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AN INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR

HUGH HUDSON

Hugh Hudson has enjoyed wide-ranging success as a director of documentaries and commercials, and his work in these areas has won him possibly every important award. He has received many offers to direct a feature over the years, but turned them all down, until finally David Puttnam offered him the script of "Chariots of Fire."

Q: What attracted you to the project?

HH: The story. There's a wonderful sense of purpose in the film; a sense of individual purpose. The two central characters don't take second best, they won't compromise. You can argue that's what I've been refusing to do for 10 years. I'd been offered many films during that period but turned them all down. I didn't want to make a film that I felt no affinity for. "Chariots of Fire" was something I knew I would do naturally well. I enjoyed making it. Like anyone who's frustrated, once it is released, you feel very elated. But there is no point in making a film just for the sake of making a film. Films that are good are about subject matter the filmmaker deeply identifies with.

Q: The actors playing the leading characters are virtually unknown to film audiences. Was this a deliberate choice?

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HH: With well-known actors, the film would have been less believable. The most interesting aspect for me was in dealing with actors and developing character. Of course, in important roles there are such eminent actors as Sir John Gielgud, Ian Holm and Nigel Davenport. The prospect of working with them was a little nervewracking. But I got on with them very well. And it is rewarding, improvising and improving, without changing the intention of the script. Without a good story and good actors to tell the story, you haven't got anything. The film can be visually as beautiful as you want, or you can break new ground from a technical point of view. But it doesn't mean anything if the humanity of the characters doesn't come across on the screen.

Q: Did you feel a great deal of pressure working on the film?

HH: People work better under pressure. You have to react instinctively by yourself in the pressure of a 10-week shoot.

Q: How would you describe "Chariots of Fire?"

HH: I see it as a story of personal endeavor, a relationship between characters that is very human, very identifiable. The film is about growing up and achieving something against the difficulties that everyone experiences in their youth. The characters are very attractive, very interesting, and one can identify with them.

Q: When did you start wanting to make films?

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HH: From the age of about 12. My first film was an 8 mm. family production about Oliver Cromwell.

Q: How did you get started in your career?

HH: After school and two years of Army service, I began in an advertising agency. Then I went to France and worked on documentaries in the cutting rooms. At the end of the fifties, I tried all the big studios. I wanted to work my way up classically through the whole system, but they wouldn't let me in. So I started working in the television department of an advertising agency. About two and a half years later, I started my own company, making commercials and documentaries independently. And then things got better...

Allied Stars present an Enigma Production, "Chariots of Fire," a Ladd Company and Warner Bros. release thru Warner Bros., starring Ben Cross, Ian Charleson, Nigel Havers, Nicholas Farrell, Cheryl Campbell and Alice Krige, with guest stars Ian Holm, Sir John Gielgud, Lindsay Anderson, Nigel Davenport, Dennis Christopher, Brad Davis, Patrick Magee and Peter Egan. Directed by Hugh Hudson, "Chariots of Fire" was produced by David Puttnam with Dodi Fayed as executive producer. The original screenplay was by Colin Welland, and the original music was composed, arranged and performed by Vangelis Papathanassiou.

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