

## “IMMORTALS”: Slash of the Titans

Written by Tony Timpone

Friday, 11 November 2011 04:42

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Opening today from Relativity Media and helmed by visionary director Tarsem Singh (THE CELL, THE FALL), IMMORTALS is not your garden-variety myth adventure, but a rousing, gory and R-rated fantasy flick where gods and humans (lead by good guy Henry Cavill as Theseus and a demonic Mickey Rourke as evil King Hyperion) clash for supremacy. FX wizards at Tippett Studio (TWILIGHT films, PRIEST, DRAG ME TO HELL) brought the film's fearsome Titans (former gods trapped on Earth) to life and orchestrated IMMORTALS' bloody finale. The project's visual FX supervisor, Matt Jacobs, gave Fango the scoop on his company's unique work on the film.

**FANGORIA:** What kind of “marching orders” were you given on IMMORTALS?

**MATT JACOBS:** Tarsem's instruction was, basically, make the Titans look cool and make them look real.

**FANG:** How were the Titans described in the script?

**JACOBS:** When we were first given the scene, the Titans were described as the embodiment of rage and the fight was to be a ballet of blood.

**FANG:** The climactic battle scene is really nasty. Were you asked to ever scale the horrific nature up or down?

**JACOBS:** No, the intent was always to make the scene graphic and gory; it should be over the top. Athena [Isabel Lucas] alone cuts off a half dozen heads or more. Poseidon [Kellan Lutz] skewers several of his victims. And Zeus [Luke Evans] goes to town with a chain, smashing several Titans and splitting one from stem to stern. However, with that level of gore, we did have to find a balance as to how much blood we should have. Nobody wanted the effects to enter the world of “campy,” which could easily happen if we had too much blood flying around. One of the more tasteful but epic deaths was of a Titan being thrown into the cell wall by Poseidon. We added broken, twisted leg bones, jutting ribs and a decent size plume of blood to

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him after hitting the wall. It was all done in just the right amount to make you look at it and go, “Ouch!”



**FANG:** Why was it decided to do the Titans action bits motion capture?

**JACOBS:** The reason for using motion capture was because the fight choreography between the Gods and Titans was very particular. On set we shot takes of the Gods fighting the stunt Titans, then a take would be done without the stunt Titans. Once we were done shooting, we immediately went to the mocap stage to recreate the fight choreography with the same actors. Motion capture was the fastest and most direct method of recreating the fight sequence.

**FANG:** Could they have been realized with regular actors and makeup?

**JACOBS:** We could use the stunt Titans right up to the point where heads started flying and guys get cut in half. When the Titans die, they move into slow motion and that meant we would be tweaking the motion capture performance.

The plan was initially to have all the Titans in the scene be computer generated because Tarsem wanted a particular texture on their skin and there were post effects we planned on doing to the performances. The texture was to have a bit more of a black, cracked earth texture and a higher relief. In the end, there were more shots with practical Titans than originally planned (due to budget issues), and we ended up matching their look so that the shots worked across the cut.

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**FANG:** How were the gore FX accomplished?

**JACOBS:** All of the blood in the scene was accomplished through fluid dynamics in Houdini and Maya. We decided early on that all of the blood would have to be done this way because we wanted to be able to direct the fluids as opposed to shooting elements and getting what you get. Directing fluids can be difficult, but in the end it offered greater flexibility to achieve the look we wanted. Plus the show was to be converted to stereo and we wanted the blood to work well in 3D. Body parts, guts and such were all modeled and integrated into the special rigs for the wounds.



**FANG:** Was any of that practical?

**JACOBS:** Only the beheadings... kidding of course.

**FANG:** How hands-on was Tarsem with IMMORTALS?

**JACOBS:** Tarsem is obviously a very visual person and was very clear about what he was looking for from the scene. He is incredibly skilled at crafting pictures and everything about the film is a direct reflection of his aesthetic tastes. That being said, Tarsem was very open and let us incorporate ideas that we thought would make the shots the best they could be. IMMORTALS was a very collaborative experience for us.

**FANG:** What else does Tippett Studio have coming up?

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**JACOBS:** We completed work on THE TWILIGHT SAGA: BREAKING DAWN, PART 1, which releases on November 18. And right now the studio is in production on Tarsem's Snow White picture called MIRROR, MIRROR and Seth MacFarlane's film called TED, which should be hilarious. We will soon begin work on the final TWILIGHT movie, BREAKING DAWN, PART 2.

**FANG:** Anything different to expect in BREAKING DAWN?

**JACOBS:** Wolves, wolves and more wolves.

**FANG:** Will there be creatures in MIRROR, MIRROR?

**JACOBS:** Can't tell you just yet, but the work is certainly challenging and really cool. We are having some fun with it.