OFFICIAL MOVIE SPECIAL

MARVEL

DOCTOR STRANGE

EXCLUSIVE COMIC STRIP

INTERVIEWS WITH BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH

MADS MIKKELSEN

BEHIND THE SCENES & CONCEPT ART

ANCIENT ONE
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DOCTOR STRANGE

CONTENTS

Interviews

6 Benedict Cumberbatch
8 Tilda Swinton
10 Chiwetel Ejiofor
12 Benedict Wong
13 Rachel McAdams
14 Mads Mikkelsen
62 Charles Newirth

Features

4 Master of the Mystic Arts
16 Exploring other dimensions
18 Magical relics
54 Concept art gallery

Movie Insider

48 Behind the scenes
50 Wardrobe secrets
52 Filming techniques
53 Creating the props
60 Mystical martial arts

Posters

2 The Ancient One
29 Master of the Mystic Arts
30 Armed allies
31 Mystical powers
32 Kaecilius
47 Other dimensions
63 Mordo
64 Doctor Strange

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VP, Global Magazines and New IP: Gianfranco Cordara. Editorial Director: Bianca Coletti. Editorial Team: Guido Frazzini (Director, Comics), Stefano Ambrosio (Executive Editor, New IP), Carlotta Quattrocolo (Executive Editor, Franchise), Camilla Vedove (Senior Manager, Editorial Development) Behnoosh Khalili (Senior Editor) Julie Dorris (Senior Editor). Design: Enrico Soave (Senior Designer). Art: Ken Shue (VP, Global Art), Roberto Santillo (Creative Director), Marco Ghiglione (Creative Manager), Stefano Attardi (Computer Art Designer). Portfolio Management: Olivia Ciancarelli (Director). Business & Marketing: Mariantonietta Galla (Marketing Manager), Virpi Korhonen (Editorial Manager), Kristen Ginter (Publishing Coordinator). Editing – Graphic Design: Panini UK Ltd. Special thanks to: Stephen Broussard, Kevin Wright, Sarah Beers, Will Corona Pilgrim, Erika Denton, Jeff Willis, Percival Lanuza, Ariel Gonzalez, Michele Blood, David Gabriel, Jeff Youngquist, Sarah Brunstad, Nicholas Fratto.

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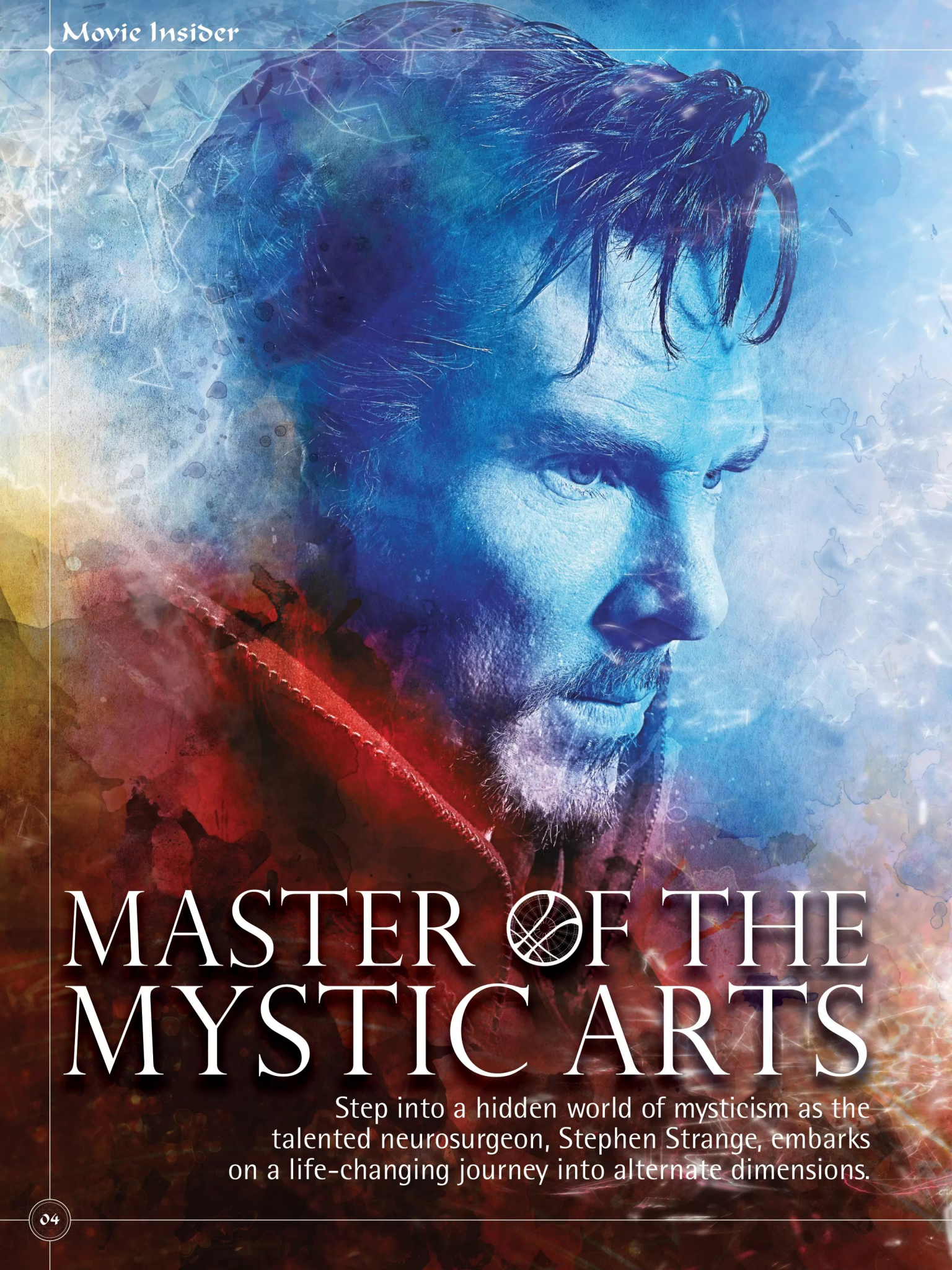


MASTER OF THE MYSTIC ARTS

Step into a hidden world of mysticism as the talented neurosurgeon, Stephen Strange, embarks on a life-changing journey into alternate dimensions.

The renowned neurosurgeon, Doctor Stephen Strange, is living a privileged life in New York City's Greenwich Village until the day he is involved in a catastrophic car accident.

The devastating incident destroys Stephen's life and career, forcing him to embark on a mission to regain everything he has lost. An arduous journey to Kathmandu leads him to a place where he discovers that he must overcome his arrogance and ego before he can learn the secrets of a hidden world of mysticism and alternate dimensions.

As his training begins, a new role for Doctor Strange emerges as an intermediary between the real world and what lies beyond. Those other realms also include an array of metaphysical abilities and artefacts that offer possibilities beyond anything imagined before in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Doctor Strange

Doctor Stephen Strange was a brilliant and renowned neurosurgeon until the tragic accident that permanently injured his hands. With his pride deeply wounded, Strange squanders his considerable wealth and reputation in search of an impossible cure. This desperate journey eventually leads him to The Ancient One, a mysterious figure who takes Strange in as a pupil in the mystic arts, ushering him into the hidden world of the supernatural and teaching him to cast his ego aside.

The Ancient One

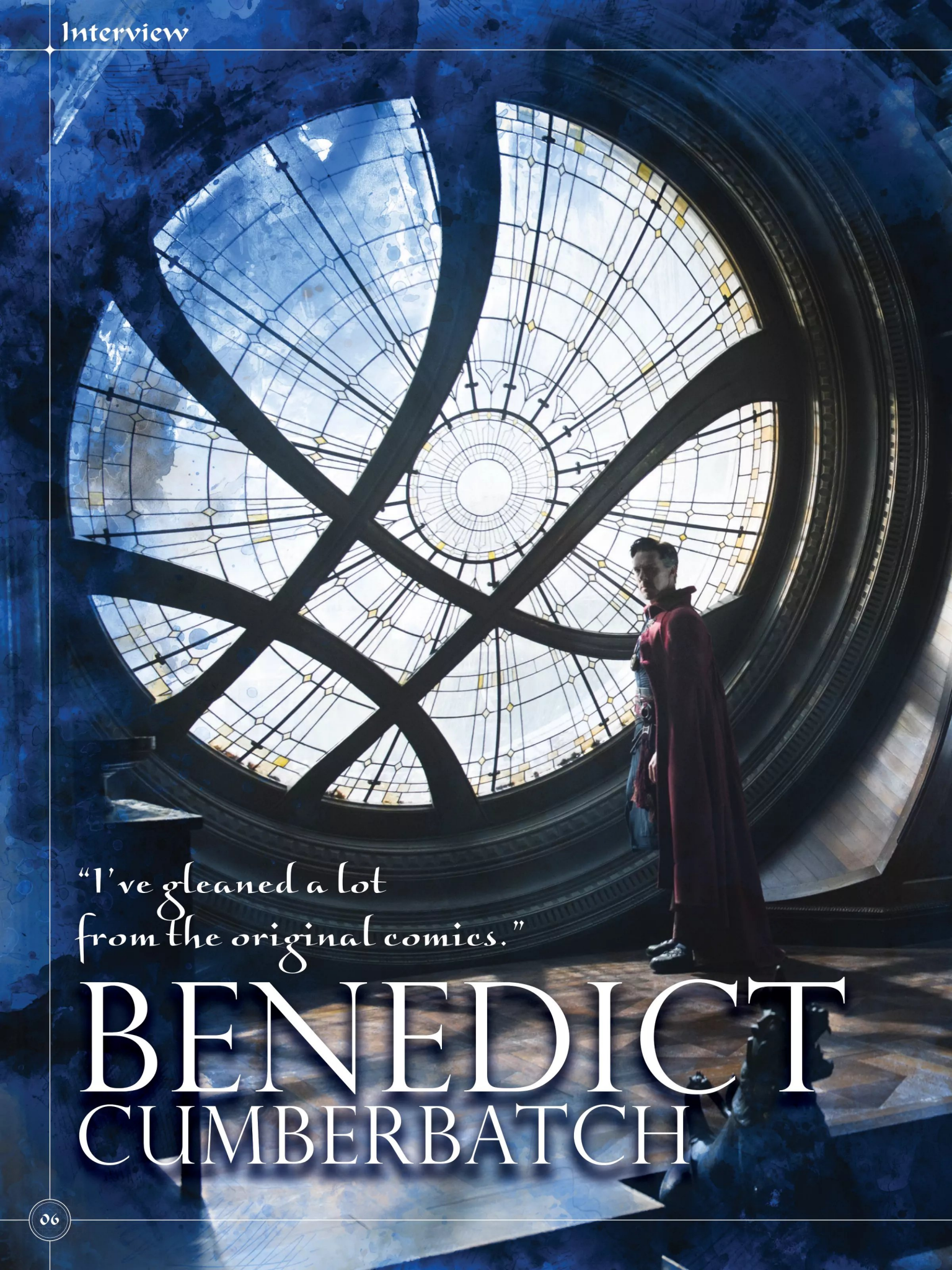
Accounts of The Ancient One's age differ widely depending on who tells the tale, but one thing is certain: her tutelage and mystical training has benefitted generations of disciples. Sacred wisdom and teachings passed down to her through the ages not only serves to heal those in need, like Stephen Strange, but also act as the spearhead to Earth's only defence against the unknowable darkness that exists in realms beyond our understanding.

Mordo

An advanced student of the mystic arts and fellow pupil of The Ancient One, Mordo can see the potential in Stephen Strange and takes him under his wing. Like Strange, Mordo was lost and broken when he arrived at Kamar-Taj. The Ancient One helped channel his anger and guided him down the path to enlightenment. While Mordo sees himself in Strange, his reason for vetting him is much shrewder – in the fight against unknowable darkness, Kamar-Taj needs all the help it can muster.

Kaecilius

Kaecilius arrived at the mystical compound seeking the secrets of The Multiverse. He turned his back on The Ancient One when he learned certain darker powers were being kept from him. It's within these forbidden powers that Kaecilius sees the answer to all mankind's suffering – the ability to alleviate the pains of the human condition. Kaecilius, joined by his Zealot followers, will use every malevolent tool at his disposal to see our reality melded with the shadowy powers of this other dimension.



"I've gleaned a lot from the original comics."

BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH

Benedict Cumberbatch discusses the many exciting challenges involved with stepping into the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

Can you tell us about the journey your character, Doctor Strange, is about to undertake?

This man has been utterly destroyed by a car accident that has taken away the dexterity of his hands through irreparable damage. A chance conversation leads him to meet someone who journeyed to Kathmandu in search of a cure for their almost-complete paralysis. Incredibly, while they were there, their condition was reversed. This gives Stephen Strange a tiny chink of light and he follows it. However, he is an arrogant, self-serving, materialistic Westerner who has been caught in a soulless reality. At his core, he lacks a spirit and a soul. He embarks on this journey in order to recover the use of his hands but in fact, what he has to do is become the person he never was. This is the end of Stephen Strange's old life and the beginning of his new life as the Master of the Mystic Arts.

What has been the motivation in Strange's life up to the point of his accident?

Strange has dedicated his life to having his name in bright lights in his particular field. I think he suffers from massive amounts of insecurity but he covers it up by obsessing over his work. However, as the story unfolds you learn where the roots of that obsession belong in his back story. There's a lot of depth and richness to him.

Have you used the comic stories to inform your role?

Yes, the comic strip has been incredibly useful. Obviously you have very different writers and artists who have worked on this character through the decades but they've remained pretty loyal to the basic ingredients. I've gleaned a lot from that whether it's his humour, drive or how he uses his hands to cast spells and hold demons and gods in his power. The comics are also beautifully drawn and visually rich. That immediately translates into a cinematic landscape. There's a lot of real-world live action in this film but there's also the fantastical adventure element. The variety of environments we filmed in and the action in those environments is exceptional. I think it's going to be a great cinematic ride.

How was the experience of filming in Nepal?

It was so important to be able to bring a big 'tent pole' movie to an area that suffered an enormous amount of damage and loss of life in the Nepal earthquake of 2015. To be able to employ local people and local industry was fantastic and it sent a clear message to the world that, yes they still need help, their infrastructure is damaged, but you can come here and have the most extraordinary experience. The welcome we were given was incredible; the strength, beauty and the sheer joy of the people of Nepal has been amazing. We hoped to catch that magic and authenticity on film. It gives you the most wonderful sense of inner calm when you look at the statues, artwork, temples, the prayer wheels. I don't think we could have done justice to what this film is about – a man going on a journey from Western materialism to achieving a powerful mastery of mysticism – unless we had actually travelled there and experienced the ancient spirituality that is Kathmandu.

Could you relate to the character of Doctor Strange?

As I read the comics, I found Strange to be arrogant, brilliant and with the potential to be incredibly hokey because it was very much a comic of its era. This Super Hero came out of a context in the '60s and '70s where there was a bleed between Western science and Eastern mysticism, which is something I was interested in as a teenager. I spent some time teaching in a Tibetan Buddhist Monastery near Darjeeling so this material immediately made sense to me.

What were the physical challenges of making this film?

I started working out for this film – not just to be bigger and fill the suit of a Super Hero, but to have the endurance needed to be able to take knocks, do the wire work, perform multiple takes of fight scenes. You also need to be able to hold yourself and move well so I did a lot of yoga and postural movement as well.

Have you had any injuries?

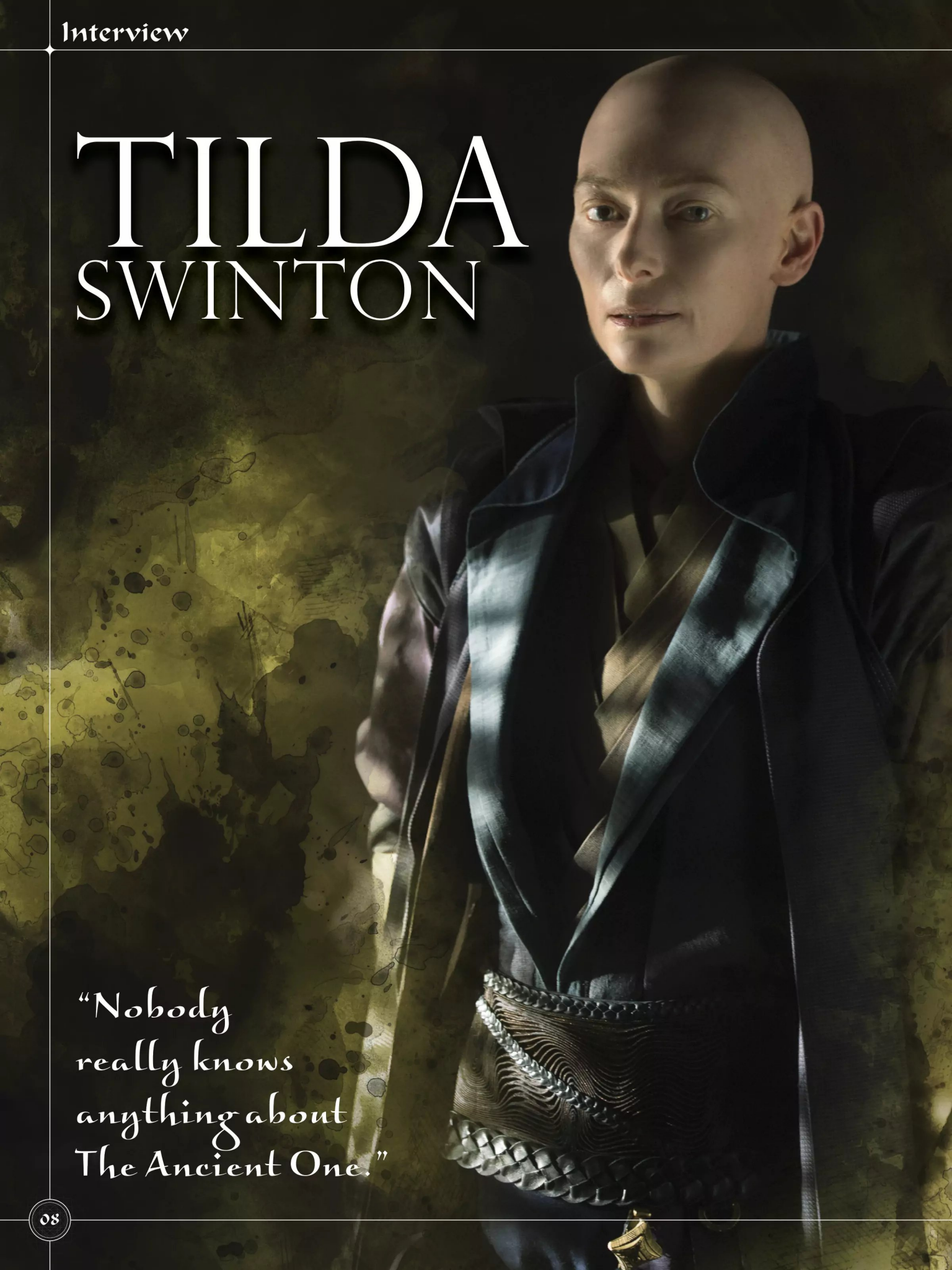
A few, yes. I've been hit in the face, kicked in the stomach and punched. I've been hit several times with a whip-like weapon that Chiwetel and I had to use in a fight training scene. I've also tripped over the cape a couple of times, which is definitely not Super Heroic but very funny. But you can't really say you're a Super Hero unless you've experienced some of the physical trauma that goes with making these scenes work.

What makes this the right time for Doctor Strange to join the Marvel Cinematic Universe?

He is a big presence in the original comics but he's flown under the radar within the MCU until now. The MCU has an ever-expanding group of Super Heroes that are relatable, if slightly extraordinary. From that everything blossoms into something more surreal, so you have wormholes opening up over New York and other-worldly destruction happening within this world's space and time. But it's about to explode into other dimensions and Strange is a very natural bridge between that. I'm looking forward to every single moment of it.

> "Strange is an arrogant, materialistic Westerner caught in a soulless reality."

TILDA SWINTON



"Nobody really knows anything about The Ancient One."

The role of The Ancient One was a freeing experience for Tilda Swinton, as the actress explains...

How did you feel when you were asked to be a part of this film?

To get a call and be invited to join the Marvel Universe was a good day for me! I just couldn't imagine that such a thing might happen. Plus the character of The Ancient One was irresistible. I wasn't aware of the Doctor Strange comics before but the way it was described to me was tantalising. I couldn't say no.

Did you then read the comics?

I did. When I read the origin story of Doctor Strange, I immediately understood the idea of what the film was going to be and it's a good one. My favourite comic is the origin story. That was the one that I focused on as I knew that's where the film sits; it's a genesis we're dealing with. It's a fantastic feeling to be at the beginning of a journey.

The film takes place in a variety of locations.

Yes, the story begins in New York, it goes to Nepal and there are also big moments in Hong Kong and London. I can't say too much about how the characters get from one place to another but suffice to say, it's impressive and quite magical.

How did you prepare for playing The Ancient One?

It was all about becoming very ancient and very wise! It's quite an idea to comprehend being so endlessly wise. I gave a lot of thought to what it would be like to have that kind of immense knowledge and what it would entail to be this unique, reliable spirit.

Do we find out anything about the character's past?

There's no way of knowing The Ancient One's age or who this person is; people just accept this strange being for who they are and move forward. At one point Mordo does tease Strange about who The Ancient One could be, how this person came to be at Kamar-Taj and what their real name might be, but no one really knows.

Can you explain The Ancient One's look?

There were a lot of people working on that development process. We looked at other options and we tested them. We kept paring away. We wanted to go for something very fluid, nonspecific, pure and ageless. It also doesn't mean male or female; it's more gender-free. We ended up going for something pretty raw and simple, modern yet also ancient.

Did you enjoy the martial arts training?

Definitely. We worked with an amazing team. They taught us these extraordinary moves with our hands but for me, there was an issue with the fact The Ancient One is a complete genius at doing these moves but is also super-still and serene while doing it. That was quite a task because generally speaking, when your character is slicing people to bits, you want to show it in your face, so that was quite a thing to work out. Also, we were thrilled at one point during filming because Jackie Chan was present. We were trying to channel his aura as we performed our stunts!

Describe the relationship between Strange and The Ancient One.

Stephen Strange is this incredibly skilled neurosurgeon who is brilliant at fixing people and being paid handsomely for it but he's not exactly digging deep spiritually. After his accident he goes to find this mysterious healer in Kathmandu. He finds The Ancient One who's not at all what he expected and he feels cheated. But then The Ancient One demonstrates her skills and he realises that he must learn from her. She deals in real inner magic, and yet science is magic. She tries to show Strange that what she does is not dissimilar to what he's been doing for years but he can't accept that; he sees what he does as a controllable science. This is a theme that bounces through the Marvel Universe but in this film it becomes a particular emphasis. It's about a magic that can be learnt to extend your powers. You don't have to be bitten by a spider. You can learn it and it's a useable magic.

What makes this film different from the other Marvel films?

This film is stepping into another world. It's about creation and creativity and not so much about destruction. It's about the mind and it's about bending things. It's a trip, not only for Stephen Strange but also for us as the audience as we get taken on this magical mystery tour. I find Marvel so inspiring as filmmakers because they are always experimental. They're always taking technology right to the edge and beyond. They're inventing new technology to do things that we wouldn't have been able to do a year ago. I find that really exciting because I'm a techno geek when it comes to filmmaking technology.

What makes Benedict such a great fit for the Doctor Strange character?

Benedict has the brains and the wit to know how to play a really arrogant character who you want to see brought down a peg or two, and he does it brilliantly. Strange has a real enlightenment of the spirit in this film and I think Benedict really loved showing that. I think it was a personal pleasure for him to go on that journey. He also looks incredible in that beard and cloak, which is an important factor. He's just fantastic.

"Strange has a real enlightenment of the spirit."

Chiwetel Ejiofor shares some of the secrets behind playing Mordo, one of Doctor Strange's mystical mentors.

Who do you play in this film?
I play Mordo, a fascinating character that Doctor Strange meets when he's searching for a cure for his hands. Mordo introduces him to this different, mystical world of magic. Mordo is very close to The Ancient One who has the ultimate power in Kamar-Taj. Essentially, Mordo facilitates the introduction between The Ancient One and Doctor Strange. The Ancient One and Mordo then work together to begin Strange's training.

What is the dynamic between Strange and Mordo?
Their dynamic is complicated by the fact that Doctor Strange has a great aptitude for the mystic arts. Mordo quickly realises that he has certain qualities that are engaging and exciting, but Strange is also reckless and filled with an egotism that is a product of him being a great neurosurgeon. With that comes a certain self-belief, which Mordo reads as arrogance. Their relationship is mentor and pupil but it's typical of Doctor Strange that he won't be a pupil for long. He quickly becomes an important part of the dynamics of the Kamar-Taj.

What do you like about Mordo?
I like the way that he is constructed. He's loyal, engaged, powerful and he has a great physical energy. He is a great defender of ideas and ideals. As an actor, that's great to play, especially when some of those things get challenged by an outsider. He has an unwavering sense of his own moral universe, which is why somebody like Doctor Strange is such an interesting person for him to meet. Strange is a bit more flexible, possibly a bit smarter and is able to use certain charms and intellects that Mordo doesn't have. But they're still very much equals; it's just that their skill sets are different. They challenge each other.

Were you a Marvel fan before this?
Definitely, I grew up reading comic books and graphic novels and I was fascinated by that world. It's been exciting in recent times to see that world take such a leap forward in terms of cinema. Doctor Strange was a character that I was aware of but didn't know much about so when we started discussing my role in the film, I felt a growing excitement that I'd be able to explore this particular part of the Marvel Universe.

What is the look and feel of Mordo?
There's a sense of peace and focus with Mordo, but that sits alongside an alertness. He's a very front-footed, engaged character. His costume reflects this. Mordo's robes have a sense of something ancient and spiritual about them but there is also a fighting practicality in the way that his outfit works. It's a great juxtaposition in the character that there's a peaceful quality but at the same time, a readiness for conflict.

Did you enjoy filming in Nepal?
We were in Nepal for a few days at the start of the shoot. It was great to get a sense of the reality of the place and it was good for my character as I could connect with the spirituality that you find there. We were filming outside in amongst the Nepalese people, in the monasteries, meeting the monks. Spirituality is part of the culture on the streets there. It was pretty remarkable.

The sets also look incredible.
The overall design of the film is amazing. I was completely blown away by the scale of it but also the craftsmanship involved. You can investigate any inch of the set and be in awe of what has been created. It really helps you get into character.

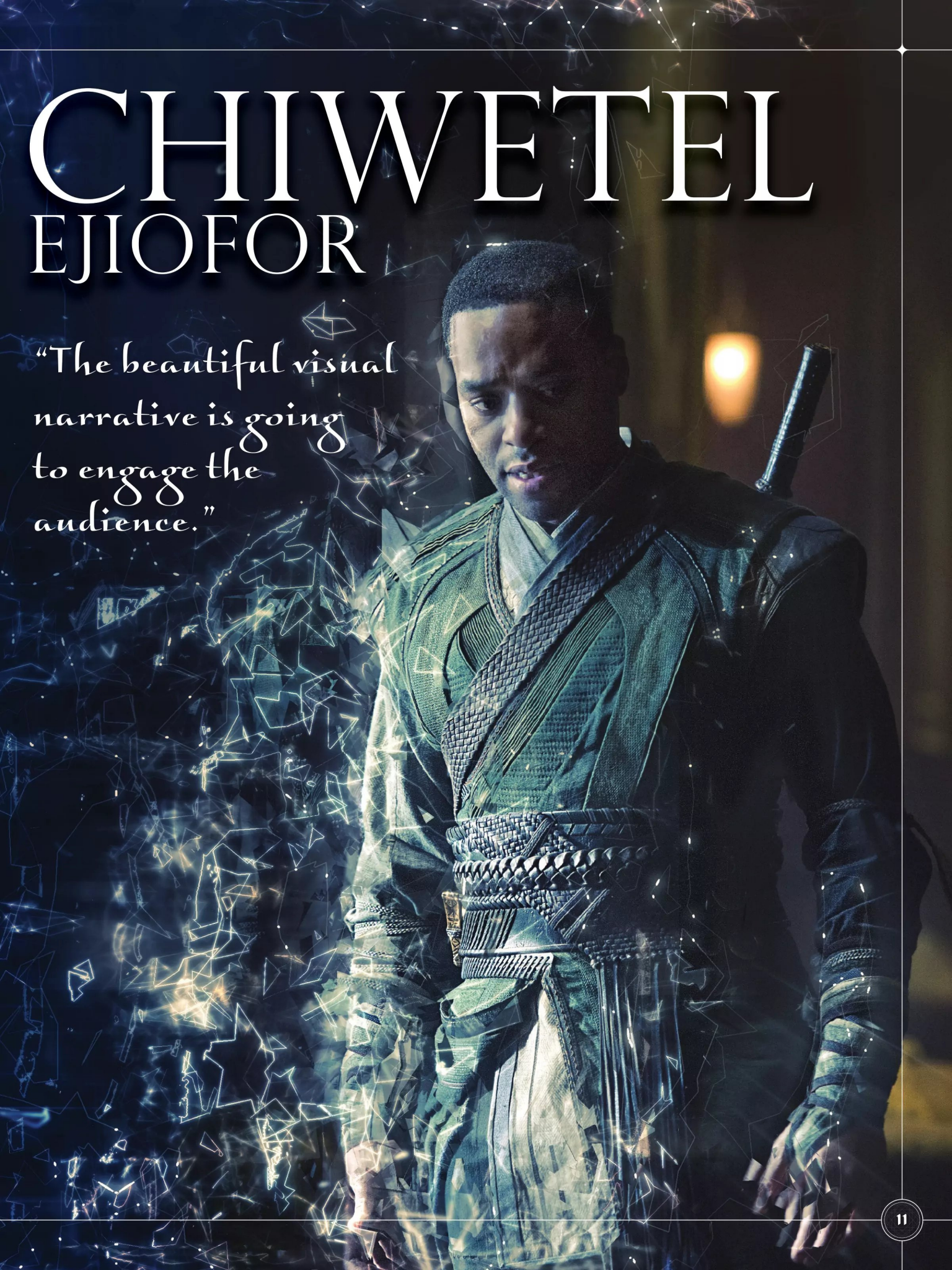
Can you give us some insights into the Kamar-Taj training scene?
It's a great moment in the relationship between Mordo and Strange. Mordo is teaching Strange to fight. He is also introducing Strange to the relics and the fantastical, amazing things that they can do. But Strange is fighting back and finding his own feet in this world. They are still master and pupil but it's the first time that there is a sense of Strange emerging in his own right. It becomes more of a demonstration from Mordo of his abilities than he anticipated at the start of the fight. It's very revealing of character. It's an intricate way to tell the story through physicality and movement. Like with all the best choreography, you understand more about the people involved by the end of the sequence.

What should the audience be most excited about?
It has to be the fascinating central character we have, Stephen Strange. It's also the visual narrative of the film and Strange's relationship to what he's seeing; the magic and fantastical elements that he's witnessing on his journey. The combination of a great central character, really interesting supporting characters and a beautiful visual narrative is going to be really engaging for the audience.

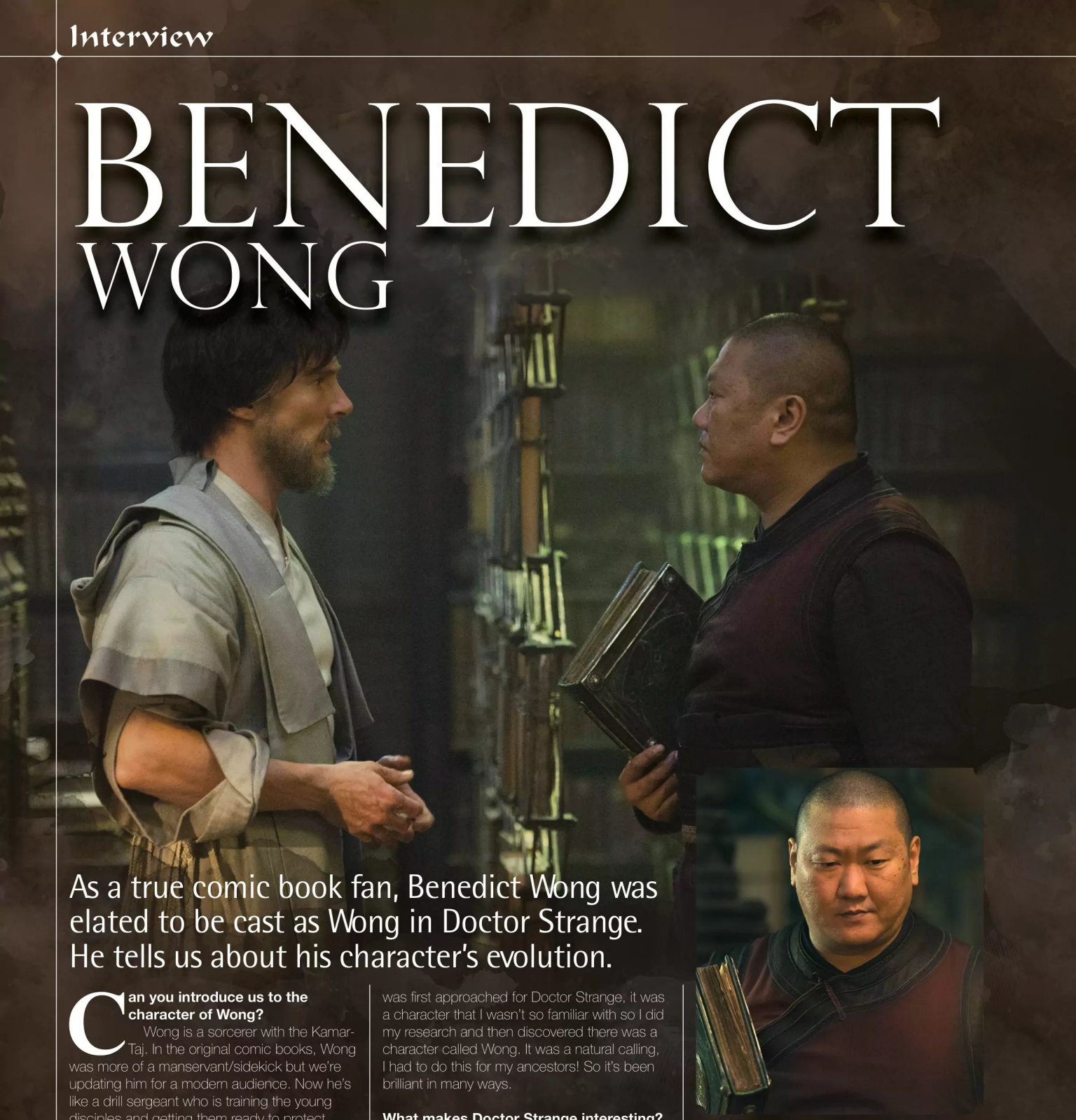
"Doctor Strange won't be a pupil for long."

CHIWETEL EJIOFOR

"The beautiful visual narrative is going to engage the audience."



BENEDICT WONG



As a true comic book fan, Benedict Wong was elated to be cast as Wong in Doctor Strange. He tells us about his character's evolution.

Can you introduce us to the character of Wong?

Wong is a sorcerer with the Kamar-Taj. In the original comic books, Wong was more of a manservant/sidekick but we're updating him for a modern audience. Now he's like a drill sergeant who is training the young disciples and getting them ready to protect against extra-dimensional forces. He's very serious about his job. Very little is known of him but he will slowly unfurl throughout the film. He's also the guardian of the Kamar-Taj library of ancient, mystical books. That is where Wong and Strange first cross paths.

Did you feel excited to be cast in a Marvel film?

I was absolutely elated. Growing up I was mad about collecting Spider-Man comics – I even have a rare copy stored in a vault. When I was first approached for Doctor Strange, it was a character that I wasn't so familiar with so I did my research and then discovered there was a character called Wong. It was a natural calling, I had to do this for my ancestors! So it's been brilliant in many ways.

What makes Doctor Strange interesting?

Over the years we've seen Super Heroes like Iron Man and the Avengers existing on Earth. What's fascinating about Strange is that we're now opening the portal into another world with things we can't see through the naked eye. I think there's something fascinating about tapping into this other world. We're no longer just on Earth, we've become astral.

Strange is taking an incredible journey.

This is the introduction to how Strange loses everything and discovers an innate ability in the mystic arts. Suddenly he has the power to protect Earth against outer-dimensional forces. I'm really looking forward to sitting down and watching the film in its entirety.

Is there a scene you are particularly looking forward to seeing?

There's a scene where Wong is overseeing the training of all the disciples and we have about sixty people doing these incredible martial arts movements in unison, with me drilling them at the front. It's going to look great.

RACHEL McADAMS

Rachel McAdams takes on the role of Dr. Christine Palmer, an E.R. trauma doctor and the ex-girlfriend of her colleague, Stephen Strange.

What is the relationship between your character and Stephen Strange?

I play Dr. Christine Palmer, an E.R. trauma doctor who specialises in thoracic surgery at the Metropolitan Hospital in New York City. Stephen Strange is a very famous and successful neurosurgeon at the same hospital. He is also Christine's ex-boyfriend. At the start of the film we are at the end of their relationship, which is a little bit different; it's not a classic love story and that appealed to me. They may have ended their relationship but they are still friends and they have a real banter and an easy way about them.

Can you explain the dynamic of their relationship?

Their relationship turns out to be a lot more emotional than I expected. At the start of the film they are friends and colleagues. But then as Stephen's life starts to fall apart their relationship becomes much more strained. They become estranged and there are a lot of twists and turns. I think they are able to match each other in terms of their energy and their ambition. They challenge each other in a positive way.

What is it like to take on a character that has a history in Marvel comic books?

There's definitely a pressure to get close to people's impressions of what the character is. However, I'm fortunate in that Christine is an amalgamation of a few female characters in the comics as well as an interpretation by Scott, our director. That gave me a fairly original jumping-off point for this character.

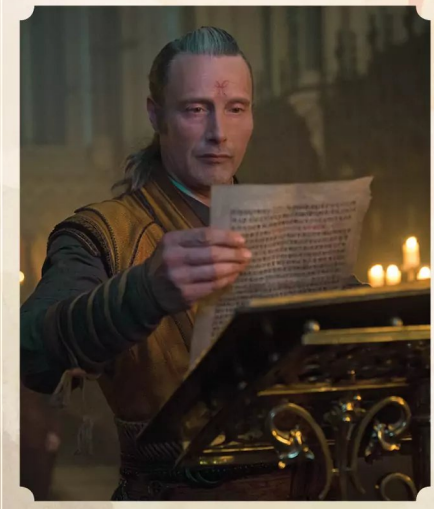
What makes Benedict the right fit as Doctor Strange?

Benedict displays such fierce intelligence which makes perfect sense for a world-renowned neurosurgeon. He also has a very heroic quality to him and yet he's so relatable. He's also very funny and he brought a great deal of humour to the set. His transformation into Strange is really extraordinary.

What do you hope audiences will get from this film?

I do think it's going to be a different kind of Marvel movie. I love the philosophy in it; it's grown-up and it's challenging. In terms of visual effects, there are going to be some things that haven't been seen before. I'm also really looking forward to that first moment when you see Benedict as Doctor Strange. He looks phenomenal. It took my breath away.

Actor Mads Mikkelsen introduces us to the character of Kaecilius, the disciple who has turned his back on The Ancient One.



How did Scott Derrickson, the director, introduce you to the film?

Scott pitched the film to me and as soon as he talked about magic and flying kung fu, my response was, "Hold it right there! I'm in!". Everything I dreamt about as a boy is what we are doing right now on this film. Plus we are dealing with a main character, a fantastic surgeon who has a touch of arrogance to him. Then something terrible happens and he has to confront his fears and beliefs. I thought that was a very human and brilliant way of describing a Super Hero.

Did you research Doctor Strange?

I did. I grew up with comic books and Marvel was a big part of that. I got my hands on a couple of old copies of Doctor Strange that a friend of mine had collected and I loved it. Doctor Strange has been under the radar for a lot of people, especially in Europe, I think it was bigger in America. It's a product of the '60s and '70s and it's a little more crazy than some of the other comics. The '60s and '70s was such a different period. It's a time when people were asking questions about the universe, religion and why we're here.

Tell us about your character.

Kaecilius is part of the Kamar-Taj temple, a place where broken people come to heal, and Kaecilius is one of them. But he sees things differently. If the majority is looking for the truth here, he's looking over there. He's positioned himself on the wrong side of the river and yet he believes that his way will make the world much more beautiful and all his questions will be answered.

How does he first meet Strange?

Their first encounter comes when Stephen Strange has been at the temple for nine months and my character has dedicated himself to the other side. Their first encounter is quite brutal. We fight for fifteen minutes and it's a situation where Doctor Strange does not yet have his full powers. He's not as skilful as the rest of us because we've been there for twenty years. So he gets thrown around a lot and it's not an easy fight for him.

Kaecilius has a distinctive look.

Yes, my character and my Zealot followers have evolved a certain facial expression they can do that goes with his specific cult. It requires a make-up process that takes about two and a half hours every day. It's a prosthetic mask and once the CGI is added in, the mask opens up and you can see through our eyes to the small universes inside our heads. It looks fantastic. Also, Kaecilius is a high-grade disciple and his clothes reflect that.

Can you tell us about the magical movements that you use?

We wanted the movements to be something that is recognisable where we conjure up weapons or make buildings do whatever we want them to do, but it's a fine balance of a movement without it looking too dance-like.

> "Scott gives us the freedom to put in our own ideas."

At the same time, the movement can't be too insignificant. Our moves might look similar but we all have our individual fingerprint that we've put on each move as well.

Is it difficult working with the green screen?

The weirdest part of filming will always be the green screen when you're acting against something that isn't there. Luckily in this case, the things that are not there are the buildings and we're not necessarily interacting with those. We've been chasing and fighting each other but with the backdrop of the green screen. Another complication is that we have time going forwards and backwards in the film so for those parts we watch what they call the pre-vis, an animated film that shows us exactly where we are in the scene at that moment.

What makes Benedict such a brilliant Doctor Strange?

I think he's the perfect choice. Benedict can be very physical and very direct but he can also be very intellectual. He can also play characters that have a fair amount of arrogance, as is the case with Strange at the start of the film. Some of the most intelligent people in the world become arrogant because, quite simply, they have nobody who matches them. Therefore, that arrogance is natural and that's the case for Doctor Strange.

Tell us about working with the director, Scott Derrickson.

Scott loves this film and this universe. His face lights up when something succeeds in the way he envisaged it. For Scott, it's definitely not just a film, it's a mission. When he's sitting in his chair directing or he's behind the monitors, Scott knows what he wants but he also gives us the freedom to put in our own ideas. He's wonderful to work with.

Which scenes are you most looking forward to seeing?

It has to be the New York scenes and the Hong Kong scenes. They are putting a lot of energy into creating those sets. The Hong Kong set is absolutely beautiful, it's stunning. But of course, the sets are our base and starting point – from there it will go ballistic!

"Kaecilius believes his way will make the world more beautiful."

MADS MIKKELSEN

EXPLORING OTHER DIMENSIONS

ALTERNATE DIMENSIONS

The Multiverse refers to planes of reality that are separate from our own. Some of these realities can be slight variations that exist alongside the world we know, while others are wholly alien and exist outside our plane of existence.

Astral Plane

This alternate dimension is closely-related to our world and comprises of the energy, consciousness and spirit of all matter. Strange learns how to view and travel through this dimension by separating his spiritual form from his physical body.

Mirror Dimension

An alternate dimension where dark matter mirrors normal matter. Dark forces can manipulate this world; they can fold buildings, create mind-bending illusions, float, flip and manipulate objects, affecting only those trapped within the realm and unbeknownst to those in the real world.

Dark Dimension

A violent and hostile alternate dimension that exists outside any known human concept of life, death, time and morality. It is an amalgamation of destroyed universe and dimensions. This hellish place does not intersect with our own plane of existence and is the domain of powerful, other-worldly beings.

A myriad of other dimensions and magical abilities are opening up to Stephen Strange. Delve into the supernatural manipulations that feature in his new world.

MAGICAL CONCEPTS

Explore some of the magical abilities that are employed by both the Heroes and Villains in an attempt to outdo each other.

Astral Projection

Separating the spiritual form from the physical body in order to access the Astral Plane. During this process, the physical body cannot move. While in a state of Astral Projection, you can remain invisible to others and are not bound by the same laws of physics. Your astral form can levitate and pass through physical objects; it can even manipulate the real world.

Dimensionlization Power

This is where beings are granted power from outside the Earthly Dimension, making it a fearsome skillset that allows the user to manipulate our laws of physics. They can bend reality at will, defy gravity, change the distance between objects and twist solid matter. Once the user moves on or becomes incapacitated, our reality snaps back into its proper state.

Eldritch Light

An energy force that is seen as luminous figures and objects. The sorcerer creates it by focusing in and calling upon a matrix of energy that courses throughout dimensions. This light can be fashioned into all manner of luminous objects and weapons including rune shields, mandalas, staffs, whips, fighting fans, shields, daggers, boots and chains.

MAGICAL RELICS

Some magic is too powerful to be channelled through the human body and needs to be hosted within an inanimate object. Find out more about some of these relics.

The Cloak of Levitation

A cloak that allows the wearer to fly. This item can also be commanded to operate independently of the wearer.

Crimson Bands of Cyttorak

Like a set of full-body handcuffs, these enchanted chains are capable of automatically binding beings of greater power. They can combat even the strongest mystical resistance.

Eye of Agamotto

An amulet that can radiate a powerful mystical light so that the wearer can manipulate time. It allows the wearer to rewind and fast-forward through time and to see all temporal possibilities.

Sling Rings

This object is almost like a brass knuckle. When it is spun it can open temporary Eldritch gates to other Earthbound locations. These gateways can only be opened on Earth and do not give access to other dimensions.

Wand of Watoomb

A small handheld staff with demonic heads carved on either end. By the power of thought, the user can gather and collect mystical energy. This energy can then be used to block other mystical attacks.

Staff of the Living Tribunal

This handheld staff looks like an unassuming billy club at first, but breaks in two and is secured by a chain of crackling Eldritch energy in the middle.

Vaulting Boots of Valtorr

A pair of seemingly simple leather boots possessed with the power to allow the wearer to leap great distances and absorb the impact of great falls.

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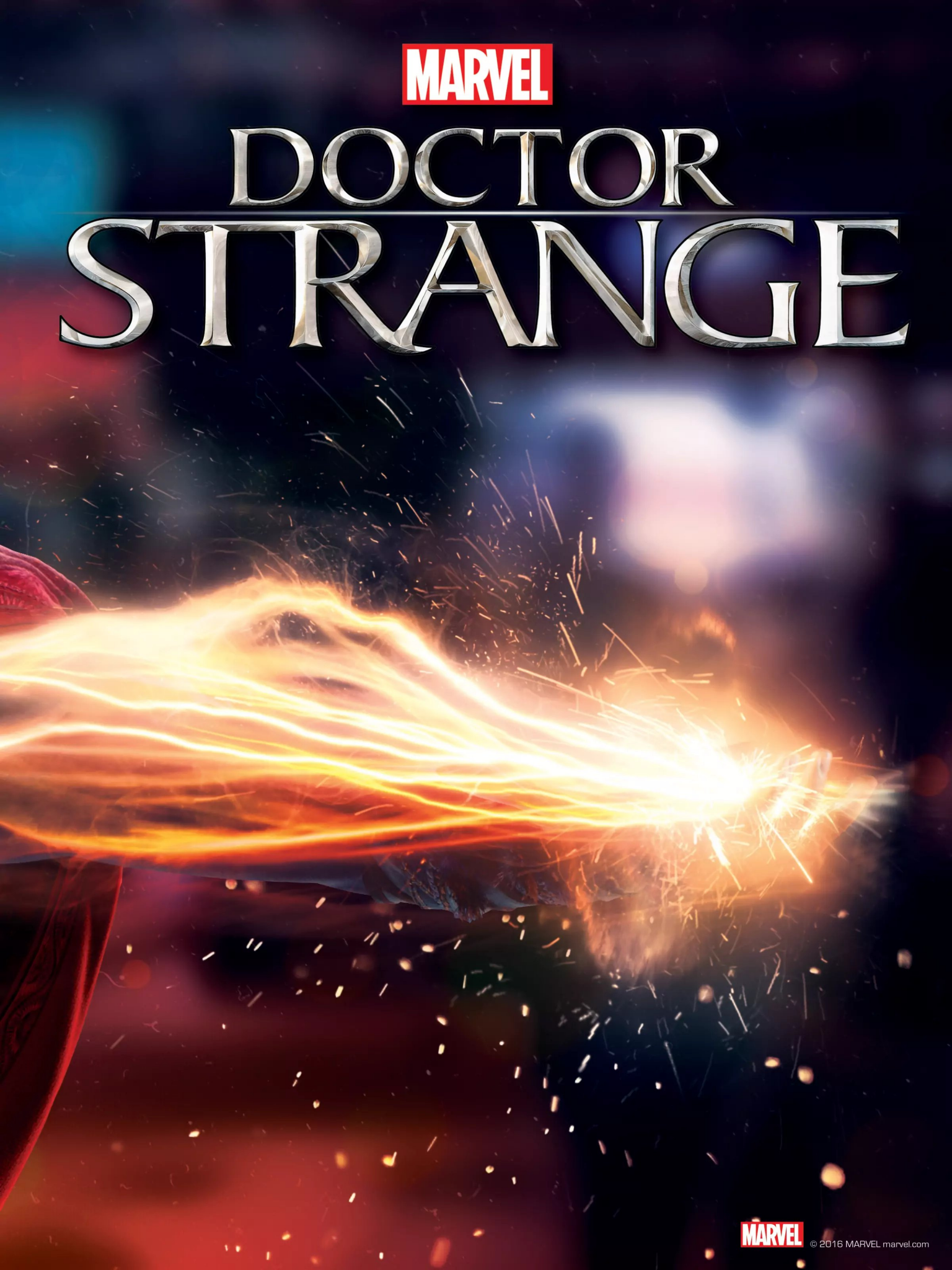
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BEHIND THE SCENES

Production designer Charles Wood gives us an insider's guide on how his team creates the huge range of sets that feature in Doctor Strange.

Setting the tone

"At the start of the process the director, Scott Derrickson, said that he wanted a film that was rich, dark and luminous which was a great starting point. Next we got hundreds of concept drawings created. Then we tried to put them all together. We followed a colour palette and a structural palette and over many months, it built into a map of how the film will look.

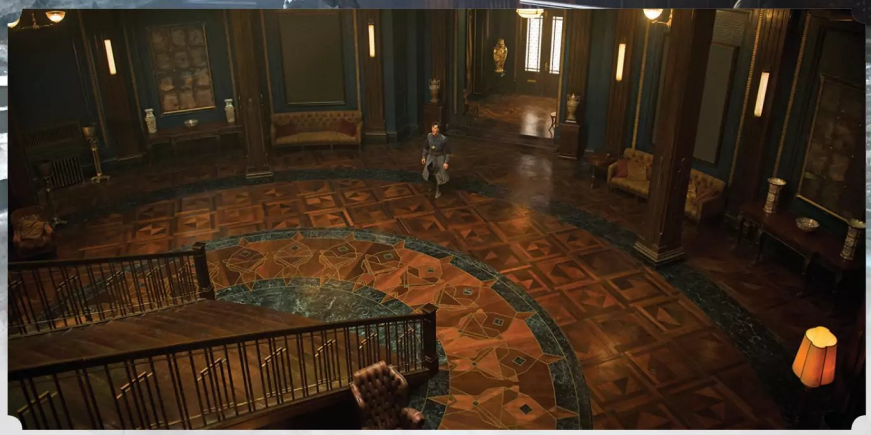
The use of colour is also important as it helps you to navigate the film. Kathmandu is a world of natural colour – red oxide, yellow ochre, dust and heat. Then when you go to a more modern world – like Doctor Strange's hospital in New York – it's a contrast with a clean, clinical palette."

Emergency room

"The hospital sets had to be authentic right down to every tool and piece of equipment. We had a neurosurgeon who would vet the set for us. That accuracy helps because it makes you look at things differently. You look at how a door should work in an operating theatre, or how a tap should be turned on with your arm, not your hand. Also, in terms of filming angles, we wanted to be able to see the ceiling. In a hospital theatre, all the equipment is hung from the ceiling so you can't trip over it. Details like that matter. We built four theatres with connecting corridors and prep rooms so it was a huge undertaking."

A Strange home

"The set for Stephen Strange's home was exciting to create from the first concept art stages. The main image we drew was of Strange looking out of a window onto the streets of Manhattan with the sun going down. That's where it started, with this image of a stoic, confident person standing and thinking. We then had to create a home that would suit this very wealthy man. His home is based on an early 20th Century New York apartment. We wanted to get a lot of reflections from the city into the room so a lot of the surfaces were lacquered."



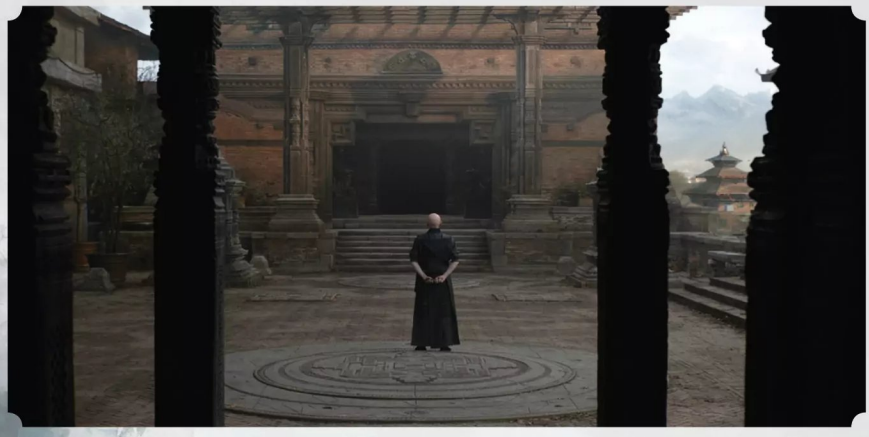
Secret sanctuary

"In the comics, the Sanctum Sanctorum is an old, three or four storey New York townhouse but we wanted to give it a twist. We came up with a slightly odd mix of architectural styles because we wanted it to be ambiguous; you're not quite sure who's lived there previously.

This building is a big character in our movie and it has its own personality. It's impossibly long, it's never-ending and it does weird things. It's also very dark and shadowy; mysterious without being creepy."

City streets

"The Hong Kong set is based on a place called Kowloon. We took several trips to Hong Kong to look at the vernacular of the architecture and to study how people live and exist, how local businesses operate on a daily basis, the type of cars that people drive, what the traffic lights look like and so forth. We ended up recreating a street of stores and businesses; it was about seventy buildings on a 600-foot set. We studied everything from what a post box looks like right down to the tiniest little sticker that's been stuck on a handrail; if it's there in reality, we need to have it on our set."



An ancient city

"For the Nepal scenes, we had to create a Kathmandu street as well as the inside of the Kamar-Taj temple. It was a real challenge to transition from what we had filmed on location in Nepal – the shape of the streets, the warping of the buildings, the ancient bricks and tiles – to recreating that in our sets.

We also had to create a set for The Sanctuary where The Ancient One has her space. It's at the top of a tower that overlooks Kathmandu. You really had to get the sense that the set had been around for centuries and that's hard to do. I'm lucky that I have the world's best plaster crew, painters and craftsmen that can create these sets for us."

WARDROBE SECRETS

Hair and make-up designer Jeremy Woodhead and costume designer Alex Byrne break down the looks for some of the key characters.

Doctor Strange

Hair
"There were three things the filmmakers wanted us to keep from Doctor Strange's iconic look," explains Jeremy. "The grey temples, the goatee beard and the dark hair. We worked with different wigs but in the end we changed Benedict's hair colour from a warm mid-brown to a darker shade to highlight the temples and give him a determined look."

Symbols
"One of the costume challenges was that in the comics, Strange has a big symbol on his chest," says Alex. "We needed to incorporate it without it being too shouty. We decided that the Kamar-Taj disciples would each have embroidered motifs to show their level of training. The motifs were based on their runic language."

Hands
"We created five moulds to show the healing process for his damaged hands," says Jeremy. "We used a flexible, sticky gum that you spread inside the moulds before placing them onto the hands. Peel the mould off and you are left with the scarring effect."

Robes
"Unlike the other Marvel films I've worked on, there is no Lycra involved in this film," says Alex. "The Kamar-Taj costumes are all about practicality for martial arts training. The clothes are very real; they're worn and dirty. They also have repairs that show their history."

Cloak
"The cloak was a challenge because it has to do so many things," says Alex. "We made a lot of prototypes testing the weight of the fabric, how it moves and drapes. There are a lot of processes involved in making it including embroidery, leather work, flocking and printing. We made versions for use in wirework, an action cloak and, of course, the full-glory cloak that gives Strange his iconic silhouette."

Kaecilius

Uniform
"Our key inspiration for the Kamar-Taj and zealot uniforms was ancient mysticism and Asian arts." says Alex. "We didn't want to land in one particular country so it's very eclectic. We had some incredible pieces from China, including cotton fabrics that had been burnished with dye and coated with an egg glaze to give it a sheen. It was interesting to treat the fabrics in different ways."

The Ancient One

Hair
"The hair needed to acknowledge the ancient nature of the character," says Jeremy. "I gathered a selection of wigs with thinning hair and Tilda would wear a bald cap underneath. We got as far as putting the bald cap on and Tilda and I looked at each other and agreed it looked fantastic on its own."

Style
"In terms of the costume for The Ancient One, I started with the comics and mood boards before drawing initial ideas," says Alex. "The costume needed a simplicity and a gravitas to it. We worked closely with Tilda and the production team in terms of how her walk, posture and fighting style would influence the costume."

Mordo

Look
"For Mordo, the first hair test we did used a Mohawk style with dreadlocks and scars all over his face," says Jeremy. "However, we felt it was too much so we pared it down until in the end we had about three scars on his face and his own hair; it ended up being a very straightforward look to create."

FILMING TECHNIQUES

Early on in the film shoot, we took a trip behind the scenes to chat to Geoffrey Baumann, the second unit visual effects supervisor. Geoffrey gave us a fascinating insight into the filming process...

Hi Geoffrey, can you tell us what you are working on today?

Today we're in our final stages of camera testing. That covers everything from wardrobe and make-up to the look of the characters, as well as trying to establish methodologies for the visual effects shots. Today is a cross-section of all of those things.

How do you start planning the filming process?

Traditionally you have storyboards that help to show the crew and the filmmakers what the director's vision is and what the shots are supposed to look like. Then a process called pre-vis takes that to the next level where it is now animated. Now you can get into the detail of what the shots are supposed to be like, how dynamic the moves are, should we move left or right and where are the characters going? In a film like this you need that to ensure everybody is on the same page before we work through the plans of how to shoot it.

Can you tell us about the scene you've just been working on?

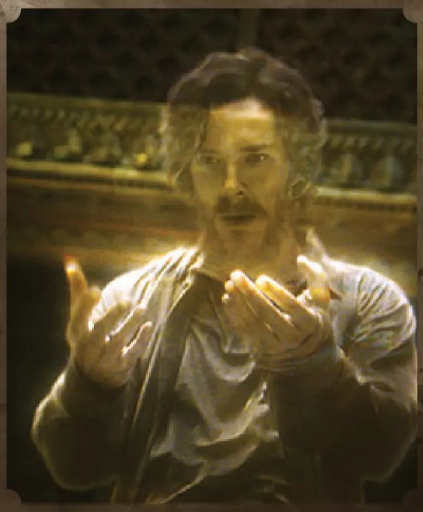
We're testing the astral push moments, or the moments where Strange exits his body. At that point we're shifting into a high speed moment so we are testing frame rates as well as camera speeds in order to do that. We had motion control rigs out here today as they can get up to speed very quickly, faster than you could with a crane or a grip pushing a dolly.

Where does this scene fall within the film?

It's the first time that Strange experiences an astral push. It's a big moment for us to figure out how we're going to film it as well as how we will work within the constraints of the set. Earlier we were mapping out where the walls of the set will be so that we don't paint ourselves into a corner where we can't get the rig into the room or similar.

Tilda Swinton was also on set today.

Yes, that was for camera tests from a wardrobe and make-up standpoint. We make sure we like the wardrobe, the colours, how they look inside, how they look outside. Tilda is wearing a bald cap with some scars applied to it. We need to test it to ensure that it looks right. Once we've filmed it, we take it to the screening room and review it to make sure that it is what we want to see in the final film.

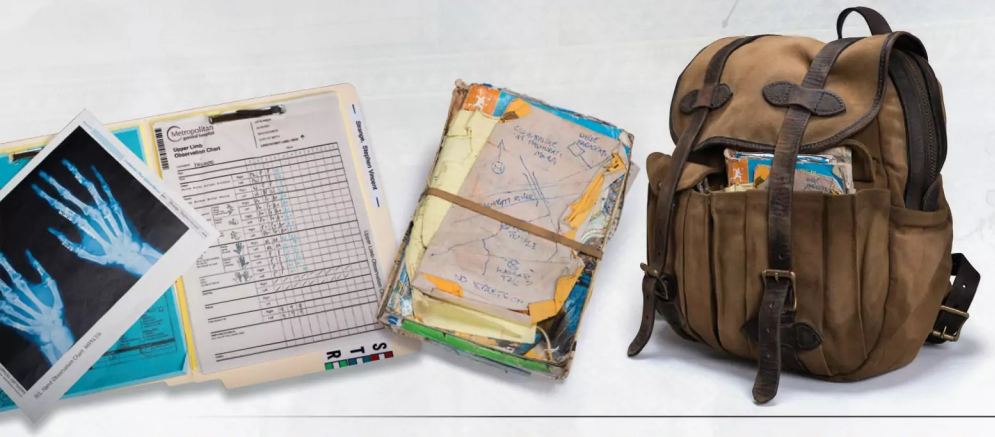


What is the next stage for you?

I need to finalise our technical spec sheets for our shoot in Nepal, then I go to Hong Kong and New York for more planning. Then I will be back here ready to pick up in the studio again.

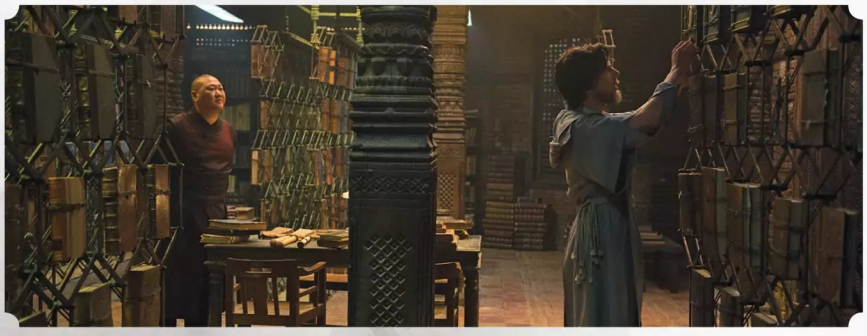
CREATING THE PROPS

Take a closer look at some of the props that have been created to tell Doctor Strange's story.



Personal items

By the time Strange travels to Kathmandu, he has sold everything he owns to fund his operations. He carries a rucksack holding his last few possessions, including the watch given to him by Dr. Christine Palmer. He also carries a map of Nepal but it offers little help in finding the secretive Kamar-Taj



Mystical texts

The props team had to painstakingly create an incredible collection of leather-bound books. Strange's training at the Kamar-Taj includes long periods in the library studying ancient textbooks written in a runic language that detail the mystic arts. Strange is one of the few students who attempts to understand the texts contained within The Ancient One's private collection; they detail the most complex and challenging secrets of alternate dimensions.

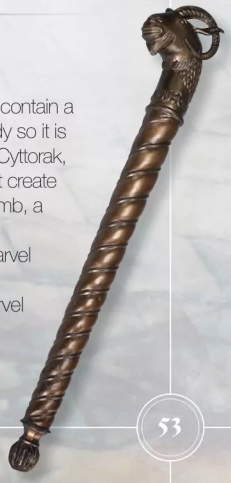
Amulet

The Master of the Mystic Arts wears the Eye of Agamotto, a powerful magical eye contained within an amulet. "We made a lot of versions of the Eye of Agamotto," says prop master, Barry Gibbs. "The stunt versions are made of soft rubber. Strange takes a lot of hits so if they break we have more of them ready to go."

Magical artefacts

The Chamber of Relics is filled with inanimate objects that contain a magic too powerful to be channelled through the human body so it is hosted within the relic. These include the Crimson Bands of Cyttorak, enchanted chains that allow the wearer to fly, Sling Rings that create teleportals to other places on Earth, and the Wand of Watoomb, a staff with demonic heads that can collect mystical energy.

"The Chamber of Relics also contains items from other Marvel stories and Marvel characters," explains set decorator, John Bush. "We had cabinets full of pieces from as-yet-untold Marvel stories. Everything in there is intriguing and mysterious."



CONCEPT ART GALLERY

Concept art is created to visualise how the characters and scenes will look in the final film.

Dimensions

Portals lead to other places on Earth as well as other dimensions.

Zealots

Kaecilius and his cult of followers, the Zealots, have a distinctive and menacing facial expression.

The Eye of Agamotto

Doctor Strange wears the Eye of Agamotto, an amulet that allows the wearer to manipulate time and see all temporal possibilities.

Ancient settings

Stephen Strange journeys to Kathmandu in Nepal, a place of ancient wisdom and mysticism, but Strange is only interested in finding the Kamar-Taj temple where The Ancient One resides.

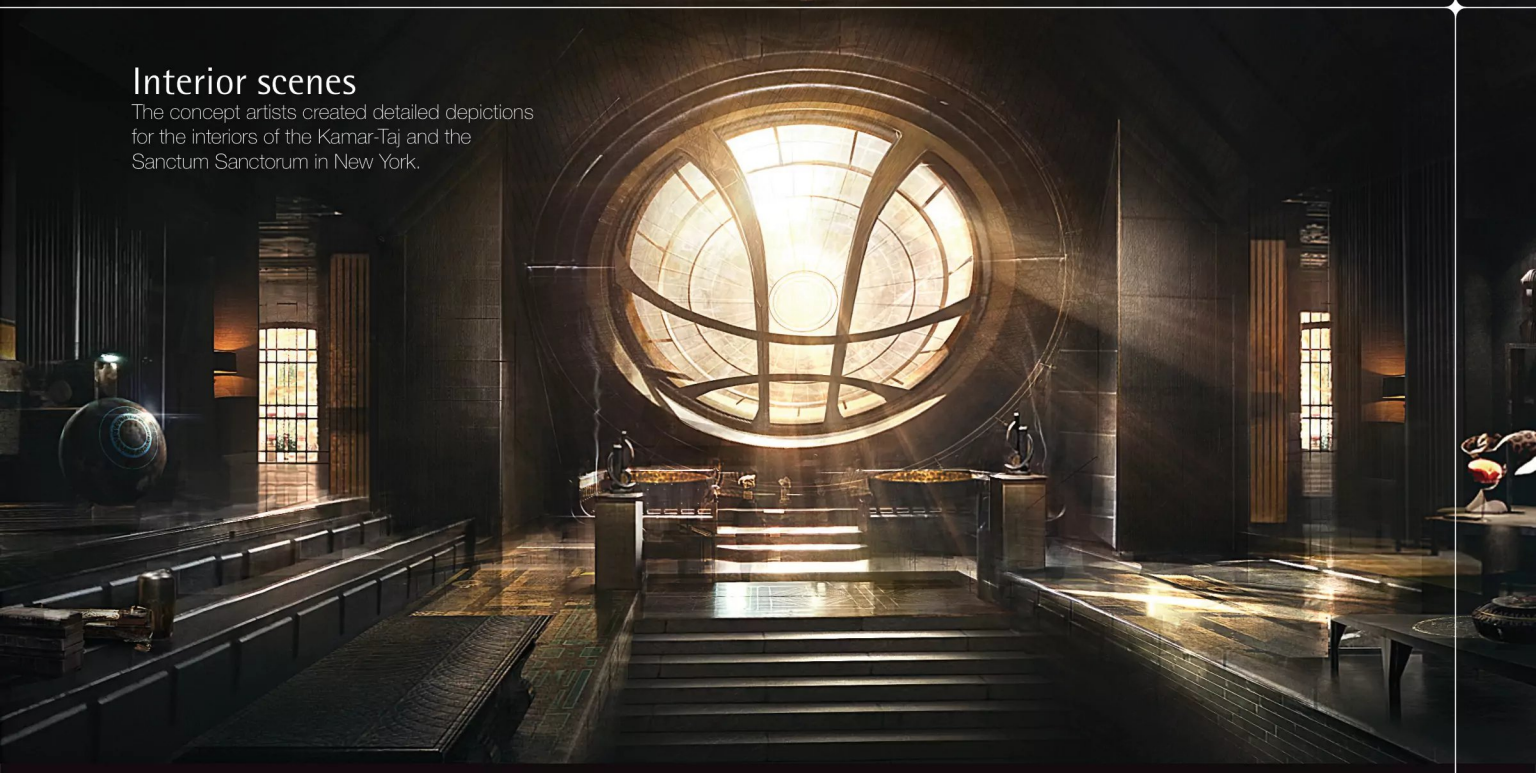
Sanctum Sanctorum

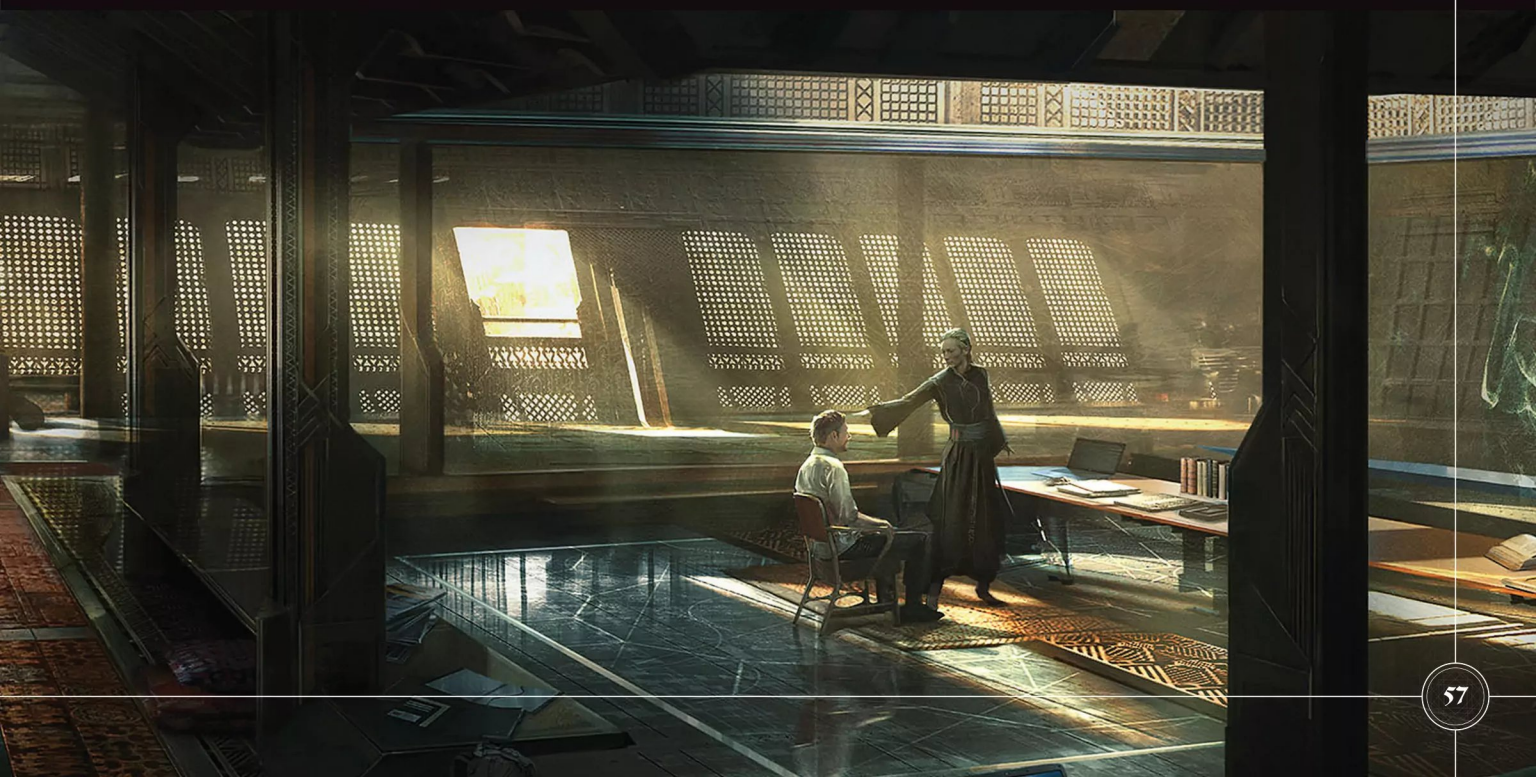
A fortress in the guise of a house, the Sanctum Sanctorum is intended to be the home of the Master of Mystic Arts. It is also home to the Chamber of Relics, a vast museum filled with some of the most powerful enchanted objects in the Universe, including the Cloak of Levitation.

The Sanctum Sanctorum has portals that open directly into other dimensions.

Interior scenes

The concept artists created detailed depictions for the interiors of the Kamar-Taj and the Sanctum Sanctorum in New York.





Kamar-Taj library

Home to ancient mystical text books and the setting for a major moment in the film, the concept artists created a unique vision for the library.

Ancient texts

Wong is the guardian of the library and he guards these priceless tomes with his life.

Creating magic

The concept artists played a vital role in visualising how magic could be used in the film with maximum visual impact.

Concept art on page 49, page 51 and pages 54 - 59 created by the following artists:
Bob Cheshire
Pete Thompson
Roberto Castro
Steve Wong
Ryan Meinerding
Karla Ortiz
Jack Dudman
Paul Catling.

MYSTICAL MARTIAL ARTS

Step behind the scenes to find out more about how the exceptional fight sequences were created.

Fight styles

The fight style in the film has been created by fusing a range of martial arts together. "We've tried to create a style that's indigenous to the Kamar-Taj," explains fight coordinator, Jonathan Eusebio. "We've blended a lot of styles including Chinese kung fu, silat, Filipino and Malaysian martial arts. We've tried to make something that is recognisable and unique to Doctor Strange."

The mystical aspect of the film also had to be reflected in the fight style. "The disciples of the Kamar-Taj do a lot of specific gestures that are part of their mystical sorcery," says Jonathan. "We worked with Julian Daniels, the hand choreographer for the film, to incorporate the hand formations into the fighting form. We tried to combine the two together and coerce the energy."

Training scenes

When Stephen Strange arrives at the Kamar-Taj he is a novice to the world of martial arts along with many other new disciples.

"Essentially the Kamar-Taj is a martial arts school," says Jonathan. "For the training scenes we had to find a group of around sixty extras who would be in the background performing a group form of kata. We had to teach them how they would practise sparring or train with weapons."

"I worked with my fight team to choreograph the overall structure of the training sequence. We planned it as a whole before sectioning it out into quadrants and looking at it as a grid. We then taught the actors how to perform the moves in groups. They all learn the same kind of moves but because of where they are positioned in the grid, the overall effect looks like moving gears."

Magical movement

Hand choreographer Julian Daniels explains how he went about creating the intricate movements used by The Ancient One and her disciples.

Can you tell us about the skills you utilise as a hand choreographer?

I've been dancing for 10 years and I also have a black belt in karate so putting those two together has made me quite uniquely qualified for this film! I used both skillsets to create the gestures for the magic moments in the movie, so that could be when Strange is making whips or a shield, when The Ancient One is creating runes or the Zealots are making space shards and space weapons. I've been a Marvel fan forever so this was not a new character to me. I knew some of the motions that he had done in the comics so I added that to what I thought that I could bring to the character.

How did you approach making the movements authentic?

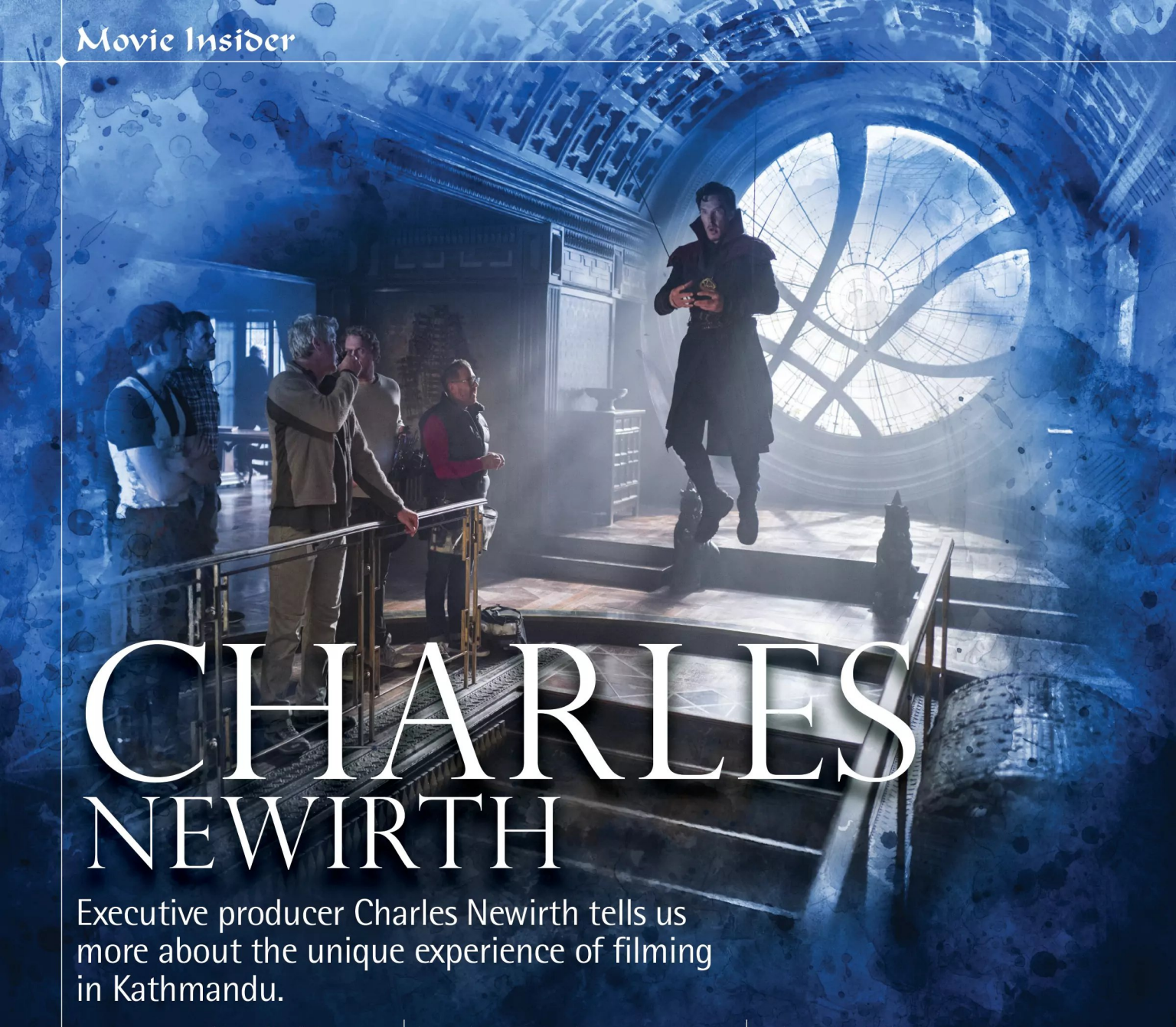
My dance style is hip-hop and popping, and popping has a very specific sub-style called tutting which uses only the arms and hands. Basically it's making geometric shapes with your arms, hands and fingers and that naturally fed into my work in the film. When I started working with Benedict Cumberbatch, we had smaller hand and finger movements but they soon evolved into a bigger and faster movement. Aesthetically we decided it looked better to have the movements on a bigger scale. Speed was also a factor. When Strange produces the shield, it's not because he's preparing to go into battle; it's because he's about to get attacked and could be killed instantly. Therefore, the movement needed to be urgent.

How did Benedict Cumberbatch find the training process?

Right from the start Benedict was a very dedicated learner and he was practicing by himself all the time. I would then be with him on set because sometimes the movements would have to change at the last moment for practical filming reasons.

Can you talk us through the creation of one of the movements?

We came up with a complex movement for The Ancient One based on a mandala design that we were given by the art department. I got a big printout of it and I sat down cross-legged in front of it – like The Ancient One would do – and worked out how I would concoct that shape with my hands. We then went back to the drawing board several times. I was sitting with Tilda Swinton in front of the mirror rehearsing the move and it just wasn't right. Then Tilda suggested that we try to draw parallels between the movements and the surgery that Strange does at the beginning of the film. I hadn't even considered that. We watched some of the surgery scenes where they're specifically focusing on the hands and from that I went back and redid it and came up with something that we were both really on board with. That became The Ancient One's mandala.



CHARLES NEWIRTH

Executive producer Charles Newirth tells us more about the unique experience of filming in Kathmandu.

How exciting is it to bring Doctor Strange into the Marvel Cinematic Universe?

It's amazing. To be able to take this character and tell his origin story has been a big challenge. We were preparing it for well over a year. It's probably one of the bigger challenges for the Marvel Universe in terms of the places that we go to with Stephen Strange, places we've never been before; places that are Earthbound; places that are not. Watching this film is going be a spectacular trip.

What made Benedict Cumberbatch the perfect choice for the role of Doctor Strange?

Benedict has such a physical commitment to the role, as well as an artistic and intellectual commitment, and you'll see that in the movie. I think there are shadings of Stephen Strange that come from within Benedict that no other actor would have been able to achieve. It's been a long time since I've seen an actor throw themselves into a role the way that Benedict threw himself into this role.

Can you tell us more about the antagonist, Kaecilius?

Mads Mikkelson does a remarkable job as Kaecilius. This character has a mix of good and bad intentions and Mads has brought real depth and dimension to him. When the audience watches the film they'll understand his motivations. Kaecilius is trying to do something that he believes is right and that quest brings him up against Strange, Mordo and the Ancient One; it becomes a pretty remarkable conflict.

Why was it important to shoot parts of the film in Kathmandu?

The textures in that city are so unique that we soon realised we couldn't do it justice with a green screen and background plates. We had to immerse the character there and make it part of his journey, and it's an amazing journey as you watch him transform from Stephen Strange into the character he ultimately becomes.

What were the unique moments for you on this project?

We first scouted Kathmandu as a location in the autumn of 2014 and shortly after, there was a cataclysmic earthquake. We had fallen in love with the city and we had tremendous concern for the people. Some time passed and we believed that filming there was still the right thing to do. The people of Kathmandu opened their hearts, their homes and their businesses to us. We worked in an environment where you could still see the remnants of the destruction that had happened months before but these people are so unique and beautiful that they've found a way to carry on with their lives. That in itself touched every crew member and it became another unique aspect of this movie that has been infused into the fabric of Doctor Strange.

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