



LUIS SINCO *Los Angeles Times*

**ADD MAN:** *Laurent Bouzereau creates "extras."*

# Where it's all in the retelling

Since DVDs paved the way, making films about films has become an art form unto itself.

By ELAINE DUTKA  
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It wasn't easy convincing his parents that he should leave his native Paris to pursue a film career in Hollywood. It didn't help matters when he became the sole male executive at Bette Midler's All Girl Prods. in offices on Dopey Drive on the Burbank lot of the Walt Disney Studios.

That has changed considerably in the wake of the DVD revolution. Laurent Bouzereau is now one of the format's top producers, creating special-edition material for 110 titles, including "The Terminal," "Taxi Driver" and the Indiana Jones trilogy. Part documentarian, part archivist, he's one of a handful of under-the-radar video A-listers in the "bonus features" realm.

Most of the top producers have long-term, if not exclusive ongoing relationships with specific directors. Charles de Lauzirika works primarily with Tony Scott and his brother Ridley, whose "Gladiator Extended Edition" is due out today. Michael Pellerin, who produced the DVDs of Peter Jackson's "Lord of the Rings" trilogy, is immersed in Jackson's upcoming "King Kong." Rob Burnett is associated with Bryan Singer ("The Usual Suspects," "Superman Returns"), Van Ling with James Cameron ("Terminator 2"). And Bouzereau has produced 18 titles for Steven Spielberg and six

[See DVDs, Page E5]



# Spinning 'extras' into 'must haves'

[DVDs, from Page E1]  
for Brian De Palma.

Shooting films about the making of films, these producers chronicle a movie's journey to the screen.

"I see myself as a historian, working on someone else's movie," said Bouzereau, 43, the author of eight books on cinema. "The goal is to do what the filmmaker would have done, had he or she had the time."

Though studios aren't always eager to spring for the high-priced members of this "Tiffany club," as De Palma described them, top directors generally get their way. And the revenue potential makes the decision easier.

"DVDs are minted money — but new bells and whistles are necessary to compete," De Palma said. "Special features, once an afterthought, are now an essential part of the marketing campaign. Laurent is on the set from Day One shooting, accumulating archival footage, asking provocative questions, turning out 'essays,' so to speak."

The job of a DVD producer differs from that of his "theatrical" counterpart, says Michael Mulvihill, senior vice president of content development at New Line Home Entertainment. "The producer of a theatrical film oversees all the departments," he said, "while a DVD producer is essentially a department head, like the person in charge of special effects or cinematography. You want someone who can click with the filmmaker."

The format has progressed exponentially since the original "Gladiator" DVD, Lauzirika said. In 2000, the film's bonus "extras" were patently promotional — culled from footage shot for HBO's "First Look" series and electronic press kits. This time, he persuaded Russell Crowe to record his first audio commentary and demonstrated how the production digitally salvaged the performance of Oliver Reed, who died during the production.

On the "Kingdom of Heaven" DVD, to be released Oct. 11, Lauzirika includes snippets of closed-door meetings between the director and 20th Century Fox. He also created an interactive grid with customized access to extras, giving people 16 ways to view cast, crew and director at various stages of production. One can choose to watch Orlando Bloom and Liam Neeson describing their first reaction to the script or Scott editing the film.

"Directors vary in their approach," said Lauzirika, 38, a USC film school graduate whose projects include the "Alien Quadrilogy," Tony Scott's "Top Gun"

and Sam Raimi's "Spider-Man 2." "Ridley was fast off the mark, embracing the potential of the format, while Tony was more cautious. He didn't want to show off. DVDs have demystified filmmaking — and it took some convincing before Raimi revealed his tricks."

"I see myself as an advocate for the filmmaker," he added, "ensuring that his vision comes through on the home video end, no matter what happened on the theatrical cut."

Lauzirika said Ridley Scott embraces his warts-and-all approach. But that's the exception, according to De Palma. The truth, he said, is an elusive goal — at least with new releases. Studios don't want to reveal the underbelly of a picture they're still trying to sell. And directors who work in the system are reluctant to rock the boat.

"Sydney Pollack recorded a candid commentary on [1973's] 'The Way We Were,'" De Palma said. "He revealed how upset Barbra Streisand was when he deleted two 'political' scenes she thought were central to her character. But only the most courageous will tell tales out of school about recent work because it can come back to haunt them. I know that from personal experience, having participated in a book about [what went wrong with the critically savaged] 'Bonfire of the Vanities.' You're not aware of it — but certain things just don't happen."

Although a DVD shoot varies with the project and personalities, certain beats are constant. The producer first writes up a laundry list of proposed features and then works out a budget. (Though most DVDs in the market come in for around \$150,000, they range in cost from \$5,000 for low-budget independent fare to millions of dollars for blockbuster titles). The minimal goal is to capture scenes on the set that are exceptional or representative — a superstar doing a cameo, for example, or creation of the dinosaur footage in "Jurassic Park."

"You don't go in with too much of a preconceived story," said Pellerin, Jackson's producer. "Life happens and you're there to document it."

The cut is sent to the director who, in some cases, gives notes. Interviews are set up with cast and crew but cooperation isn't a given. John Travolta declined to participate in the bonus extras for "Carrie," though his female costars did. Some actors have asked to be compensated, especially on older films. Only rarely do they receive it.

Bouzereau originally pro-



# DVD sales

Here are the 10 top-selling DVDs for the week ending Aug. 14. Rankings are compiled from a variety of major retailers, including Best Buy, Blockbuster, Circuit City and Costco.

1. "Kung Fu Hustle"
2. "Guess Who"
3. "Because of Winn-Dixie"
4. "Alexander"
5. "Constantine"
6. "The Muppet Show: Season 1"
7. "XXX: State of the Union"
8. "Million Dollar Baby"
9. "The Muppets' Wizard of Oz"
10. "Ghostbusters I & II"

Source: *DVDExclusive.com*

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duced laser discs, a niche medium that was geared to film aficionados. Ironically, he thought mass-market DVDs would be the death knell for his mini-documentaries. The general public, he figured, was more interested in movie stars than in the craft of filmmaking. Pellerin, another veteran of the cumbersome laser disc era, grasped the possibilities of DVDs early on.

"Laser discs weren't big moneymakers," said Pellerin, 40. "But Jackson was so excited and hands-on that on his 1996 movie

"The Frighteners" he produced four hours of supplementary material himself.

"He's the only director I've worked with who has actually done my job," he said. "As a DVD director you're not an outsider. Everyone knows you — and you know everything about the film. When they go off to start their next project, you're the movie's caretaker."

By the time DVDs took off in 2000, Pellerin was in the market full force.

On his "Fantasia Anthology," he included an audio commentary by the long-deceased Walt Disney using recorded press interviews. For the last installment of the "Rings" trilogy, he interviewed 140 people and, over the course of the trilogy, shot about 11 million feet of footage. On "King Kong," he and Jackson are sending out "production diaries" twice a week, disseminated on a fan website.

"What we do is a world apart from large DVD companies producing 60 titles a year. Yet, because we're part of the packaged-goods industry, many of the studios refer to us as 'vendors.' They think of us like Kleenex because DVDs come in a wrapper."

Maybe so, De Palma said, but "that won't last for long."

"Vendors" is a transitional term," he said. "These guys will get their due. Pretty soon, you'll see the name 'Laurent Bouzeureau,' say, on a DVD and know it's a sign of quality."