

## **Designing for Films: A Q&A with Ed Verreaux**

By Susan S. Szenasy

**Susan S. Szenasy: OK, Ed, tell us what film we're going to discuss first.**

Ed Verreaux: *Starsky and Hutch*.

**(They roll a clip from Starsky and Hutch.) Ed, you did your job so well on this, we don't know what you did. What did you do on this film?**

I just found a bunch of locations and shot them.

**You found the locations. Who picked that sweater that Ben Stiller wears?**

That was the costume designer, Louisa Mingenbach. We've worked together before on things, and when I work with her we actually collaborate, as far as the colors and all that, so that the stuff I do on the set doesn't clash with the actors. That sweater, by the way, was 2500 bucks. Because they waited so long to [choose] it, it had to be hand-knit, and it was a rush job. So this is an example of Hollywood. I think, actually, Ben owns it. He liked it a lot.

**It went with that hairdo.**

That was a wig, actually.

**So this was 1970s?**

Originally, the film was going to be contemporary, like 2003. Actually, at the beginning, the script was a whole lot different. There were some very big set pieces that, in the end, got dumped because of economy. Ben, who was the movie's executive producer as well as lead actor, thought, "I'm not wearing bell-bottoms and these kinds of shirts now, I'm going to look like a real dork. Let's just take this and push it back and make it kind of an homage to those Spelling-esque T.V. shows." So that's how it became [based in the] '70s.

**So there was no attempt to mimic the '70s, but create the mood of the '70s. It wasn't copying what existed. I was there, and this didn't look like those '70s.**

Well, we were trying to take motifs and things from the '70s; at the beginning of the movie, you see the boat on the water, and it says something like "Bay City, 1975." So the whole thing with the costumes, the hairdos, Vince Vaughn's mustache--I had one like that--that whole look, it was sort of evoking the '70s.

So it was supposed to be a buddy-cop send-up: on the one hand, we were trying to find things that worked for the '70s, but also there were things that we'd just say, "OK, well, nobody ever really dressed like that." Ben was supposed to be the really goody-two-shoes, really squeaky-clean cop, who was basically the over-active A personality, and then Owen [Wilson] was the kind of sleazy cop on the take, who had a penchant for black women.

We actually used a lot of locations within about two miles of here. We were down on Broadway, and down on 5<sup>th</sup> Street, using several old hotels, because a lot of the

architecture that's down here has been here since the '20s. Unfortunately, it's going through hard times right now, but a lot of film companies come down here and use these areas.

**A lot of what Snoop wears looks like his own clothing.**

No, that's all costuming that Louise did, and we kind of keyed off of each other; it was supposed to be an upscale pimp bar. Although Huggy really isn't a pimp--he's like the godfather of downtown--Todd Phillips, the director, wanted certain things in the bar. He wanted to have photographs of famous pimps. We couldn't actually get photographs of famous pimps, because we didn't know any. Also, there's a little thing now with clearance, so if you put anything on the wall it has to go through legal clearance. It's very difficult. We just made these up.

I did some sketches and then a painter friend, Linda, went ahead and painted. She painted eight famous pimps, and the last one was Snoop. We made his cane, made his rings, everything. He kept it all, 'cause he really liked them. He kind of had final say on the design. But we did his picture over the bar.

**So these costumes and all the things that we're seeing: Did they have a sense of reality even if they weren't on camera? In other words, there's this director--Visconti, I think--who used to provide all these luxurious things to the actors to inspire them in their roles. Did you have very real things?**

Oh yeah. Especially with Ben, Owen, and Snoop, but even the lesser players, they all had costume fittings.

**In the film clip where you showed the office, I noticed that they were working with typewriters. Where did you find the typewriters?**

There are different prop services.

**That building...**

That building is across the street from here [The conference was held at the L.A. Mart, located at 1933 S. Broadway.] We put up the signage and painted the curbs--we actually weren't allowed to use paint, so we put tape on the curbs and then painted the tape, because of all of the environmental stuff that's going on.

The thing I liked about this is that it looks kind of like it was built in the '50s, which it was, and it's got the monumental T.V., non-descript face. Inside the police station--this is actually the interior of the old drafting room of the Boeing plant in Downey. It's this huge aircraft plant that is now empty. We found a lot of the typewriters and stuff in the back room.

**So it wasn't an existing office, it was actually designed for the film.**

It was actually designed using the existing location--the columns were already there, but they were straight up, so we added those caps to them and painted the floor, added the

separations. By the way, this is the same space that Jeannine Oppewall used for the FBI office in *Catch Me If You Can*.

I was very impressed with that movie, and I thought she was so clever to put the lights at a 45-degree angle to the room. Then I got down there and thought, “Well, hey. I’ll use it too, it worked for her.”

Starsky’s condo is a location that’s out in Venice Beach. The thing with Starsky is that he’s a full-blown cop, so he has Andy Warhol paintings, but they’re of pistols. A lot of that stuff you didn’t see in the movie because it was gone over fairly quickly, but we had a lot of paintings that we made for that set, and Kate Sullivan, my set decorator, had one of these targets, you know the human targets that the police use? It was supposed to be his qualifying target that he got the day he got out of the academy. That was over the mantelpiece. We tried to layer a lot of that stuff into the movie, just to give it a level of believability.

**When you were designing for Starsky’s personality, what story line were you thinking of? Do you have a full-blown character in your mind? What was it that you knew about him that you knew that this would be his room?**

I saw Ben Stiller as being this really uptight guy, ’cause he plays that character really well. We were going to have it be a lot slicker and cleaner, and then the director said, “No, no, I want you to bring it back down a bit.”

What I did also to help inform me--because it’s supposed to be kind of the ultimate bachelor pad--is look at a lot of *Playboys* from the era. Seriously. I know it sounds kind of strange, but it’s true. You have to get your research wherever you can.

*Playboy* would always have the cool, bachelor-pad penthouse of the year. And it would have all the cool stereo stuff, so we looked at a lot of those and got ideas. We looked at home and garden magazines from the ’70s, too. I spent about three days over at Warner Research, just pulling stuff out...we created five big books, they were style books, that had ’70s clothes, ’70s advertising. Then also I would try to find things that looked like they would go in Hutch’s house, or that would go in Starsky’s house.

**Do you have a whole visual concept book for every film that you make?**

Yeah, you start with an idea and then you look for stuff to back it up. If you do an illustration of something from the time of the Pharaohs, then you’re going to look stuff up to see what scepters looked like then. What did people wear? That’s part of the beginning process; you’re going to do some research. Even on a comedy like this.

**Who do you share that with? The director and...**

Anybody that will listen! I mean, this was a mostly location movie, so I had a location manager who was out looking for stuff. We also did several weeks of just driving around, myself and him and the director, looking for things. This was the first month, it was just the three of us. I also shared this with my set decorator, the costumer, and with everybody else as we began to develop the style and look of the film.

**As the production designer, who's on your collaborative team?**

The title “production designer” gets thrown around a lot, and it's fairly loosely used. I believe that it was originally used or given to Cameron Menzies, who designed *Gone with the Wind*, who literally did a painting or drawing of every set and scene in the movie, and also oversaw all the designs of the costumes. Most production designers don't do that anymore, but they have a hand in all that.

The people I have directly on my team are set designers, art directors...a construction crew and a construction coordinator, and then carpenters. Lots of times I'll be at least mildly responsible for getting the special effects guys, too. So I'm working with all these people, and then I'm also working with the director and producers, because we're always fighting about money. I don't know why it's this way, but it is. There's just never enough money.

So you're always trying to compromise and say, “Okay, what can I get away with not having here?” Sometimes you have to go back and talk to the director and say, “They say we can't do this,” and then we go and make some kind of deal, or somebody has a tantrum, or whatever.

**OK. Let's see some more. (They roll another clip from the film.)**

The one set we built on a stage over at Warner Hollywood. This was Hutch's house. I designed it so there was a dining room and a living room you would pass through, and then there was this kitchen. I designed it in such a way that there would be lines of sight through these different rooms.

The director and I talked about how he was going to shoot the set, and I designed it with the way the scenes were going to be shot in mind. And, of course, on the day of the shoot, he changed his mind, and shot it all in one room. But, you know, that's what happens.

**Do these homes actually look like homes, or do they look like something for camera angles?**

If you walked in there, they look like rooms, but they've been laid out and built in such a way that they can be shot, and all the walls can be moved at a moment's notice. They're called wild walls.

So, for instance, that wall over there on the right, if you wanted to put a camera there, remove a couple of screws and the wall comes off. That's the advantage of shooting on a set, as opposed to shooting a location, because then the walls are solid. Usually. We have cut holes in walls, too.

**What's the level of detailing for something like this. Is it very fine?**

It's very fine. Some of the stuff doesn't actually show on camera as well as you'd like it to. The human eye sees with a lot more resolution than a camera lense.

**What's in Hutch's personality that would have him be this traditional in his home decoration?**

Well, it's not that it's traditional, but it's just a little ticky-tacky piece of junk after World War II. I've got stuff [in his house] from the Rose Bowl flea market--I've actually got stuff there from my garage. Stuff I was able to get rid of it. It was great. It's sort of in bad taste, and that's Hutch. He doesn't really care too much. As long as there's beer in the fridge, he's happy.

**So the sets really help build the character.**

Absolutely. There was a whole sequence that we were going to do, and we actually ended up taking a block of downtown--this is Los Angeles Street, I think. It was all boarded up, and they wanted to do a red-light porno district, and so we went in there, got all these neon signs, and turned it into an amazing, lit-up block of the sleazy underside of Bay City.

As often happens in these things, all you ended up seeing is a long shot of Owen walking down the street. He turns, goes into a door, and that's it.

**After you built that block, this was all we got?**

Yeah. After we went to all that trouble, they did that. But that happens.

We also had a lot of alley shots, so once again we did a lot of stuff downtown. One of the things about shooting downtown is that the alleys are really dangerous. One reason is that there are a lot of people, unfortunate people, who live in these alleys. There's a lot of refuse and excrement and all that.

So every morning that we would do an alley, the locations would have a sanitation truck go and literally spray the alley down with disinfectant. So you'd walk into this alley and it would smell like a Porta-Potty.

One of the biggest things we had to do was knock down a lot of the graffiti, because the graffiti now is a lot different that it was in 1975. It's a lot more colorful, a lot more expressive now.

**So all those painted areas that look like they're painted out...**

Yeah. There was a scene where Starsky and Hutch go pick up this little kid at school, and they take him for a joyride down by the river. There's this one place down by the Sixth Street Bridge where they were going to drive up through this tunnel, and it's got graffiti on it. We wanted to get rid of the graffiti, so we found some local professional graffiti artists that know all the gang guys. So they can kind of get away with [painting over the graffiti], you know, saying, "Well, we're doing a film." If I sent my painters down there, they'd probably be shot.

So you're always doing that, too, making sure that you're not stepping on anyone's toes, and making sure that you're kind of jiggly with the neighborhood, otherwise...

**Does your crew get hazard pay?**

No, they don't, unfortunately. But we did. I had to send a couple of my art directors downtown to measure one block, and they came back after a day and said, "We're not going down there again without a bodyguard." So we told production, "Next time any of us goes down there, you've got to provide us with a cop." Which they did.

**This was all filmed in L.A.?**

This is all L.A., and, of course, the days that we had our boys here, the place was locked up tight. But when the construction, art department, and set tech are down there, they don't care as much about us.

**So how come this film didn't go to Toronto like so many films are doing?**

Thank goodness for Ben Stiller. I believe he and his wife have a brand-new baby, and he said, "I'm not leaving town. I'm staying here." Otherwise, we probably would have gone to Toronto.

**What's this?**

This is actually the women's bathroom down in the basement of the Biltmore Hotel. We did a lot of changes, because we wanted it to look a little nicer: it was supposed to be a country club. We also built these modules to light the guys. It's a very low, strange room and it's difficult to shoot in there.

There are very low ceilings, so there's no place to hide the lights, so you have to build the light into the set. There's an example of working with the lighting gaffer and with the director of photography so that you can light the movie. Because if you and I were here [in this room with high ceilings], being photographed, the lights would be up above us and off to the side. But if the ceiling's right here, you can't cut holes in it, because you're in the basement.

Then, of course, the final thing happens in the film, which is they end up chasing the bad guy down to the marina. We looked all over the place, because at the end they're going to drive the car off the dock. At one point, it was going to be Marina del Rey, at one point it was going to be up in Ventura...it finally ended up being down in San Pedro, in what used to be this supertanker dock.

You can't see it in this picture, but we brought in about 200 shipping containers, dressed them strategically, and built a whole approach around a corner. These three ramps, we built those because the car is going to jump at the end. It's going to jump off the dock, and it's got to get altitude. It can't just go off straight, because the boats have to go underneath it. I racked my brain for what would be down there, and said, "Okay, maybe special loading ramps."

The first two [ramps] are just plywood, plaster, and paint, and then the third one has a special effects rig inside it. It's all steel, and it's a catapult. And basically they throw the car off the dock. I had the painters down there trying to paint it so it would look like the birds were, you know, pooping on it, and then the birds just came and did it themselves.

**What's bird shit in movies?**

It's just paint. White paint with a little gray.

So when the car goes off the dock, it's actually a series of cars, but that's a catapult, very close to what launches an aircraft carrier. What we did was cleaned out the car: It has no oil, no motor, no fluids in it, because of environmental concerns...and then the special effects coordinator and I, we set this ramp up out in a junkyard in Sunland and tried the catapult, to make sure we knew how far the car was going to go. The problem is, you really can't test it until you run it. We used a car, but we didn't use this one. They had to shoot it three times, because every time they did, the car would roll over on its side, which it's not supposed to do.

**So how many cars did you trash?**

At the end of the movie, if any of you have seen it, the whole end of the movie just shows cars being trashed. It was about eight or nine cars, and they all got trashed in various ways. But also, in the movie, you can see here that there's no boat. We shot the boat separately from the car. Because it was way too dangerous, and also it would have been virtually impossible to get the boat in the right place at the same time the car is going over. This is called a split, and it gets done all the time.

**Do you have to clean up afterwards?**

Oh yeah. What I didn't have a picture of was, out about 100 yards, there's a whole camera crew there. Then there's a floating Eymo camera right about where the car was going to come down. They also had a camera in the grill of the car.

So we had divers that went down to get the car, attached airbags to it, inflated the airbags, brought the car back up, hooked it up to a crane...I mean, of course the car's wrecked, so they had a second car...they spent the whole day doing this. And of course, they fired both cars off, because you want to do as many as you can and make sure you [get the shot].

And to get the car going over your head, we also hung the car and ran a hand dolly underneath it. This was done the old-fashioned way, and could have been done with a model and been very expensive, but we decided no, we had a bunch of other stuff to do.

Also, we had a lot of driving shots when the guys were driving and talking. We had a setup like this. The camera is right where the hood is, and Owen and Ben can be talking and driving, but they're not really driving, so I don't have to worry about that. Lots of times they actually tow the car, and there are several different ways to do that.

There were also shots where we just had them sitting in the car on a bluescreen stage. That means also that, at the end of the movie, there's a whole sequence where they're driving, talking, and chasing these guys. We couldn't really have them in the car while the car was going through all these crazy gyrations. So we had a second unit crew go out and photograph film plates of the background going by really fast at all the different

angles. You need two shots looking back, a single on each side...then we went into the bluescreen stage and shot all the dialogue. And it all got composited, so it looks like they're really driving this car and doing this wild stuff.

**Where did you find those bikes?**

We had bike wranglers and some guys from local bike shops. There's a whole sequence where they end up going to a biker bar. It actually was an old biker bar that's up in Azusa Canyon. It was derelict, so we got the owner to let us go in there.

We had bike training: the stunt coordinator, Gary Davis, was a professional motorcycle racer for years. Ben came, but Owen never bothered to show up. So Owen really couldn't ride a Harley. He thought he could, but he couldn't. They're very hard to ride. So they just said, "Screw it," and they hooked him up to this rig, and that's how they shot him. In any shots where you see them riding along alone, those are doubles.

**So these guys are being pulled along by this contraption?**

Yeah. Because especially if something happens to them, your movie is over. You need to do everything you can to try to protect [your stars].

**Let's go right into the next movie. (Rolls clip from the film Mission to Mars.)**

This is *Mission to Mars*, and this is a scene from the middle of it, where we're in this ship on its way to Mars to rescue Don Cheadle.

**This is an actual capsule?**

Yeah, this is inside the set. Connie Neilson just unhooked herself, so now she's going to start walking. She's at the bottom of this wheel, but because we've got the camera on a techno-crane with a hothead, it looks like she's really walking all the way around this wheel.

What's happened is that she's at the bottom of the wheel and it's revolving underneath her. She's going to walk very quickly up this ladder, because the ladder's actually going counter clockwise, and then Jerry [O'Connell] will come in the front. Gary Sinise is strapped to his chair.

**How big is this thing?**

It's a 40-foot diameter set that rotates. Jerry's really walking up, but it looks like he isn't. Now we're going to come all the way across and find Gary, who's actually on his side now, and the camera's going to then rotate into Gary and then he's going to disconnect and start to stand up. This is the next set, which is supposed to be right next door, where these guys are supposed to be flying and floating.

**Are they on tethers?**

They're on wires. There's a whole bunch of stuff going on here...he's hanging upside-down, she's on a rotator right now, so she's really on a teeter-totter and a spinner. Also,

by having this techno crane with this hothead on the camera, we can actually be flipping people. He's got a pole on his back that's kind of holding him in place.

**And all of that is erased?**

Well, it's shot in such a way that you can't see it.

**Is this spaceship meant to resemble existing spaceships?**

No. My original concept was entirely different than this. When I got the job--this movie was for Disney--I did a lot of research. I went to see Louis Friedman at the Planetary Society--he used to be an associate of Carl Sagan's--and I went to a couple of NASA Web sites. There were several ideas about going to Mars. One of the problems is it's at least six months to go to Mars, roughly. And we don't know what people will act like or what zero G will do to them, so we did a lot of research on this.

Originally, the idea was that there would be two parts of the ship. But that was with the first director, Gore Verbinski, who left halfway through the project. So they brought in Brian De Palma, and Brian really wanted to have this big wheel. And I said OK, but Tony Masters did that in 2001. He said, "I don't care, I want the wheel." So we ended up making it.

[The wheel] is supposed to be a big gravitational habitat. It was also based on some NASA designs that exist. I used some artistic license, but I was basically trying to stay within sort of a known, NASA-esque look, and say, "OK, maybe in 10-15 years, if they actually did something like this, what would it look like?"

**It has to be somewhat familiar, but also advanced.**

Yeah. A lot of NASA's designs really don't look like that at all. But it has something that somewhat resembles the space shuttle.

We built a big set up in Vancouver down by the Fraser River--Mars and the habitat. We built the set, sculpted it out of sand based on designs that I had done, and also based on knowing what time of year we're going to shoot it. You can look up and see what the sun's arc is going to be, where the shadows are going to be.

**So it's actually technically correct in terms of the time of the year, how the light would hit it.**

Yeah, and I did a lot of work with the director of photography in this movie, Steve Burum, who works with Brian a lot.

**Is this where you use those millions of gallons of paint to get the effect?**

That's right. It was actually a combination of sand that we built models of, figured out all the sculpting, and then had guys out there with really big earth movers literally sculpting the sets. Then they came in with a colored gunnite, which is like a spray concrete, and they sprayed all the sand mounds to hold them in place. They were all painted, and then we also shipped in tons and tons of rocks, different sizes of volcanic rocks, that were

painted, too. We had a paint crew and they had a big truck with like 200 gallon buckets and a big fire hose. It was really fun to do. It was actually all recovered, by the way.

**So that was mopped up. How did you recover it?**

There was an environmental company that took care of everything. They have a process where they were able to separate the pigment from the rocks. And it was a biodegradable paint, too.

**That makes me feel much better. When I read about those gallons of paint, I thought you'd really poisoned the environment.**

We probably would have originally. The original concept was to go out to western Arizona. We went out and did some helicopter scouting, and the thing that really worried me was that even when you're out there in the bleakest part of the desert, there are little plants everywhere, and they would have all had to have been scraped off. That really is environmentally damaging, because those environments--they may not look like there's much going on, but that's very sensitive stuff.

**Did any scientists debate you on the color of Mars' atmosphere?**

We did have NASA consultants; one of the shuttle astronauts, Story Musgrave, who was a visual consultant as well. We went to a fair amount of trouble to get the details right, to make the edges look realistic.

**What happens to a set like this after you film it?**

We had to trash it. This is supposed to be when the first group [of astronauts] has landed, and everything's nice and pristine. Then this thing happens, they get killed, and our hero, our sole survivor, Don Cheadle, sends a message back, this garbled "Help blahblahblahlah."

So when our second crew finally makes it down to the planet, they find out that this guy's kind of like Robinson Crusoe. He's managed to survive, and create air and water from the existing atmosphere; he's growing plants and all this stuff. Don Cheadle's a method actor, so he wanted to sleep in the set, which he did one night.

Then, this was our cockpit for the ship. Those seats I got from *Armageddon* and revamped them. So even on a film like this, you're constantly trying to find inexpensive ways to get things.

**Does that happen a lot, that you reuse stuff from other pictures?**

Yeah, if you can find stuff that you can use. Why build something from scratch if you can take something that's already been built and modify it a little bit? This was the large central room. The only reason that room is so big is so that Tim Robbins and Connie Nielson could dance. It probably wouldn't be this big in reality, and I didn't want to make it that big, but it was one of those things.

**So you knew that was going to happen before you built this.**

Oh, yeah. When you're building a movie set, you're building to the action. Especially in a movie like this, you have to think about things in advance. Every one of those panels can come out, when need be.

**Those chairs...what did you adapt? Was there an existing ergonomic chair that you pushed to this new level?**

Those chairs are from an aircraft salvage place in Seattle. My set decorator, Liz MacDonald, found a source. These are actual chairs from a C130 plane.

I said, "Let's use those, we'll put some plates on them to hold them up, and we'll put some ribbing on the plates, and then you can adjust them if you need to." But in a wide shot, it looks like they're all bolted down and hooked into the floor.

Basically, I had three color schemes. I had Mars, which of course is red, and anything inside the spaceships was the complement, so it was kind of greenish. When you're out in space, it's all white and gray, so that the only color is the humans' faces. And when you're on the space station revolving around earth, it's blue. That way [through the color] you know where you are.

**It's the mood of each one reflected in the color.**

Yeah.

***(Begins to run a clip from Jurassic Park III.) Which is the next film?***

*Jurassic Park III.* They're down in this big cavern, in a canyon. It's all foggy and they see that it's this huge thing, which they realize is a bird cage for Pteranadons [a type of flying, toothless dinosaur]. Trevor is walking across an old suspension bridge and he sees something come out of the fog, and instead of it being his mom, it's actually...

So we did this on three sound stages at Universal, at the back lot at Universal, in Hawaii and also in the Humboldt River. This gives you an idea about how stuff gets cut together. Stan Winston provided little puppet Pteranadon babies, so some of them are puppets and some are CG, computer graphic.

**So this was an actual set?**

This was a series of composites. That's actually a set, but the rest was a digital composite from ILM [Industrial Light and Magic]. This is all a set except for the Pteranadon.

**Is the fog done to mask the effects?**

Absolutely. Well, it also is a story point, because the guys end up unwittingly walking down into this big space, and they don't realize what it is. The fog helps to make it mysterious.

**Something like this scene, how many takes is this?**

You mean how many cuts? It's several hundred...I haven't actually sat down and counted it shot for shot, but if you just look at how quickly he's cutting, you know, five

or six seconds... What was especially gratifying for me on this film was the seamless nature with which the sets cut right into Hawaii, back and forth.

That's not a real dinosaur.

**When do these dinosaurs get put in?**

They're all done in what's called post. But every time somebody gets picked up or flown, that's done as a live action effect. The guy is wired, he gets picked up and dropped, and then you actually have to attach the dinosaur to him.

**Were you involved with the dinosaurs at all?**

A little bit. I had to be because we had to build the sets to work for the dinosaurs.

*(Watching the film roll)* This is the back lot at Universal. We built all of this. There was a tank back there that they used for *Jaws*, so we built the set around this tank. This is Kauai [in Hawaii]. Back at Universal. Uh-oh...they didn't lock the gate! Now this is the Waialua River in Kauai.

There's a whole sequence at the beginning of the movie where their plane crashes in the forest. The plane is caught up in the trees, and the Spinosaurus comes and bites off the front of the plane, eats a couple of pilots, and then tries to eat everybody else. So we had to build this entire place set on a gimble rig, and then also build the forest set on stage 12 at Universal.

**This is not in Muir woods or something...**

No, it's not. This entire thing is on a soundstage. We were cutting back and forth between the soundstage and Hawaii, so the [actors] would run through some bushes and come out in Hawaii and then come back.

We used the sound stage a bunch of different ways. We were constantly moving trees around, but the one thing that stayed constant was that right down the center of the stage there were a couple of rails that the dinosaurs rode on like trains. We would move the set around to accommodate the dinosaurs.

**What I'd like to do with you, in the last few seconds that we're here, are some word association with you. Let me say two words: Chuck Jones.**

First guy I ever worked for in the film business.

**What did he teach you?**

He taught me how to animate. He taught me that anger was a luxury. A lot of the guys I worked with were all Disney guys, and they were very elegant and very much gentlemen, so that's something I've tried to emulate in a way, to not lose my temper too much.

**Steven Spielberg.**

I've spent a lot of time working with him. I wouldn't be here without him. My entrée to all of this, to big time live action, was from Steven.

**Robert Zemeckis.**

You're setting me up here. My first production design job, on *Contact*, was with Bob.

**How about the word "craft"?**

Craft? Well, it's something that I think most people that do what I do take seriously, and we try to imbue what we do with a level of quality. A level of craft. Some more so than others, but I think that's what we do.

**How about ethics in aesthetics?**

Once again, I think, the play's the thing, the show's the thing. It's not so much my aesthetics, although I'm always trying to sort of make my opinions known. But it's really serving the needs of the film, serving the needs of the story.

I think if you don't want to do certain kinds of films you are aware of that, and when you read a script you say, "This isn't something I want to do," you pass on it.

**So, now you know what goes behind the scenes, to all of these wonderful films. Does anyone have any questions to ask?**

Q: How do you go about becoming a set decorator?

Set decorators, just like production designers and art directors, come from a lot of different backgrounds: art training, interior design training, that kind of stuff. Find somebody whose work you like and then contact them and see if you can work with them. See if there's some way you can start out by being an assistant or a PA. That's what I did. I started out in animation, because I wanted to just get my foot in the door. Then you learn what it's about as you do it.

**Well, Ed, thank you for being here, and thank you all for attending our talk.**