

FILMING THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN

Fans of director Terry Gilliam's relentless visual inventions will be pleased that the settings of his new film, *The Adventures of Baron Munchausen*, range from the Moon, to the center of the earth, to the inside of a sea monster's belly.

The film centers around Karl Friedrich Hieronymus, Baron von Munchausen—a notorious 18th-century tall tale-teller. The Baron was a cavalry officer in the service of Germany's Frederick the Great, and his purported exploits while battling the Ottoman Empire included riding a cannonball across enemy lines; flying to the Moon in a hot-air balloon constructed of ladies' lingerie; and wooing Venus the love goddess under husband Vulcan's nose inside the erupting Mt. Etna.

Gilliam, who previously directed *Time Bandits* and *Brazil*, re-creates all of these fantastic events in his new film. He uses a framing device to point up the power of storytelling. The movie opens in an unnamed besieged city, where the Henry Salt & Son Players are presenting their own version of Baron Munchausen's adventures onstage at the bombed-out Theatre Royal. Ironically, the film's literal enactment of these events never matches the magic of the representation by the Salt & Son Players.

For the Theatre Royal interior, production designer Dante Ferretti provides a towering baroque structure in the crumbling midst of bombardment, as well as a detailed glimpse at early stage mechanics. A wooden sea monster is cranked out of the wings to confront mermaids which are a clever blend of live actresses and cutout tails; under the stage, a complex of giant machinery is worked by muscular laborers. Gilliam and his crew take a modern delight in demystifying process, without diluting the marvels which result.

Location filming for *Baron Munchausen* was in Almeria and Belchite, Spain. The Theatre Royal was constructed at Italy's Cinecittà Studios, on a soundstage which was itself half-demolished by Allied bombs in World War II. Other settings, including the Moon and the



underground Vulcan-Venus home-
stead, were also shot at Cinecittà. A new facility, part of an \$8 million (UK £4.6 million) modernisation program coinciding with the studio's 50th anniversary, was utilized for the plentiful special effects shots, designed by Richard Conway. Shooting wrapped up with miniature work at London's Pinewood Studios.

To achieve his fantasy, Gilliam enlisted an immense multi-national production crew which included some of the finest behind-the-scenes people working in the Italian film industry—besides production designer Ferretti, who won honor for his work on such films as Fellini's *Satyricon* and *Ginger and Fred*, there's Guiseppe Rotunno, the cinematographer who worked on Fellini's *Amarcord*, Mike Nichols' *Carnal Knowledge* and Bob Fosse's *All That Jazz*, and Gabriella Pescucci, costume designer on Fellini's *City of Women* and Scola's *The Women*.

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AUSTRALIA/SCENOGRAPHY

DESIGNERS AND SCENOGRAPHERS SLATED TO MEET IN SYDNEY

From June 7-11, 1989, Sydney will be the site of a meeting of the OISTAT Scenographic Commission, an international gathering of designers and scenographers, sponsored by the Australian National Center of OISTAT.

The Sydney conference consists of a series of discussions on The Architecture of the Stage in Performance. Sessions will be held at Sydney theatres, including the Wharf Theatres of the Sydney Theatre Company and the Sydney Dance Company, the Seymour Theatre Centre and the Sydney Opera House. The meeting will be highlighted by behind-the-scenes tours of these and other performing arts complexes in and around Sydney.

Sessions begin on Thursday, June 7 at the Seymour Theatre Centre at the University of Sydney with discussion groups on "The Australian Experience: An Historical

Overview." Friday's theme is "Contemporary Theatre Building in Australia" to be held at the Sydney Opera House. On Saturday, "Recycling Old Buildings into New Stage Spaces" at the Wharf Theatres. The conference concludes on Sunday with discussion on "Training and Education" at the National Institute of Dramatic Art.

For more information on the 1989 Meeting of the Scenographic Commission in Sydney, contact: Andrew Blaxland, OISTAT commissioner general/Australia, Tel: 61.2.969 5709, or Derek Nicholson, Theatre Studies Services Unit, The University of Sydney, Sydney NSW 2006 Australia, Tel: 61.2.692 3635. Fax: 61.2.319 1001.

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