

Winners Conference: Special Visual Effects

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Gravity

Q. Special effects, special visual effects, guys, make the impossible possible on a daily basis. But even so, when Alfonso Cuarón came to you and said "We want to do this", did you think maybe that is too far because we can't quite do that?

TIM WEBBER: Initially it felt like a challenging film, but actually, a few weeks into thinking about it more, I think we realised it was more than just a challenging film, it was a massive leap forwards in challenges and we were going to have to invent whole new techniques and new ways of doing it. In fact, it was not even just a few weeks in because a lot of it came from Alfonso working out how he wanted to tell the story, the incredibly long shots, the amount of movement that we need in space, and just how tricky it is to simulate zero gravity. You kind of don't realise it until you get into it.

Q. If you look at your resumes on the IMDB, there are three or four-year gaps for most of you. There are some in 2008 and then there is *Gravity* in 2013. How long did you spend on this movie, all of you?

TIM WEBBER: I spent three years solid plus a little bit more.

CHRIS LAWRENCE: I was just over three years.

NIKKI PENNY: I was over three years.

DAVID SHIRK: It was a bit over a year and a half.

Q. That is easy. Neil?

NEIL CORBOULD: On and off, two years.

NEW SPEAKER: Tim, this was a groundbreaking movie in terms of special effects and 3D and everything. How important is it, do you think, in terms of cinema history?

TIM WEBBER: I think that's impossible to judge now. I wouldn't, you know, like to be able to tell the future and more than impossible to judge when you are inside it. I mean, the effect it's had on people is amazing. The number of people who have come up to me and said: oh, when I saw the look on my son's face, I could tell this was his moment when he realised what cinema could be. Stories like that. It is amazingly gratifying to know that you have helped make something that has had that effect. So hopefully it will last, but you can't really be sure.

NEW SPEAKER: Were you aware you were definitely the front runners? I mean, there was nobody who was going to come close tonight. Nobody had a hope. Were you aware that the odds were on you?

CHRIS LAWRENCE: A lot of people came and told us that, but I don't think it sinks in. The

other films were very good. There was lots of great work there. It wouldn't have been a shameful thing to have lost to any of them, I think. It is ...

TIM WEBBER: When I went to the bake off for the Oscars and the top 10 films of the year are shown, I was just blown away by the quality of all of them. I think it was an amazingly good year.

Q. And a shoe-in for the Oscars. 100 per cent?

TIM WEBBER: There is no such thing.

NEW SPEAKER: Was it important that Alfonso used an English company, do you think?

TIM WEBBER: Yeah, I think it was something he really wanted to do. Does someone else want to ...? Okay.

You know, I had worked with him before, at Framestore and you know, it was something he wanted to do. I think he wanted to work in London for a number of reasons and, you know, he knew us and he knew me and I think that was important to him.

CHRIS LAWRENCE: It is a very international theme, I should say. David is American. We have had people from all over the world working on it, but ... (Laughs)

NEW SPEAKER: Tim, it could be a question for you. Are there breakthroughs that you made in *Gravity* which are being used now in films that are being made at the moment?

TIM WEBBER: Well, there are. I mean, there's -- you know, the whole of what we put together was kind of specific to a movie set in space, but having said that, there's many little aspects of what we did that are being used and developed further. And we are very keen. We have been talking a lot about sort of bringing them more together and making it more available to be used, because there are many incredibly useful things within it that can certainly be used in the future.

NEW SPEAKER: I would like to ask you: how were the contributions he gave since he is not an expert in what you actually are? How was he getting involved with the process? What were his suggestions?

DAVID SHIRK: I will jump on that. Yes, it is interesting. In getting him to work with Alfonso, is that he brought a perspective that never, never allowed for us to ever hold back, because we said: well, that is really difficult, or that is something that we hadn't planned on doing. He came at the perspective: this is what I want to see in my film. He had a really, really clear vision for us and he was never satisfied until we were able to hit that mark. He was tremendously collaborative, incredibly generous with the crew, and because of extending that generosity to us, I saw this crew work incredibly hard in -- in a way that was pretty striking to me. We were locked in these kind of dark, cramped rooms for years and people were just pouring themselves into this movie, and I think it was because he was there with us every day and just pushing things forward and really felt like a collaborator. We were never just showing him things. We were participating with him.

NEW SPEAKER: You have already explained that it was, you know, a very international

collaboration. But for the British side of it, there were some criticisms from some quarters that *Gravity* was not really a British film, despite the fact that it was filmed here or the effects were here. Would some of the Brits among you like to say something about that

element of it and whether you think BAFTA was right to put you in that category?

NIKKI PENNY: It is a very difficult one to answer, except for the fact that everybody was, you know, at Framstore and the key crew are English and American. And I think it was - it was a sensible move by BAFTA to keep it in that category. I think it deserves to be there.

NEW SPEAKER: Fantastic film and great special effects. I just wondered whether there are any moments in the film where you think: actually, I could have done something a little bit better? (laughter)

CHRIS LAWRENCE: The nice thing for me about watching it, there was about a year between when I finished working on it and when I saw the finished product. Normally when I work a movie, when I finally see it I'm cringing and think: this bit, that thing. When I watched *Gravity* I was so taken on such a rollercoaster ride of the story, I did not even see these little things.

So it took me like three times watching it a year later after I finished it that I saw anything.