



File photos shows director James Cameron speaks at a news conference announcing a new show by Cirque du Soleil based on his movie "Avatar" in Montreal. — AP

Cameron talks 'Avatar' sequels, Cirque du Soleil show

The first "Avatar" sequel is still years away from hitting movie theaters, but fans of the blue-hued Na'vi can get their fix at a touring Cirque du Soleil show that James Cameron helped create - without his having to reveal too much of what's up his cinematic sleeve. Cameron, who plans four sequels starting in 2018, served as a consultant on "Toruk - The First Flight," a stadium show that opened in Montreal in November and has since toured North America. The writer and director suggested to the Cirque team things that the Na'vi might do or how they might think about certain things, but said he largely let writer-directors Michel Lemieux and Victor Pilon create freely.

"I was just a cheerleader on the side with some pom-poms," Cameron said this week when the show stopped in Brooklyn. "Interestingly, left to their own devices, the Cirque guys creatively wound up resonating very, very closely to the overall arc of the four-sequel saga." The Cirque show's upcoming stops include Newark, New Jersey; Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Minneapolis; Winnipeg, Canada; Fresno, California; Ontario, Canada; Los Angeles; Phoenix; San Diego, California; Sacramento, California; and Portland, Oregon.

The original 2009 film centered on the conflict between humans and the blue-skinned alien race Na'vi of Pandora. "Toruk" is named after the massive, dragonlike creatures from the film and tells the story of two Na'vi warriors finding a series of sacred objects. The action takes place on the planet before humans make contact, thereby sidestepping the problem of how to depict the 10-foot Na'vi. Now Cirque gymnasts, no matter how tall, can shine. "If you want to see that explosive celebration of human movement, they're not going to be tall people," said Cameron.

Cameron, always on the cutting edge of tech, will shoot his sequels partially using a high 48 frame rate format and said he appreciated the Cirque show employing 40 digital projectors to show everything from lava to water. He said that after seeing the stage show, he might swipe some of the hairstyles and costumes for his films. He also said the Cirque team never asked what was coming up in the sequels, afraid of leaks.

Successive movie

The filmmaker has a history with Cirque that includes being an executive producer and camera operator for the 2012 fantasy film "Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away." He said he admires the way the company promotes talent and keeps creative lines open. "They empower and celebrate creativity and empower the artist. It's the exact opposite of Hollywood," he said. "It's like the anti-Hollywood. If Hollywood were just more like that, I think movies would be a whole lot better." Cameron said he hopes the first film sequel can open at Christmas 2018 and then he'll roll out each successive movie every year after that. But Cameron said he would tweak the timetable to ensure each film is released as closely as possible so there are no lengthy delays. "Once you're on that ride, you don't want to get off," he said.

The original 3-D "Avatar" film has netted over \$2.7 billion and Cameron pointed to its beauty and its overall theme of protecting nature as reasons for its success. He noted that more than half of all humans now live in cities and that we're paving over all the green. — AP

'Heat' at 21: Pacino and De Niro in rare reunion

Twenty-one years ago Michael Mann's iconic crime opus "Heat" paired Hollywood legends Al Pacino and Robert De Niro for the first time, delighting moviegoers and inspiring a generation of filmmakers. The sprawling 1995 epic, which pits the actors against one another as kindred spirits on opposite sides of the law, has become a benchmark in neo-noir cinema, lauded for its melancholic but visually stunning depictions of Los Angeles. The stars and their director reunited this week for the first time to share memories of an intense 107-day shoot, debunk myths and reveal an aspect of Pacino's acclaimed performance kept secret for two decades.

"I knew it would be special when I read the script so I'm happy that it got the attention it did," De Niro, 73, told a panel at the Academy in Beverly Hills, moderated by Oscar-nominated British filmmaker Christopher Nolan. "Heat" follows Pacino's LAPD detective Vincent Hanna over almost three hours as he and his team chase a gang of robbers led by De Niro across Los Angeles. It is lauded for its striking cinematography, taut action and a meeting in a diner between the two leads that marked their first scene together after appearing separately in "The Godfather: Part II" 21 years earlier.

Pacino, 76, revealed for the first time that he deliberately played his famously brash detective-a role which has come to define his later career-as a drug addict who regularly "chips cocaine." Mann never filmed the character taking drugs but Pacino said much of his motivation for the over-the-top, erratic detective came from thinking of him as constantly strung out on coke.

"I've always wanted to say it, just so



Al-Pacino revealed for the first time he deliberately played his famously brash detective in iconic crime opus "Heat" as a drug addict who regularly "chips cocaine". — AFP

you know where some of the behavior comes from," Pacino said. Nolan, who drew inspiration in his portrayal of Gotham City in the "Dark Knight" films from "Heat," rebuffed a long-held conspiracy theory about the movie-that Pacino and De Niro didn't actually act opposite one another. Their paths cross on several occasions but they appear separately in close up shots, and an urban legend asserting that they were never together at the same time has grown popular over the years.

Nolan pointed out, however, that after moving to LA he had seen a picture of the acting legends on set together, hung for years above a door at the now closed Kate Mantilini diner in Beverly Hills, where the scene was filmed. The famous exchange, mostly taken from the 11th take, revealed something of De Niro's meticulous acting method, Pacino said, recalling that his co-star didn't want to rehearse. Pacino said the

dynamic between the two actors was helped in part by the fact that De Niro was in a bad mood when the cameras rolled due to a production delay.

"I loved the scene, and I really wanted it to be the best it could be. I was a little unhappy that we started so late, in the middle of the night, but anyway we did it," De Niro shrugged sheepishly. Mann was inspired to write the script by the experiences of his friend, a real-life detective in Chicago called Charlie Adamson, who shot dead criminal Neil McCauley in 1963 after the pair had enjoyed an amiable dinner. Mann said the real-life pair shared "the kind of intimacy only strangers can have," even though Adamson didn't hesitate for a second when he had to kill McCauley. "It was one of those things where the contrapuntal nature of it really fascinated me, that both are true, it wasn't a contradiction. That's the real germ of the film." — AFP

'Taxi' star Danny DeVito eyes Broadway bow early next year

Danny DeVito will make his Broadway debut next year as a wily furniture dealer in Arthur Miller's "The Price." The Roundabout Theatre Company said Thursday the Emmy Award-winner from "Taxi" and "It's Always Sunny in Philadelphia" will star alongside John Turturro, Tony Shalhoub and Jessica Hecht. Performances begin Feb 16 at the American Airlines Theatre.



File photo shows Danny DeVito arrives at the 5th Annual Reel Stories, Real Lives Benefit in Los Angeles. DeVito will make his Broadway debut next year as a wily furniture dealer in Arthur Miller's "The Price." — AP

DeVito began his career in off-Broadway shows, including Shakespeare in the Park. In 2012, he starred with Richard Griffiths in a West End production of Neil Simon's "The Sunshine Boys." In "The Price," an embittered New York City police officer feels that life has passed him by while he took care of his now dead father.

He and his estranged brother, who left to become a successful doctor, must reunite to sell off dad's possessions. — AP

Tony Award winner Ben Vereen divorcing wife



File photo shows Ben Vereen participates in the panel for "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" during the Fox television Critics Association summer press tour in Beverly Hills, Calif. — AP

Tony Award winner Ben Vereen is divorcing his first wife - again. The New York Post reports Vereen claims he divorced his first wife, Andrea, in the 1970s but she's saying the divorce was never official and she only learned about it when she filed for Social Security. The two were in a Brooklyn court Thursday to hash out the details. After leaving his first wife, the Post says court records show Vereen married Nancy Bruner in 1976 and filed to divorce her in 2012.

Andrea's lawyer, Harold Mayerson, said the second marriage wasn't legal because Vereen was still married to Andrea, who's asking that Vereen pay for the divorce. Vereen's attorney, John DiMascio, says nothing has been proven yet. Vereen won best actor in the 1973 musical "Pippin." — AP