Famuyiwa’s “Our Family Wedding,” opposite Forest Whitaker and Carlos Mencia, which will be released by Fox Searchlight on March 12th, 2010.

Recent feature film work includes Warner Bros.’ “The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants 2,” the sequel to the hit 2005 film she starred in. She also starred in the bilingual independent film “Towards Darkness,” which she executive produced, and Fox Searchlight’s independent film “Under the Same Moon.”

Ferrera currently serves as an Artist Ambassador for the global humanitarian organization Save the Children, with a focus on championing education for children in marginalized communities, both in the United States and in developing countries.

JONAH HILL (Snotlout) has quickly become one of Hollywood’s most sought after comedic talents, due in part to his starring role opposite Michael Cera in the acclaimed hit “Superbad,” produced by Judd Apatow, directed by Greg Mottola and written by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg. Hill was most recently seen in Apatow’s “Funny People,” with Adam Sandler and Rogen, and he made a cameo appearance in the 2009 summer hit film “Night at the Museum: Battle of the Smithsonian,” opposite Ben Stiller. Hill was seen in the recently released “The Invention of Lying” starring Ricky Gervais, Jennifer Garner and Tina Fey, and will soon be seen in several upcoming features, including a comedy from writing/directing team Jay and Mark Duplass and Nicholas Stoller’s “Get Him to the Greek,” opposite Russell Brand and produced by Apatow, due for release in June 2010.

The 26-year-old continues to confirm his place among a new generation of comedic writer/actors, currently co-writing “The Adventurer’s Handbook,” in which he will also co-star with Jason Segel. He is also co-writing the big screen adaptation of the hit TV series “21 Jump Street”; co-writing the Apatow-produced comedy “The Middle Child,” in which he will also star; and writing, producing (with Apatow) and starring in the romantic comedy “Pure Imagination.” Hill recently served as associate producer on the Sacha Baron Cohen comedy “Bruno.”

He played alongside Segel, Russell Brand and Kristen Bell in the Apatow comedy “Forgetting Sarah Marshall.” Produced by Apatow and Shauna Robertson, and directed by Nicholas Stoller, the film went on to make over \$100 million worldwide.

Hill began his career performing one-scene plays that he wrote and performed at the gritty Black & White bar in New York City. After landing a role in David O. Russell’s “I Heart Huckabees” with Dustin Hoffman and Lilly Tomlin, Hill was next seen in Judd Apatow’s 2005 summer hit comedy “The 40-Year-Old Virgin” with Steve Carell.

Other film credits for Hill include “Click,” “10 Items or Less,” “Evan Almighty” and “Accepted,” and he was seen presenting at the 80th Annual Academy Awards®. In addition to his role in “How to Train Your Dragon,” Hill will also lend his voice to the DreamWorks Animation film “Megamind,” starring Will Ferrell, Brad Pitt and Tina Fey, out this Fall.

CHRISTOPHER MINTZ-PLASSE (Fishlegs) is quickly becoming one of the most sought after young comedic actors in Hollywood, thanks to his unforgettable film debut as “Fogell” aka “McLovin” opposite Michael Cera and Jonah Hill in the acclaimed teen hit “Superbad” in 2007. Last year, Mintz-Plasse was featured in the hit comedy “Role Models.” 2010 is a busy year for Mintz-Plasse, with upcoming projects including a starring role as “Red Mist” in the teen super-hero film “Kick-Ass.” The film also stars Nicolas Cage and Clark Duke and is set for release in April. Mintz-Plasse will also be lending his voice to the character “Giuseppe” in the upcoming film “Marmaduke,” set for release in June 2010.

T.J. MILLER (Tuffnut) was named one of *Variety*’s Top 10 “Comics to Watch” as well as one of *Entertainment Weekly*’s “Next Big Things in Comedy.” Over the next year, he will appear in “Gulliver’s Travels,” “Get Him to the Greek” and “Unstoppable” and will voice a character in “How to Train Your Dragon.” He is currently in New Zealand filming “Yogi Bear,” in which he’ll play Ranger Jones. Previously, Miller appeared in Mike Judge’s “Extract” and starred in J.J. Abrams’ “Cloverfield” and the Russo brothers’ show “Carpoolers” on ABC. He hails from Denver, Colorado, and toured with Second City for almost two years. In 2007, he moved to Los Angeles, where he continues to reside and, by his own admission, struggles to find meaning in an uncertain world.

A comedic star borne from the “Saturday Night Live” stage, **KRISTEN WIIG** (Ruffnut) has become one of the most sought after talents in film and television today. Wiig recently earned her first Emmy nomination as Outstanding Supporting Actress in a Comedy Series for her incredible work playing such memorable characters as the excitable Target Clerk, the hilarious one-upper Penelope, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, and Suze Orman, among others.

Wiig’s upcoming films include the following: “MacGruber,” in which she stars opposite fellow “SNL” cast member Will Forte and Ryan Phillippe; Greg Mottola’s “Paul,” co-starring Simon Pegg; and her first purely dramatic role opposite Ryan Gosling, Kirsten Dunst and Frank Langella in Andrew Jarecki’s “All Good Things.” She also

contributes voice work in two upcoming animated feature films, DreamWorks Animation’s “How to Train Your Dragon” with Gerard Butler and Jay Baruchel and Universal’s “Despicable Me” with Steve Carell and Jason Segel.

Wiig made her big screen debut to universal high praise as Katherine Heigl’s passive-aggressive boss in Judd Apatow’s smash-hit comedy “Knocked Up.” Her additional film credits include Mike Judge’s “Extract” with Jason Bateman, Ben Affleck and Mila Kunis; “Whip It!,” Drew Barrymore’s directorial debut, starring Ellen Page; Greg Mottola’s “Adventureland” with Ryan Reynolds, Kristen Stewart and Jesse Eisenberg; David Koepp’s “Ghost Town” with Ricky Gervais; and Jake Kasdan’s “Walk Hard,” another Apatow-produced film in which she starred opposite John C. Reilly.

A native of Rochester, New York, Wiig worked as a main company member of the Los Angeles-based improv/sketch comedy troupe The Groundlings. She joins the ranks of “SNL” castmates Maya Rudolph, Will Ferrell, Phil Hartman and Jon Lovitz, also Groundlings alumni. Wiig lives in New York City.

About the Filmmakers

Born into an artistic household in Colorado, **CHRIS SANDERS** (Writer / Director) grew up drawing and penning short stories. Although Sanders drew throughout school and served as the cartoonist for the Arvada High School newspaper, he hadn't considered art as something he could do for a living. But when his grandmother found a random article about the California Institute of the Arts (or CalArts) in the *Denver Post*, everything changed. Sanders applied for and was accepted to CalArts' Animation Program, and went on to work for Marvel Productions, and then Disney Studios. He worked as a story artist on “Rescuers Down Under,” “Beauty and the Beast,” “Aladdin” and “The Lion King,” before he was made head of story on “Mulan.”

It was towards the end of production on the film “Mulan” when then-Head of Disney Feature Animation Tom Schumacher asked Sanders if there was anything he wanted to develop. Sanders recalled a story from 18 years before that he had tried to write as a children's book, but had given up on because he couldn't compress it into a short-story format. Over a sushi dinner with Schumacher at the Walt Disney World Swan Resort, he pitched the story—a tale of a strange forest creature, shunned by all, and unaware of his own origins. Schumacher liked it, and when he suggested that Sanders relocate the tale of the lonely little monster into the human world, “Lilo & Stitch” was born.

Sanders wrote, boarded and directed “Lilo” with Dean DeBlois. In 2006, he left Disney Studios to join the filmmaking team at DreamWorks Animation.

Canadian-born **DEAN DeBLOIS** (Writer / Director) is a film director, screenwriter and animator who is equally at home in the worlds of live-action and animation filmmaking. Although already an accomplished animator and writer at the time the film became a worldwide hit, DeBlois is perhaps best known for co-writing and co-directing Walt Disney Animation Studios' “Lilo & Stitch.” He later stepped behind the live-action camera to direct the indie critical darling “Heima,” which documents alternative/post-rock band Sigur Rós' series of free, unannounced concerts performed in

their home country of Iceland. He also previously served as head of story on the Disney hit “Mulan.”

He is set to write, produce and direct the live-action comedy “The Banshee and Fin Magee” for Walt Disney Pictures. In addition, he has several live-action projects in development at Universal Studios and The Walt Disney Studio, on which he is serving as writer, director and producer.

DeBlois started his career at Hinton Animation Studios and worked as animator on the television series “The Raccoons.” He next joined Don Bluth’s Sullivan Bluth Studios in Ireland and worked on the animated features “Thumbelina” and “A Troll in Central Park.”

BONNIE ARNOLD (Producer) is an accomplished filmmaker in nearly every genre. She recently produced the Sony Pictures Classics release “The Last Station,” which received two Oscar® nominations as well as award nominations from the Screen Actors Guild; the Golden Globes; and the Independent Spirit Awards, including a nomination for Best Picture. In addition, she produced the 2006 DreamWorks release “Over the Hedge,” the Disney blockbuster “Tarzan” and the history-making film “Toy Story,” which combined have earned more than \$1 billion in worldwide box office revenue.

Arnold’s previous production credits include a list of titles, among them the Oscar®-winning epic Western “Dances with Wolves” and the hit comedy “The Addams Family.” Arnold’s interest in journalism led to her first entertainment industry assignment as the unit publicist for American Playhouse’s debut production, “King of America.” Following that, she worked with several independent filmmakers via the American Film Institute and the Atlanta Independent Film and Video Festival.

Her work in promoting independent films influenced her decision to pursue a career as a producer. Arnold is a member of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences as well as the Producers Guild of America.

KRISTINE BELSON (Executive Producer) is currently pulling double duty for DreamWorks Animation, handling producing duties for both “How to Train Your

Dragon” and “The Croods.” Belson brought to DreamWorks Animation more than 15 years’ experience developing and producing both live-action and animated films. She most recently spent eight years as Executive Vice President of Production at the Jim Henson Company. During her tenure, she developed a slate of more than 40 live-action and animated films. In addition, she served as an executive producer on “Muppets from Space,” producer on “Good Boy!” and co-producer on “5 Children & It” and “The Muppets’ Wizard of Oz.”

Prior to joining The Jim Henson Company, Belson held the post of Senior Vice President of Production for Columbia Pictures, overseeing such films as “Big Daddy” and “Can’t Hardly Wait.” Before her stint at Columbia, she served as Senior Vice President for Turner Pictures, and also spent two years as Director of Production at 20th Century Fox.

TIM JOHNSON (Executive Producer) most recently co-directed the hit computer-animated comedy “Over the Hedge” and the animated action-adventure “Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas” for DreamWorks Animation. In addition, he served as co-director of the 1998 computer-animated hit “Antz” during his tenure at PDI/DreamWorks.

Johnson joined PDI in 1988, and two years later co-founded the studio’s Character Animation Group. He later served as animation director on the 1995 “The Simpsons” Halloween special “Homer3,” leading the team in transforming the 2-dimensional Homer into a 3-dimensional world. The episode has remained a favorite of fans of “The Simpsons,” and has become a classic to animation aficionados.

Johnson’s background in film and animation dates back to his college years. While earning a BA in English Literature at Northwestern University, he produced two animated films, both of which earned Richter Grant Organization Awards. Upon graduation, he worked for two years as a freelance cel animator and director. His introduction to computer animation came in 1985 while he was on staff at Post Effects in Chicago.

KATHY ALTIERI (Production Designer) was the first artist hired when DreamWorks Animation opened its doors in 1994, serving as Art Director on the studio’s first film, “The Prince of Egypt.” She later served as Production Designer on “Over the Hedge” and “Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron.”

Before joining DreamWorks, Altieri worked at Disney Feature Animation as a background supervisor on “Aladdin,” the featurette “The Prince and the Pauper,” and the Roger Rabbit short “Tummy Trouble.” She was also a background painter for such animated successes as “The Lion King,” “The Little Mermaid,” “The Hunchback of Notre Dame,” and another Roger Rabbit short, “Roller Coaster Rabbit.” It was this opportunity at Disney, working directly with Jeffrey Katzenberg, that made her talent and work ethic known.

Altieri attended the University of California at Los Angeles as an Art Major and also studied Illustration at Pasadena’s Art Center for three years. She frequently teaches and speaks at conferences, festivals and various schools about art, animation and hard work.

PIERRE-OLIVIER VINCENT (Art Director) most recently worked on the computer-animated DreamWorks Animation and Aardman comedy “Flushed Away.”

Vincent joined the studio as a layout artist on “The Road to El Dorado” and went on to character design for the animated adventure “Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron.” He also served as lead sequence design artist on “Shark Tale.”

Prior to joining DreamWorks Animation, Vincent worked as a visual development artist at Gaumont Multimedia on various television animation projects.

CRAIG RING (Visual Effects Supervisor) most recently served as Visual Effects Supervisor on the animated comedy “Over the Hedge” and on the mini-movie “Hammy’s Boomerang Adventure.” He previously served as the Digital Supervisor on “Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas.”

Prior to joining DreamWorks Animation, Ring was based at PDI/DreamWorks in Redwood City, California. While there, he worked as a CG Supervisor on the traditionally animated “The Road to El Dorado” and was also the lead lighting supervisor

for DreamWorks’ first computer-animated release, “Antz.” In addition, Ring worked on such live-action features as “Batman and Robin,” “The Peacemaker,” “The Arrival” and “Batman Forever.”

Before joining PDI/DreamWorks, Ring was a Technical Director at Industrial Light & Magic, where he worked on the Oscar®-winning feature “Forrest Gump.” He began his career working in product design, software design and digital hardware design at Hewlett-Packard. He has a dual BS degree from Stanford University in Product Design and Electrical Engineering.

Prior to joining the crew of “How to Train Your Dragon,” **ALESSANDRO CARLONI** (Head of Story) worked as a supervising animator on the Academy Award®-nominated “Kung Fu Panda,” and as a story artist and animator on “Over the Hedge.” As story artist, Carloni was responsible for using rough sketches to take the script and translate it visually. As an animator, he breathed life into characters by providing movement and actions. Carloni first joined DreamWorks in 2002 as an animator working on the lead character in “Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas.”

Carloni has a wide variety of experience within the animation industry and has often held several positions during the course of production on any given animated project. In the realm of feature animation, Carloni worked as a supervising animator and sculptor on “Help! I’m a Fish,” as a character animator on “Tobias Totz” and as an animator and clean-up artist on “The Fearless Four.” As for animated shorts, Carloni served as a director, designer, storyboard and animation supervisor on “Fire Flies,” which he created for the national Italian broadcast outlet Canale 5, and for which he won an Image Award for Most Outstanding Television Commissioned Film of 2001 at the Image Award Festival. He was also a co-director, animation director, sculptor, special effects supervisor, storyboard and visual development artist on “The Shark and the Piano,” which merited several awards, including the Prix Air Nova Award for Best Short Film at the International Canada Film Festival and the Grand Jury Award for Outstanding Short Animation Film at the Castelli Animati Animation Festival.

Hailing from Bologna, Italy, Carloni has studied a number of fine arts disciplines at various institutions. He has an Art Degree from Art Iyceum and Art College, and has also studied music composition, harmony and arrangement at the CPM Music Institute.

SIMON OTTO (Head of Character Animation) has been a key artist at DreamWorks Animation for nearly 13 years. He previously worked as an animator on the hit comedy “Bee Movie” and as a supervising animator on the DreamWorks Animation/Aardman Features computer-animated comedy “Flushed Away.” He was a character designer on the hit 2006 animated comedy “Over the Hedge,” and served as an animator on the studio’s Academy Award®-nominated hit comedy “Shark Tale.”

In addition, he worked as a supervising animator on the title character of Sinbad, as well as his crewmates Jin and Li, on the studio’s animated adventure tale “Sinbad: Legend of the Seven Seas.” Additionally, he worked as an animator on the lead character in the Academy Award®-nominated adventure “Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron,” and also supervised the animation of the eagle in that film. Otto began his career at DreamWorks in 1997, as an animator on the epic “The Prince of Egypt,” as well as the comedy adventure “The Road to El Dorado.”

Prior to joining DreamWorks Animation, Otto studied animation at the renowned Les Gobelins in Paris, France, and received additional training during an internship with Walt Disney Feature Animation in Paris. He began his career in the arts industry as a snow sculpture artist and news cartoonist. Otto is a native of Switzerland.

PHIL McNALLY (Stereoscopic Supervisor) most recently served as stereoscopic supervisor on DreamWorks’ “Monsters vs. Aliens.” Hailed as the expert on all things 3D, McNally was introduced to stereoscopic photography in 1990 while studying at the Royal College of Art in London. This hobby soon became his passion and has developed over the years through a range of creative projects—from Viewmaster promotional reels to gallery installations.

In 2001 McNally moved to California to work as an animator at Industrial Light & Magic after the success of his short animated film “Pump-Action.” His stereoscopic experience was rewarded when Disney tasked ILM with converting “Chicken Little” into a 3D release in 2005. Since then, McNally has supervised the stereoscopic work on Disney’s “Meet the Robinsons” and advised on the 3D conversion of “The Nightmare Before Christmas.”

MATT BAER (Head of Effects) joined PDI/DreamWorks in 1999, handling cloth effects for “Shrek.” He then went to work as an effects animator on “Shrek 2” and the television special “Shrek the Halls.” Baer served as Visual Effects Lead on the studio’s “Madagascar” and as Supervising Effects Lead “The Madagascar Penguins in a Christmas Caper.”

Prior to joining PDI/DreamWorks, Baer worked as an effects animator at Tippett Studio. He began his career at Grayphics in Santa Barbara as a designer and color corrector before joining Alias|Wavefront as a software consultant. Baer also did work as a freelancer with Santa Barbara Studios.

Baer received an MA in Business and Arts from Westmont College, Santa Barbara and also took various physics and programming classes as enhancements to his education.

About the Dragons

The rarest and most intelligent of the dragon species, the **NIGHT FURY** is distinguished by its dark color and piercing yellow eyes, as well as its smaller size, heavy chest and short neck. Possessing the largest wing-to-body ratio of all dragons, it can fly higher, faster and longer than any dragon, and its incredible power-to-weight ratio renders it capable of vertical takeoff. Yet, all that grace in the air translates into clumsiness on the ground. Its unconventional fire (a semi-solid mass alight with an acetylene/oxygen flame) explodes its target on impact. Its signature attack mode is executed after sundown and from high altitude—enwrapped in its wings, it dives like a bullet, pulling up at the last moment to deliver one precise and explosive burst...then vanishing back into the darkness. The only warning is the ballistic noise the diving Night Fury makes. Its kamikaze attack, along with its cautious behavior and analytical mind, makes the Night Fury a devastating opponent with an extraordinary success rate. To date, no Night Fury has ever been brought down.

Don't be fooled, because the beautifully colored **DEADLY NADDER**—displaying tropical palettes as vivid and varied as a parrot—is also extremely dangerous. It is flighty, aggressive, and has a quick and explosive temper, which is made all the worse by its preening vanity. Its attack is two-pronged: it can breathe pure magnesium (the hottest dragon fire) hundreds of yards; and it can whip off a load of lethal spikes with a flick of its tail. This—along with the fact that its danger in the air is topped by its danger on the ground—makes it one of the most difficult dragons to fight. Carried by muscular and quick-moving legs, it can also fan spikes on its body and defend itself with its crushing crossbill beak. Its head also doubles as a battering ram, capable of knocking down all but the sturdiest walls and doors. Its weak point is its eyesight – because its eyes are on the side of its head, the Deadly Nadder suffers from a huge blind spot right in front of itself.

The flagship of the dragon species, the **MONSTROUS NIGHTMARE** is the most visually terrifying and iconic of known dragon species. The mostly red and black Monstrous Nightmare is violent, stubborn and tenacious, first to arrive and last to leave a battle. It is gifted with exceptionally good vision and extendable wings that make it appear even bigger, intimidating its enemies. It can attack on the ground (clinging to walls and utilizing its gigantic mouth and long horns at close range) as well as in the air—even though its enormous wings make it slow-going on land and its size renders it an easy target. That is compensated for by its armory of spikes and its greatest weapon, a kerosene gel fire. This heavy, sticky fire coats surfaces and seeps into cracks and trenches, making it nearly impossible to put out. Its strategy is to coat itself in fire from nose to tail and attack its enemy as it burns.

The **GRONCKLE** is distinguished by its robust body and relatively tiny wings that can flap with tremendous velocity, endowing it with the ability to fly backwards or sideways. The Gronckle loves to sleep, and can sometimes be seen dozing off in flight or piling on top of its peers, creating a giant heap of sleeping dragons. It divides its day thusly – Flying 1%. Eating 5%. Complaining 10%. Sleeping 84%. While attacking, the Gronckle smashes and crushes enemies with its extendable tail, capped with a mace-like ball, or by using its head as a battering ram. But deadliest is its fire—hundreds of pounds of ingested rocks are melted into lava, which is combined with oxygen (from breathing) and propelled like a flaming cannon ball at its attacker. Its Achilles heel is its terrible vision, sometimes even mistaking rocks as its eggs and sitting on them, waiting for them to hatch.

The most unusual of the dragons, the **HIDEOUS ZIPPLEBACK** is easy to spot (and easy to figure out where it got its name): just look for the two heads, each on separate necks that can “zip” together. While it’s the longest dragon, it also has the smallest wings, along with short, stocky legs—so it’s neither great in the air nor effective on the ground. Little matter, as its unusual attack is especially lethal. Instead of breathing fire, one head produces a flammable gas, while the other ignites it with a spark. It can, therefore, attack from remote locations, with the gas seeping into corners and

crevices before it is ignited. Its physical shortcomings and dull mind have contributed to this beast’s near extinction. Its greatest strength—two heads—is also its greatest weakness, as the two separate and limited minds often disagree, leaving it stalled and vulnerable. Likewise, multiple Vikings can confuse and defeat it. Male Zibblebacks often egg themselves on until they blow themselves up—females are more reasonable and live longer.

Of all known dragons, the **TERRIBLE TERROR** is both the smallest in stature and the most numerous in population. Even though it travels in packs, it loses the advantage of its large numbers by constant infighting, rather than focusing on creating a cooperative plan of attack. This renders them ineffective in battle, so they scavenge for food instead of hunting for it. Because the Terrible Terror cannot fly great distances, it attaches itself to larger dragons for free rides. This dragon’s high rate of reproduction and its non-confrontational attitude towards humans have allowed it to thrive, despite its disadvantages. Although there are reportedly thousands of Terrors, it is rarely sighted—some Vikings go their entire lives without seeing one.

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