

## MARKING TIME

**PRODUCER JEREMY LATCHAM, WHO HAS EARNED THE PRODUCERS MARK FOR HIS WORK ON THE FILM ADAPTATION OF THE POPULAR BOARD GAME DUNGEONS & DRAGONS, TALKS ABOUT APPROXIMATING ITS ROLE-PLAYING MAGIC, AND WHY HE'S AS EXCITED ABOUT THIS AS ANYTHING HE WORKED ON IN HIS 14 YEARS AT MARVEL.**

Jeremy Latcham, a producer on the upcoming board game adaptation *Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves* (March 31), is familiar with big pop culture IPs. As a Marvel movie veteran, he served as an associate producer on the first *Iron Man* (2008) and executive producer on *The Avengers* (2012), *Guardians of the Galaxy* (2014), *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015) and *Spider-Man: Homecoming* (2017). The latter was written by Jonathan Goldstein and John Francis Daley, who took the writer-director reins on *Dungeons & Dragons*. One

of his fellow *D&D* producers, Brian Goldner, who was the chairman and CEO of Hasbro, died in August, 2021, as the film entered post. Goldner was key in convincing the Hasbro brain trust to rethink action figures like Transformers and G.I. Joe into blockbuster Hollywood properties.

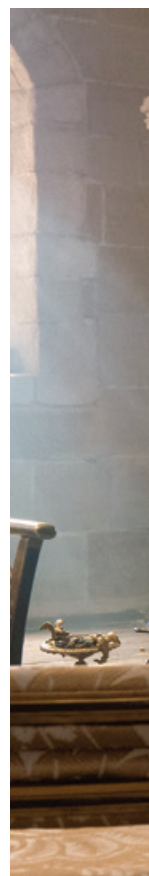
Entertainment One (eOne), the Canadian production studio acquired by Hasbro in 2019, and Paramount Pictures teamed up to finance *Dungeons & Dragons*. Wizards of the Coast, a subsidiary of Hasbro, is the maker of *Dungeons & Dragons*, which has

enjoyed a resurgence in popularity due in no small measure to its prominent role in the Netflix series *Stranger Things*. An earlier theatrical adaptation of the role-playing fantasy game was released in 2000. And while it presaged Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* movies and the HBO series *Game of Thrones* in the sword-and-sorcery realm, it ended up a commercial and critical disappointment. The latest iteration was shot in 74 days with as many as 400 extras, and the help of ILM and MPC to give it the kind of sophisticated VFX that eluded the original release.



Producer Jeremy Latcham (center) with unit production managers John Naclerio and Denis L. Stewart on location for *Dungeons & Dragons: Honor Among Thieves*

PHOTOGRAPHED BY AIDAN MONAGHAN



**IN YOUR RESEARCH, HOW MANY PEOPLE OUT THERE HAVE PLAYED DUNGEONS & DRAGONS OR OWNED THE BOARD GAME?**

I don't know the actual numbers. But I will say that Dungeons & Dragons has one of the rare and vaunted spots in the history of pop culture of America. It is one of those games that has been ever present in everyone's lives in one way or another. And to me, there's very few things out there that have had this kind of staying power. You know, we're looking at the 50th anniversary of D&D next year, and it is something that is growing in popularity. It is more popular than it's ever been—I know that much.

I think *Stranger Things* obviously has had a huge influence by opening up tabletop role-playing to a broader audience. I think people are yearning to connect

with each other in a real way, and this is a great way to do it. You get to escape to another world, and you get to create a character and go on an adventure with your friends. I think the movie does a great job of capturing that spirit and emulating what it feels like to play the game.

**THE FILM WAS LARGELY SHOT IN THE U.K. AND NORTHERN IRELAND. WHY THOSE LOCATIONS?**

The ability to find beautiful locations that fit the screenplay exactly as we'd envisioned it really made Northern Ireland, where we did the bulk of the photography, the perfect location for us to shoot in.

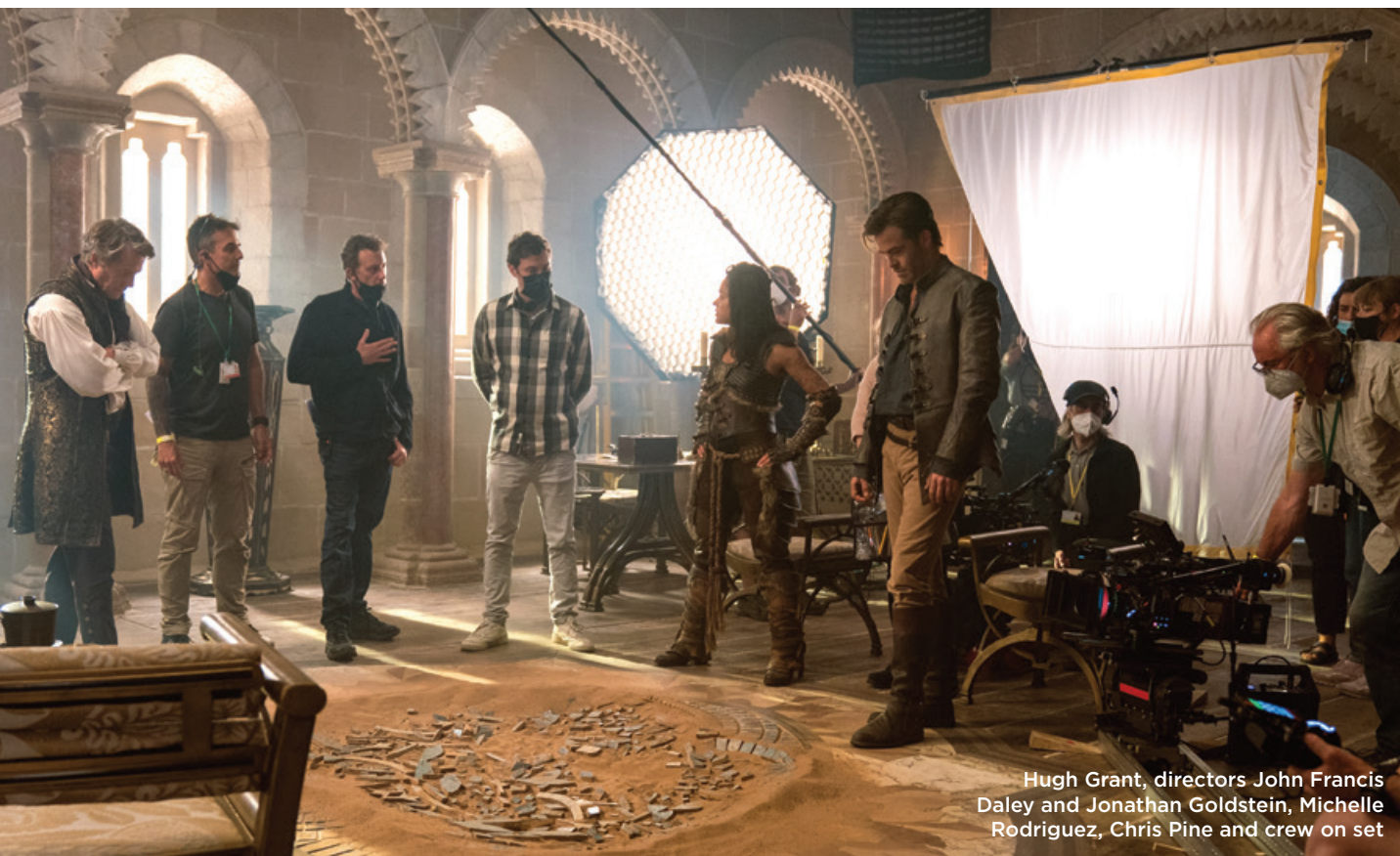
We needed a kind of traditionally medieval kind of feel and look. I think the scenery in Northern Ireland really played a big role in making it

a viable location. Obviously, there's a big tax incentive to be had in the U.K. in general, and an even bigger tax incentive in Northern Ireland. So that was a big factor.

And the crews are really experienced. They had *Game of Thrones* there for years; *The Northman* (2022) had just shot there, and a bunch of shows were coming in right after us. They're really building out the facilities and the space to make for a really A-caliber shooting location.

**TELL US ABOUT YOUR DAY-TO-DAY ROLE ON THE FILM.**

I was on the film every single day of the shoot, and I'm really the creative partner to John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein. I've known them since *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, which they wrote. I was the film's executive producer when



Hugh Grant, directors John Francis Daley and Jonathan Goldstein, Michelle Rodriguez, Chris Pine and crew on set

## NEW MEMBERS

PRODUCED BY TRAINS THE SPOTLIGHT ON SOME OF THE GUILD'S NEWEST MEMBERS, AND OFFERS A GLIMPSE AT WHAT MAKES THEM TICK.



### NICOLE SYLVESTER

Nicole Sylvester is a Brooklyn-based filmmaker who hails from Detroit. Her feature debut as a writer-director-exec producer is *Maya & Her Lover* (2021), which has played at several film festivals, including the Harlem International Film Fest and the Detroit Trinity International Film Fest. Both bestowed it with their Best Feature prizes. Her other producing credits include *Blood Bound* (coproducer, 2019) and *Cargo* (2017). She also served as a production coordinator on *Venom: Let There Be Carnage* (2021).

#### WHO OR WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO GO INTO PRODUCING?

I was inspired by old Hollywood. Learning stories about how films like *Jaws*, *The Godfather* and *Chinatown* came together was magical. I started working on movies in the late '90s and I was a huge fan of films made during the '90s indie boom—especially films by Robert Townsend, Spike Lee, Quentin Tarantino and the Coen brothers.

#### WHAT'S THE BEST PIECE OF ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED ABOUT PRODUCING?

The best advice I ever received about producing was to never be afraid to ask for it—don't talk yourself out of asking by assuming the answer is no. Let them tell you no. There's a 50% chance the answer will be yes.

I was at Marvel. The three of us were the core team that worked day-to-day with the cast, with the script, with the location and with the crew, making the film together. I feel like we made a movie that's as big and as exciting as anything I ever made when I was at Marvel.

#### CAN YOU GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF A LOGISTICAL PROBLEM THAT AROSE DURING THE SHOOT AND HOW THAT WAS ADDRESSED?

I would say the biggest challenges from a logistical standpoint were just trying to make a movie of this size and scale and scope during the pandemic.

We were scheduled to shoot in France for some location work and went there on a proper scout and started making plans. Then COVID numbers changed in France and the risk-management team and the COVID officers felt like it was unsafe to go there, so we had to retool an entire production plan to find castles in the United Kingdom that we could still travel to. So we ended up shooting some stuff in England at the very last minute for some of the exterior location work. It was quite challenging to move those pieces around.

#### WHAT IS THE KEY IN YOUR MIND IN MAKING THESE BIG IP PROPERTIES WORK?

To me, the key to any endeavor that you're putting on screen is in this order: heart, humor and spectacle. You have to make the audience feel. Through making them feel, you can make them laugh. And I think you have to show them something they haven't seen before. It has to be something that doesn't feel rote. You have to look at the world a different way. It doesn't mean you have to have visual spectacle that's expensive;

it just means you have to have something that's new for an audience to see and experience.

#### WHY UNVEIL THE FILM AT SOUTH BY SOUTHWEST?

South By means we can put the film in front of a big, real audience three weeks before it comes out and hopefully exceed expectations of what a movie based on a 50-year-old, tabletop, role-playing game could really be.

#### LASTLY, THE FIRST DUNGEONS & DRAGONS FILM (2000) WAS PANNED ACROSS THE BOARD AND BOMBED AT THE BOX OFFICE. DID IT ACT AS A CAUTIONARY TALE?

I'll be honest—I have not seen it. Intentionally. It was made in an era before these kinds of movies were given their due, before budgets (enabled) the sort of visuals you needed. A lot of it is now working on the backs of Sam Raimi and Jon Favreau and Peter Jackson. These people have come out and said this genre of fiction matters to people, and is worth being taken seriously. It's those people who have paved the way for what I think is a renaissance of big-screen storytelling. ■

*Certification via the Producers Mark indicates that a producer performed a major portion of the producing functions on a specific project. Criteria, its definition, the process for earning the mark and other particulars can be viewed at [producersguild.org](http://producersguild.org).*