

Tom Hanks: A Life in Pictures

19 October 2013 at the Princess Anne Theatre, BAFTA, 195 Piccadilly

Francine Stock: Good evening ladies and gentlemen and welcome to this BAFTA A Life In Pictures, which is sponsored by Deutsche Bank. I'm delighted to welcome you all to this evening with Tom Hanks. But first of all I do have to thank Deutsche Bank for sponsoring the event, it wouldn't be possible without them, and they've added the A Life In Pictures strand to their existing wide range of arts sponsorship, which includes the Frieze Art Fair and also a programme with the Globe Theatre, which allows children to access Shakespeare.

Anyway, onto this evening's programme itself. I'm not actually going to waste any superlatives on you at this stage because you will know as well as I do that stars don't come much brighter or bigger than Tom Hanks. So before I invite him to the stage let's just remind ourselves of a few of his past roles.

Montage of clips

APPLAUSE

FS: Ladies and gentlemen, Mr Tom Hanks.

Tom Hanks: That was lovely, thank you very much. I was peeking through the door, and it has been so long since anybody has shown a clip from *Turner & Hooch* that I was delighted to see that it was the first stop in that montage. I was literally saying 'what was that from? Oh! *Turner & Hooch* – learned a lot from that dog'.

FS: So Tom, welcome to BAFTA.

TH: Thank you, thank you very much.

FS: And indeed to your Life In Pictures, but since we're starting about *Turner & Hooch*....

TH: [Laughs] Let's get to it.

FS: We can go wider than that, but comedy as a background for an actor who would later become a dramatic actor: How important, how good a grounding do you think it is?

TH: Well, because it's such a bitch – pardon me – but you know it is either funny or it's not, so it's the epitome of sink or swim. The first job I ever got was because I was loud and funny, louder and funnier, or maybe just louder than the other people that were up for the same role. And it can't be faked, there's no theory to it, it simply is. It is either funny or it's not.

And on film the danger is you could be working with almost anybody who has no sense of humour. The editor could have no sense of humour, and the editor can be going through things like 'let's cut here and let's cut there, let's cut there'. Not to start the anecdote parade, but here's one, in *Turner & Hooch* – the most important movie of this or any career – we were doing this thing... the movie suffered all these setbacks and so we were shooting six day weeks in Los Angeles, so we had to work on Saturdays.

So Roger Spottiswoode, who was the director, and Dan Petrie Jr. who was the producer and screenwriter, we got together and said 'okay look if we've got to come in and work on Saturdays let's make those the dog-centric days. Let's make those the days we just work with the dog. There were probably five or six scenarios in which it was just me and the dog, important to the story.

And there was one, actually you showed a clip from it, where I chase him out of bed and I get him into the bath. We shot it probably 11 times, because the dog often runs off the set. You can't keep the dog in the moment, and we weren't trying to do a thing where the dog's behaviour was shaped by the editing. We said the dog will have to be a dog and I will have to react off that dog being a dog. So it was actually very hard work.

So we gave it to the editor and he came back and he had turned it into a kooky bath montage theme. All that was missing from it was [voices comedy music] and I said to Roger 'I don't know much, but I think I know some things that are funnier than others. I don't know how long you want this scene to be, but just find the best master, the one take, and just stay with that as long as you dare, and I think that will be better than a cutty version of it. He put it in there and it ended up working pretty good.

The chops that you develop in comedy are the chops that you will not be slave to but they will serve you in other aspects of storytelling. There is a timing to it, there is a pace, there is the supreme task of give and take with whoever else you are acting with in the scene. I think that in some ways comedians, if they ever freed themselves from the self-consciousness and pain of not being funny – because if you're not funny as a comedian you die – so if you can get away from that need to be constantly funny you'll have a bit of a grounding.

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Going back to the first – again the anecdote parade continues – the very first job I had, which was in *Splash* with Ron Howard, I had been doing a comedy television series and got fired from it, went off the air. I was desperate to be funny again, quite frankly. And the very first read through of the screenplay had all the actors, John Candy and Darryl Hannah and Eugene Levy, everybody was there, all the key department heads.

And I was operating from the task that had been mine when I was on the TV show, which was to score, which was to kill, which was to take the lines and get laughs at the table. And I did it, like flop, sweat mercilessly trying to get laughs around this table. And it was terrible, and I didn't get any laughs and I felt like I had failed. And Ron took me aside that day, right after that reading, and said 'look, I know what you're doing, you're trying to be funny, you're trying to score. That's not your job in this movie; your job is to love that girl.

And if he hadn't said that... he could have fired me that day, to tell you the truth, but he had done TV so he knew the things I had fallen into so he cut me some slack. God bless the boy.

FS: So after *Splash* came *Big*...

TH: Well that was a long time afterwards, I think *Big* was my eighth or ninth job. Of course I was doing them back to back so it was probably 18 months later [laughs].

FS: You'd done a series of mainly comedies.

TH: Yeah, yeah, mostly comedies. I had made one sort of family drama-comedy called *Nothing In Common*, with Jackie Gleason. I don't know if Jackie Gleason means anything over here but it was like working with the Pope. But by and large I mostly made comedies, because I was in my 20s and they were asking me to and that's where I had the chops.

And the nature of the business was there were a lot comedies being made. Imitation Bill Murray films, different versions of *Animal House*, you know. A lot of movies like that, and that was right up my alley, man. Let me do those second rate Bill Murray films, I'll do them 'til the cows come home.

FS: But the role in *Big* where you're playing a boy who is sort of transported into the body of an adult, that actually had attracted the

attention of a number of straight actors who were interested, I gather, in just the actual challenge of doing that.

TH: The screenplay was actually superb, and Penny Marshall who had directed either one or two films, she was extremely dedicated. Yeah, it only fell apart because of showbusiness reasons. The financing fell apart, the studio went through some shift, a number of people almost made the movie but then for some reason it all dried up. So that when it came back around it just came my way, and it happened almost by accident.

FS: I had read somewhere that De Niro was once interested.

TH: He was involved in it for a while, and that was one of those things where the studio changed hands and suddenly the entire slate shifted. It's kind of nice, yeah. Sorry Bob.

FS: So we're going to see our first clip now, which is from the moment when Josh, the boy who is now apparently a man, actually confronts his best friend who does not yet know about this extreme transformation.

Clip from Big

FS: So that was Jared Rushton there. I wondered whether it was actually more difficult to play a kid against a kid than when you were with adult actors?

TH: The thing that I sort of had to set out to do was to get back in touch with the sense of play. I probably had the job like three or four months before we started shooting it and not knowing what else to do that's what I did. I started playing like when you were a little kid. Literally I had army men that I would set up on the floor of my house, I'd do goofy stuff with my kids, you know, just come up with any sort of game and sense of make believe.

So Jared was kind of cool in that way, because he was a kid anyway. That very thing was not scripted that way. There was a long list of things that Josh was going to say, tell Billy, and it was kind of lifeless. 'I remember when you broke your arm, I remember when you broke so-and-so's window playing ball, I remember we caught so-and-so doing that'. And it was okay but it was just kind of like a list. And searching for something else, that riff, that song was something that my son had learned at his sports plus day camp that year. So he had been

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doing it all the time, so I learned it from him and I said 'what if we know this thing from a camp that we went to a long time ago?'. Penny said 'alright, let's do that'. And that's how that moment came to be.

FS: And it is absolutely magical, all those little movements.

TH: There was about nine movies out that had the same sort of plot device, somebody switched roles or somebody young became old, and Penny was so hip that we didn't waste any time getting there. What I liked about that was as soon as Jared's character knew, Billy, he was like 'oh year, alright' so it was taken care of and we were onto the rest of the story after that.

FS: And obviously a lot of physical stuff generally.

TH: Oh yeah, yeah, I still had knobby knees back then.

FS: But the comedy becomes deeper and more interesting as you go along because for example there's the film *Punchline*, where you play quite a complicated comedian, it's actually a dramatic role even though there are laughs there.

TH: Oh yeah, we made *Punchline* prior to *Big* but they were reversed when they came out. *Punchline* was going to be a treatise on the self-loathing lifestyle that comedians actually have. Because I had never met a fully rounded human being that was a stand up comedian at the same time. They're all oddly scarred and over burdened and kind of morose and unhappy.

We said 'hey, let's make a movie about that'. David Seltzer who wrote it and directed it, he wrote the routines, they were all in the screenplay. The problem was they weren't funny. They took up space in the screenplay so we knew how long it was, and this scene is five pages, so when we were beginning to work on it I said 'he's a stand up comedian and you've written in these days stand up routines'. He said 'yeah'.

'Well, you know they're not really funny, and I don't know how to perform them so that they'll be funny. They're missing some sort of organic sense of timing and pace and subject and theme'. And he said 'yeah, I know'. I said 'well, whoever plays this part is going to have to go

off and probably develop a stand up comedy routine'. And he said 'yes'. I thought 'okay, as long as we know that'. But I had never done any stand up; I was loud, I could be funny at a party, or [jokily] at one of these retrospectives of my films, I can get a couple of laughs from the audience every now and again even if it's this mock self deprecating attitude I have about myself.

So I began going out to clubs and literally trying to develop... and it was horrible for weeks and weeks. I tried to do three or four sets a week, and it was terrible. It was bone crushing bad, and flop sweat and... but then you get a two minute routine that carries the day. We kept it up throughout the shooting of the movie, and the routines that we worked out in clubs – I had two guys that were working with me – are the routines that are in the film. So they literally have... stand up comedians are like novelists, they write this material that only they can deliver and only they can send, so that's what ended up in the movie.

FS: And it gives it a really great edge. And then along comes *Sleepless In Seattle*, which changes romantic comedy I think – in what way do you think?

TH: You said it, I don't know, I don't know. Nora Ephron, who wrote that with her sister Delia, she landed on this concept of hearing somebody's voice on the radio. And that being that odd kind of catalyst that actually makes sense. We've all experienced something like that. We've either heard somebody's voice, or heard somebody talking and thought 'you know, I might fall in love with that lady'. The fact that they never see each other and they don't really know who each other are... that was the structure of the screenplay.

I was probably very cranky with Nora at the beginning of that because I kept reading it and saying 'he's got a kid, that's the kid's scene, the kid's the guy, the kid's the catalyst. It's the kid's movie'. And she said 'no, you have to be a dad' and then I said 'well then you have to write it like a dad'. I'm making a joke, but actually sometimes we did come down to words like that. She said 'what do you mean?' I said 'you're a woman, you're a mother, you're basing this on your experience with your boys. I'm a man, my relationship with my boys is nothing like this'.

For example she wrote a scene where Sam was going to go off for a romantic weekend with

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this other woman, and [his son] Jonah didn't like her so he was throwing a fit. In the screenplay Sam, the father, did not go because he didn't want to disappoint his son. That was in the screenplay. I told Nora, 'that is such horseshit. Let me get this straight, a man has not gotten laid in four years, and he's got a shot to get laid this weekend, and he's not going to go because his son doesn't like the girl? I got news for you, that kid's going to the sitter, and I'm going off to get laid'.

Which Nora laughed about and she said 'that's perfect, let's incorporate it into it'. Now he doesn't go off because the kid runs away or there's some plot device in there that prevents Sam from getting laid. But there was the beginning of, I guess... it always comes back to the logic, and the drama, I think, has to be shaped by a logic that is irrefutable, that is recognised as true, human behaviour.

Otherwise you're making an Abbott & Costello movie in which kooky things happen, and it's funny, those movies can almost be formulaically laid out if the writers are good. But by the time I got to be old enough to be playing a father in this circumstance well then let's make it logically irrefutable and the comedy can certainly come out of that if you can find a way to make it real.

FS: And that same year you made *Philadelphia*.

TH: Yeah, boy we're blowing through this career pretty fast aren't we? Then I made *Philadelphia*.

FS: Sadly it has to be a whistle-stop tour. So you made *Philadelphia*, okay we're now looking back 20 years...

TH: 93, yeah.

FS: And at that point how radical was it to play a gay lawyer?

TH: Here's what was radical about it, it was going to be a mainstream motion picture and by and large AIDs was topical in the way it was being covered, but just recently prior to that what broke the AIDs story, that brought it into the consciousness of mass media, mass America, was when Rock Hudson was diagnosed as having AIDs. There was a huge population that would never have thought Rock Hudson was gay, because he made all those movies where he kissed Doris Day.

So we were going to be making this movie that was going to compete in the marketplace, it wasn't a small niche movie that was playing at Greenwich Village theatres to, essentially, the choir – meaning to the population that had already been ravaged by this pandemic, that were dealing with it every day in the most tragic frontline terms.

We were going to be making a movie that was going to have to compete with Arnold Schwarzenegger adventure films, or whatever else was in the marketplace at the time. That means we would have to get an audience that was going to be open to the fact of 'all this time I was thinking that I didn't know anybody who was gay, and secondly AIDs has not touched my life'. Well this movie comes out and *Turner & Hooch* here ends up being the guy who's gay and has AIDs which made them – perhaps – think that 'I haven't seen that guy at the bank who's usually been my bank teller. He's gone now. I remember the guy at the hotel that was on the night desk every time I went, he got really skinny, and I noticed sores on his face the last time I was there'.

So what it ended up doing, in a mainstream and perhaps palpable way, was saying to anybody who bought a ticket 'you know somebody who was gay and AIDs has affected your life. That was a bit of the genius of Ron Nyswaner's courtroom drama. And Jonathan [Demme] casting of it as the story of these two lawyers who come to grips in this kind of way.

When the movie came out and it had all the attention that any studio marketing could muster, that it had, we did all the right interviews and it had all the right features, it entered into the national zeitgeist a third and a third. A third of the reaction was this is a groundbreaking movie. A third of the reaction was this is nothing but a tepid potboiler that doesn't really touch upon the subject that it pretends to touch upon. And the other third was from essentially the gay segment of the world that said 'this movie has nothing to do with us and what we have been facing'.

And for three weeks, the first week it came out and then it was forgotten, second week they were still playing. And the third week the great gay activist, he wrote *The Normal Heart*, Larry Kramer who I have since met, and talked to about this very thing, he wrote the most devastating, negative article that said 'Why I Hate Philadelphia'.

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And Larry Kramer is unarguably the hero of the AIDS movement. He was the first person to go on TV on the Phil Donahue show, and say 'you people are afraid of me because I'm gay and I have AIDS, you don't even have television cameramen that will stay in the same studio with me'. And he did that three years before we made *Philadelphia*. So he came out... it wasn't loaded with vitriol, it was just his opinion and was so strong that overnight we became controversial.

But enough people had to go in and see the movie, and weigh in what they thought of, and that actually brought in a ton of those very Americans who thought 'I don't know anybody who's gay, and AIDS hasn't touched my life' so it ended up being a touchstone as the cinema can do.

Not unlike the Gregory Peck movie *Gentleman's Agreement* did in the 1940s when he pretended to be Jewish. If you see that movie now it's kind of dated, you don't really quite get what the big deal is about Gregory Peck pretending to be Jewish, but it was certainly a big deal in 1947. And, to whatever degree it was, *Philadelphia* served more of a surprising purpose than even the crack marketing staff of Orion Pictures thought it might at that time.

FS: Well we are going to see a clip from that, and what we're going to see is the scene where you and Denzel Washington, who plays the lawyer who is representing you in your case for wrongful dismissal, this is the famous scene where you are explaining to him the glories of Maria Callas.

Clip from Philadelphia

TH: You know, Jonathan does this thing in films that is very disconcerting to shoot the first time you do it, he doesn't do traditional coverage. He makes you look straight down the barrel of the lens. So you'll be doing a two hander with Denzel and he's behind the camera, you can see his shirt, but you're looking right down the barrel of the lens. They have to do this thing where you don't have the filter over it so you can't see a reflection of yourself, because then you couldn't do it at all.

Denzel throughout all of that is looking literally into the eyes of the audience. Believe me I loved doing that scene, it was Callas for crying out loud, it's a scene with three people: me

and Denzel and Maria Callas – not bad. But without Denzel's perspective it's just like an uncomfortable scene. We had a problem trying to shoot it, in that Chris our sound mixer, who's a great guy who I'd worked with before... We were in the trailer and understand I'd been listening to that thing forever, I got to the point where I literally knew the Italian, I'd listened to it a million times.

We shot the scene at about three o'clock in the morning in a real loft in Philadelphia and Chris came in and said 'we have to figure out a way to do this, we can't overlap'. So how are we going to hear the music and deliver the dialogue at the same time? We were in there, just he and I, for the longest time and he said 'well we can start playing the music and then turn it off and then you can say it and then you can go back and I said 'that's real convenient, let's figure out the timing of that here at three o'clock in the morning'.

And he said 'well I do have this little radio earwig we can put in one ear, so you can hear that. It'll sound really tinny but I can play it throughout the track. And I said 'okay well let's try that' and we jammed it in my ear and were trying to do it and I said 'well you know I think I'm going to be walking around, so then we'll see it and I'll be worried that if the angle's on that side you're going to see it'.

So we're going around and around on this, and then Jonathan came in 'how's it going!' happy, upbeat. We said we were trying to figure out how to play the aria and shoot at the same time because we don't want to overlap. He said 'don't worry about that, we're just going to turn that sucker on and play it loud – and we'll do it'. And that's the way we did it.

His willingness to postpone any difficulty to the post process meant that every time I did it we started at the beginning of the aria and went all the way through and so it ended up being really something. It was what it was, it was a pretty transformative night. And then we finished about five o'clock in the morning and then we all went home.

FS: It's difficult to imagine you'd get that intensity if...

TH: I think that lessons should be given to actors the first time they go and translate their stage skills to film. You're literally thinking this will be a fun scene to do and the next thing you know you've got a guy saying 'can you not

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overlap?'; 'What does overlap mean?'; 'Can you not talk at the same time as he's talking...'
'But it says in the script we're talking,'; 'No, I can't get tracks, I can't separate the tracks'; 'What are tracks?' – we had no idea. But when they're willing to go ahead and do that you realise that technically they can fix anything later on in post.

FS: So, an Academy Award for *Philadelphia* followed the next year by another Academy Award for *Forrest Gump*. So this made you only the second actor in the history of the Academy to have two consecutive awards.

TH: Yes, me and Spencer Tracy. [Jokily] You know we had coffee the other day.

FS: So *Forrest Gump*, who rightly or wrongly is nearly always one of the first film titles that you're associated with.

TH: Every time I walk into somebody's living room for the first time they always say 'son of a gun, Forrest Gump in my living room'. Elevator rides with people 'oh I can't believe, Forrest Gump in the same elevator as I am'. I get it, I get it.

FS: So how did you settle on *Forrest Gump*, on the stance, the voice and the whole kind of bearing?

TH: Bob Zemeckis told me at the very beginning of making that movie, he said 'look, I can't make this movie with an actor playing the title character unless he is a complete soulmate of mine in making this movie'. I said 'what does that mean?'. He said 'that means you can tell me anything, that means when we start putting this movie together I will open up the reels, that means you can tell me what you're preferred take is, that means you have a free hand in which you have to constantly tell me what your character is so that I can make the movie which is going to emerge from everything else that goes into the film.

The way Bob rehearses is, he gets the entire cast together – it would be me, Sally Field, Gary Sinise, Mykelti Williamson and Eric Roth who won the Academy Award for the screenplay. And we sat for two weeks in a room and we talked all day long, and there was no rules. We talked about each other's scenes, we impacted the script, we changed things around. Eric was right there saying 'well what do you think he should say?'. It was a great process of discovery because you couldn't say

anything wrong, you couldn't step on any toes. In casting the young Forrest there was a particular dilemma, in which Bob said 'what do you think we should do?'. We talked about it for a while – it's a hard role to cast. A lot of professional actors, a lot of professional kid actors, and I don't know where it came from but we realised that you will never get a kid in order to recreate something that I come up with theoretically.

What has to happen here I think is you've got to cast a kid and then I follow where that kid goes. Young Michael Humphreys came from this part of Tennessee that is literally more of a part of Arkansas or Mississippi. But he had this accent, he had this way of speaking, I would engage him in conversations with a tape recorder and just get this weird kind of cadence.

It was in South Carolina, we were riding out to see the house that they had built; the set of the Gump house which was not a real house. And we were just in the car and I was saying 'so Michael, what does your father do?'. And Michael said 'ma dad makes grease'. And I said 'how do you make grease?'. He said 'ah don't know but they use it in lipstick and motah oil'. Then he said to me 'cahn ah tell you what my favourite movie of yours is?' I said sure, what is it. He said 'well, ah like all of your films, but my favourite is *Drag-a-net*'. So taking him and everything that came out of Forrest was based on him.

The way he held his hands this opposite way, it all came from little Michael Humphreys. Years later we were in Nashville shooting *Cast Away*, and Michael had grown up and he came and visited us on the set. He was such a great guy because he was completely unscarred by the fact that he was young Forrest Gump. He thought that he was going to get more work, and acting wasn't for him, and I said 'do people still...' and he said 'yeah, run Forrest, run'. He had lost the accent by that time.

Then later on he joined the military and served in Afghanistan which of course [meant] everybody called him Private Gump while he was there.

FS: What do you put the enduring appeal of *Forrest Gump* down to? Is it because he's a character who can be as simple or as profound as we wish to project upon him?

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TH: I think it's just a very special movie, that Bob cracked some kind of amazing code in which for a generation you see all that we had survived, you know. We realised we had just been through a lot. My own kind of prism on it was in those discussions that I talked about earlier where we talked about the script for years, I was always fighting against scenes that made no sense to me.

I said 'it doesn't make any sense, why is he doing this stupid thing? It doesn't make any sense. There's no logic to this experience happening'. We had a big problem solving Forrest in the army, because it was written like *Buck Privates*, where he and Bubba were clumsy oafs that were always getting in trouble, that were wrecking jeeps and stuff like that. I said 'I don't get it, they'd be thrown out, they wouldn't last. What, are we going to go to Vietnam and have *Buck Privates* running around? We can't do that'.

Because logically wouldn't Forrest be the best soldier ever? He does everything he's told, and he does it exactly as he's told, and Bob said 'that's brilliant, he'll set records for putting his weapons back together again'. And that's exactly what Bob put in. I always said he can't operate faster than his own common sense, and if he doesn't have common sense he goes back to what God says to do, what Mama told him to do and what he learned from Jenny.

And I think it comes off in the screenplay that you end up oddly feeling that he'll be okay at the end of the movie. He's got his kid, he's been through enough that he's learned enough that I'm not really worried about Forrest Gump becoming 60 years old. He'll probably be okay. Movies like that, that's bottling lightning man, it will be with me forever, and I always welcome that moment 'I can't believe it, Forrest Gump is in the same Chinese restaurant as I am!'.

FS: Well we're just going to see a little excerpt which is from that very tender moment where [Forrest] goes to see his childhood friend Jenny some years later, after there's been a brief night of something more than friendship. She's played of course by Robin Wright, and Jenny has a revelation.

Clip from Forrest Gump

TH: The young Haley Joel Osment on the cusp of his career there. I ran into him and I said 'do you have any memories of doing that?'. He

said 'I remember playing ping pong with you'. The key to that scene for me was his observation that she had air conditioning. That was my line, I added that, I'm very proud of that.

FS: But the big moment is when he realises it's his son, and he asks... and I think that's what's so wonderful about scene, he asks the question, actually the secret fear that every parent has, 'I hope my child will not inherit whatever defect it is I have'.

TH: I think that goes back to the reason why you're not worried about Forrest, that scene means he has a self awareness of his place in the world, that he knows that he has this thing he has to overcome, and that he has through luck and love and ... That never fails to be the little tip of a pyramid in the movie.

FS: You re-teamed with Ron Howard for *Apollo 13*, and then of course you also became the voice of Sheriff Woody, in the first of those *Toy Story* films.

TH: Yeah, man o man, what a bonanza, yeah.

FS: This whole thing about American heroes/everymen the thing that is supposedly the great Tom Hanks thing. Can you see that these roles, can you see that they have something in common, and if so what is it?

TH: It's me. I don't know how else to put it! At the end of the day I'm as confused by this inexplicable thing that's happened. I am not, by and large, a bigger than life persona. You know, there are movie stars that are. I think I'm charming as hell but I don't strike fear, I don't have a huge amount of mystery, you're not worried about me killing you or stealing your daughter or being some sort of criminal mastermind.

By and large I'm always this guy because I look like this, and I sound like this, and this is my nose, and that's how you're going to get around to it. I would say that if I'm going on the other side of it, rather than what everybody's perception of it is, the core of it I guess is the decisions to say yes. These movies, these roles are always something that – if I was a little more accomplished – well I could be that guy.

For example Jim Lovell is a very good example of this. He's the commander of *Apollo 13*, and I wanted to make *Apollo 13* even before Ron did because I'm a space geek. I knew the story

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and whatnot, I thought it was going to be fascinating. Then Ron and I met at some point and I said I'd like to do it. My only thing is 'do you think that anybody would buy me as an accomplished astronaut?', because astronauts are like they are in Roger Ramjet cartoons or the *Fantastic Four* or *The Right Stuff*. They're chiselled, and they're American this and that.

And Ron said 'I think it will be okay' ('well thanks for that vote of confidence Ron'). But then in the course of doing it I met Jim Lovell and I thought I am exactly like Jim Lovell. Jim Lovell is funny, he's a family man. He's very proud and very competitive as far as what he does. The only difference is he's really good at flying jet planes. And he wanted to be an astronaut for the same reason I would want to be astronaut, he read this ad one day which said 'somebody is going to go the moon'.

And I thought if somebody is going to go to the moon I'd like that to be me. So *Apollo 13* opened up an awful lot to me because I stopped being self conscious as to whether or not I could bear the physicality of being some guy who does something as amazing as fly to the moon, because as it turns out bald headed guys flew to the moon. Look at the crew of *Apollo 12*, half of them were bald for crying out loud. Two out of three, they looked like insurance salesmen, except they were really good pilots.

So the everyman, as soon as you wear an American flag everybody says you're just the American aspect of it. I get that but I think I view myself as a guy that if I had been a good student I could be a historian. And if I had been good at science I could be a doctor. I'm not good at any of those things so I'm an actor.

FS: So in the mid 90s you directed your first film..

TH: Yes I did, *That Thing You Do!*, yes.

FS: Had you been thinking of directing for a while?

TH: I think every actor thinks that he can do a job better than a director, 'if I was directing this movie I'd know what these shots are, I wouldn't be up at three o'clock in the morning trying to figure out how to get the soundtrack over - I'd know what to do!'. You think you know how to do it, and I had done some directing in television for the experience. This is intriguing, I don't want to tell tales out of school, but Robin was married to Sean Penn, right, and we were

in Washington D.C. on Halloween. For Halloween you take the kids out trick or treating, right? And it just so happened Arnold Schwarzenegger was in town doing *True Lies*; he rode a horse through Congress or something like that, whatever that movie was. So we had these three people and we all knew each other and we all had kids.

So me and my kids, Sean and Robin and their kids and Arnold and his kids went out trick or treating together, in Georgetown. If anyone was to come out of their house to see who's on the sidewalk, they're going to win the celebrity lottery here. Arnold was saying to us [impersonates Arnold Schwarzenegger] 'come on, hurry up, you snooze you lose, get up there with your candy'. And Sean had directed a movie called *The Indian Runner* at that point, and I said 'Jeez what was that like?'. He said every actor should direct, just to find out how hard that job was.

And likewise every director should act, to find out how hard that job is. So I did that in television just to get the sense of whether or not you have any instinctive ability. Actors don't have to communicate anything, actors can carry it around in their head and do it on camera and say 'see, that's what I was talking about' whereas directors have to be constantly talking.

So I had this fevered pitch idea for the story that I actually wrote when I was on the global *Forrest Gump* push, because I needed something to do outside of talking about myself. Because quite frankly between the Academy Award the year before, the release of *Forrest Gump*, if it had only made \$100 million the press would have called us geniuses. But because it made \$300 million they called us diabolical geniuses. 'What have you figured out here, what's the point of all of this?'

So I had talked about myself honestly for a year straight, so I started writing this thing in order to maintain some creative sanity and it ended up being something that I wanted to direct. And I thought I had enough chops in order to get there and do it. And I look at the movie now and I love it, one of my kids was born during it, I had a bunch of old friends from the Great Lakes Shakespeare Festival in it. There's probably three or four sections of it that were even better than I could have imagined. The rest of it works okay, so I have a great affection for the movie, particularly the music.

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FS: Now we're moving forward to the next clip.

TH: I'm getting whiplash from this, you know. Yes I directed that movie, it was two years of my life but alright, what did I do next? I've lost count.

FS: Next you worked with Steven Spielberg.

TH: Oh yeah, yes, oh God yeah.

FS: So this is the beginning – you've worked with Steven Spielberg on a number of occasions, but this is *Saving Private Ryan*, and obviously you worked with him [later on] on *Band of Brothers* in terms of producing. But at that point with *Saving Private Ryan* was there the feeling that you wanted to give the whole experience of World War 2, to go at it in a different way, to present it in a different way – to have a different understanding?

TH: In fact yes, because I've always been a student of it. It goes back to high school, KTVU Channel 2 re-ran *The World At War* narrated by Laurence Olivier and I went to school the next day asking everybody 'did you see it last night? Did you see it?' and they were like 'what?'. 'Did you not watch *The World At War* last night you idiots?'. It was the best entertainment I could possibly imagine. So I had been a student of it, and there had not been anything other than genre movies made about World War 2 in, I don't know, 20 years.

And they weren't about the war anymore, they weren't about the human element of it, they were no longer about the context of the time and the stakes. Because when I was growing up every adult I knew, from my parents to my teachers to my Dad's friends, all talked about the war in this three part phase. And their lives were defined by these three phases. They'd all say 'well that was before the war' which had this whole gestalt connotation to it.

Then there was 'well, I went to Pocatello during the war'. Well why, why did you go to Pocatello? 'Because I had to learn about hydraulic mechanics and the navy had a school there'. During the war was this five year tacit period when they had no idea what their future was going to be, and that impacted the story that they were going to... then 'that was after the war', and da-da-da, 'I got your Mom pregnant' and stuff like that. So that all had this context. When *Saving Private Ryan* came around, the script was very much completely in flux, and when Steven takes over a script that's

really just a blueprint for the movie that he's going to make, particularly with as much visual, cinematic elements to it as that. I knew about it and desperately wanted to be involved, and when Steven called me and said 'there's this script called *Saving Private Ryan*', I said 'I KNOW!' like that.

We talked about it and I said 'with your abilities and the science of making movies now, you – we? – could really blow the lid off of what everybody's concept of the World War 2 movie [is]. It will no longer just be a caper movie, or a genre movie. We'll be able to address so many specifics that it will be a tactile experience for the audience, as opposed to an intellectual one, or a stroll through history. And Steven did that in spades in the course of the movie. It was an experience man, I can only tell you.

There was one story, this is so great. We're in the boats, the landing craft at the beginning of it. Literally on the first day of shooting we're going to shoot the moment where the ramp goes down and we can't get off the landing craft so I grab some private and we both go over the side and land in the water and have to flounder our way onto shore. And then that guy takes a round in his chest.

I'm meeting this guy, 'hey how you doing?', he's only going to work on the movie for one day, 'you missed the training, it was really fun, it was great. Can you believe we're in a Steven Spielberg movie? Isn't that great? This is nutty man, can you believe how many Irish army guys there are round here, this is crazy. Are you cold? I'm a little cold'. It was like that, the guy could hardly say anything. I can't remember what his name was. I said 'hey, is this your first movie?'. He said 'yes, I just got out of drama school last week'.

He had never made a movie. I said 'you never made a movie and you're in this with Steven Spielberg today? Oh man, hold onto your hat guy, all you gotta do just say the words, say the words, you'll be fine'. He said 'okay, alright'. It's very confusing, what happens in the scene is the front of the landing craft goes down and there is a collection of dummies and stuntmen in front of us, like five rows of them, that are blown to smithereens in front of us. And it's loud and suddenly there's pink mist in the air, pieces of fake blood and brain and skin and sinew have landed on us, and you cannot hear the cacophony is so loud.

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Alright, so I turn to look at this poor guy, a week out of drama school and he's covered in stuff, he was literally in shock. Then it was time to shoot the scene where we go up and throw him over. I said 'hey man, it's time to get wet now, let's go, hope you know how to swim'. 'Well actually I don't, I don't know how to swim. Actually I'm not very good in the water'. So we had to do that in which this guy is petrified and then we're dragging each other, and we did hit the bottom, and had to pop up, hit the bottom and had to pop up, and we finally get around.

And now we're going to do the scene where he is going to get shot, and the special effects crew come over and essentially wire him with an explosive device. A radio controlled explosive device, so the guy says 'alright, radios off – we have to turn the radios off otherwise the signal could make this thing blow up right in our hands, isn't that amazing? Alright, all you got to do is make sure it's going to blow, it's going to pop out this way but don't look down, don't look down because it can do some eye damage. Alright we're running, we're running, we're running', 'BOOM' like that. And then the guy, the sum total of his acting experience was to float dead in the water.

So then he has to like, be like this, and that was that guy's five hours of making a movie straight out of drama school. 'Welcome to the movies kid, ain't it great?' But that was how tactile the entire film was making. It was actually a miracle that nobody in the cast twisted a leg or sprained an ankle, because there were a couple of broken bones in the stunt crew. But it was just so oppressive, and I can't tell you how fast Steven works, he works lightning quick. He makes it up on the fly, he's got every toy in the world on the truck, he can set up any kind of shot he wants to.

Sometimes we had six cameras going, and I will say that's a movie where you really learned how to work with a cameraman, because his principal cameraman is a guy named Mitch, I wish I knew his last name, and Mitch gets shots that are almost unbelievable. He's got a huge Panavision Arriflex on his shoulder, and you're me and I'm Mitch and he's working with you that tight. He's so good that you honestly forget that he's there after a while.

He just becomes another member of the thing, but that was an acting exercise that was void of theory. It was all practice. Even down to Steven saying [claps hands] 'you're going to

cry tomorrow'. 'Oh fine, what am I crying about?'. 'Something about you lost weight...'. 'Oh alright, okay', then you can go home. But that's how fast and demanding a filmmaker he can be and you've got to be up to snuff otherwise you're doomed.

FS: Well the bit we're actually going to show is a reflective moment, a rare moment of relative calm when the captain who has taken his men behind enemy lines to find this missing Private Ryan – who is of course the only surviving son of the family in Idaho – he's sitting with one of his men in a church.

Clip from Saving Private Ryan

TH: That ended up being the scene that we talked incessantly about, because we shot that almost at the end of the film, because it was one of the rare times when we were shooting on a set. That scene had to carry a certain amount of weight. First of all I told Steven 'I hate this scene', 'why?', 'because we'd all be asleep. We wouldn't be sitting around talking, we'd be dead on our feet, we'd be asleep. This is a fake scene!'. Then he'd laugh.

But the way it is it had to have this weight of sort of verbalising the theme and the superstructure of the character. And we really wrestled with how to do that for the longest time, until somebody came up with the idea of talking about an unseen character, which was the Vecchio guy. The mention of Anzio, and it was true, the Fifth Army Rangers had been involved in the invasion of Sicily, and earlier in the film you actually see a little tin that says Africa on it, because they were at the Kasserine Pass which was this massive debacle.

So that interesting thing of making movies is that sooner or later you've got to come around and figure out the best way, without making a signpost, but somehow telegraph both the main broadsheet of what the film is about but hopefully do it in ways that will still have these little mysterious references to it. That in some ways speaks volumes for who the guys are and where they've been.

FS: I'm going to have to press on even faster than I thought I was going to. So you work again with Robert Zemeckis on *Cast Away*, and actually later you'll go on with Zemeckis to make *The Polar Express*, so we're getting into that whole area of performance capture, and digital manipulation of actors. I wonder what you felt about that?

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TH: I hated it because you were robbed of the greatest ally an actor has which is a costume. We had no costume. We would have one day in which the entire costume would be put on us, including the make up design, and you were photographed and digitised, and you went inside this machine that x-rayed you and did all that kind of stuff. But that was only for computer references in post.

The movies are shot very quickly, we probably shot *The Polar Express* in 21/25 days in a grey, lifeless 'volume', it was called, in which the computer lenses are all around you and you're wearing these markers on these essentially skin tight suits that record the data on a hard drive. But without a cape, without a cup, without a hat, you don't get props or costumes, what you get in the alacrity of shooting, you completely lose any sort of tactile connection to the process.

The great promise that mocap was supposed to give you, was that anybody could play anybody; that a female, if she was the best person to play Franklin Delano Roosevelt, they could play Franklin Delano Roosevelt because they could put on the markers, they'd make her up once, and then they could do that. The result was that it never got cheap enough, and there was always some kind of aspect of it that was missing once you finally saw it. I mean even when I saw... look, *The Polar Express* works fabulous as a non-realistic presentation of it, but I don't think it ever got around to the photorealism that it was sort [of] desired. The eyes were a little stilted and, an interesting thing happens is that it doesn't have the fluidity of a regular motion picture.

Even an animated film has fluidity. You can shoot entire sequences and throw them out, because you've never gotten past the storyboard phase. The scripts really had to be almost locked in. I mean, when you walked away from the 'volume' after having, quote unquote, 'shot' that scene, even though there were video cameras for references, for physical references, when you walked out of the volume [you're] done with that. That means the data never changed.

So I haven't been in post, involved in it, but in the experiences that I've had with [it], at the end of the day, you don't have access to a variety that you can have in, whatever, traditional filmmaking.

FS: So you don't have any fear that, you know, in the foreseeable future that actors are going to be replaced?

TH: Well I'm going to tell you right now, any movie you've seen, if you've gone to see *Thor* there's mocap in that, there's mo-cap galore in every movie that you've seen, but it's not the only tool in the box.

The fabulous quality of all those great video games like, you know, *Rape and Pillage 3*, it's all shot with motion capture, and then they do it later on. And it's a fabulous tool for the making of, you know, movies because there's some shots you can't get any other way except motion capture, but it's not the be all and end all. It's just one of the many tools like, you know, green screen is, or wire removal is, or something like that.

FS: And you've managed to, you have a great slate of films whereby you can do something like *The Da Vinci Code* films and *Angels and Demons*.

TH: Yeah, those are fun.

FS: Which are great big...

TH: Big scavenger hunt films, as I always call them. Theological scavenger hunt films.

FS: Because the critics were a little bit iffy about the first one...

TH: [Jokily] Oh they hate everything. No, well you know, the *Da Vinci Code* book was like this inexplicable hit. It's like 'why is everybody on the planet reading this book?'. And it's 'because it's fun! Because it's a fun scavenger hunt'. And likewise, there might be another one. And Dan Brown, he stumbled onto this, you know, it's essentially like doing a *Sherlock Holmes* movie, you know? You're going to be invested in what the hunt is, and what the mystery is.

And I got to tell you, they are a substantial challenge to make as an actor because they happen in real time, meaning it's like, by and large, 24 hours. So you're always putting on the same costume and picking yourself up right after it. And to bring an immediacy and a true sense of knowledge to some of the arcane stuff that you're saying, you do have to do research in order to understand what you're really talking about.

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When I would read the books or read the screenplays I'd do it with Google right next to me because your setting [it] in a space, so you could go on and see what the picture was, and see the artist's references of it, and get the history of it right there, and it ends up kind of like being like a great summer course in art history making those films.

And, you know, you get to run around the Piazza del Popolo at three o'clock in the morning in Rome. Some guy says 'for you, I open, for you. Come, sit, eat. For you I serve the food, all good. For you, for you'. And that's like 'three o'clock in the morning they're making pasta just for us. This is not a bad gig at all!'.

FS: One of my favourite films of yours which *Charlie Wilson's War*, which I think is such a clever, funny, but also, you know, a great sly little commentary on American foreign policy at the same time.

TH: Yeah, that was a very confounding project from beginning to end because, one, it's called *Charlie Wilson's War*, you know, it's not like the happiest title you're gonna do. But what we wanted... this amazing thing happened between these two guys, which was the crux of the movie as far as I'm concerned; Charlie Wilson, who is, literally, he was a wild, drunken, sex-crazed congressman who always won re-election for some reason, met this dark, truly dark, CIA operative, who loved being a spy, and loved killing bad guys, and he did kill... Gust Avrakotos was this kind of like spook who loved killing, like, Communists in back alleys in Greece just because he could.

And they met up at this time when all this stuff was going on and Gust Avrakotos had to go over to this idiot congressman's office to have a meeting, in order to substantiate some budgets, and instead he got this wild, hard-drinking congressman saying 'I want to kill me some Russians, do you?'. And Gust Avrakotos says 'this is what I live for!'. And so they literally got together and said 'how can we kill the most Russians there are? They kicked our ass in Korea, they embarrassed us in Vietnam, we've never been able to go head-to-head with them. Hey lets go head-to-head with them in Afghanistan.' And that's literally how it all began, and the odd plus that came out of it is you can honestly say, for good or for bad, that Afghanistan brought about the end of the Soviet empire.

And if you're going to go back an trace some key steps, Charlie Wilson, and his desire to do that... The Berlin Wall fell about four months after the American's stopped their secret operations in Afghanistan. Now that's not a political comment, good or bad. It's just a fact, so it's a fascinating history of what one guy, or in this case, two guys, in a place like congress, how they can either do something great, or really fuck up the world in a really big way.

And Charlie couldn't have been more open about everything he ever did. He passed away but he was a great guy as far as being honest about how they did stuff and how they got stuff done.

FS: So as we gather speed on this journey through your career...

TH: Oh man oh man I'm in freefall now, I swear to God, terminal velocity folks! Hang on to your hat, I think we're gonna be done in four and a half minutes! [laughter]

FS: It's going to be something like *Gravity* at this point.

TH: Yeah, yeah

FS: We are moving towards a couple of real characters you play. One is Walt Disney and the other is Captain Phillips. So I'm just going to check, we are going to Walt Disney next, is that right? No Captain Phillips.

TH: Okay Captain Phillips.

FS: I was actually going to do Walt Disney first. I'll tell you why, because the interesting thing in all of this, first of all Walt Disney had never been played on screen before.

TH: Only by Walt Disney.

FS: Yeah, now, was this an issue?

TH: Was it an issue?

FS: Yeah, was there, I mean did you have to be very careful about, there are things about the reputation of Walt Disney because he's quite a controversial figure.

TH: No no, actually we wanted to, and the problem was in the current atmosphere of pressure in films, like for example Walt Disney died of lung cancer. He smoked three packs a day. Can we show him smoking in a major

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motion picture these days? No way in hell. It's just kind of like this thing that has happened that real people can't smoke. If you are smoking it's like *Mad Men*; you're making a comment about how much everybody smokes.

And so we had, there were a couple of realistic aspects of Walt that even John Lee Hancock... I didn't bring... I said 'can we do this?' he said 'we're trying to figure out a way'. We had literally a negotiation about whether or not I could hold a lit cigarette in a scene, as in, it's lit right there. Let me tell you something about Walt Disney, you go back and you see all these photographs of him like on sets or you know when Disneyland is being built and, I mean, he's pointing like there [points], and he's pointing like there [points], and he's pointing like there [points] with two fingers; he was pointing with two fingers because he had a cigarette in between them, and they airbrushed out the cigarette. That's why he's going like this [points] everywhere.

So we had a scene in which in the film you see me putting it out; so you don't actually see it lit in my hand, but you see the definitive putting out of a cigarette. And I think Walt even says 'I don't want everybody to see me smoking because I don't anyone to get, you know, to pick up bad habits' which was true. He didn't want anybody outside his, you know, the world of Walt Disney to see him smoking but he, Richard Sherman of the Sherman brothers, you know? He said you always knew Walt was coming to visit you because you could hear him coughing at the end of the hall [mimics coughs] as he's walking.

FS: You get some of that in the film as well. The little excerpt we're going to show is actually where, obviously the film is about Walt Disney's struggle over decades, in fact, to get Mary Poppins made, to get the rights from P. L. Travers who was...

TH: Flinty.

FS: Yes, protective, flinty and protective of her property, as it were, and so we see here in the scene with Emma Thompson as P. L. Travers.

TH: Well I haven't seen this.

Clip from Saving Mr. Banks

FS: What an operator, what an operator. And he did...

TH: Oh he was, he was a business man foremost above everything else.

FS: Is there a little line maybe in the film, a slight sort of apology for having taken Mary Poppins and made of it something...

TH: Oh, er, no! [laughs] And in fact Mary, P. L. Travers hated the movie.

FS: And went on hating it for years.

TH: And went on hating it for years and did not like Walt and, on the other side of it, Richard Sherman said, 'so well how was she?' and he said 'Pamela Travers was a bitch'. There was not a happy two weeks that they worked out. But, you know, I think she actually needed the money; I think it ends up, why she ended up you know...

FS: She wanted to keep her house didn't she?

TH: Smart thing to do. And the tête-à-tête, the mono e mono they shared is pretty authentic throughout the course of the movie. But what Mister Walt, Walt was a guy that, you know, he'd win and then he'd move on, you know, to the next thing because he always had, you know, five years of movies in the pipeline and he was building Walt Disney World in Florida at the same time so he just wanted to charm everybody, call everybody by their first name, wish them luck and then move out of the way and Mrs Travers did not let that happen.

FS: It's a great, *Saving Mr Banks*, is a great hymn to traditional filmmaking.

TH: Yeah, yes, yes.

FS: It's made in a kind of lovely retro, traditional filmmaking.

TH: It's on set, and it's on film and there's real horses in it.

FS: [Laughs] It could not be more different in that sense from *Captain Phillips* which is so much in the moment, that kind of immersive storytelling.

TH: Oh yeah.

FS: We were talking about working with Spielberg and what he wanted to do with *Saving Private Ryan* but in a sense, this is even taking that one step further isn't it? Putting you right inside the experience for the duration of

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the film. There's a tiny bit of preamble and then you are absolutely in it then.

TH: Yeah, that's Paul. Paul Greengrass. We had, you know so much of this is, look I'm lucky in that I'm invited, mostly I'm invited into the process early on and, it's always like, you know 'let's make this movie together'. So it's always very long philosophical discussions, and also very pragmatic discussions, with Paul about literally how to make the movie because no matter what was in the book and what's in the screenplay, we are going to get to the place; the plot is there, we know what the plot is, but what's the procedure and what's the behaviour and it is shaped, in this case by the real ship that we were on and it was, you know, clumsy and hard.

A screenwriter can write moments in a story but it can turn out those moments are literally impossible to happen on the set, in the procedure, at the moment. For example in much of *Captain Phillips* you can't help but write in some romantic aspect of being a captain at sea. And the yearning for wanting to be home and with his family when he's being held by the hijackers on day and the misery in that lifeboat, you know, Billy Ray who wrote the screenplay, you know, he had a moment where, you know, Rich looks out the porthole and surveys the stars over the horizon and wonders if, you know, Andrea back home knows what he's going through. That's a great thing to write but there's not even a porthole to look through in that thing. So there's a moment that has to be excised because it literally cannot happen, unless you're gonna make a substantially different film.

And Paul, wanting to examine the graphic reality not only of, like, piracy but also commerce. Those ships are ugly, rusty unglamorous things but to be a captain on board is the most complicated job you can imagine. I was talking to Rich Phillips, I asked him about the romantic thing I asked 'Rich how often do you ponder the horizon and, you know, breathe in the fresh salty air and think, you know, "thank God for God's great ocean"?' and he said 'Tom I haven't done that for 35 years'. But then you have 'what's the hardest thing, you know, what's the deal about being, you know, being the captain?' And he says 'I'll tell you one problem, the human, the human behaviour'. I said 'what do you mean?' and he says 'I got to deal with three unions; there's three unions on board this ship. There's twenty members of the crew, three unions. That

means overtime, that means pay scales, that means complaints, that means coffee breaks, the length of them, that means union rules that were busted "I'm going to file a grievance against Merris Corporation", this means "I want off so you've gotta get me a ticket outta here" and "hey you gotta come bail us 'cause three guys are in jail in Mombasa for having a fist fight at the whore house". That's the kind of stuff Rich Phillips has to deal with. And you can incorporate that burden into the guy provided Paul Greengrass is going to give you the moments to explore those things other than just the plot and the shot in order to move the story on.

TH: Paul did things like, in this film, we did not meet the Somali actors. We never met them. We knew they were around somewhere. We saw black guys and we said, 'I wonder if those black guys are the Somali actors? I don't think they're skinny enough.'

And then the day came, where we shot the hijacking and they came on-board the bridge, we had never met them, they came roaring on loaded for bear, pumped up, their veins sticking out, their teeth bared, they were the skinniest, scariest human beings we had ever seen. And there was bona fide hair standing up on the back of your neck fear, for the better part of forty minutes, you know, four or five takes, in which everybody just re-gear up and then we had fifteen minutes in order to figure out what we were going to do next. Then we finally said 'hey, how you doing? Nice to meet you.'

And what did Barkhad Abdi say to me, 'oh, I can't believe I'm making a film with Forrest Gump.' [Laughter]

And I went, 'well, welcome to the big time kid.' And that was the way that we did it all. Paul because he's a documentarian, it took me a while. I ran into Matt Damon who had done three films with Paul and I said, 'so what's the scoop?' And he said, 'you'll rehearse for a long time, and then you'll finally shoot and the first take is a disaster because everyone is talking on top of each other and everybody's trying to get their beat in, but don't worry, it'll settle down and you'll get it.'

And he does not stage the action as much as he captured it after the fact. So we would do, we would shoot long takes, sometimes longer than the magazine could hold, you know time in the camera, and there'd be three cameras;

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one would have a late roll, one would reload on the fly and the whole of the unit would go up on Barry Ackroyd's shoulder and we completely stopped seeing the cameras after a while, because we would have fourteen, fifteen, eighteen minute takes and it would just go on and on and on and on.

Then we would stop and we would figure out what new had been impacted in that day and incorporate it into the next one, and incorporate it into the next one. So as actors we had this flow, from beginning to end that was not truncated, it was not abbreviated, it was not like a section and often times I'd learn really quick and I'd go over the Paul and be like, 'are you going to get that little bit that me and Shane are doing at the charts?' And said, 'we got it already,' I was, 'when did you get it?' 'Oh, about two takes ago,' 'oh, I didn't notice.' And that's just the way he... it's extraordinary to be in the midst of it, because as an actor all you have to do is behave.

And I think that's the thing that can break you in the course of making a film, is that you become self-conscious somehow, of the particulars of what the shot requires, of not wanting to overlap somebody's dialogue, of it's too special, the lights are too obvious, the mark is too hard to hit, the apparatus is crazy, you got to be in the right place 'cause otherwise the crane can't get around.

When we were working on *Castaway* we had a scene, towards the end, it was the scene where I finally come back and Helen Hunt is married and I show up at her door, and I can't tell you about the long talks we had about what was going to go down in that scene. And Bob [Zemeckis], it was all about if we don't get accurate behaviour in that scene, we were doomed, we didn't have a movie, we got that. And the way Bob shoots is, he shoots one shot with a very complicated crane move that really encompasses maybe as many as seventeen, eighteen very specific beats that have to be captured. And the first time you do it you just think, you're never going to get this and Bob says, 'no, we'll work it out, we'll get it, we'll get the camera moves, don't worry about the camera moves'. And that's literally Bob saying just behave. You get the behaviour and you won't even notice it, and that's the high country when it comes to making films.

Not just when you can't see the camera, you don't have a sense, but when you have no self-consciousness about the fact that you're

recreating this thing over and over and over again.

FS: Well here's actually an example from Paul Greengrass...

TH: Oh, we haven't seen that clip yet!

FS: No, we're about to see that, which is actually from a little bit later on in the film, where Captain Phillips has been taken off the *Maersk Alabama*...

TH: Oh, we're on the lifeboat here?

FS: And he's in the lifeboat, and this is a very good example of that kind of absolutely taking the audience into that very claustrophobic moment.

TH: Yeah.

Clip from Captain Phillips

TH: You know, those four guys... It's an example of what I think I was saying about the self-consciousness. Those four guys had never acted in movies; they had never acted at all. They were just Somali guys living in Minneapolis, Minnesota who saw a thing on the news that said, 'hey, this pirate movie is going to be made, open call for anybody who is Somali'.

So they went down then next day with like, eight hundred other people, because there's a very vibrant Somali community in Minnesota, that's why there, and it's a huge community and there's arts and music and clubs and newspapers and everything. And they just kept making it through the audition process; one of the reasons is because they look as startling as they do, but the other thing is, is that they have these kind of like, storytelling chops those four guys. They're sort of like, artists in their own right, but the fact is you could probably learn the racket that is making movies relatively quickly, you know, marks and angles and stuff like that. Learn the lines, hit the marks, say the words. But unless you can get past that self-consciousness, unless you have some sense of storytelling chops, you'll never be able to do it and that's what differentiates the people that do it and the people that don't.

And those four guys were extraordinary, because they were never not right in the moment and Paul, working with them, communicated right off the bat that you can never do anything wrong here, as long as

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you're coming in with a drive to it, it's all gonna work, and all those scenes, we shot them actually out in Longcross, [to audience] anybody work out in Longcross yet? They're turning that into a real studio out there. It used to be where they tested tanks and built tanks and was...

Audience Member: It's where the dam busters, the bouncing bomb was developed...

TH: Oh, is that right? Ok, alright, well we were in some cast iron octagon out there that they probably, I don't know, tortured people in or something like that. But the pirate ship was on this gimbal and it was just as hard and clumsy and complicated like that. But even in that circumstance, here's four guys that are just into it and they didn't notice the cameras at all and they had this kind of purity. And I had no idea what they were saying when they spoke Somali. Until I saw the movie and could read the subtitles and I was amazed. 'Hey man, this is getting bad,' 'hey, there's two ships out there.' You know, they're talking in a vernacular that is recognisable to all of us and I didn't know that until later on, so it's just a testament to the people that can make movies, they come out of anywhere and in this case they came out of Minneapolis.

FS: Great, well at this point I'm going to open it out to the audience, there's some questions, we've got some microphones, one down there, one down there, there's a hand up there, please, and there's one just right by you there...

TH: If one of the questions is how much longer, I don't know! It's about quarter to nine now, we'll see how it goes. [Laughter]

FS: Okay, if you want to go...

Question: I wanted to ask you about the opening sequence of [*Saving*] *Private Ryan* and obviously, what's good about it and what sets it apart from most battle scenes in movies is all you guys are scared shitless number one, as you would be, and number two the action was so brilliantly done, it's really scary, I've got so that if I see a battle scene and I'm not scared, I think it's rubbish, you know? But I can think of another film, another one of my favourite films which is *Cross of Iron*...

TH: Oh, yeah yeah, James Coburn, yes...

Questioner: Yeah, Sam Peckinpah. I've always wondered if there was any discussion or reference or 'let's do this like *Cross of Iron*', obviously better and with a bigger budget, but was that a topic that came up at all?

TH: Steven [Spielberg] and I, Steven on his own he can remember every movie he's ever seen and every shot, and so he and I watched a lot of war movies from every era, together, and he also went on his own kind of thing. I watched a lot of documentaries and did a lot of reading, but no, *Cross of Iron* and Sam Peckinpah definitely came up.

There was one sequence that Steven was all about shooting from the very beginning, about a machine gun nest under a radar installation, and when we got there the set was tilted the wrong way and the sun was in the wrong place, so Steven had to come up on the fly with this other way of shooting it, and that's actually visceral.

We shot, we were in County Wexford in the sunny south east of Ireland which was, kind of like a great match for Dog Green, the beach, and we literally just moved geographically up farther and farther and farther up the beach.

But actually, it was so hilarious because, eight million guys, the Irish army is all dressed up, and those anti-tank things are everywhere, and we would get ready to do a shot and the special effects crew would have laid out the pyrotechnics, which is just also squibs and huge air mortars that are going to go off and it's going to be loud and it's going to be confusing. But they would plant these little flags, and they would say, 'oh Tom, now see the flags, those are where we have a charge so don't step on them, alright? Cause you know, could blow your leg off, alright? So don't do that, alright? So, you see, is that alright?' So I said, 'oh yeah, I see, I'm ok, great!' And what's the first thing they do? Take out the flags. Had no idea where we were not supposed to shoot or not. But Steven also, he had a lot of amputee actors that would have... and they would rig those things up. So you'd be running and you'd see a guy get blown up and his leg go flying off.

Because I didn't meet up with the rest of the actors until we hit the shale, so I worked for a couple of days before they came down and started work, I told them, you know, they were all up rehearsing or doing something, I said, 'guys, hold on to your hat, you have no idea

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what we're doing down there. All this talk we've had, maybe rehearsals, forget it, because we'll just, we'll just be trying to get through this'. And that's exactly what it was.

Question: Hi Tom, it's great to see you. My question is, I'm a big fan of *Forrest Gump* and I like the way that the film is divided into diverse stages of his life, like the Ping-Pong, and Vietnam and the running etc. Which one of those was your favourite to film and which one was the most difficult?

TH: In *Forrest Gump*? You know, the Vietnam sequences were I think the most key to a lot of us, because that was when, because Bubba was involved and Lieutenant Dan. And Vietnam, it hadn't been handled in a while, in popular films. Certainly in *Platoon*, but that was about fifteen years before and because it was, essentially it was a brief part of the movie and it was a grunts eye view of what it was. It was so specific what Forrest and Bubba went through; that was the most evocative stuff for me.

I was thirteen when Vietnam happened and I remember very specifically it tearing the United States apart and I was just confused by it. And the microcosm that Bob Zemeckis created which was this ambush and then this terror filled fleeing from the battlefield was just incredibly evocative for me. I often rode out, the set was a pretty long way away, and Gary Sinise and I, who is an actor whom I greatly admired because he had come from the Steppenwolf theatre in Chicago, he and I talked a lot about the verisimilitude that we were trying to capture in these Vietnam sequences. The whole movie had something going on in it, that was crazy and involved, but that was the meat of it for me, everything else required a lot of attention, but that was important to me.

FS: But I guess the slightly flippant counter side of that was the great Ping-Pong scenes. There was actually no ball, was there?

TH: None, no ball what-so-ever! So here's how Bob Zemeckis works, this is hilarious. We're shooting a scene, where Forrest Gump is told he's won the Congressional Medal of Honor and it happens, an actor comes in and says, 'Private Gump,' and I say, 'yes' and he says, 'you've just been awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor,' and I can't remember what Forrest Gump says.

And we were shooting it when Forrest was in the hospital; he was just recovering from his

wounds. And it was the last shot of a week and we were, you know, it was getting on towards late, we didn't have a lot of scene and Bob was, 'God dammit! God dammit!' I said, 'what?' He said, 'well how do we shoot this? What do we do? How do we shoot this?'

I said, 'Well, how about, I'm standing there, and a guy comes in and says, 'hey, you just won the Congressional Medal of Honor'? And he looked at me, with rage in his eyes, and he said, 'Anybody can do that!' And he came up with this thing that required special effects; not only was I hitting a Ping-Pong ball against the thing in this little square, [as Zemeckis] 'You're going to put a little square here, it's got to hit the Ping-Pong ball just like that, over and over and over and over again'. And I said, 'okay, alright,' but then when this guy comes in, we had to work out, I had to palm a Ping-Pong ball so that when I put the paddle down and stood at attention you'd see the ball under the paddle, so there was none that way, but I had one in my hand all the time.

[Imitating hitting a ball with a bat] Dogidy, dogidy, dogidy, dogidy dogidy 'Private Gump?' 'Yes Sir.' So it's like, in there, and that's the type of thing and you've got to throw that together, but Bob was so mad at me that I was just like, 'well, why don't you just do it without special effects?' And that's the way Bob makes movies, 'hell, anyone can do that'. You gotta fight that battle tomorrow.

FS: Well, I don't think anybody can do that. But thank you for your questions, but most of all, thank you so much.

TH: We have required our time! I'm all out of charm. Thank you very much! I hope I didn't talk too fast or too much! Thank you, thank you very much, I really enjoyed this.