

TV SCOOP
WIZARDS & WARRIORS
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The World of WIZARDS and WARRIORS

A dazzling odyssey onto the set and into the fantasy universe of television's new sword and sorcery series.

By BILL COTTER

The Great Hall is the center of a huge stone castle, with corridors extending in many directions. Brave knights and fair maidens talk of an upcoming battle and whether or not the King's personal magician will be able to assist their cause. Outside the castle walls stretches a land where dragons and other strange creatures can be encountered at every turn.

Awakening in such a place, you might believe you had somehow journeyed back in time to Camelot, home of England's legendary King Arthur. However, you would actually be many years in the future, and in a land quite different from any here on Earth. The planet is known as Camarand, and the castle is that of King Baaldorf, one of the rulers of the dragon-shaped continent of Aperans. This brave new world is the setting of *Wizards and Warriors*, a fantasy adventure series scheduled to premiere on CBS in late January or early February.

As noted in STARLOG #67, *Wizards and Warriors* is an ambitious tale of two warring kingdoms and the young princes who lead the opposing armies. Prince Erik Greystone is the heir to King Baaldorf, ruler of the southern portion of Aperans. Greystone's former childhood friend, Prince Dirk Blackpool, now commands the northern forces in a battle which has driven him to madness. The conflict has lasted for so many years that both sides have forgotten their original problems, and fight solely for supremacy over all Camarand. With each army being of equal strength, Blackpool has turned to the realm of sorcery to aid him in his task, for this is a world in which magic is *real*. Powerful wizards, who supposedly exist only to serve royalty, can provide formidable assistance to their rulers. Each of these masters of magic requires a talisman, an ornate monocle to focus their powers, and it is through his possession of one such monocle that Blackpool can control the evil Vector, perhaps the most powerful sorcerer of all. Vector's allegiance to Blackpool veils his own secret plans to recover the stolen monocle and replace Blackpool as the ruler of the northlands.

This new series is the brainchild of Co-Executive Producer Don Reo, who has also written four of the eight episodes filmed thus far. Reo, whose credits include the TV versions of *M*A*S*H* and *Private Benjamin* in addition to numerous sitcoms, says that he conceived the show around the *Dungeons and Dragons* games which interested his children, and was also influenced by movies as diverse as *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* and *Dirty Harry*.

"I wanted to capture the feeling of friendship and camaraderie of *Butch Cassidy*, where humor was an important part of that friendship," he explains. "This show is funny—now, you won't be able to look at a script and point to a one-liner or some other joke, but the overall tone will be light. Understand, however, that people *die* in this show—it's not a comedy, but what I feel is an enjoyable adventure." Reo explains the *Dirty Harry* inspiration as the single-minded determination to succeed which provides Greystone with the ability to continue through seemingly futile battles.

Although *Wizards and Warriors* could have been set here on Earth, Reo explains that he wanted a world "unencumbered by history or by logic." Supervising Producer Bryan Hickox adds that "this is a time that never existed, in a place that never was." Both admit that they were influenced by recent sword and sorcery movies, but feel that their series is unique. "When I saw *Excalibur* and *Dragonslayer*, I thought they were both beautifully photographed films," says Reo. "Unfortunately, I also thought that they were so slowly paced that you could walk in or out at almost any point and not feel as if you had missed *anything*. Our show is definitely full of action, but not at a loss to the characters or story."

Having determined the type of series he wished to do, Reo met with CBS executives in May 1981 to begin his efforts at selling the show. The writers' strike delayed negotiations, until Reo finally was given a go-ahead in November. The pilot, entitled "The Rescue," was shot in spring 1982. CBS then ordered 10 additional scripts, with seven of

them filmed and prepared as mid-season replacements. Reo adds that the network required each script to be able to serve as the series' first episode, allowing the best show to air as the premiere. "It may be the pilot, or any of the others," Reo decrees. "We just don't know yet."

Whatever the debut, viewers should be able to quickly understand the series' intrigues and motivations, since Reo notes that an effort was made to provide enough references to the standard concepts (such as the wizardly monocles and the Greystone-Blackpool feud) in each episode. Similar situations in past series in which the pilot episode *wasn't* the first aired, have happened previously; one example is a little show named *Star Trek*.

Casting Spells and Stars

Looking for an actor who could convey the feeling of friendship that was to be so important, Reo and Co-Executive Producer Judith Allison selected Jeff Conaway to portray Prince Erik Greystone. Conaway, who starred in TV's *Taxi*, is also well known for both the stage and movie versions of *Grease*. In order to prepare for his new role, Conaway watched numerous action films such as *Robin Hood*, and took lessons in swordmanship and riding. The sword duels and hand-to-hand fights presented a challenge, but according to Conaway, his biggest problem was quite unexpected. "When Don Reo mentioned that he was influenced by *Butch Cassidy*, I knew which of the two stars I was most like, so when it came time to shoot the pilot, I agreed to have my hair lightened for the role. Now, my biggest problem isn't Blackpool—

it's dark roots!"

Conaway admits to having had initial fears about Greystone, for the character requires "a certain amount of lines that could sound ridiculous in other settings, but which, in fact, fit well here. I try to play him as determined and forceful, but still human. I'm lucky to have a great bunch of co-stars who help make all this work."

Greystone is aided by his loyal vassal, Marko, said to be the strongest man in the entire land. Marko, who also possesses the ability to communicate with animals, is played by Walter Olkewicz, an affable actor who credits his first large screen role to Steven Spielberg. "I was signed for a one-line part in *1941*, where I played one of the tank crew. During the only day I was scheduled to work, Spielberg came up and asked if I might be free for a few more days. Well, of course, I said yes, and that led to 18 weeks of work on that picture."

Olkewicz, who recently appeared in *The Blue and the Gray* and *The Executioner's Song*, feels that Marko is a perfect role, enabling him to exhibit both comedic and serious sides of what he thinks of as "an inherently good man, a strong but gentle man who is a good model to follow."

The Blue and the Gray featured two other stars of *Wizards and Warriors*: Duncan Regehr, cast as the evil Dirk Blackpool, and Julia Duffy who plays Princess Ariel Baaldorf—promised to Greystone at birth but now questioning that pledge. Regehr's credits include the telefilm *Goliath Awaits* and *The Greatest American Hero*, while readers might recall Duffy's work in *Battle Beyond the Stars*. Adding magical menace as the wizard

Opposite page: Jeff Conaway brandishes his lightning sword as Prince Erik Greystone, hero of *Wizards and Warriors*. Below: The villains, Prince Dirk Blackpool (Duncan Regehr, right) and the insidious Wizard Vector (Clive Revill), plot to conquer.





Prince Dirk Blackpool (Duncan Regehr) dallies with Bethel (Randi Brooks), a semi-recurring character in the series. She loves both Blackpool and Greystone.

Vector is noted stage actor Clive Revill, who supplied the voice of the Emperor in *The Empire Strikes Back* and has appeared in many television shows and films, including the classic *The Legend of Hell House*.

Having cast the starring roles, the producers began assembling a talented team to create the land of Aperans. Production Designer Peter Wooley, who created the settings for *Blazing Saddles*, *High Anxiety* and other films, is responsible for the series' overall look and several huge sets including castles, dungeons, taverns and caves full of hidden dangers. Required to work within the budgetary constraints of television (although *Wizards and Warriors* enjoys a much higher than usual budget with CBS anteing up a license fee of almost one million dollars an episode), Wooley designed his sets to serve more than one purpose. The Great Hall of Baaldorf's castle, for example, can quickly be altered to serve as a huge banquet room or as the dungeon area deep below the fortress.

Another important ingredient is con-

tributed by Theadora Van Runkle, the Costume Designer (an Oscar nominee for *Bonnie and Clyde* and *The Godfather II*), who has provided the inhabitants of Aperans with a wardrobe ranging from peasant rags to beautiful gowns. Realizing the importance that music would play in the series, Hickox enlisted the services of Lee Holdridge, who recently performed similar duties on *The Beastmaster*. A 45-piece orchestra was used to record a score said to be strongly influenced by the work of Max Steiner, composer of scores for countless film classics (*King Kong*, *Gone With the Wind*, *Casablanca*, etc.).

Weaving Effects Wizardry

Obviously, a series of this nature relies heavily on special effects, engineered here by Dick Johnson (whose credits include *The Winds of War*, *True Grit*, and *Marathon Man*), and John Elliott (who worked on the *Foul Play* TV series and *Star Trek—The Motion Picture*). Both men feel that the *Wizards* is unusual for television in that the number of

effects is quite high. "We may not be breaking new ground with any one effect," states Johnson, "but this show is literally full of effects and stunts from beginning to end."

Says Elliott, "It's a matter of the company asking for feature-film style effects, but on a television budget."

Their work for *Wizards and Warriors* includes miniatures, opticals, explosions and a seemingly endless list of "minor" effects, such as daggers which barely miss the stars and arrows that slice through ropes in midair. The miniatures are used to add large structures, castles or entire towns for example, to the exterior scenes. While many other productions have employed matte paintings to achieve the same result, Johnson and producer Reo feel that the miniatures are more effective. The basic concept of this effect is that a miniature, such as Baaldorf's castle, is hung in the air in front of the camera on extremely thin wires. When the actors ride by on horseback, they can cross in front of the miniature, or turn and ride toward it. Besides allowing the director more creative freedom, the process also eliminates the time and expense required in the lab to optically add matte paintings.

Another effect used to great advantage also abolishes the optical work normally necessary to create ghosts or other transparent creatures on screen. A device known as a "beam-splitter" is placed in front of the camera lens by an effects technician. The set is divided into two. One area is the main set, with actors and props placed as needed. A second and smaller set is covered in black cloth, and the "ghost" is lit so that the background doesn't show. When filming begins, the actors on both sets can then actually interact and exchange dialogue, which Reo feels adds to their performances while decreasing the effects budget.

Other effects utilized in the series include puppets, such as a flesh-eating plant which Vector casually feeds a mouse. The plant was a simple hand puppet, with Johnson curling his fingers around the mouse meal to create the illusion it was being devoured (the mouse remained unharmed). Pools of deadly quicksand are devised from vermiculite, while those fearsome bubbling pits of acid are only air blown through colored water, with a bit of dry-ice stirred in for effect.

Wizards and Warriors also requires many explosions, from simple puffs of smoke emanating from Vector's fingertips to a recent stunt where a cannonball, five feet in diameter, crashed through a castle wall. Miniatures were unusable for this scene as the actors had to be present on the same set, so Johnson and Elliott rigged a section of the wall with explosive Primacord, and actually blew it apart as the cannonball hit the wall—and missed the actors.

Besides those effects shot on the stage, the series still requires a large amount of post-production to add such effects as lightning bolts, the glow of a monocle as spells are cast, and pools of water in which the future can be seen. Additional post-production effects employ rotoscoping, a process in which

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Wizards

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animators trace the outlines of previously filmed live actors, thereby providing effects such as a colorful glow around Greystone to represent a wizard's spell of safety (this method was displayed recently in Ralph Bakshi's *Wizards*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *American Pop*). Blue screen inserts are often used, in scenes where huge boulders crash down around Greystone and Marko as they flee from Blackpool's traps. When the scene was first shot, small "boulders" were dropped between the actors and the camera, and others were added via the blue screen. The result is the two heroes twisting and dodging as a virtual mountainside of boulders fall all around them. [PHASER: rocket]



Above: A Bonecrack Demon (Steven Strong) unleashed. Below: Marko (Walter Olkewicz) and Greystone (Jeff Conaway) prepare for action.



Despite the extensive effects, Reo and Hickox feel that *Wizards and Warriors* is a show about *people*. The series will feature human interest stories, and won't just be an excuse for explosive effects. Time and time again, the two stressed the importance of the friendship between Greystone and Marko; they believe this series will be entertaining as well as exciting. Visits to the set revealed a feeling of goodwill between the cast and crew which usually exists only in a press agent's dream. If even that attitude and the spectacular production values transfer to the small screen, Greystone may be able to overcome a foe more deadly than the armies of Blackpool or the spells of Vector—the dreaded Ratings of Nielsen. ★

Games

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tion of the Ark. At that point, you're on your own. (Will someone please write in and tell me how to read that map?)

The theme of *Aztec* is clearly inspired by the film *Raiders*; but the principles of its design are related to two of last year's largest-selling games for the Apple—*Castle Wolfenstein* from Muse Software and *Swashbuckler*, programmer Paul Stephenson's previous game for Datamost.

Castle Wolfenstein is the original "animated adventure." As a captive in a castle teeming with Nazis and SS men, your little animated video man is handed a fully-loaded gun and invited to try his luck blasting out of the fortress, searching along the way for items which might help his bid for escape. *Swashbuckler* is a simple, but ingenious, sword-fighting game in which keyboard commands control the movements of one of the two sword-fighting figures. The other figure, computer-controlled, becomes a better duelist as the game proceeds.

Aztec borrows from *Wolfenstein* the technique of changing both the layout of rooms and the location of objects for each game, so that no two games are ever alike. As in *Raiders*, you control an animated adventurer in pursuit of treasure—a golden idol hidden deep in a lost temple inhabited by snakes, spiders and brutal killers. But what makes the game a real stand-out is the smooth and responsive keyboard-controlled animation.

The figure you control moves in two modes. In regular mode, a single keypress will cause him to walk, run, jump, change directions, kneel, crawl, climb or stop—and every one of these movements becomes necessary to save your life at some point in the game. In fighting mode, your man can draw his gun or machete (that is, if he's found either of these objects in the maze), fire or lunge, and spin to the other direction.

Aztec offers eight different levels of difficulty; the higher levels provide faster and more numerous monsters to guard the treasure. At level one, most gamers will find it simple to secure the idol in an hour or three. Level four and above take lots of careful playing—luckily, games can be interrupted with the present situation recorded to disk. This will not only allow you to get some sleep, you can also cheat death when it occurs by going back to your last "saved" position.

Also Recommended:

Ali Baba: arcade-style adventure by Quality Software for Apple II and Atari 800 computers

Dark Crystal: illustrated adventure by Sierra On-Line for Apple

Minotaur: adventure-arcade hybrid by Sirius for Apple II

Escape From Rungistan: animated adventure by Sirius for Apple II computer

Superman: arcade-style adventure by Atari for the Atari 2600

Next Month: The Great Galactic Shoot-Out, Part One. ★