There and Back Again:
The Production of Peter Jackson’s Middle Earth.

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This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfilment of the BA (Hons) film degree at Dublin Business School. I confirm that all work is my own and all references have been acknowledged.

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Abstract:

“Looking back, I think we were a bit naive. At the beginning; I don't think anybody had any idea how difficult or complicated it would be. We somehow went into it thinking we could do it. And then we've stumbled along just taking each day at a time.”

-Peter Jackson

After the quite recent releases of *The Hobbit* films, much attention has been brought back to *The Lord of the Rings* series- reigniting many fans love of the franchise and introducing many more new ones. In this dissertation I will look into Peter Jackson’s journey from his more humble splatstick beginnings to the colossal task of bringing Tolkien’s Middle Earth to life. The dissertation will focus on examining the huge production and sheer level of detail, with particular emphasis on the scale of the design and digital aspects that went into *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003). As well as finally briefly looking into the production of Jacksons latest adaption’s of *The Hobbit; An Unexpected Journey* (2012), *The Desolation of Smaug* (2013) and *The Battle of Five Armies* (2014).
Chapter 1: Humble Beginnings.

“If I had to start (The Silmarillon) tomorrow, I would say no, because I definitely would appreciate a break to clear my head and get my little New Zealand stories done, which is where my passion and my heart is heading now. But ask me in two or three years, and I’d probably say yes. It would be hard to see another filmmaker go into this world, because I certainly have an emotional ownership of it.”

- Peter Jackson

In December 2015, Peter Jackson re-sparked rumours that he would finally be making The Silmarillon; the ‘origins’ book within Tolkien’s Middle Earth universe, despite the still ever present issues regarding him obtaining rights. The mock-style video was released on his Facebook page; in which he and his daughter are polishing his Oscars and discussing him directing a future Doctor Who episode. However, the thing that really caught fans eyes was; on the table, strategically placed in plain view of the camera, was a large copy of The Silmarillon, with post-it notes marking several pages. Keen-eyed viewers took this as Jackson saying, or suggesting, that he was possibly doing something with it in the future, or at the very least, trying to. This suggestion, or simple baiting of fans, created much excitement among the film lovers, which brings us all back to the epic journey Jackson started with The Lord of the Rings, and firstly; where it all began with Jackson.

Born in 1961 in Wellington New Zealand, Sir Peter Jackson, is now an acclaimed and award winning screenwriter and director, most notable for his work with The Lord of the Rings, from which, he almost single handily boosted New Zealand’s economy. However Jackson surprisingly, began his career almost solely in the ‘splatstick’ genre; a mix of splat horror and slapstick comedy- a far cry from what he’s known for today. His first horror-comedy; Bad Taste in 1987, was shortly followed by black-comedy; Meet the Feebles in 1989, zombie-comedy; Braindead, also known as Dead Alive in 1992, and his final comedy-horror The Frighteners in 1996. All Jackson’s splatstick films have
received much appraisal in later years, and have ultimately become very popular cult classics. One obvious commonality between the films are, like _The Lord of the Rings_ and _The Hobbit_ they were all shot primarily on location in New Zealand, and included many of same crew members. This “devotion to New Zealand filmmaking, which has led him to shoot all his pictures there and even to form Weta; an indigenous special effects company that rivals George Lucas’s Industrial Light and Magic, is certainly, an explicit address to the American domination of cinema; this to such a degree that Jackson, even before _The Lord of the Rings_, was well on the way to establishing the prowess of New Zealand cinema.”

*Bad Taste*, His first feature film which he directed, wrote, produced, photographed, co-edited and co-starred in: showed early on Jackson’s affinity for having heavy involvement in every aspect and detail of his films. It was a low budget production costing about $25,000, with a cast and crew comprised mostly of Jackson’s family and friends, and shot on weekends over a span of four years. The plot sees aliens invade the fictional village of Kaihoro to harvest humans for their intergalactic fast food franchise. There they face off against a four-man paramilitary force from the Astro Investigation and Defence Service (AIDS), and several insane mishaps follow. It was a film that provided Jackson with the starting point and necessary leverage needed to advance in the industry. Jackson incorporated many absurd and gory special effects which would become a staple for his following films, often involving people being torn apart or eating some sort of grotesque food.

Following that was; _Meet the Feebles_, which he directed and co-wrote. This is the first Jackson film that was co-written by his future wife; Fran Walsh, who has gone on to co-write all his subsequent films. The film is comprised of Jim Henson-esque animal puppets, utilising a perverse comic satire. The Feebles are members of a stage troupe trying to make it big time. However, along the way are
confronted with adulterous affairs, drugs, murder and a web of other often highly sinister sub plots; far deeper than the premise would have audiences perceive.

*Brain Dead (or Dead Alive)*, had a considerably larger budget than the previous films at; $3 million-showing Jackson slowly climbing the ladder. The plot revolves around Lionel, whose mother; Vera is bitten by a rabid rat-monkey and is turned into a ravenous zombie. As she infects more and more people, Lionel struggles to control the growing zombie hoard, and eventually an extremely gory fight between the living and the dead ensues. *Brain Dead* has received much acclaim, with many calling it the goriest splatter film in history; one of the Robert Ebert correspondent’s states:

“*Dead Alive* has maintained its infamous status as one of the most disgusting horror films ever made, and you will be treated with gruesome moments which certainly make you cringe and wince; you may want to stop watching it as being repulsed and disgusted by it. Nevertheless, once you understand that this is a black comedy which goes far, far over the top with its gleeful no-holds-barred approach to its rotting zombie bastards, you can have some good laughs-while holding your barf bag just in case.”  

Interestingly The first scene to be shot; the opening sequence on ‘Skull Island’, was filmed at Putangirua Pinnacles, the same location Jackson would later use for the Paths of the Dead in *The Return of the King*.

His final splatstick film; *The Frighteners*, had the largest budget at $30 Million- still not close to what would be *The Lord of the Rings* budget, merely few years later. The visual effects were created by Jackson's Weta Digital which was established in 1993. *The Frighteners* required more digital effects than almost any movie made up to that point, resulting in an eighteen-month period for effects
work by Weta and the innovation of several new effects programs; which would later pay off intensely for *The Lord of the Rings*. The plot follows Frank Bannister, whose wife died in a car accident. Frank gains the power to see ghosts and befriends three. Together they con people by performing “exorcisms”, during one of these cons Frank discovers there’s a Grim Reaper killing people, his ability to foretell the murders puts him under suspicion with the police but unbeknownst to them, he may be the only person who can stop the reaper and save both the living and the dead.

Many would then question how Jackson could possibly make the jump from such humble beginnings in a specific niche to the massive production that was *The Lord of the Rings*. Many who are unfamiliar with his splatstick past would assume he just came out of nowhere, however it was these splatstick beginnings which ultimately lead him to *The Lord of the Rings*; each film honing his skills and influencing what he would later incorporate in terms of style and effects. Jackson himself addresses this saying:

"Most fans of *The Lord of the Rings* are probably not that familiar with my earlier films, so they may have the impression that I popped up out of nowhere and was suddenly directing this huge movie project. But from my perspective, I certainly didn’t pop up out of nowhere. If I had, I never would have been equipped to direct *The Lord of the Rings!* It was a hard slog to get as far as making *The Lord of the Rings* and it only happened because for the ten years before; I had made movies and learnt enough about film politics to give me the skill base I needed to tackle this particular project. Ten years of film-making, if you count the little amateur ones I made as a child; thirty years of film-making. People may or may not have seen, or even known of, those films, but that’s almost beside the point, because it was the experience of facing the often seemingly overwhelming odds involved in making them—creatively, technically, politically- that really equipped me to face the enormous challenges that were involved in filming *The Lord of the Rings.*"  

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Jackson ultimately got his hands on *The Lord of the Rings* with somewhat of a stroke of luck—A talented, passionate filmmaker being in the right place at the right time, with the right people.

Recently having made a name for himself among the mainstream industry, and always a Tolkien fan, he finally had his opportunity to bring his ideas to producers. He went to Harvey Weinstein; the co-founder of Miramax, with the idea of doing *The Hobbit*, and then if that was well received, to follow it with *The Lord of the Rings*. Weinstein looked into issues obtaining rights; realising *The Hobbit* was too complicated because they were split between MGM and the Saul Zaentz Company, but that *The Lord of the Rings* would be easier because it was entirely owned at that stage by Saul Zaentz, who happened to be in business with Weinstein; making *The English Patient*, and therefore fairly easily obtained the rights.

Jackson and Fran went to work straight away, condensing the books into an initial ninety page treatment, then immediately started working on a second. After several meetings, Weinstein told Jackson he had to squeeze the proposed two films into one, due to input from Disney (who owned Miramax at the time), saying fantasy films don’t make money. Jackson rejected this offer saying there was simply no way he could tell the story and do it justice in just one film. Miramax agreed to allow him a four week turn-around to see if anyone else would take on the project as two films; while Miramax executives would still obtain on-screen credits.

Jackson then headed to Hollywood and called upon his friend Mark Ordesky, who was an executive at New Line. Ordesky set up a critical meeting with founder; Bob Shaye. After the presentation Bob said ‘Peter, why would anybody in their right mind make two movies’, this shattered Jackson thinking he too would only want one film, and that he had now lost his last hope. However, Shaye
continued to say ‘This is three films!’ Once New Line were on board they had to then rewrite and reorganise the original two scripts, meaning a total restructuring from page one. Jackson and Walsh brought long-time Tolkien fan; Philippa Boyens on board to help rewrite. Thus began the beginnings of what would become one of the largest scale productions, and the first time in cinemas history that three films were made simultaneously; a Journey with over seven years of production.
Chapter 2: The Fellowship of the Ring.

“I’ve always thought it was remarkable that Tolkien, basically spent his entire life creating, what he called the secondary world. You know, he created the languages, he created the thousands of years of history. It’s so rich and so detailed, that nobody today that writes a piece of fiction is ever going to come close to the sheer wealth of information and detail. Of course all of that makes it fiendishly difficult to adapt into any sort of movie”

– Peter Jackson

Now they finally had a studio backing, came the real challenge; how could one begin to turn such a beloved literary masterpiece into film? Tolkien’s The Lord of the Rings books had been the 20th century’s second most read book- second only to the bible. One vital thing they had to accept before going on this journey was that they simply couldn’t include everything in the books, “cracking the code of The Lord of the Rings- as the way that I sort of think of it is, basically, you know saying; well the book is a great book, the story is a great story, the characters are great, but its un-filmable, and it is un-filmable. If you were to just shoot the book page by page, scene by scene- it would just be a mess.”

If there is one overarching phrase to attribute and embody the entire production of The Lord of the Rings it would be controlled chaos. The sheer scale of pre-production and preparation alone is unmatched, every tiny detail was examined meticulously; yet there was a certain chaos to this perfectionism. The scripts were never truly finalised until filming was completed, being rewritten and tweaked every day for the entire shoot. The files upon files of rewrites, although hectic, lead to each becoming closer and closer to the book, and honing in on each character to a point worthy of Tolkien’s writing.
“When you’re doing three films back to back the danger of the train derailing was huge. We knew we had to plan these movies as detailed as we possibly could.” The film was fully storyboarded early on, allowing Jackson to visualise how scenes were running and if they were working; all before wasting film, actors and crew’s time and money. Later they were digitised and had sounds and dialogue laid over them, as a digital flipbook to even further assist with visualising shots, Jackson then took it a step even further and had storyboxed sets turned into models with figurines, to test how scenes would work with different camera movements.

Often Jackson and other crew members would act out scenes to ensure they worked well in certain sets. Yet another pre-visualisation method incorporated was; roughly animating scenes. This came about after being invited to the Skywalker Ranch by Rick McCallum and George Lucas, who showed Jackson how they pre-visualised Star Wars, which he then took back for The Lord of the Rings. “I find that scenes born in pre-vis are often the most imaginative scenes, because you feel brave when you’re just devising these crazy shots with little computers and stuff. But ultimately those crazy shots play an important part in defining the style of the film.”

The designers, along with every other department involved were told to imagine that The Lord of the Rings was real, that they were simply recreating an historical event and had to create authentic pieces to do so. As Jackson acknowledges:

“I think one of the remarkable things about reading The Lord of the Rings is you go into this world which is, you know; fairytale- It’s dragons and its trolls and its hobbits and it elves, and it’s amazing how authentic, genuinely authentic it feels. You start to believe it could possibly be history, that somehow Tolkien found some lost parchment; some secret parchment that we don’t know about, that he really took this from; a true historical event- it has that degree
of believability about it. I guess the way that we tried to hint at the dept- which is all that the film can really do, was partly in our design process.”

The design process for *The Fellowship of the Ring* and throughout began with drawings from concept artists; Alan Lee and John Howe as well as Weta designers. Their hundred’s of designs were spliced all over walls, and Jackson and the team would discuss ideas and favourites, which were then turned into various sculptures. Dwarvan design was; squared, rigid, angular, sharp while eleven was very intricate, delicate and elegant. Hobbiton had to be homely, cosy, familiar and welcoming. These aspects were very important in distinguishing races and cultures, and their history and aesthetics, and very much embodied their characteristics as well. Construction on Hobbiton for example was done over a year prior to filming even began, to ensure it looked lived in, wild and slightly overgrown- long lush grass, big trees, bushes and flowers everywhere.

A huge amount of props had to be fabricated from scratch and duplicated at multiple scales for the varying races. John Howe accredits the huge scale of construction and production to being one of the films greatest strengths “because everything had to be designed, there was no shortcuts, there was no just picking something of a shelf, you had to put thought into it.” The props department created was composed of every craftsman imaginable; from silversmiths, armour-smiths, sword-smiths, cart makers, saddle makers, glass blowers, carpenters, woodcarvers, sculptors, clay workers, coopers, wheelwrights, painters, distressers, seamstresses and every other possible craftsman and labourer in between.

Weta workshop played an immense role in this film and all the subsequent ones. They were responsible for all the prosthetics, special effects makeup, armour, weapons, creatures and
miniatures, and created over 45,000 items for this first film alone. Jackson loved using miniatures, or as the crew referred to them ‘bigatures’, opposed to the usually favoured; map drawings. There were about fifty-six of these bigatures used for *The Fellowship*, and composited into the film. They were so large, detailed and realistic that they stood up to every shot. Even background characters that were hardly seen had immense detail within their effects and costumes; each orc had individual pieces created with Black Speech incorporated along tiny details in their armour, as well as every weapon been etched and engraved differently. The sheer amount of thought and reasoning that went into every single detail of the designs is un-comprehendible.

Little people were used to represent the hobbits scale; each actor had an accompanying scale double. Another scale technique used was forced perspectives; Gandalf would be in the foreground to look larger while hobbits would be further back, yet the way its shot ensures it looks like they’re beside each other. Forced perspective shots previously had to be static with no movement, otherwise the illusion was exposed, so a technique they pioneered around this was; the camera would move as well as the actors simultaneously, this was achieved using dolly’s and rigs. Blue screen was also used for the more complex shots involving scale, as well as CGI facial replacement, although rarely. For some simpler shots the hobbit actors would simply just kneel down. There were also multiple sized sets for each actor to look certain sizes in; hobbits used larger sized sets and props to allow them to look smaller. An interesting scale technique they incorporated in scenes such as in *The Prancing Pony* were; ‘big-rigs’, which were essentially actors on stilts with huge robotic rubber hands and moveable features to make them look like regular humans, but in fact being much larger than the hobbit actors.
Even in areas such as lighting, they incorporated tremendous detail into their work. Andrew Lesnie, the cinematographer, created a Christmas lights type rig for Galadriel, in order to create a subtle starlight effect in her eyes, which really shows the immense research in reflecting what Tolkien wrote about her: “no sign of age was upon them, unless it were in the depths of their eyes; for these were keen as lances in the starlight, and yet profound, the wells of deep memory.” 12

With up to seven film units shooting at any one time, it’s no surprise that daily’s each day amounted to around four hours, although tedious for the crew involved, this was a vital aspect in determining what improvements could be made. Jackson mentions “After a couple of months of cutting you get to see a pretty tight visual of the film that matched the script. People might think, well that’s the film finished; you’ve matched the script and that’s exactly what you want, but it’s not- it never ever is. At that point, problems with the script start to show themselves, bits of the film start to drag, that you put things in the script that are repeating the same piece of information twice; its redundant, things that you shot with the best intentions, you realise that you didn’t actually need.” 13

The first assembly of the film amounted to about four hours. Deciding this first film had to be very Frodo-centric helped when cutting because anything that didn’t heavily involve Frodo or relate to that journey, would either need really strong reasoning for keeping, or would be cut. Editor John Gilbert highlighted one dilemma they faced in the editing process being “The story had to work for people that didn’t know anything about The Lord of the Rings; people that never read the books, have never heard of Frodo- they had to understand the story from the first minute through the end. We had to make the film work for them. Obviously the people who haven’t read the books; they aren’t going to miss things that aren’t in the film, which are in the books. Whereas the book fans were, so we had kind of a tension between those two things.” 14 Digital grading was a tremendously
important aspect in taking the films visuals that step further and enriching the images. This also blended shots together; often scenes were comprised of miniatures, along with live action performances as well as CGI, all with different lighting and tones- grading blended these into one seamless shot.

Early on into filming, Jackson wanted to prepare some of the scenes to be screened for the crew, and found that a lot of the temp music chosen was Howard Shores. This led to Jackson contacting Shore to score the film. Jackson notes:

“The primary reason why you choose a particular composer for a film is to define the sensibility that matches the film you’re shooting, the sensibility within that composer’s skills and the quality of his work. We found that with Howard, his music connected with the heart of the film we were making. The other thing we were looking for in a composer was a tremendous time commitment to this project because we needed someone who could score all three movies.”

Shore ensured the music reflected and captured the different cultures and languages; having choruses in Sindarin, Quenya, Dwarvish and Black Speech. It was also very important for him to capture a sense of New Zealand into the score; he made several journeys there while filming was taking place, to capture what was happening around him.

The Fellowship of the Ring was finally released in December 2001, and was not only a renowned box office success but a critical one as well, receiving mostly praise, as well as four Oscars. Cinema Blend delivers a particularly impassioned review stating: “Lord of the Rings is much more than a bunch of furry-footed creatures and wizards running about with swords and using silly medieval catch phrases. It's a journey of spirit and darkness unlike any other. Director Peter Jackson has re-created
a world so full of history, detail, and affection, that it far surpasses the work of any other. The impossible dream of Tolkien fans has come true, and the beauty, majesty, and genius of Tolkien's world is at last fully realized, going on to say “there is more here than just good directing, more than just good story telling, more than just good filmmaking. To put it simply there is a LOVE for this material and a LOVE for what these people are doing.” Before albeit dramatically, finishing on the remark “Peter Jackson and his cast are the stuff of legends. How can I, how can any of us live until we see the next instalment?” 16
Chapter 3: The Two Towers.

“The Two Towers was in some respects, the biggest challenge of The Lord of the Rings trilogy, because you can film the beginning and you can film the end, but filming a movie; which is really ‘the middle’ is a challenge indeed.”

-Peter Jackson 17

Tolkien’s *The Two Towers* is really two books, almost artificially made into one. The first half is essentially Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli’s journey and anything relating to that and then the second half goes back in time, to go from Frodo and Sam’s story, with no intercutting between. To film it divided, as it is in the book, would not work nearly as well because you’re losing whole character groups for incredibly long periods of time; which could fracture the story and lose momentum. Although it works rather well in the books creating a great deal of realism and tension not knowing what’s happening in the other groups, it simply would not have the same effect in a film. Jackson also noted the middle of a storyline can risk losing or lacking the excitement and build up felt at the beginning and the action and climax of the end; “shooting a trilogy is; you know, I think is a great experience. It has drawbacks and I think in a sense the middle chapter of a trilogy is the greatest drawback.” 18

This film in particular drew a great amount of design inspiration from Alan Lee and John Howe’s earlier Tolkien illustrations done years prior and followed the typical design process laid out in the first film. What was different in design this time around was not the method or scale or detail but simply the tone; Jeremy Bennet, the visual effects art director states “the look of film one was, in comparison to film two, certainly more cheerful. You had this fellowship; their out on this adventure, everything was, for awhile at least, going well. Now with *Two Towers*; the world of man is teetering;
it could be over. It certainly has a more serious feel to it, and that is reflected in the colour pallet of the film.”  

The design meetings with Jackson on this film were certainly more complex due to Jackson being immersed in filming whilst pre-production on The Two Towers was happening simultaneously. Often the art departments would have to chase after Jackson on location; on sides of mountains and riverbanks, carting around tables full of designs and models. Set designer Dan Hennah reflects on the amusing process as “it wasn’t really an ambush, it was more like setting the stuff up in the pathway of where he’d be going, from like set A to set B”  and often Jackson would be so busy he’d tell them he’d look later, meaning they’d have to quickly gather it all and rush to his next location hoping to catch him there.

Rohan’s designs reflected heavily on Tolkien’s desire to give England a mythology. Tolkien likened them as Anglo-Saxon and took direct influence from Beowulf. This carried over onto the designer’s work, who envisioned them as ‘Vikings on horses’, horses then featured equally as heavily within the designs of the buildings, costumes and architecture of Rohan. Edoras is a rather obvious example which Tolkien took directly from Beowulf, and so was one he provided quite a lot of detail on-setting a high standard for designers to aim for. After finding a hill in front of a snowy mountain, Jackson and the head designers all agreed being there felt far superior to using blue screen. The conservation department gave the crew permission to build at the location as long as the site would be left exactly as it was found. They had to rather unusually remove all the vegetation in areas where they would be placing parking and roads; tussock grass had to very carefully removed and rolled up and then placed in a ‘nursery’, which temporarily held all the native flora while they were there, just further showing the commitment of the crew to do the film justice, blue screen certainly
would have been the easier option. Over eight months of construction on Edoras for just a couple days of filming, Alan Lee sums up perfectly that “There’s actually no end to the amount of detail put in to these places.”

Helms Deep was one of the larger sets built. It was constructed at an old quarry, which allowed them to build up alongside actual rock. They also built a bigature of Helms Deep on location, as well as a miniature. One feature of Helms Deep which highlights the genuine quality of the production; was that they built a real battering ram to take down the door; however the door built was of such high quality it took the stunt team several hard hits to actually break through. The Helms Deep night shoots alone required over hundreds of people fighting as uruk-hai, which off course then meant that at any one time they would need hundreds of uruk-hai prosthetics, meaning Weta really had to churn them out at unbelievable rates and speed, whilst still working on everything else.

*The Two Towers* required a vast array of incredibly diverse armour. King Théoden’s is one example that really stands out; with layers upon layers of detailing- there are little illustrations of stories and heraldry all subtly etched throughout the entire piece. It’s a highly authentic armour, being made out of hand-hammered plate brass coated in leather, the designers even went as far as including etching on the inside of the armour, which would never be seen on camera, but just further amplifies the sheer level of detail and care put into each piece. Actor Bernard Hill was very appreciative of the detail and blown away by their work, similarly Viggo Mortensen reflected on the importance of designers work; “however chaotic it became, that foundation; what the art department did- the design of the places themselves was so instrumental in us getting lost in the story.”
Unlike in *The Fellowship of the Ring*, this film would require ‘monster’ characters that have larger roles; Treebeard and Gollum. Treebeard ended up being a full-sized animatronic puppet, created using casts from real trees, to allow a highly realistic texture. This very real physical presence not only looked good, but helped the actors immensely. In post-production it was then decided to also animate his face, adding more subtleties and emotions. Gollum was vital in this film and the next, so it was very important he was perfected early on. Weta’s Richard Taylor captures the essence of the task saying “Gollum is almost become the statement of fantasy art in the 20th century. So to be tasked with bringing Gollum to the screen, as if he was a living, breathing creature was all invading in our thoughts for a long time.”

Andy Serkis was originally cast with the notion of just providing voice work for Gollum, However it was soon decided to use him as a physical presence as well, Jackson noted:

“He was almost cast from the second that we met him, and what was interesting was in order to create the voice he had to distort himself, and put all this expression in his face, and that’s where he was finding the voice- in him actually doing the character. And it was really in that audition that I came to realise something that had never really occurred to me, and that the voice and the facial expressions and the energy are related, I mean you can’t separate the two.”

Many can overlook Andy’s performance and commitment to Gollum because you don’t actually see him on screen, but without him, as Jackson is the first to point out- they just couldn’t have done it. Elijah Wood remarks on Andy’s dedication;

“That suit took a beating too, cause I remember they made it, and it was all kind of clean and pristine and Andy- he’s a pro, so intense, and he gave absolutely everything every day, and
physically bashed himself about, so the suit was just screwed. He’d also, with the voice, he would give everything, and as a result he’d be spitting and drooling. He tore up his throat with that voice, hence the Gollum juice (hot honey, lemon and ginger). He went to all of these extremes to make sure that this character came to life; in the way that he saw in his mind, and that’s an incredible achievement.”  

Jackson was in awe off what Andy brought to Gollum and insisted they take Gollum a step further and incorporate Andy’s face into Gollum’s CGI work. The animators had to re-do any previous work, although an annoyance, in the end it enhanced Gollum beyond imagination. They incorporated this ‘motion capture through animation’ or ‘roto-animation’ technique where they would super-impose Gollum onto Andy acting in the scenes, mimic Andy and then draw him out leaving only Gollum; tedious work, but it paid off. They would also animate scenes that Andy simply couldn’t do; such as the scene where Gollum crawls face-first down the rocks, as well as doing facial movements, ensuring they captured Andy’s emotional performances. Andy comments on their work; “I’m so, in awe of what the animators have done really. They’ve been able to, basically interoperate my performance, and give it that level of photorealism and reality.”  
The work done on Gollum really was a milestone in animation, which changed the realm of CGI forever, incorporating very new and old techniques. Jackson sums the whole unified effort;

“The wonderful thing about Gollum is that; he’s really the culmination of the huge amount of talent that’s spread across the entire production, you know, it started with the writing, with the design, through to the onset acting, into the post production where we had to do voice, we had to do the rendering, the animating, the compositing and ultimately Howard Shore had to write music for Gollum. And so to me Gollum represents a great example of a wonderful collaboration amongst a broad group of talents.”
The effects work required for this film was far greater than the first. They incorporated a software program called ‘massive’, which was developed for Jackson by Steven Regelous some years prior. It’s a system which allows them to show tens of thousands of people in battle, using artificial intelligence to add individual characteristics to every character in the shot. This meant simulating a vast amount of detail and having each one aware of each other and reactive to sound and stimuli. They also created programs to allow each character to be different and vary in size, appearance and costume seamlessly.

The editing on this film was also more complex due to the multiple storylines. Peter and the editors decided to split it into the three stories; Frodo, Sam and Gollum being one, Aragorn, Legolas and Gimli the other and Merry and Pippin being the third, and then edit each story separately as a standalone narrative, before finally editing them together as one; a rather unusual approach to editing, also later utilised in Return of the King. While scoring the film in London with Howard, they had to bring over an editing suit and edit right throughout, until the very end of the deadline. The crew all agree that the post production on The Two Towers was the toughest; Jackson sums it up saying “The post-production year we spent on Two Towers was probably the darkest period, the darkest patch of the entire seven year experience.” 28

The Two Towers was finally released in December 2002, and was again not only a box office success, but a critical one as well, leaving audiences very much wanting more, and earning two Oscars. In Roger Ebert’s review of the film he states; “The Two Towers is a rousing adventure, a skilful marriage of special effects and computer animation, and it contains sequences of breathtaking beauty. It also gives us, in a character named the Gollum, one of the most engaging and convincing CGI creatures
I’ve seen” and noting that “Peter Jackson, like some of the great silent directors, is unafraid to use his entire screen, to present images of wide scope and great complexity. He paints in the corners.” 29
Chapter 4: The Return of the King.

“The Return of the King is the most enjoyable, because in the structure of the movies, it is nothing other than pay-off. There is no more setting up to do, no more exposition, no more introducing characters. From my point of view it was always great, because we were heading toward an ending; a climax.”

-Peter Jackson

The design teams, as always put an unbelievable amount of work. Co-Producer Rick Porras notes:

“On a typical movie if you’re doing the design work for the film, you’re there for pre-production, you maybe overlap a bit into the production, but the second you really start getting into the heavy part of production, the original design team aren’t necessarily required. In Lord of the Rings, because we’re doing three movies at once and because it was an evolutionary process, the design process was equally evolutionary and consuming over the entire length of the production.”

He goes on to comment on Weta in particular saying; “these guys just went, you know, beyond the pale in terms of delivering a high level of artistry to Pete as well as a high level of enthusiasm and love for the project. Everything was designed down to the very most minutest of details, I mean belt buckles and arrow heads- you name it.”

Minas Tirith was perhaps the largest and certainly most stunning set built, Jackson comments: “the city of Minas Tirith was by far the most extensive set that we ever built for the trilogy. And it was always going to be a difficult set to build not just from a construction point of view but actually where do you put this thing” 33, the sheer size was phenomenal, Rick Porras claimed it was “the
largest set built in the Southern hemisphere.”  

The team made the practical decision to utilise the Helm’s Deep set built for *The Two Towers* and use it as the basic bones of Minas Tirith. It took about six months to build, with about a hundred people working on the actual construction. The finished result stunned everyone who visited the set with the detail and scale— it was like a labyrinth with side-streets and walkways, Producer Barrie Osborne commented; “you could walk through the streets and lose yourself in that set. It was monumental.” The interior of the Citadel atop of Minis Tirith was built at a different location; an old warehouse, but was equally as awe inspiring and huge, being easily three stories high and adorned in black and white marble. The bigature for Minis Tirith Weta made, was possibly the largest they created, taking up almost an entire room with an even larger bigature of sections, made for close ups; so large that you could actually walk through.

The Paths of the Dead was an ensemble sequence, in terms of locations. It was shot mostly at Putangirua Pinnacles, with several parts shot in the studios. The exit from the City of the Dead was built onto an existing rock face at another location. There was off course also the use of Jackson’s beloved bigatures; which had an unbelievable 80,000 individual, hand-sculpted and painted little skulls, which was mimicked on a larger scale for the live action shots with actors. As Dan Hennah points out “it took place in quite a few different places, but they all add together to make a fairly startling sequence, I thought.” The actual King of the Dead had an equally interesting composition, incorporating both CGI and footage of the actor wearing his rotten, decaying prosthetic. The digital team used a technique which faded between the skeletal CGI and rotten prosthetic, by compositing the CGI over the footage, mimicking it exactly and the blending it in and out, creating a really visually interesting look.
Gondor was a heavily important feature in *The Return of the King*. As a culture they had somewhat fallen from grace and were not the power they once were, it was important that this reflected in the design of their armour in particular. It was decided they were a nation who looked back and reflected on their golden years, opposed to looking forward; very much holding on to the old aesthetic. The helmets, very true to the book all somehow incorporate seagull or ‘sea-bird’ wings, with each rank and position having different styled armour.

In contrast to the Gondorian armour, and very much the typical metal, silver, black and earth toned armour shown thus far, *The Return of the King* introduced a new race; The Haradrim. From the far south of Middle Earth, Tolkien described them as ‘flashes of gold and red’. The designers took a lot of influence from the Aztec culture, incorporating; tattoos, scarification and body paint. They used rich colours of red and yellow in their costumes, and had armour made of woven wicker and bamboo, with replicated precious stones, ivory and gold. John Harding who designed a lot of The Haradrim gear commented; “the joy of something like this is you actually invent this whole scenario of how they make their stuff. You don’t just go ‘oh their Haradrim’, the way to make them special and fantastic is to actually come up with an entire culture to back up any questions about them” 37.

Mumakil were a large mammoth-type creature used by the Haradrim, Jackson didn’t want them to be solely CGI in the film and so asked Weta to create a life sized sculpture, to serve as a backdrop for some of the closer shots. A literal mammoth of a task, Weta first created smaller versions to master the look and positioning desired, and then sculpted the giant on set using chainsaws. The final sculpture was massive; the sole of the creature’s foot was the size of a fully grown man. To allow for easier transport they cut it into pieces which could be re-assembled, even so, it took about fourteen
trucks to transport it to and from locations. The crew noted that Jackson would have liked the mumakil even bigger if time had allowed.

Orc’s were a big challenge for this film, because in *The Fellowship of the Ring* they had been portrayed as the ‘rats of Mordor’, and now to follow *The Two Towers* where uruk-hai had been this formidable, powerful and impressive force, in comparison the orc’s where nowhere near as daunting. After seeing an early cut of the film, Jackson felt the orc’s were the weakest part, and particularly disliked their ape-like walk; feeling it looked childish and far from frightening. He then tasked Weta with redesigning them, to be the finest selection of orc warriors; making them look meaner, tougher, more rotten, with skeletal noses, and now also armour. As with everything else in *The Lord of the Rings*, they had to make each orc, their armour and weapons all different and unique. Jackson also wanted to bring in Gothmog; the orc commander. The designers initially gave him this small growth on his nose, and typical with Jackson’s love of the grotesque, he made larger and larger until it covered half his face and body, this was particularly reminiscent of his earlier effects style in his splatter films, such as *Braindead*.

There were quite a few other changes and revisions in the film; Aragorn fighting Sauron was changed to a troll, as it was truer in keeping the journey be about helping Frodo. Literally on Andy and Elijah’s last days in New Zealand for pick-ups, Jackson decided to redo the Frodo and Gollum fighting for the ring in sequences. The Witch King’s helmet was re-designed as they felt it was too similar to Sauron’s. The Mouth of Sauron was also revised later on, when Jackson felt he wasn’t menacing enough, they eventually just enlarged his mouth and enhanced voice work. Jackson summed up these changes saying “you don’t stop making the movie; we were just always rewriting scenes and
writing new scenes and shooting stuff and tweaking stuff, and constantly, constantly challenging
ourselves really to try to think of last minute improvements.” 38

The pickups for *The Return of the King*, actually happened three years after primary filming had
wrapped. The Stone Street back lot and factory was essentially turned into an almost ‘mini’ Middle
Earth, with sections of sets being placed side by side; much of the cast and crew described it as
looking like a Middle Earth theme park. Dominic Monahan noted that he’d be filming his battle
scene as Merry on one part, and would be able to see Gandalf and Pippin in their scenes from Minis
Tirith only a stone’s throw away. This all again was testament to the designers and builders, who not
only had to recreate sets that matched the previously filmed ones exactly, but also due to the actors’
limited availability meant they had to be constantly turning around sets over night.

Other than usual immense scale of costumes provided on each film, it’s particularly relevant to
mention here because all the main characters costumes are rejuvenated toward the end. Aragorn
went from his ranger costume to eventually wearing the armour of his forefathers. Pippin becomes a
Knight of Gondor and wears a beautiful black velvet ensemble with silver embroidery, Merry now a
Captain of Rohan wears rich Red and Greens. Sam and Frodo are given eleven robes; again very
intricate with beautiful etched velvets. Gandalf, now Gandalf the white, transformed from his old
tattered grey robes to a cream eleven, fully embroidered piece; of which you can’t even see half the
detail on the screen, so is yet another ever present example of the sheer detail the team go into, Ian
Mckellen noted this saying “this immaculately embroidered gown can never be seen. There’s no
point to doing it, other than making me believe as I put them on that they are real clothes- which I
do.” 39
They incorporated some quite clever filming techniques in the film to make difficult shots, actually quite easy and save time in post-production. Some examples of these little illusions being: when Denethor grabs Pippin and tosses him out of the mausoleum, he actually drags Pippin’s scale double then tosses her onto a mat where the actual Pippin is laying out of shot, the second she hits his back he just pops up into frame, a very simple yet seamless way to address the scale without the need for CGI or other complexities. Another of these creative illusions is when Denethor needs to be pushed by Gandalf’s horse onto a burning pyre. The second unit director; Geoff Murphy knew the horse wouldn’t go near a fire and therefore came up with a reflective trick; by setting up a sheet of glass at 45° to the scene, it reflected a fire burning of to the side of a blackened room over onto the pyre and camera lens on the opposite side. This allowed them to film with the horse, without the need for CGI; and in fact was so effective the flames needed no enhancement.

Towards the end of filming for The Return on the King, for Gollum; they actually had developed the motion capture enough, that Andy could now shoot in the mo-cap suit on set. Previously, although motion capture was used, it was done solely on the mo-cap stage, while the actual performance was done separately on set. Barrie Osborne noted “on that set, I remember doing something I had tried to push for, for over two years, which was live on-set motion capture. Because it always occurred to me, particularly as we were getting crushed for time and delivering, that to have Peter or Fran having to direct Andy on the set and then spend a day or two, or a week, directing him again doing the same sequence on a motion capture stage, was a total waste of time and energy- particularly when they didn’t have time or energy to waste.” It ended up working perfectly and not only saved time but also allowed for better performance because it was in the moment with the other actors there.
Funnily, towards the final days of filming Jackson stated rather bemused that “nobody’s ever shot three huge movies in a row before, and I think the most interesting thing I’ve discovered over the last fifteen months is exactly why nobody’s ever done that! And now I know, and therefore I won’t be doing it again” 41, little would he know only a few years later he would take on a similar task with *The Hobbit*. In summing up what the cast and crew had achieved with *The Lord of the Rings* is almost unexplainable, there aren’t enough words to come close to showing the amount of time, work, dedication, effort and detail that went into each film, Gino Acevedo rather beautifully sums up the experience with “Middle Earth was a real place, we were there.” 42

The CGI required, tripled that of the first and at least doubled that of the second film. Due to extreme time pressure, Jackson decided with so many units out shooting he would allow the visual effects supervisor; Jim Rygiel and his team to shoot the live action needed for a particular section of the battle. So having done this and spending months upon months working on the scene where two Mumikil collapse into each other, they showed the results to Jackson, who noticed their camera movement was less impressive than the ones they created together in pre-vis; their version sweeps ever closer under the Mumikil, Jackson’s pre-vis version sweeps from the side and out. This was only two days before the reel was due to be sent out, so they decided the only way to fix it in time was to totally remove the live action they shot and do it all digitally, freeing up the camera angle, and as Rygiel says “a six month shot turned into a two day shot basically.” 43

Jacksons admiration of his crew is only surpassed by perhaps the crews admiration of him, what he created and achieved never ceased to amaze, and as Randy Cook; the animation designer and supervisor, says “we all had to believe that this guy who did the splatter films, could then do... an extravaganza, of the type that had never been achieved before, and if you’d have known him- I’d
think you’d have believed it too.’ 44 In typical Lord of the Rings style the Film wasn’t finalised until two days before the Wellington Premiere.

The Return of the King was finally released December 2003, and was perhaps the most adored of the three films, with a clean sweep of eleven Oscars. Todd McCarthy states in his review; “A ‘King’ that earns its crown, Peter Jackson’s final instalment in his monumental The Lord of the Rings represents that filmmaking rarity- a third part of a trilogy that is decisively the best of the lot. With epic conflict, staggering battles, striking landscapes and effects, and resolved character arcs all leading to a dramatic conclusion to more than nine hours of masterful storytelling” he goes on to note; “All the outstanding technical and craft achievements that have been duly honoured in the previous instalments are at least equalled and sometimes trumped here, especially in regard to how involved the creatures are this time. There has been no let-up in creativity, only intensification” and finishes rightly saying; “so Jackson has done it. After seven years of work, the young New Zealander has pulled off one of the most ambitious and phenomenally successful dream projects of all time.” 45
Chapter 5: The Hobbit.

“I was always unsure whether I should direct The Hobbit. I didn’t want to end up in a position where I was thinking back to what I did on The Lord of the Rings, feeling like I was almost competing with myself, but on the other hand, you kind of feel a sentimental attachment; as to ownership to the Middle Earth that’s been put on the screen”

-Peter Jackson 46

After The Lord of the Rings, fans were craving more. They begged New Line to make The Hobbit, and began a huge fan campaign and petition called “Let the Hobbit Happen”. The studio was keen, especially after the huge success the films had been, however there was some complex issues regarding the rights; which at this stage were split between WB and MGM. In 2008 they went about sorting the issues, but Jackson was adamant he wouldn’t direct; felling he would just be competing with himself, and would instead produce and co write alongside Fran Walsh and Philippa Boyens.

Jackson being a fan of Guillermo Del Toro, brought him in to direct. Although the project had not been officially green-lit, Guirmo spent over a year working with Weta on developing concepts, props and weapons. MGM then went into some financial trouble, and the project kept getting pushed further back, Guirmo ultimately decided he couldn’t wait any longer, and in 2010 left to pursue other projects. The team were in despair and seeing the project falling apart; Jackson stepped up to direct. Several weeks later MGM and WB made a deal and green-lit the film. Weta concept artist; Daniel falconer, shared much of the crews opinion stating; “when we heard that peter was going to step in and direct, it was like coming home- because he was there leading the charge for us on those first three films, and it’s hard to imagine those ever happening without Pete.” 47
The Hobbit films were even more chaotic with near impossible time constraints, how well each film turned out visually is testament to the crew; almost all of whom had worked on The Lord of the Rings, with the same department heads and creative leaders. Jackson noted how lucky he was that; “ten years after The Lord of the Rings we find ourselves back on set with essentially the same crew, so I’ve sort of done the once in a lifetime experience twice in my lifetime but not a third time! There won’t be a third time!” 48 Jackson had to scramble; working with Weta and the designers to re-design and re-envision all the original preparation done with Guirmo to fit Jackson’s vision. Jackson notes the extreme time pressure; “I found myself with very little time to prepare, on The Lord of the Rings I had probably; two, two and half years to prepare for three films and on the hobbit I had about five months to prepare.” 49 With so little time they decided to have day and night crew so that they could be working 24/7.

Just as filming was due to begin, the project ran into some more issues, when Jackson was hospitalised with an ulcer. Jackson worked on pre-vis while in hospital; allowing the crew more time to get everything ready, as well as giving the actors an extra month in boot camp. Principle photography finally began in March 2011, with pickups in 2013 the films were shot over a total of 771 days. Strategically, filming began with the Gollum/Bilbo scenes, because it would allow more time for departments to polish work on the dwarves, but also good for Andy Serkis; who Jackson had asked to be the second unit director; allowing him to get his scenes out of the way and focus on directing.

This time around, on An Unexpected Journey, Andy was able to solely perform on set with the actors, using a full motion capture suit and a mounted facial camera; allowing for a much rawer performance with no disconnect. Another difference being Gollum’s CGI was much sharper and
more detailed; even incorporating Andy’s own skin texture and pores. Advancements in the
animation techniques also allowed improvements in muscle movement and control, making it far
more realistic and natural. Visual effects supervisor; Joe Letteri notes; “we want you to know that
that’s exactly the same character, but as you look at the detail and nuance of the performance- the
way his eyes are behaving, he way his muscles are working- all the detail is much better, much more
realistic than we did ten years ago.” 50 The use of 48 frames per second also really came into play,
with Andy commenting; “the use of 48 frames per second creates and very interesting more
forward, a great leap forward for digital characters and live action. There is something that happens
to your brain watching 48 frames per second that makes you unable to question the fact that CG
characters and live action characters don’t exist in the same time and space. They just look- It’s
impossible to see that they can’t; that’s a significant shift.” 51

Improvements in technique were also needed; being that films would be 3D meant the forced
perspective tricks would no longer work, and although they still used the scale sets and scale
doubles, they also incorporated a new technique; slave-motion control. This meant Ian McKellen
would perform on a green-screen set separate from the other actors, with two cameras at each set
linked together insuring identical movements. The green set camera would be much closer than the
live set- meaning Gandalf would be composited into the live action, appearing much larger. This was
mostly used in the Bag End scenes, with actors using earpiece to hear each other on the different
sets.

*The Hobbit* films incorporated the same level of unbelievably extensive thought, quality and detail as
their predecessors, but all in a much more condensed timeframe. A key feature of these films was
obviously the thirteen dwarves. Weta’s Richard Taylor comments;
“The design process for any culture is never random; we start the whole process by trying to find the central graphic motif, the design signature that speaks across a whole race of people. In the case of the dwarves it’s about thinking of their cultural reference in architecture, how they mine the granite bellow their feet, how their empowered by the riches of the world and their need to hoard those riches, and how that may bring a signature to the way they may dress, the way they may adorn their hair- all of these things start to bring a rounded design and hopefully gels them as a culture and makes them significant in the eyes of the audience.”

Each dwarf underwent hundreds of design ideas and styles before Jackson found the unique looks he liked best. To ensure the dwarves didn’t just look like small men, the actors wore fat suits or muscle suits to bulk them out, along with prosthetic hands and facial pieces and oversized boots.

A key aspect of the second film; The Desolation of Smaug, was obviously the dragon; Smaug. There was a lot of pressure on the team to get Smaug right, and he too underwent many designs. Jackson ultimately wanted Smaug to be huge; the largest creature in Middle Earth, with his head being the size of a bus. John Howe was particularly involved with Smaug, and had actually illustrated the Smaug on the 1995 hobbit cover. Howe wanted Smaug’s eyes to be something really unique and stunning; creating a key-hole type look, which Jackson and the team loved, it added a sense of age and wisdom and amounted to very powerful shot. The whole design team agreed; ‘the most difficult thing about Smaug was to get John to stop drawing’. Very late on Jackson decided he wanted Smaug to be changed from having four legs to just two; using his wings as arms; similar to that of a bat, adding a more predatory effect. Each scale on Smaug was unique and varied; some being microscopic- there were about 20 million scales total in the final result. Interestingly, Benedict Cumberbatch; the voice of Smaug, did some motion capture work for the film, which was mostly used to incorporate some of his facial movements.
The central moment of the final film; The Battle of the Five Armies, was of course the huge battle, which took an incredible amount of work from the design and digital team. There wasn’t too much footage actually shot for the scenes, due to the time limitations, so really there were only sections of live action, which were mostly the main characters. This meant all the digital effects; which were a lot, had to be done alongside cutting the film. The battle takes place on three locations, all of which had to look and feel different; affront of Erebor was the main formation battle on a grass-land area, then Dale had the more street-style battle amongst the town, and finally the snowy; Raven Hill which was the dramatic, emotional, one-on-one battles. The backgrounds were created by taking plates of various New Zealand locations and splicing them together.

It was important each army had a unique style and look, as well as movement, to allow them to be more identifiable in large, crowded shots. Dwarves were mechanical, solid and grounded. Elves were very graceful and choreographed, very fluid; they decided to have the elves fight in kind-off trios, where they would have two swords men to one archer and all move together protecting and helping each other. Orc’s were just chaotic and out to kill, they would swarm with no sense of preservation or camaraderie, very kamikaze-like.

The “war beasts” or trolls also played a large roll. In the final battle of Return of the King we seen super-trolls the; the olog-hai; the ultimate and strongest trolls, and Jackson wanted these to return for The Battle of Five Armies. He also wanted some to be turned into weapons with functions; adding catapults to some and battering ram helmets to others; turning them into Middle Earth’s versions of a tank. Jackson’s favourite design was; ‘Stumpy’, a blind troll who had his eyes sewn shut, with his driver controlling him by tugging on chains attached to his eye sockets, he also had his arms and legs
turned into different weapons. To give the armies realistic movements, motion capture was used to assist; it was essentially twelve mo-cap guys representing entire armies’ movements. After capturing these wide ranges of motion and style, it was then the job of the animators.

An Unexpected journey, The Desolation of Smaug and The Battle of Five Armies were released in December 2012, 2013 and 2014 respectively, although not the critical success of The Lord of the Rings; receiving mixed reviews, they certainly were a financial success. It is undeniable the immense talent of the crew; who produced such high quality work in so little time. Jackson saw The Hobbit as not only a childhood dream realised but a chance to expand his vision of Middle Earth. The success of Jackson’s Middle Earth is phenomenal, both trilogies carried some of the largest production values; innovating new ideas and technologies, and ultimately being one of the highest grossing franchises of all time, with a total of 17 Oscars and countless other awards. Jackson stayed through to his roots, and carried with him much of the same crew, even from way back in his splatstick days; and together they created a masterpiece of visual storytelling. Writer and producer; Philippa Boyen’s encapsulates their journey together saying: “We ALWAYS had the support of this INCREDIBLE crew; they went on the journey with us, they really did. They signed up and went there; they went there and back again.” 53
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Bad Taste - 1987

Meet the Feebles - 1989

Brain Dead - 1992

Heavenly Creatures - 1994

Forgotten Silver (TV Documentary) - 1995

The Frighteners - 1996

The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Rings - 2001

The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers - 2002

The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King - 2003

King Kong - 2005

Crossing the Line (Short) - 2008

The Lovely Bones - 2009

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey - 2012

The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug - 2014

The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies - 2015
Oscars:

The Fellowship of the Ring:

Won: Best Cinematography (Andrew Lesnie)
    Best Makeup (Peter Owen & Richard Taylor)
    Best Music Score (Howard Shore)
    Best Effects (Jim Rygiel, Randall Cook, Richard Taylor & Mark Stetson)

Nominated: Best Picture (Peter Jackson, Barrie Osborne & Fran Walsh)
    Best Actor in Supporting Role (Ian McKellen)
    Best Director (Peter Jackson)
    Best Writing (Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens & Peter Jackson)
    Best Set Decoration (Grant Major & Dan Hennah)
    Best Costume Design (Ngila Dickson & Richard Taylor)
    Best Editing (John Gilbert)
    Best Music Song (Enya, Nicky Ryan & Roma Ryan)
    Best Sound (Christopher Boyes, Michael Semanick, Gethin Creagh & Hammond Peek)

The Two Towers:

Won: Best Sound (Ethan Van Der Ryn & Mike Hopkins)
    Best Visual Effects (Jim Rygiel, Joe Letteri, Randall Cook & Alex Funke)

Nominated: Best Picture (Peter Jackson, Fran Walsh & Barrie Osborne)
    Best Set Decoration (Grant Major, Dan Hennah & Alan Lee)
    Best Editing (Michael Horton)
    Best Sound (Christopher Boyes, Michael Semanick, Michael Hedges & Hammond Peek)

The Return of the King:

Won: Best Picture (Peter Jackson, Barrie Osborne & Fran Walsh)
    Best Director (Peter Jackson)
    Best Writing (Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens & Peter Jackson)
    Best Editing (Jamie Selkirk)
    Best Set Decoration (Grant Major, Dan Hennah & Alan Lee)
    Best Costume Design (Ngila Dickson & Richard Taylor)
    Best Makeup (Richard Taylor & Peter King)
    Best Music Score (Howard Shore)
    Best Music Song (Fran Walsh)
    Best Sound (Christopher Boyes, Michael Semanick, Michael Hedges & Hammond Peek)
    Best Visual Effects (Jim Rygiel, Joe Letteri, Randall Cook & Alex Funke)
An Unexpected Journey:

Nominated: Best Makeup and Hairstyling (Peter King, Rick Findlater & Tami Lane)
   Best Visual Effects (Joe Lettei, Eric Saindon, David Clayton & Christpoher White)
   Best Production Design (Dan Hennah, Ra Vincent & Simon Bright)

The Desolation of Smaug:

Nominated: Best Sound (Christopher Boyes, Michael Hedges, Michael Semanick & Tony Johnson)
   Best Visual Effects (Joe Letteri, Eric Saindon, David Clayton & Eric Reynolds)
   Best Sound Editing (Brent Burge & Chris Ward)

The Battle of the Five Armies:

Nominated: Best Sound Editing (Brent Burge & Jason Canovas)
Appendices:

A still from Jackson’s Facebook video, showing *The Silmarillon* in plain view of the camera.

Jackson’s Splatter Films.

Jackson behind the scenes, filming *Bad Taste* in the 1980’s.

An example of Jackson’s gory effects in *Braindead*.

(Top)- Still from *Braindead* shot at the pinnacles.

(Bottom)- Still from *Return of the King* shot at the pinnacles.
Billy Boyd reading the latest re-writes before shooting a scene.

Genealogy of the sale.

One example of the story-board's used in *The Lord of the Rings*.

Comparison of the pre-vis animation (left) and the final result as shown in *The Fellowship of the Ring* (right).

Some of the many miniatures used for *The Fellowship of the Ring*. 
Examples of the immense detail put into each weapon.

Elijah Wood with his scale double.

Starlight effect shown in Galadriel’s eyes, achieved using a special lighting rig.

The breath-taking Edoras location.

The Golden Hall exterior at Edoras.
Building the Helms Deep set (left), the Helms Deep bigature on location (middle) and the Helms Deep miniature (right).

Detail’s of King Théoden’s armour.

Filming with the Treebeard animatronic for *The Two Towers*.

Andy Serkis acting as Gollum on set with Elijah.
Example of roto-animation for Gollum.

Progression from blue-screen (left) to incorporating the massive program (right), and then the final results (bottom).

Example of the immense detail incorporated into even the smallest things; such as arrow heads and knives.

Blueprints for the huge Minas Tirith set.

(Top)- Building and filming at Minas Tirith (Bottom)- Alan Lee (left) and Jackson and Ian McKellen (right) at Minas Tirth; their favourite set.
Minas Tirith miniatures.

The stunning black and white marble interior of the Citadel at Minas Tirith.

Some of the 80,000 little skulls used for The City of the Dead miniature.

King of the Dead visual effect; which blends the actor in prosthetic’s (top left) and CGI composite (top right) to achieve the final fading result (bottom).
Gondor Helmets representing various ranks.

Example of scarification, tattoo’s and body paint used on Haradrim warriors.

Haradrim and mumakil concept art and sculptures.

Some of the crew with the mumakil after filming.

Andrew Lesnie and Dan Hennah with the mumakil for pickups.
Actors in the original orc design, training to do the ape-like walk, before it was revised.

Some examples of the new and improved scarier orc designs for *The Return of the King*.

Similarities between Jackson’s effects style in *Bad Taste* (left) and Gothmog in *The Return of the King* (Right).

The original Mouth of Sauron (left) and the revised final version (right).
Some of the partial sets at Stone Street re-built for pickups.

Aragorn’s initial costume (left) and his final costume in *The Return of the King* (right).

The four hobbit’s in their initial costumes (left) and their new costumes (right).

Gandalf the grey’s costume (left) and Gandalf the White’s costume (right).

Some of the beautiful detailing and embroidery on Gandalf the White’s costume.
Cleaver illusion reflecting fire onto a pyre across the room, allowing for filming with the horse and actors close by and without the need for CGI later on.

The originally rendered Mumakil sequence (top), and the re-done version with Jackson’s preferred angles done in only two days (bottom).

Andy in the improved motion capture suit on set filming for The Return of the King.

Jackson and Guillermo discussing idea’s for The Hobbit.
Jackson and designers, re-designing *The Hobbit* to suit Jackson’s vision.

Andy filming in the improved mo-cap suit with a facial camera (top) & the CGI mimic (bottom).

Gollum in *The Lord of the Rings* (left) and the improved Gollum in *The Hobbit* (right).

Diagram illustrating how slave motion control works in regards to scale.
Designing the dwarves for *The Hobbit*, note the multiple concepts shown on the walls as well.

Some of the dwarves muscle and fat suits.

Jackson with Bilbo, Gandalf and the thirteen unique dwarves.
Some of the earlier Smaug concept designs by Weta.


Sketch detailing Smaug’s eye (left) and coloured version (centre) both by John Howe, and then the final result as shown in; The Desolation of Smaug (right).

Close up shot showing Smaug’s numerous scales, as well as his weak-spot.
A still showing the final Smaug with Bilbo, as shown in *The Desolation of Smaug*.

Rough animation showing the trio-formation elven fighting style: two swordsmen to one archer.

Olog-hai concept art from Weta.

Digital mock-up of Jackson’s favourite troll: ‘Stumpy’