

# The Frodo Franchise

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*The Lord of the Rings*  
and Modern Hollywood

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## CHAPTER 5

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### *Click to View Trailer*

When you buy a commercial on television, you lease the consumer for 30 seconds. But if you can get a consumer engaged online, you can own that viewer for 30 minutes.

JIM MOLOSHOK  
Yahoo!

STUDIO MARKETING RELIES ON CONTROL over publicity, but control is hard to maintain. With the rise of infotainment, the more people know about the inner workings of show business and the private lives of its celebrities, the more they want to know. The introduction of the Internet provided a new forum for the circulation of fact, rumor, and opinion. For many spectators shopping for a movie to see, a casual glance over some general film sites might provide enough information. For the devoted fan of a specific star or director or series, there is no such thing as enough. Harry Knowles, founder of the most successful fan-originated movie site, Ain't It Cool News (AICN), has said, "When I consulted with Lucasfilm on StarWars.com, they asked me, 'What is it that fans really want?' And I said, 'Fans want to know if you're using Phillips head or flat-head screws on your sets, don't you understand!? Fandom wants to know *everything*. There *isn't* enough information you can give them.'"

Studios might be willing to reveal what sorts of screws they use in their sets, but they're not about to tell fans everything. Inevitably their need to keep many things confidential clashes with the fans' desire to know every last detail, and the Internet has become the main arena for this struggle.

Online information can come from official and sanctioned websites supervised by the studios or from the unofficial sites run by fans. Fan webmasters

and their collaborators are willing to pour astonishing amounts of their own time and money into sites that publicize the products of big Hollywood studios—even in the face of secrecy or downright opposition from the studios themselves. For years Hollywood had ignored the tremendous value of this free publicity, but during the period of *Rings*' production and release, it began to understand the potential of online fandom. Such enthusiasm and labor are, however, difficult to control. Fans may provide extensive publicity, but they can also ferret out secrets and post them in cyberspace. Letting the fans find out enough to keep them intrigued without allowing them to divulge too much is a balancing act that Hollywood has still not fully mastered. Peter Jackson's clever handling of the problem provides a model that will surely be taken up by others.

#### HOLLYWOOD DISCOVERS THE INTERNET

There's just an amazing timing issue, that the 'net came into general, everyday use for most people in the western world at the same time as this film was announced.

ERICA CHALLIS  
"Tehanu," TheOneRing.net

Internet movie marketing is sometimes assumed to have begun with the official website for *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), but many movies had sites before that. New Line's senior vice president of worldwide interactive marketing, Gordon Paddison, was a pioneer in this regard. In 1995, Paddison built an official site for *Mortal Kombat*, generating 100,000 hits in an era when few fans were on the Internet.<sup>1</sup> In March 1998, about three months before the *Blair Witch* site appeared, Paddison's team launched The Lost in Space Galaxy. Apart from information on the film *Lost in Space* and the original television series, the site offered games, downloadable wallpapers, an online shop, and other interactive components.<sup>2</sup>

Still, the *Blair Witch* site did differ from the typical official movie site in important ways. It went online extremely early (June 1998), promoting a film that did not even have a distributor until more than half a year later, when it screened at the Sundance Film Festival on 24 January 1999. The site proved that a microbudget independent film could be publicized online to spectacular effect, and far more cheaply than on television. It also demonstrated the power of initially targeting a niche market, in this case young

horror-film fans who were likely to use the Internet. The filmmakers cleverly presented the site's content as factual documents concerning a case of witchcraft and murder. Many Web surfers took the film to be a documentary. One person who caught on to the ruse helped perpetuate it by starting the first *Blair Witch* fan site in December 1998. Responding to fan interest, the filmmakers added new information to the official site weekly.<sup>3</sup> The *Blair Witch* campaign was too oddball for all its tactics to be completely replicated, but it demonstrated to Hollywood how original thinking could make websites more effective. The film, with an estimated budget of \$35,000, grossed \$204 million worldwide.

At the same time, New Line was also proving the power of the Internet. In June 1999, a month before *Blair Witch* was released, *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* reached the theaters. By the week before the film's opening, its modest site was receiving more than a million page views a day. In 2000, New Line's poorly reviewed *Final Destination* was a hit largely based on Paddison's website.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, New Line was initiating its campaign for *Rings*. In this case, however, there were many Tolkien fans who already had websites and thousands more who were willing to work for those sites or build their own once they became fans of the film. A huge unofficial campaign grew up in parallel with the official one.

#### SPY VS. SPY

*Blair Witch* emerged from nowhere and had to create attention with an online gimmick. *Rings* did not. Publicist Melissa Booth says with a laugh, "Unlike some productions, where you're trying to encourage people to come to the set and have a look and cover it, our main job was to *not* be in the press every day. Because otherwise, with the Internet, as soon as you've got something in a local newspaper, you've got it all over the world."

The key to whetting fans' appetites was limiting access, but fans proved hard to manage. They were prepared to spend time and money to get even a glimpse of inaccessible material. On 30 September 2002, for example, the first full-length trailer for *Towers* was made available for twenty-four hours exclusively on AOL, before being placed on the official site, lordoftherings.net, on 1 October. Several show business and Tolkien-fan websites with access to AOL quickly uploaded the trailer themselves, so non-AOL users had access to copies during most of that twenty-four-hour period. Because these copies could take an hour to download on a dial-up connection, fans had to go to some trou-

ble to view those fuzzy, jerky images. Nonetheless, as remarks on those websites clearly indicate, fans reveled in getting something highly desirable ahead of its official date of availability. The same trailer premiered theatrically on 4 October, an event of considerably less note to site managers and fans, since trailers are viewed far more often online than in movie theaters—and, besides, anyone can go to a movie theater.

Sites were also keen to get graphics of unreleased publicity materials and licensed products. On 13 September 2002, for example, Lights Out Entertainment posted two new “screen shots” from the menu of the extended DVD version of *Fellowship* well before its November release.<sup>5</sup> Around 17 September 2002, TheOneRing.net displayed four hitherto unseen *Towers* graphics for popcorn bags (figure 18).<sup>6</sup> In January 2003, warofthering.net posted images from the tie-in calendar for *Return*, several months before the calendar itself became available.<sup>7</sup> Descriptions of trailers and DVD footage were posted as well. Knowles apparently was given a copy of the *Towers* trailer about a week before it appeared in theaters, for he described it shot by shot, complete with dialogue, on Ain’t It Cool News.<sup>8</sup> On 12 September 2002, Tolkien Online summarized the additions to the extended-edition *Fellowship* DVD from a script. The same site ran a sketchy account of the first full *Towers* trailer on 24 September 2002, a week before its Internet release.

Authors of such articles are coy about their sources. Knowles attributes his access to the preview footage to Gandalf, while the Tolkien Online folks write: “We sent a flock of Crebain from Pasadena to see what news they could find of the upcoming trailer, and they reported back, ‘The trailer is AWESOME, the fans have much to look forward to next week.’” (Crebain are the birds that fly over the Fellowship.) Fans who had not seen the trailer itself but only read this description of it reacted with comments that must have been gratifying to those publicizing the film: “Oh GOD! I can hardly wait!!!! \* jumps up and down \* // OMG!!!! // Can’t Wait!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!! // What a Teeceaserrrrr!!! // woow!!!!”<sup>9</sup>

Initially the filmmakers sought to conceal as much as they could from snoopy fans. On 30 August 1998, Jackson went on Ain’t It Cool News to answer fans’ questions. He said good-naturedly in his introduction, “After this brief warm shower together, Harry and I return to our different sides of the line—us trying to maintain secrecy . . . and he using his low-life methods to publish it all on the net.” On 31 December, he returned for a second round of questions. One fan asked him to reveal where some of the location shooting would take place. Jackson responded, “We have a few key locations nailed down. I’m not going to be specific because I don’t want to see photographs

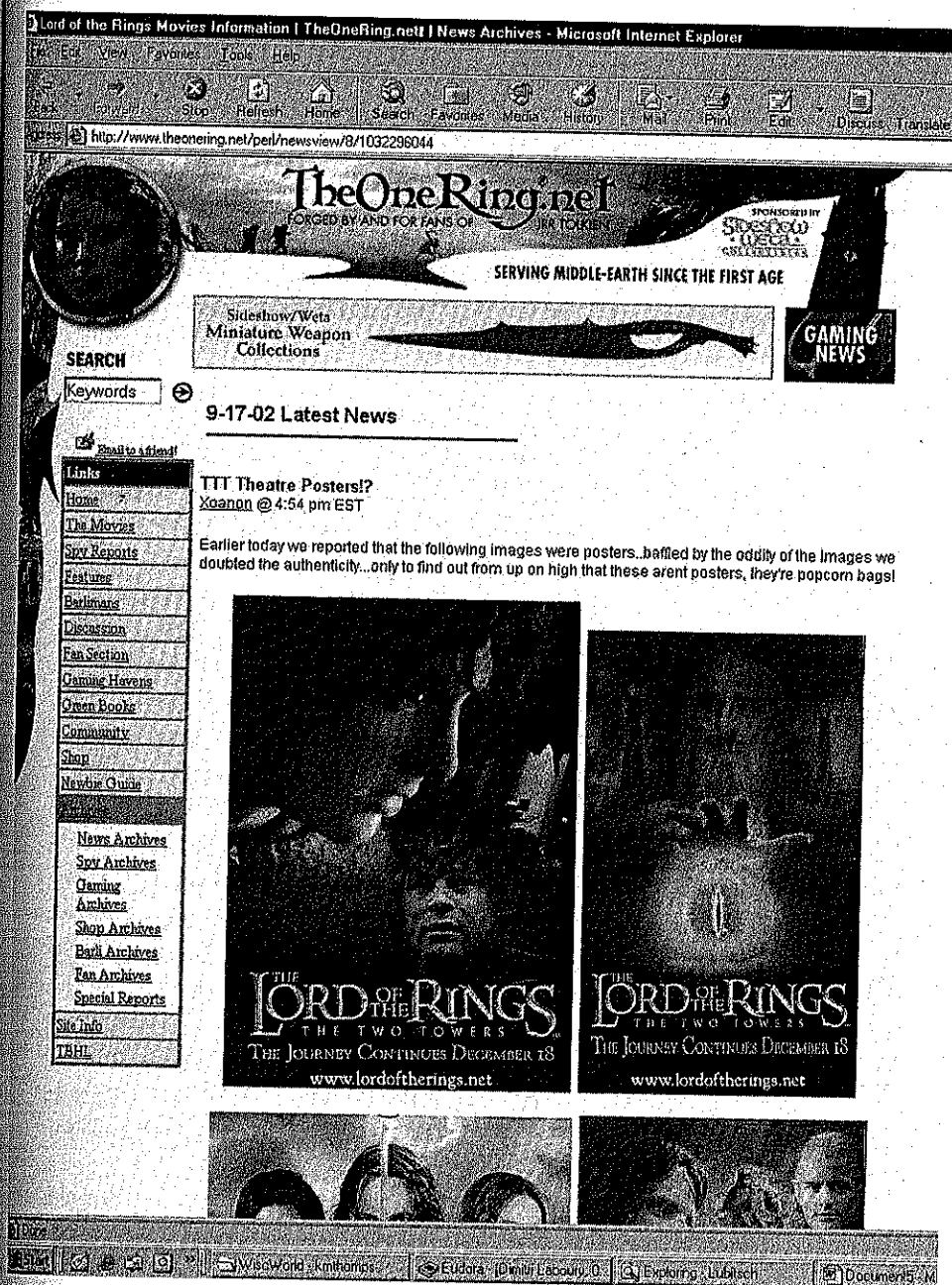


Figure 18. Anything might count as news on fan sites, including popcorn-bag designs. (Courtesy TheOneRing.net.)

appearing on the net!"<sup>10</sup> Jackson told me that his main use of the Internet was to monitor spy material:

The only real, serious reason, I guess, that we were reading it, beyond just being curious and having amusement from what people were perceiving we were doing, was in case there were any leaks or security issues that we needed to know about, so suddenly if something showed up on the Internet that shouldn't have done, then we had to know about it, because for all we know, we may have had an employee that was stealing stuff. I mean, we actually didn't have that at all. We had one person that stole some tapes at one stage, with some footage. But you're sort of monitoring it just to make sure that there's nothing going on out there that you need to know about in terms of material leaking out.

Jackson refers here to an incident that occurred in 2000 during principal photography, when a stuntman pleaded guilty to stealing the tapes and trying to sell copies over the Internet.<sup>11</sup>

Rumors and hints fed fans' appetites, but the ultimate dream was to leave the cyberworld and hit the set. From the start of the production, fan sites competed to feed that desire by posting scoops or "spy reports" that helped their readers vicariously experience the filmmaking process. These sites recruited spies living in New Zealand, and a long-running tussle between webmasters and New Line began. The studio was happy to provide news to a limited number of popular, trusted sites, but it wanted to be the origin of all information about the filmmaking. Throughout the shoot, security guards and fences surrounded areas where filming occurred. Scenes for *Rings* were shot on roughly 145 different locations, so savvy spies could track down a unit filming in local parks and valleys. Security was a particular problem in the quarry in Lower Hutt where the filmmakers built full-size sections of the Helm's Deep and Minas Tirith sets. Fans trained cameras with long lenses across the valley to capture images probably made more intriguing because of their fuzziness. The cliffs and tangled fields above the quarry became hiding grounds for spies trying to photograph a corner of a set or costumed extras smoking between takes.<sup>12</sup>

Jackson and his team—most of them Internet users themselves—would come to be slightly less worried about curious fans as the project progressed, and they began cooperating in a limited way with two of the most powerful of the "spy" sites. They would drag New Line with them. Ultimately, the unofficial Internet campaign for *Rings* taught Hollywood much about how fans could promote a blockbuster.

#### THE BULL'S-EYE: OFFICIAL AND SORT OF OFFICIAL SITES

At one point when the trilogy was still being released, a search on the string "Lord of the Rings" resulted in about eleven million hits. A significant proportion of those pages represented companies selling *Rings*-related merchandise and others focused on the novel, but there were also many sites consistently devoting much or all of their content to the film itself. Although some of these sites were doing things of which New Line disapproved, all of them were publicizing *Rings*.

Imagine this vast campaign, official and unofficial, as an archery target. The few sites that had New Line's complete or nearly complete approval would be in the bull's-eye. The first ring—a very narrow one indeed—we can call the "quasi-sanctioned" sites. These obtained limited access to the production through the filmmakers' cooperation but without any initial agreement from New Line. Moving to the next ring, we encounter sites that gathered news from a variety of sources but had no direct access to the filmmakers. The more important ones did have the privilege of being on New Line's list to receive press releases and other publicity material. Such sites are sometimes called "multipliers," because other sites link to them or repost the news items, thus carrying New Line's information to an ever-expanding audience. Such sites also usually depend on volunteers around the globe to send in news, gossip, scans of magazine articles, and so on. Farther out on the target, we find the fan sites that center not on news but on the webmaster's personal interests. Often they concentrate on photographs, typically of one or more actors. Finally, in the margins outside the target's rings lie fan-generated parodies, fiction, and art.

New Line created or endorsed only four websites to publicize *Rings*.<sup>13</sup> Most centrally, of course, there was (and is) the company's own *Rings* site. Its home page included a link to the website of the licensed Lord of the Rings Fan Club.<sup>14</sup> New Line bolstered its official site by arranging for a general entertainment website, E! Online, to run a series of on-set reports. The studio did not plan to exploit personal cast or crew websites—such sites were in their infancy at the time. Nonetheless, Ian McKellen's site quickly became one of the main sources for fans wanting behind-the-scenes *Rings* news.

#### *New Line's Official Site*

New Line's publicity department began with one signal advantage: many fans desperately wanted to love the films. (The same phenomenon can be observed in other fandoms, such as those for the *Star Wars* and *Star Trek* series.) One

such fan, Scott Edelman, the editor of fan magazine *Sci Fi*, articulated this desire clearly and succinctly in an editorial. Edelman identifies himself as an ex-hippie who loves Tolkien's novel. He recalls:

So when I first heard that director Peter Jackson was going to tackle filming the trilogy, I grew fearful. I had long since given up the dream. Perhaps, I told myself, turning those particular words into cinematic reality was unfeasible. Not every story is filmable. Maybe we should just be glad that the books had been written in the first place, and forget about trying to do the impossible.

Even though I had enjoyed Jackson's earlier films, I was confident that when *The Fellowship of the Ring* appeared on the screen, it would cause me to weep. I can't remember when I was so nervous attending a screening. I guess that was because my lifelong love of Tolkien had left me feeling invested in the critical success of the film in a way that just wasn't present for the average genre film.

As it turned out, the film indeed brought me to tears, though not for the reasons I feared. At my first glimpse of The Shire, I was able to relax. And with each passing instant, I nodded and thought, "Yes, yes, that's it, he's nailed it." Jackson's obvious love for Tolkien filled the screen, and I was transported to many places—not only back to Hobbiton, but back to my childhood dreams as well.<sup>15</sup>

As this passage suggests, however, many fans were also extremely skeptical about the movie. The studio and filmmakers tried to reassure these people via the Internet. Like the film itself, the Internet campaign had to both appeal to the built-in fan base and create a new, larger audience. Given that more than three years passed between New Line's acquisition of the project and the premiere of *Fellowship*, the wooing of these two publics was lengthy and convoluted. The studio started by concentrating on the existing fans.

New Line established the Lord of the Rings website ([www.lordoftherings.net](http://www.lordoftherings.net)) quite early, in May 1999.<sup>16</sup> Here the producers and others with financial ties to the films released news tidbits at brief intervals, with the occasional large revelation. Such a tactic aimed to maintain fan interest during the long gaps between the interlarded releases of the films and DVDs and to whip up enthusiasm before each release. Many webmasters cooperated enthusiastically, and their sites linked to [lordoftherings.net](http://lordoftherings.net). *Variety* wrote of it, "There are global armies of devotees who view the Tolkien epic not as a corporate asset but as holy writ, and Paddison straddles the line between their needs and the demands of AOL Time Warner's global marketing machine."<sup>17</sup>

Among other things, the Internet made it possible for digital publicity items

to be given away on a mass scale at minimal expense. As Paddison said, "We go where the fans are and give them stuff."<sup>18</sup> The film's website featured downloadable screen savers, wallpapers, interviews, brief behind-the-scenes clips, and trailers. On 7 April 2001, the first theatrical trailer for *Rings* was made available exclusively on the site. It set a record, with about 1.7 million downloads in the first twenty-four hours and 6.6 million in the first week. (For a comparison, the trailer for *Star Wars: Episode I—The Phantom Menace* was downloaded a million times on its first day.)<sup>19</sup> The website was covered widely in print, broadcast, and online media, generating additional free publicity.<sup>20</sup>

Since New Line is owned by Time Warner, Paddison could easily place advertisements, links, short informational texts, and the like on AOL itself (including a link to AOL's online ticket agency, Moviefone), Netscape, and AOL's instant-messaging service, ICQ. New Line could run travel sweepstakes on these sites, with trips to New Zealand as the top prizes, as well as smaller contests giving away licensed merchandise. The AOL keyword "Lord of the Rings" was included in much print advertising, drawing more people onto the Internet. In many cases, the much-vaunted synergy that was supposed to develop among the components of large media conglomerates in the 1990s didn't meet expectations, but Paddison managed to make alliances within AOL Time Warner work for *Rings*.

The official site proved inexpensive, too. Although New Line spent only 2 percent of its marketing budget on its web campaign, exit polls after *Fellowship's* release revealed that more than half of the spectators had gained some information about the film from the Internet. As Paddison pointed out, the Internet's efficiency as a marketing tool comes from the fact that it is the cyberworld equivalent of word of mouth (word of keystroke, perhaps). Like Jim Moloshok of Yahoo!, Paddison knew that the Internet can give potential moviegoers a longer exposure to publicity, at a fraction of the cost of TV ads. New Line's *Rings* site has been highly influential, and it literally became a textbook example when Paddison contributed a 54-page case study of the trilogy's marketing campaign to the second edition of *Internet Marketing*.<sup>21</sup>

Later in the official campaign, [lordoftherings.net](http://lordoftherings.net) sought to lure in those who had not read Tolkien's novel. As Paddison said, "People click down into the site, and before they know it, they turn geek."<sup>22</sup>

### *E! Online and the Force of Hobbit*

While [lordoftherings.net](http://lordoftherings.net) concentrated on wooing existing fans, New Line sought a partner to help make the film appeal to newcomers. During the summer of 1999, as the start of principal photography approached, Paddison

arranged a deal with E! Online, which had an editorial partnership with AOL. (This deal was consummated before AOL merged with Time Warner.) Apart from the connection with AOL, E! Online's audience offered what the studio considered desirable demographics. On the basis of New Line's early market research, female filmgoers would constitute, as Paddison put it, "a secondary but key audience." The research had indicated, misleadingly as it turned out, that nearly 75 percent of Tolkien fans were males in their early teens to early thirties, went to comic-book conventions, participated in role-playing games, and liked *Star Wars*, *Star Trek*, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. *Rings* was not, New Line feared, a date movie.<sup>23</sup> E! Online's audience was 61 percent female, 63 percent of whom were between the ages of eighteen and thirty-four and went to the movies monthly.<sup>24</sup>

E! Online was commissioned to create a series, "Force of Hobbit: On Location," that would appeal to people who had never read Tolkien. Scott Robson, executive editor for the website, contrasted the series with what the official site was posting: "It's a different kind of content, for people who might not know the difference between Frodo and Sam Gamgee."<sup>25</sup> An agency in Auckland hired John Forde, a 1999 graduate in film and media studies from the University of Otago.<sup>26</sup> According to Melissa Booth, Forde was given monthly access to some aspect of the filmmaking. The reports were approved by New Line and Jackson before being uploaded.

Forde got along well with the cast and crew, which shows through in the enthusiastic tone of the reports. Like many visitors, he was invited to be an extra, as a Gondorean soldier, an experience that he described to envious fans. Forde's series began appearing on 12 January 2000, a few months after the beginning of principal photography, and it ended on 1 December 2001, with *Fellowship's* London premiere.<sup>27</sup> Traffic on E! Online spiked for a few days after each posting. Overall, there were on average 700,000 page views per month. During the period immediately preceding the release of Film 1, *Rings* was generating 34 percent of all traffic on E! Online.<sup>28</sup>

### *The Lord of the Rings Fan Club*

We may think of a fan club as expressing the spontaneous upsurge of devotees' idolatry, but more often than not the film industry creates fan clubs. On 17 October 2001, two months before the release of *Fellowship*, Decipher Games announced the formation of the Lord of the Rings Fan Club. Decipher was licensed by New Line to run this club and to publish *The Lord of the Rings Fan Club Official Movie Magazine*. (A prominent games firm founded in 1983, Decipher also produced the licensed trading-card game and role-playing game

based on *Rings*.) Dan Madsen, who had started a fan club for *Star Trek* in 1979 and subsequently founded a business to run the official *Star Wars* fan club, was Decipher's partner in obtaining the license. He subsequently managed the club and conducted many of the interviews for the magazine.

The Fan Club offered some commonplace benefits, including a "collector" lithograph, the bimonthly magazine, and a 10 percent discount on merchandise.<sup>29</sup> In addition, it hit upon a brilliant gimmick. Charter members would have their names listed after the credits on the DVD versions. (The extended-version DVDs had not then been announced, but ultimately the names appeared there rather than on the theatrical versions.) The densely packed list runs for twenty minutes. Elijah Wood was the first member to sign up, and other actors' and crew members' names appear as well. This unprecedented acknowledgment of the fans, absorbing them into the most authoritative version of the film they adored, represents the sort of strategic inclusion that its makers—many of them possessed by the fan spirit themselves—offered to *Rings'* admirers.

The same sort of inclusion was offered online. As a licensee of New Line, the Fan Club was able to run a sanctioned website, which set up a community area in which fans could interact. Through it, individuals or small groups spontaneously began forming local branches of the Fan Club that could meet in person. In Düsseldorf, Kathryn Buchhorn (Skybly) organized such a branch, creating another website, [www.of-the-shire.net](http://www.of-the-shire.net), with a chat room, reports on local Fan Club get-togethers, and a "Middle-earth Scrapbook" that introduced members to each other through photographs and biographical sketches. By early 2002, the Düsseldorf group included 230 members, big enough to warrant an article in the Fan Club magazine, which also launched a regular column called "Fan Focus." Buchhorn voiced a common view among fans, online and off: "This is what I still love most about this place—we are a really diverse group, with people from all walks of life, and yet there is a real family feeling about the Fan Club."<sup>30</sup> The "family" notion crops up again and again in this club and in some of the unofficial fan sites. In the case of the Fan Club, the metaphor was literalized more than once. Madsen corresponded with a woman on the website, met her in person at one of the Oscar parties put on by TheOneRing.net, and eventually married her.

The magazine was built around interviews, notably an update with Peter Jackson in nearly every issue. The editors captured some of the sense of participation associated with the Internet by inviting readers to submit questions and by including some of those questions in every major interview. Club member Mary Kiesling wrote to praise an interview with Howard Shore:

“Also, he answered the question I submitted! I’m over the moon!”<sup>31</sup> The magazine contained numerous regular features, including letters to the editor (MailBaggins), announcements of new merchandise, and a section of minor news items. Most issues also included one surprisingly detailed article profiling a manufacturer of licensed merchandise, from the huge video game company Electronic Arts to Star Toys, a small German company creating resin and vinyl model kits. The series “Unsung Heroes” profiled lesser-known members of the crew, such as the greensmaster and a helicopter pilot. The “Artifacts” series dealt with the craftspeople responsible for the props and costumes. Despite its cumbersome title, *The Lord of the Rings Fan Club Official Movie Magazine* offered a serious and thorough survey of the entire franchise. In 2004, it won an award for excellence in layout and design.<sup>32</sup>

#### *McKellen.com*

If the official film site was aimed at existing fans and E! Online’s series attracted neophytes, the site that drew people from both groups came from one of the most respected British stage actors of the day and the third oldest of the major cast members. Christopher Lee remarked, “In the film we were both several thousand years old, but in the real world he is some twenty years younger than me, which is young enough to have the habit of keeping a diary in a laptop.”<sup>33</sup> (McKellen was sixty when he began work on *Rings*; Lee was seventy-eight.) The diary was added to McKellen.com, which had gone online on 1 September 1997—nearly two years before its owner was chosen to play Gandalf.

The site grew out of McKellen’s resistance to the idea of writing his memoirs. The introductory note calls it “my online autobiography.” The impetus to start it came in early 1997, when the actor was in Los Angeles to star in *Apt Pupil* (1998). During filming, he had enough spare time to act in *Gods and Monsters* (1998) and to perform his one-man stage show, *A Knight Out*. Not having a laptop to revise the latter, he contacted a computer-adept acquaintance, Keith Stern. Stern recalls, “He found out that I was doing these newfangled things called websites. I’d done one for myself and done one for Spinal Tap, the group and the movie.” Given that the proceeds from *A Knight Out* were going to charity, Stern donated his services to create a website for the show. “People came in from all over the country after seeing it on the Internet. Those were early days, early 1997, and anything you put on the Internet that was of any interest or quality at all would tend to get more than its fair share of attention.” Impressed, McKellen asked Stern to create a personal website for him.

Many of the features of the site have become fairly standard, but at the time there were no models. “Even the idea of separate photo galleries and the terminology of labeling them ‘galleries’ was original,” says Stern. “Maybe somebody else did it before, but not to my knowledge.” Even today, few sites devoted to an individual are so elaborate. From crates stored in McKellen’s basement, Stern rescued photographs, programs, and other memorabilia, creating an online archive of modern British theater history. By June 2005 the site contained more than a thousand pages, and many boxes of documents remain to be uploaded.

To keep the site fresh, Stern encouraged McKellen to keep a behind-the-scenes *Rings* diary and suggested he call it “The Grey Book” and later “The White Book.” The names derived from Tolkien’s original “Red Book of Westmarch” (the book containing *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* that Frodo gives Sam), adapted to Gandalf’s colors. The first entry in “The Grey Book” was posted on 20 August 1999, shortly after McKellen was cast in *Rings*. Stern couldn’t take a camera on set, but he posted snapshots showing McKellen and the other actors amid stunning New Zealand scenery impressed fans. The last entry of “The Grey Book,” on 14 December 2001, covered the London premiere of *Fellowship*. On 25 June 2002, “The White Book” began. It dealt with the pickup footage for Films 2 and 3 and ended on 12 November 2003, after McKellen had done his last dialogue dubbing.

When McKellen arrived in New Zealand in January 2000, he was the only one of the major cast members posting on a personal website.<sup>34</sup> The reaction of the other stars to Stern’s initial visit to Wellington suggests the novelty of actors’ sites at the time. “It all started about the day I arrived on set in May of 2000. I mean, every one of the actors wanted a website, and as soon as they found out that I was there—and they’d all seen Ian’s website—it was just a series of meeting after meeting with all the actors in their hotel rooms to do what I could to get their feet wet on the Internet.” Hectic shooting schedules prevented them from creating sites right away, but eventually Stern built websites for Andy Serkis and Sean Astin.

McKellen wrote the first on-set Grey-Book report (25 January 2000) in Matamata, where he had begun with the scenes in Hobbiton. His diary created an unintended rivalry with Forde’s “Force of Hobbit,” which contractually had exclusive rights to on-set coverage. By this point Forde had posted only one “Force of Hobbit” entry, which appeared on 12 January 2000 but covered a day of shooting in the Queenstown area one month earlier. Forde had the advantage of using official publicity photos, and he also talked with stars and key behind-the-camera people like Jackson and Richard Taylor. In

Forde's second report (1 February), Elijah Wood remarked excitedly, "This is the first interview I've had. I haven't been able, really, to talk about it, so this is cool now that I'm right into the project. I've been looking forward to this!"<sup>35</sup>

McKellen, however, was already known to millions of fans as Gandalf (and as Magneto in *X-Men*). His website was well established and had been successful from the start. During the release of *Rings*, it fluctuated between 4 and 8 million hits a month, peaking at more than 25 million in December 2003.<sup>36</sup> Fans loved the site because McKellen made interaction with them an integral part of it. When the site was launched, it linked to McKellen's personal e-mail address, and on most days he would answer fifty to sixty messages. When he was cast as Magneto and Gandalf, the flow of inquiries soared. This mail was a revelation for the actor, who had not read the novel before he was cast and knew little of its immense fan base. Later he told an interviewer, "I learned very early on, because I've got a website, and people communicated with me, and they said, 'Look, get Gandalf right, or there'll be trouble!'"<sup>37</sup> By the end of 1999, the number of e-mails flowing in had risen to about two hundred (in a pre-spam era). According to Stern, "With some regret he asked me to take the link off. It seemed to me that I might somehow screen the e-mail coming in so I could pass the most interesting ones on to him. Geek that I am, I naturally thought a forum would be the best way to do it, and the idea of the 'E-Post' was born—'e-mail' being too American for my anglophile taste."

On 22 February 2000 (the month after McKellen arrived for principal photography), the "E-Post" section went online. Each major project had a separate E-Post, with the ones for *X-Men* and *Rings* commencing simultaneously.<sup>38</sup> The contact address given on the website leads, of course, to Stern, who winnows the fans' messages, but McKellen does personally answer each one that appears on the E-Post.<sup>39</sup> His replies occasionally shed light on such matters as changes from the book, as when one fan asked why Gandalf looks so messy and haggard in *Fellowship*. McKellen replied: "Gandalf the Grey is a wanderer and survives a number of long journeys by foot and horseback—he is rarely sitting out of harm's way in his pony-trap. So of course he gets dusty and dirty, without benefit of wayside washrooms."<sup>40</sup> Even now that the trilogy and DVDs have long since been released, the *Rings* E-Post is updated occasionally. McKellen has remarked, "With an autobiography, you finish it, stop writing, go on with your life, but this is always there. I imagine one day I'll be dying and say to the doctor: 'I just need to post this e-mail, to let the fans know I'm dying!'"<sup>41</sup>

The chatty, heavily illustrated diaries and the *Rings* E-Post elated fans even

more than the official and the E! Online series. Now they were getting access to the production, "talking" to one of the primary players. The news sections of many fan sites have immediately posted links to each new *Rings*-related addition to McKellen.com. After *Fellowship*'s success, the media promoted the website to a wider audience. *Entertainment Weekly* recommended that new fans eager for information about Tolkien turn to McKellen: "You've got to hand it to Gandalf for delivering the most *fun* site about the films this side of the Misty Mountains."<sup>42</sup>

Although New Line was not entirely happy with having a second on-set series appearing on the Internet, it did not discourage McKellen from posting *Rings* material. The studio tended, however, to take a conservative view of what information should be released, and McKellen was eager to give fans more than they were receiving on the other official sites. As Stern put it, "Our objective was to give people enough information so that they would have an understanding and a confidence that the material was being treated properly and that Ian had a proper respect and understanding of the material and fans." The result was a constant process of negotiation, with Stern as the cautious member of the team. McKellen told me that Stern "found it *extremely* difficult to be taken seriously by New Line, in terms of having meetings or in terms of leeway with what he could or couldn't do without their say-so. It was me who kept saying, 'Oh, publish! Put it on and be damned!'"

Stern agrees that he was more cautious. "My approach was to basically make an agreement with New Line that we would let them see anything and comment on anything that we were getting ready to post. And in exchange for that courtesy, we would hope that they would only squelch what really needed to be squelched." The system worked well. In practice, New Line did not always have time to check the proposed postings. Stern estimates that he sent about 75 percent of stories to the publicity department. In those cases he might say, "I'm getting ready to post something, and if I don't hear from you by tomorrow or the day after, away it goes." Occasionally New Line asked that the piece not be posted; usually, however, the studio approved or did not respond. The rest of the time Stern would simply post and tell the studio to check it online.

Confidentiality remained an issue, since McKellen tended to conform to Jackson's view of what constituted spoilers—not New Line's: "I kept a diary, 'The Grey Book,' and we showed that to New Line, and they took forever approving it. One of the major problems that they were concerned with was revealing the plot. We had to explain to them that the plot was well known [laughs]—particularly to people who would be accessing the website." As Stern



says, "The thing about a confidentiality agreement, of course, is, how do you enforce it? What are you going to do, in the end? Big star, little star, what are they going to do, cut him out of the film?" With millions of fans on his side, McKellen could afford to be, as Booth affectionately terms him, "cheeky."

On the few occasions when New Line requested that something be removed from McKellen.com, Stern complied. Deleted items are difficult to track down, of course, since they usually vanish quickly. I happened to check the site on 30 December 2003, and witnessed the beginning of what might be called "The Case of the Missing ADR Pages." ADR, or automatic dialogue replacement, is the recording and postdubbing of vocal material. It was two weeks after *Return's* release, and ten pages of McKellen's ADR scripts had just been posted. These listed snippets of dialogue, breathing, and laughter that he had recorded in a Soho studio, including the scenes in Edoras where Pippin looks in the *palantir* and where Aragorn and Gandalf discuss whether Frodo is alive. New Line urgently demanded that the pages be taken down. Within twenty-four hours they were gone.

Stern and McKellen were never given a rationale, but both were disappointed. For Stern, "It was at a time where we wanted to kind of remind people a little bit about the great dialogue in the film, and particularly Gandalf's great dialogue. I thought these ADR scripts were something that most people hadn't seen before and would find quite interesting." He hopes to repost the pages: "I think they're wonderful and historic, so I think it's perfectly appropriate for us to post them again."

Despite occasional problems like these, New Line learned from experience and changed its strategy. Stern saw an evolution in the firm's attitude toward fans on the Internet: "It worked out just the way I hoped it would: that they would include the fan sites, support the fan sites, and be clever about the way they used the Internet. I realized the Internet would be very, very important to *Lord of the Rings*. I realized that the fans were on the Internet. I was glad that as time went on and things developed, that they at least seemed to understand that and pay attention to it." As McKellen points out, the result was to "feed the *amazing* appetite that there was out there, for millions of people who were awaiting the films with a sort of concerned desperation that Peter Jackson and I thought was a wonderful thing. There were all these fans of the books who were nervous about the film being made but who were on the side of the film. In advance, why put those people off by not feeding them?"

Together, the officially created and the sanctioned sites soon fostered a sense that fans were glimpsing the making of the film through a virtual keyhole. The production process came across as small in relation to big Hollywood shoots,

as taking place in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere, and as happening in a beautiful and remote locale uniquely suited to representing Middle-earth.

Still, as Knowles says, there is never enough information to satisfy fans. Webmasters set out to find out far more and give it to the world. Thus began a lengthy struggle between fans and studio, with concessions made and lessons gradually learned in how to deal with each other. In the wake of *Rings*, a slow shift in the attitude of Hollywood companies has become apparent as they realize the enormous value of the free publicity offered by responsible fan sites. The question is, how does one find the responsible sites and avoid having confidential information leak out into cyberspace?

#### THE RED BAND: QUASI-SANCTIONED SITES

At the end of the 1990s, fan sites devoted to films were just coming into their own. New Line's August 1998 announcement that it would produce *Rings* was timed perfectly to benefit from this vast new potential for free publicity—yet at that time, like other Hollywood studios, New Line was more suspicious of the motives of the fans than eager to exploit their enthusiasm. Jackson and his team, however, gave two websites privileged cooperation, even allowing their founders to breach—albeit briefly—the taboo against on-set visits by "spies." New Line slowly worked out relationships with both sites and received a flood of publicity. Like McKellen.com, *Ain't It Cool News* and *TheOneRing.net* made readers feel they had direct access to the production. Here, though, it was through the eyes not of a star but of fans like themselves.

#### *Ain't It Cool News*

The Internet made webmaster Harry Knowles the most influential film devotee in the world. Knowles's parents were dealers in popular-culture collectibles, based in Austin, Texas. He built up his appreciation of film history by exploring their huge stores of accumulated material. At the age of twenty-four, Knowles was bedridden by an accident that severely injured his back, not knowing whether he would ever walk again. His link to the world became his Packard Bell Pentium 66, on which he began surfing the Internet. Rather than adopting a nom de net, as virtually all fans did, he contributed to chat rooms as Harry Knowles. He aspired to provide real show business news à la *Variety* or the *Hollywood Reporter*. His first scoop came when George Lucas previewed footage from *Star Wars: The Special Edition* at Texas A&M. After Knowles's online description was immediately reposted uncredited by various sites, he started his own.<sup>43</sup> "I had a collectibles section, which was a big

part of my life at the time, the discussion about film, and then just stories from my life.”

About two months after Ain't It Cool News (AICN) went online in February 1996, Jackson saw a photo of Knowles there, holding one of eight known surviving *King Kong* one-sheet posters from 1933. Knowles recalls, “Peter, being a *Kong*-phile of the ‘moderate’ level [laughs], contacted me, thinking, ‘Stupid Internet kid, I’ll be able to get this poster cheap.’ I told him I’d rather see my father dead. Then we just began the mutual *King Kong* and Forrest J. Ackerman appreciation society and started exchanging e-mails back and forth.” The two discussed Jackson’s current project, his first attempt to remake *King Kong*. Once it fell through, “Peter kind of disappeared for a while.”

In the meantime, AICN was gaining prominence. Ambulatory again, Knowles covered the first Quentin Tarantino Film Fest, held in Austin in September 1996. He discovered that Tarantino was faxing AICN’s coverage to people like Steven Spielberg. “That was the first clue I had that I was really making any headway beyond my own borders. I was so technically naïve at this point that I knew nothing about counters.” Spy-generated reviews from a test screening of *Titanic*, combined with Knowles’s prediction that it would become the highest-grossing film of all time (something few people then believed) brought him attention. “For better or worse, I earned my own weird species of celebrity in the process.”<sup>44</sup> Knowles says his Talk Back feature was the first of its type, though lists of reader feedback are now common on websites. To him, “It was one of the closest things you could find to pure democracy on the Internet.”<sup>45</sup>

On 30 October 1997, AICN carried a brief story entitled “To Kong or to Hobbit, That Is the Question.” At that point *Rings* was well into preproduction at Miramax, but the trade press wasn’t covering the project. The next month, Knowles carried a brief, excited announcement that Jackson would make *Rings*.<sup>46</sup> The site pledged itself to support the project. In February 1998, thinking that Miramax was about to terminate the production (and, indeed, Bob Weinstein was by now worried about rising costs), Knowles ran a scathing editorial, “Lord of the Rings!!! Does Miramax Lack Nerve?”<sup>47</sup> He recalls, “I talked about how each of the films could bring in a billion dollars worldwide. I’m sitting there like some sort of Nostra-Harry, basically stating what wound up happening. The reason is that I just believed it was true.” When Miramax put *Rings* into turnaround that summer, AICN lambasted the firm. “It’s a project [for which] you could create frothing lines of hungry fans panting to be let in. . . . I bet I have a few bazillion fans of the books on my side with this one. Oh, well, I guess Miramax always has *Total Recall 2*.”<sup>48</sup>

AICN deals with popular film culture as a whole rather than specifically with *Rings*. Still, it played a crucial role in blurring the borders between the officially sanctioned sites and those generated by fan enthusiasm. After New Line’s 24 August announcement that it had acquired the *Rings* project, Jackson decided to contact fans using AICN. There was, after all, no official *Rings* website yet. He describes it as

something I did on my own, without New Line’s input at all. I don’t think I even asked permission to do it. What’s interesting about Harry’s site obviously is that you get all that feedback stuff where people put all their comments on. The feedback just went crazy, and it was mostly of a slightly hysterical nature. It was mostly fans of Tolkien, of the books, who were dubious about the films, who didn’t know me. They didn’t have a clue about what I was going to do. I hadn’t done interviews about it, so nobody had heard from me about my thoughts about it. There was all this hysterical stuff going on where people were saying things like, “Oh, I bet a Hollywood film, there’s no way they can have four Hobbits and no female Hobbits. I bet that Sam will become a girl Hobbit.”

Jackson wrote to Knowles, proposing that they solicit inquiries from fans, from which Knowles would pick the twenty most interesting or common ones for the director’s responses.

On 26 August AICN invited fans to send questions. Knowles boiled the results down, passed them to Jackson, and posted the answers on 30 August. Knowles thinks one reply especially connected with fans. Asked what moment in the novel he was most eager to capture, Jackson poetically described the Helm’s Deep battle as if it would be a historical re-creation based on archaeological evidence. For Knowles, “You read and you just get cold chills over it.”

The questions and answers were enormously popular: “It was the very first real press on *Lord of the Rings* where it was the director actually stating what he was going to do.” Jackson did another session of twenty questions on AICN on 31 December.<sup>49</sup> This time the questions and answers were edited to form a conversational flow among Knowles, Jackson, and the fans. Questioners were delighted to have such access. Underdog prefaced his question by saying, “Peter, first I want to thank you for being human enough to get down in the mud and play with us.” Some fans seemed already to feel themselves as allied with the director against the Hollywood system. One participant asked, “Do you have it in black and white on a contract that the editors aren’t going to have a heyday with your film and make some butchered Bakshi-like piece of shit that has a total running time of a little under 3 hours?”

New Line had not been consulted about Jackson's cooperation with AICN and wanted it stopped. The director intended to do more question sessions over the following years and ended the second set with, "Let's do it again!" It was not to be. According to Osborne, doing the sessions "was strictly a Peter decision. Initially New Line was very much against that and squashed it, asked Peter not to do that, and so Peter said, 'Fine,' but over time, Peter won New Line over to the idea that we'd have Harry down here." Nearly two years after the second twenty questions, Knowles reported directly from the set during the last week of principal photography.

Despite the question sessions, considerable fan opposition to Jackson's project lingered. Knowles recalls an incident shortly after the first one. He was participating on a panel at the annual science fiction/fantasy event, Dragon Con (3-6 September 1998), and when he asked the audience of two thousand what they thought of Peter Jackson directing *Rings*, most of them booed. AICN would help to gradually convince the doubters.

The twenty-questions sessions gave AICN a higher profile and an aura of reliability. Several months later, it received an even bigger boost. Following the death of film critic Gene Siskel, of *Siskel & Ebert & the Movies*, Roger Ebert sought a replacement. For several months guest reviewers joined him on the program. Most were traditional media reviewers, such as Kenneth Turan of the *Los Angeles Times*. Knowles, who appeared on the 24 April and 31 October 1999 episodes, was the only Internet reviewer among the guests. Thus he was anointed "an official critic," as he puts it. To the public, he was not a mere fanboy anymore. Many fellow fans would claim that AICN gradually ceased to be a fan site at all, given the money Knowles eventually made with it and the many Hollywood connections he forged. Looked at another way, however, Knowles and some other webmasters invented the category of professional fan.

Knowles's relationship with New Line also improved. Paddison happened to be from Austin, and the two met during his visits to his parents. By late 2000 dealings were friendly enough that New Line gave Knowles permission for the on-set visit as *Rings*' shooting ended. He paid for his own flight, though Jackson insisted on covering his hotel. As far as New Line was concerned, he was there strictly as a guest, not a reporter.

Jackson was not naive enough to think that Knowles would post nothing during his visit, but he describes how even he was taken aback at the result:

I didn't get into it, because I didn't want to be overly protective. He was coming to visit, and he was sitting on the set, and he had his laptop, and he was

[taps fingertips on table as if typing] on set. I didn't really have a clue what he was actually, really doing, other than I thought he'd obviously write *something* about it. And then the first day he's here, I click onto his site that night, and there's this hugely long report on everything that we'd done that day. And so it was like, "Holy shit! He's doing everything," and the second day I was kind of aware now that everything I was saying and doing was now getting typed in, which was a little more intense than what I'd imagined. But we were in a pretty relaxed state, because it was the end of a long shoot.

New Line seems to have been less philosophical about the series of lengthy reports, which appeared from 22 to 27 December 2000. According to Knowles, "New Line was freaking that I was on-set writing the reports, but once I started, they couldn't stop me." Influential print publications complained about Knowles's preferential treatment, which may have driven home to studio officials how powerful AICN was. The series was allowed to continue.

Quint, a young film-buff friend of Knowles who contributed to AICN, was not so lucky. New Line gave him, too, permission to visit the set, this time in the spring of 2003 during the pickups for *Return*. He wrote nothing then, but when he returned in July, Paddison and New Line's unit publicist for *Rings*, Claire Raskind, agreed to Quint's doing some reports comparable to Knowles's earlier ones. He wrote up a description of Christopher Lee during the filming, which was posted on AICN.<sup>50</sup> According to Quint, "I got an e-mail from Mark Ordesky the next day, saying that I needed to stop writing and that I was invited as a guest, not as press." Paddison had received messages from magazines and newspapers like *USA Today*, which had held off publishing material on *Rings* at his request. They threatened to publish their stories immediately if Quint's series continued. Although Quint hadn't signed a nondisclosure agreement, he ended his series to avoid causing Jackson trouble. The other reports he wrote during that visit have never been posted. The incident illustrates how exclusive agreements with traditional news outlets can lead to a conflict with fan sites. But as such sites grow and drift into the mainstream, they can compete on a more even footing for scoops that they formerly had to get from spies.

As a sign of how things have changed between studios and fan sites, when Quint returned to visit the *King Kong* set in October 2004, Universal agreed to his posting reports on AICN, providing that studio publicists could vet them first. Knowles attributes this increased access partly to Jackson's new power as a director and partly to the fact that AICN is unusual among fan sites in sending a key staff member to spend a significant stretch of time on

the scene. And as Quint summed it up when describing Knowles's on-set reports, "[The fans] could tell he was being honest about it. That's what really showed through in those reports. It didn't sound like somebody who was bought and paid to go out there."

Like most fan sites, AICN was initially a money-losing endeavor, dependent on the unpaid labor of its owner and contributors. Despite receiving some early donations amounting to slightly over \$10,000, Knowles says, "I sunk ninety thousand of my own money into it, which was my book deal. I used my book deal to get me through the bottom falling out of the Internet. When you have a sinkhole like that that you're sinking money into, you realize, geez, I could've paid off my house." Quint started with AICN as a volunteer. Initially he received funds from Knowles to replace a computer and for travel to events like Comic-Con. After the collapse of the Internet bubble in 2000 and the decline of advertising income, he went back to covering his own expenses.

At that time, Knowles was working through an advertising agency that paid him 30 percent of revenues from ads on AICN. He decided to try selling ads directly, approaching Sony and New Line. Paddison accepted a four-year deal for a banner ad on the site's main page at considerably below standard rates. (Knowles is quick to specify that the deal had no effect on how his writers discuss New Line films—as evidenced by an adverse review of *Blade III* in late 2004.) In 2005, New Line renewed its deal, and several other long-term advertisers came on board. As Quint points out, New Line advertises on several major film-fan sites. "Gordon just knows that their demographic, especially for what they were doing during *Lord of the Rings* days, were sites like Ain't It Cool, CHUD, Coming Soon, those kinds of places."

Quint moved from writer to editor in the summer of 2004, still on a volunteer basis, but the site's finances had improved enough that by the end of that summer he was on the payroll. By then Knowles had also arranged a deal with Amazon.com to receive 15 percent on sales generated by traffic from a link on his site. With AICN's links generating nearly half a million dollars in purchases each quarter, AICN's share would be around \$300,000. Together with advertising revenue, the site's finances were finally healthy.

Asked about the overall impact of *Rings* on his website, Knowles replies, "Oh, God! Huge!" For one thing, feeling that he had an actual influence on the production encouraged him to keep the site going. For another, it "created a certain level of trust between me and my audience." Moreover, he credits his close relationship with Jackson as leading to New Line's long-term advertising contract with AICN. Finally, he thinks that the success of the film after Jackson's team cooperated with Knowles "has helped the film industry

to recognize the Internet not as a negative place and not as something that's there to destroy you, but as something that can be a support system."

AICN is not a *Rings*-centric site, and it has moved on. Like many touched by the film, however, Knowles sees it as a high point in his life. "I don't know if I'll ever love somebody else's project as much as I love *Lord of the Rings*, simply because it was such a leap of faith to say it was going to be right. When it got eleven Academy Awards, like many *Lord of the Rings* fans, I was crying, but *unlike* many *Lord of the Rings* fans, it was such a complete cry because I had gotten on board *so* early."

### *TheOneRing.net*

What would become far and away the most successful fan site wholly devoted to *Rings*—both books and films—originated in an unprepossessing little-page with no name and a lengthy URL housed on the Geocities domain. Erica Challis (nom de net, Tehanu), a professional French-horn player in Auckland, had recently met Michael Regina (Xoanon), a student in Network Technology at CDI College in Montreal, via the Internet, as a result of their mutual interest in fantasy and science-fiction films. Both were excited at the prospect of *Rings* being made, but the site really grew from Challis's love of her country's natural beauty, over which she had hiked extensively.

I put photos of New Zealand up because I wanted to show people why it was a good place to shoot the movie. I think we might have had one or two reports from TV One. We hardly had anything. So I started writing a series of articles on what is fantasy, why do people need it, why did Tolkien write what he wrote and what influence he had, and Mike started writing a whole series of essays on how you could turn *Lord of the Rings* into a film and what kinds of thing you would have to think about. We were really just speculating a lot.<sup>51</sup>

Challis's site was admired by Tolkien fan Chris Pirrotta (Calisuri), a student in digital media at Pennsylvania State University, who brought in Bill Thomas (Corvar), a computer expert in Kenosha, Wisconsin. The two Americans offered to design a more enticing-looking site. The four cofounders' talents meshed: Challis reported from New Zealand, Regina edited the content, Pirrotta designed the look and navigation of the site, and Thomas handled the technical and financial aspects of installing and maintaining the site in its new home (figure 19). The group wanted the domain name TheOneRing.com, but because that had already been taken, the new site became TheOneRing.net (TORN). The owners of the TheOneRing.com domain name had not yet



Figure 19. The four founders of TheOneRing.net on a panel at the One Ring Celebration in early 2005: *from left*: Chris “Calisuri” Pirrotta, still wearing Elf ears from an earlier skit; Michael “Xoanon” Regina; Bill “Corvar” Thomas; and Erica “Tehanu” Challis. (Photograph by the author.)

put their site online, and they grudgingly changed its name to Tolkien Online. (Perhaps due to a copyright or trademark problem, in 2005 the owners reverted to the original name, The One Ring, [www.theonering.com](http://www.theonering.com).)

Challis and Regina’s “green site,” so called because of its dark green background, posted its first news on 10 April 1999. It became TheOneRing.net on 9 May.<sup>52</sup> The new design, still in use, became instantly recognizable to fans seeking *Rings* news. TORN burgeoned. On 27 June, the cofounders issued a plea: “With all the additions that we are making to the site, we find that the 4 of us are needing another person to lighten the load. So we come right out and ask: ‘wanna work for us?’” On July 3, an announcement named new volunteer staff, including Quickbeam, nom de net of Cliff Broadway, an actor, playwright, and serious Tolkien buff. Xoanon instituted the site’s “Green Books” section, for essays and articles, and Broadway became one of its regular contributors; it has remained a core feature. The Chatroom and the Gaming Havens were also added.

The central focus for many users, however, remained the news items, posted daily on TORN’s home page. Challis hiked doggedly over hills and fields near Matamata (soon to be Hobbiton) and around the Queenstown area. Her photos initially showed nothing but New Zealand landscapes perhaps destined to be filming locations. These vistas not only hinted at what might appear in the film but also introduced international fans to the beauties of this remote country. Challis also monitored news leaks and sought glimpses of the preparations for filming. (An early post contained information on the Hobbit holes being built.)<sup>53</sup> Activity intensified when principal photography commenced on 11 October.<sup>54</sup>

Fan and reporter espionage was routine in the early months of filming. Then an event now famous in the annals of online *Rings* fandom occurred. On 16 January 2000, Challis, who had done her share of photographing through fences, was served with a trespassing notice. Challis recalls what led up to that moment:

One of the reports described the quarry site where they built Minas Tirith and Helm’s Deep. Basically I was describing how you could get to watch them filming. I said, it’d be really difficult because there’s a lot of gorse and blackberry. You would probably lose your way, but you could probably steer if you kept track of the power pylons which go overhead at that point. And I did this knowing perfectly well that *I* wasn’t going to—I mean, I’m in my late thirties. I’m not going to be crawling around there at night.

The security staff tracked Challis from place to place through her reports, and upon returning home, she was served a notice banning her for two years from the quarry site. E! Online had exclusive on-set coverage, and Forde noted in his January “Force of Hobbit” entry: “Spies from TheOneRing.net have been spotted trying to gain access to the set. But security has been tightened even further in an effort to ensure that no more news or photos leak out.”<sup>55</sup> The reference was to a fashion magazine that had printed photos of Liv Tyler in costume—which perhaps made New Line particularly nervous about spies at that time.

Challis mentioned the notice to some reporters who themselves were being chased away from filming locations. She recalls, “Probably out of boredom and frustration, they decided to turn that into a story, and they sort of blew it up into this big thing: ‘This poor little fan is being oppressed by this big film company.’” After the story appeared in the papers, she was interviewed on national television. Challis may have intrigued the media because

she was not a typical teenage male fan (many of whom actually did crawl through the gorse above that quarry), but a slight, intelligent, polite thirty-six-year-old woman.

The publicity drew the attention of the filmmakers. Jackson's account of the incident reflects how the studios and filmmakers were confronting this new phenomenon of fan-site spies:

The One Ring was initially seen as quite a threat in the sense that they were clearly out to spy on us—which was a novelty for us. Never in my life have I ever had an Internet site trying to find out everything that we're doing. It wasn't anything to do with us, but New Line got incensed, and they put a legal trespass notice on her personally. The paranoia about what The One Ring was finding out was growing, and it was making them more determined, and I just felt it was all getting a bit out of control.

A truce was reached about a week after the notice was served. Challis was again in Matamata to show the Hobbiton area to a tourist. She ran into a security guard whom she knew, and he suggested that she talk to Barrie Osborne. Challis left her card at the production office, and Osborne phoned her. He recalls, "I brought her out to Hobbiton, and she got to meet Ian McKellen, and she was overall thrilled with that. Again, [it was] mostly driven by Peter, who said the best tactic is to welcome her instead of driving her away." Jackson confirms this: "I said to Barrie, 'If you like her, if she's actually a decent sort of person, why don't you just give her a surprise and tell her to jump in your car and you'll drive her onto the set?' Barrie went off, and we kept shooting a scene with Ian McKellen on the cart arriving into the village." Challis recalls that during the drive to Matamata, Osborne was on his cell phone with New Line's publicist, reassuring her about allowing a spy onto the set. Jackson says that once he met Challis, "We invite her just to sit down right beside me, and I chat to her, and she meets Ian McKellen, and all this sort of stuff, and we just say, 'Hey, we're sorry about this trespass thing. It was stupid, and let's just all behave in a better way.'" All parties agreed that the filmmakers would try to accommodate TORN without New Line having any editorial control over postings.

Challis naturally wanted to post a description of her one day on set, and she was given permission. She recalls the online reaction: "A lot of the major people following *The Lord of the Rings* just wouldn't believe it, they wouldn't post it. They were just either spitting with jealousy or they wouldn't believe it." Once it became clear that TORN had gotten "the scoop of all

scoops," many fans labored under the impression that Challis had regular on-set access from then on. In fact she went back to the position of peering in with her nose to the fence. When she later visited Wellington, she was invited on-set again, provided that she would not report on what she saw.

The single report gave TORN a powerful reputation as a reliable news source. Challis's day in Hobbiton was the beginning of a special relationship between the filmmakers and TORN that has not ended even now. Most of the cast and crew read the site regularly. Booth says she sometimes used TORN to keep track of actors' birthdays so that she could arrange for presents.

Cliff Broadway had worked for McKellen.com for several years, and though he had to keep confidential much of what he learned in that job, occasionally McKellen and Keith Stern would provide special news items for TORN. In November 2000, as a result of his work on both sites, Broadway was allowed to visit the set for a week and wrote five reports—though, unlike Knowles, Broadway delayed posting them for a year until shortly before *Fellowship* appeared, to maximize interest.<sup>56</sup> Although the reports contained information about *Towers* and *Return* as well, New Line did not protest.

TORN also hosts the quasi-official Jackson fan site, *The Bastards Have Landed* (<http://tbhl.theonering.net/index.shtml>).

As with AICN, the early period of TORN was rocky financially. With no guarantee of reimbursement, Bill Thomas, the most gainfully employed of the group, paid several thousand dollars for expenses. Eventually TORN began to make money. Where AICN depends on advertising, TORN built up income through merchandising. In December 2001, Sideshow Weta, producer of collectible statues and busts, arranged for a link on the site. Fees on sales provided TORN's main source of income (and a career opportunity for Chris Pirrotta, who was hired as Sideshow's webmaster). It also earned income through its links to Amazon.com and other retailers of *Rings* merchandise. Thomas was repaid, and profits go to various charities. The staff still receive no income and usually forgo reimbursement for small expenses.

The site's relationship with New Line slowly improved. Gordon Paddison provided press releases and other material, as he was doing with a few dozen other sites. On the other hand, he monitored TORN and occasionally asked for items to be removed. In one major incident, an unrendered image of Gollum surfaced and was briefly posted. Pirrotta recalls, "Then we're like, 'Wait a second! Didn't we tell Weta that we weren't going to put it up? Aw, crap!' Because this is how One Ring operates. It was just 'Mike? Take it down! Take it down!' But by the time *we* had taken it down, it spread out through the Internet." TORN also posted April Fool's news items. When, on 1 April 2002,

the site reported that Andrew Lesnie's Best Cinematography Oscar had been rescinded, neither New Line nor Jackson appreciated the humor, and the item was deleted.

TORN played a crucial role in maintaining the *Rings* franchise, through the series and beyond. From that and other sites New Line discovered the virtues of cooperating and negotiating with fans. Says Alyson McRae, the film's first marketing coordinator: "I think [Gordon Paddison] had to develop relationships with them because [New Line] really wanted to control the release of information, and a lot of these fan sites were very effective in cutting across that. It was very important to him to build a relationship so that he could say, 'All right, you've got that, but we'd like you to hold off,' or 'I can give you this, but—.'" If point people like Knowles and Challis could be brought into the inner circle and would pledge to keep some secrets, the fans' experience could be enhanced and their loyalty solidified.

#### THE BLUE RING: MULTIPLIER NEWS SITES

New Line's first effort at Internet publicity simply gathered material for its own site. The idea was to control all the information, without recourse to fan outlets. Soon, however, Paddison saw that a degree of cooperation with those sites was advantageous. As he put it, "New Line chose to embrace the existing Tolkien 'eco-system.'"<sup>57</sup> The practice Paddison drew upon was viral marketing, which depends on people who receive news about products passing it along to others, who then pass it along. "The best way to advertise your product," he notes, "is to have your best friend advertise it by sending it to you. That way the message doesn't come from New Line, it comes from someone you trust."<sup>58</sup> Obviously such a tactic assumes that the first people who receive the news want to share it. *Rings* fans were ideal for viral dissemination of information.

Paddison not only ran lordoftherings.net but also cooperated with a group of sites that grew from about 25 early on to 50 by the end. Press releases and images were provided to those, and then other sites either linked to them or reposted the items, spreading the material like ripples on a pond. Paddison has described how he found the "QEIB," or "quantifiable early Internet buzz" in his search for *Rings* multipliers: "It's nice simple science. . . . I look for which Websites index highest for frequent moviegoers in this target demographic: 17 to 24 males who are 220% more likely to attend this movie based on genre."<sup>59</sup> The point, again, is not to convince them to go—they presumably would anyway—but to convince them to communicate their enthusiasm to others.

One such site was Tolkien Online (now The One Ring, [www.theone-ring.com](http://www.theone-ring.com)). Founded in April 1999 by two friends, later joined by a third, who were fans of the books, the site was slanted toward the novel but covered the film as well. Like so many webmasters, they contributed a significant part of the salary from their regular jobs to support the site. "Monthly, it costs us the mortgage of a mid-size house to keep it running," one of them explained, adding, "At night when I check my dozens of emails, there's usually one that says, 'I really love the site! I check it every day. Thanks so much for giving me such a great place to share my love of The Lord of the Rings.' And that's what keeps us wanting to work on the site every night and weekend."<sup>60</sup>

Shortly after *Fellowship* opened, longtime Tolkien fans Fatty and Iluvatar set out to create their own *Rings*-based website. After months of layout, design, and gathering of content, on 21 June 2002, War of the Ring ([www.warofthering.net](http://www.warofthering.net)) went online and grew rapidly. Initially it had fewer than a thousand daily unique hits, but a year later it was averaging more than 1.6 million hits a day, 35,000 to 40,000 of them first-time visitors.

WOTR's popularity did not go unnoticed. Although representatives of this site did not visit Wellington to view filmmaking, New Line and its licensees cooperated with them to a considerable extent. Like TORN, WOTR's index page carries news stories relating to the novel, the film, the video games and other products, the actors' and crew members' activities, and anything else remotely related to Tolkien. There is an extensive art gallery, with images by famous Tolkien illustrators and by fans, an archive of interviews, and a separate department for information about the film. As is typical, the webmasters spend an enormous amount of time keeping the site going. Although advertising and commissions on products sold through links bring in some income, they were forced to solicit voluntary subscriptions, which has been a common tactic for some of the large sites.

Paddison's multiplier effect worked very well. Consider a brief series of postings on another prominent site, the Council of Elrond ([www.council-of-elrond.com](http://www.council-of-elrond.com)), on 29 September 2002 (underlining indicates links).

Tolkien Online has gotten hold of four new Two Towers advertising posters. Pretty nice! Check them out! Thanks Mormegil!

Over at The War of the Ring you can find some nice pictures and information about the Universal/Black Label FOTR game. Looks like fun! Thanks Fatty!

The New Zealand Herald interviewed Marton Csokas (Celeborn) about his role as Yorgi, a Russian villain in XXX. (Thanks peta)

Fatty from *War of the Ring* has some *downloads* available of the new LotR games. They also have some *nice pics* from the extended DVD and some pics from *The Two Towers*. Check them out! (Thanks Fatty!)

The large number of *Rings*-oriented websites creates an enormous amount of overlap and repetition. Fans are not likely to miss any significant news.

Grudging though New Line's cooperation with fan sites might occasionally have seemed, it went distinctly beyond what most Hollywood studios and directors did for major sites devoted to other films. Neither George Lucas nor Twentieth Century Fox gave TheForce.net the sort of input that Jackson and New Line did for TheOneRing.net, AICN, and the multipliers. Because the studio and the filmmakers cooperated with so many fan sites, webmasters were willing to police themselves and to remove spoilers or other items if asked to do so. Coproducer Rick Porras points out how remarkably few spoilers got out, considering the size of the production, the number of outdoor locations, and the sending of filmic elements around the globe. "I can only take from that that it wasn't just *our* diligence, but it was also the helpful diligence of those gatekeepers out there on the web."

Much of Hollywood has been slow to learn how valuable a resource fan websites can be. In June 2004, when *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* was about to start principal photography in Auckland, I interviewed its producer, Mark Johnson, and unit publicist, Ernie Malik. Erica Challis had been making tentative inquiries about receiving cooperation to start a *Narnia*-related website or Web page hosted on TORN. I told Johnson and Malik something about TORN and its founders and how they were providing free publicity for *Rings*. They knew about TORN but were surprised to learn that the people running it poured a great deal of their time and money into the site without payment from New Line. After talking with Challis herself, Johnson and Malik agreed to cooperate in a smaller *Narnia* site hosted by TORN, TheOneLion.net ([www.theonelion.net](http://www.theonelion.net)). Initially Challis was allowed four set visits, resulting in five articles, but the Buena Vista Pictures marketing department okayed their posting only at increasingly long intervals, with the last one not coming out for more than a year. Challis also posted the usual sorts of spy reports, and marketing requested that some items be removed. Deciding that Disney was treating her as an unpaid employee, Challis stopped working on TheOneLion.net, which became essentially a multiplier site posting studio press releases and other news.

As this incident suggests, Hollywood's acceptance of fan-generated publicity is uneven. Not all studios are willing to cede even a modicum of con-

trol in exchange for free coverage by fans. In 2004, *Variety* queried fan webmasters and found that they considered Sony, New Line, and Warner Bros. to be the most receptive to their sites, while DreamWorks and Universal were the least.<sup>61</sup> As Hollywood discovers the value of such publicity, however, more studios will undoubtedly figure out how to ensure security without quashing fan enthusiasm.

Jackson himself has understood the potential of fan sites better than perhaps any other director. For *King Kong*, he cooperated with TORN to form another hosted site, KongIsKing.net. On the first day of principal photography, Michael Pellerin, producer-director of the *Rings* extended-version DVD supplements, began filming behind-the-scenes footage. Without any involvement from Universal aside from financial support, Jackson and Pellerin sent in a series of eighty-nine short videos to form a production diary, posted frequently on KongIsKing.net.<sup>62</sup> In effect, Jackson became his own spy. (The contact address on the site, [spymaster@kongisking.net](mailto:spymaster@kongisking.net), acknowledged that role.) In several episodes, Jackson reads out questions sent in by fans, addressing them by name. This approach gave him not only a closer connection with grateful fans but also more control over what information became public. With access up close and personal, who needed to stand pressed against the chain-link fence? Jackson even staged a comic scene of the crew chasing after a fictional spy (day 36), as if to flaunt the lack of real ones. *Entertainment Weekly* remarked, "Jackson's determination to turn himself into a kind of reality TV character is in some ways a heroic gesture, more an expression of his love for moviemaking than a commercial stratagem."<sup>63</sup>

No doubt, but the diaries could be both. Since fans will pay for promotional material—even material that has previously been available for free—Jackson released fifty-four of the entries on two DVDs, "*King Kong*"—*Peter Jackson's Production Diaries*, on 13 December 2005, the day before the feature's theatrical release. In October the production diaries had been removed from KongIsKing.net. (The postproduction diaries, thirty-five of them, appeared on the two-disk release of *Kong*; as of mid-April 2006 they remained on KongIsKing.net.) One fan-magazine writer commented: "As a past contributor to Frederick S. Clarke's *Cinefantastique*, where in-depth on-set reportage of fantasy film production originated, for better or worse, I find it fascinating that such reportage—the stuff of small circulation fanzines 20–30 years ago—has now vaulted into the upper strata of the DVD mainstream."<sup>64</sup> Thus Jackson took a logical step forward in turning fan-friendly publicity material into a revenue-producing stream.

Jackson's *Kong* diaries may have started a trend. Bryan Singer (who visited



the set of *Kong* and appears in the production diaries) started a video blog on the production of *Superman Returns*. Like Jackson, he chose a fan site, BlueTights.net, rather than the film's official website (which contains a link to BlueTights.net). Having a director like Jackson or Singer pressing the flesh or signing autographs along a red carpet during a premiere offers a few on-lookers a brief brush with fame. The Internet allows fans to read the filmmaker's detailed accounts addressed to them or replies to people like themselves, and this may give them an even greater sense of contact with filmmakers than personal appearances do.

## CHAPTER 6

### *Fans on the Margins, Pervy Hobbit Fanciers, and Partygoers*

What would the film industry be without  
the obsessed?

AL LIEBERMAN AND PATRICIA ESGATE  
*The Entertainment Marketing Revolution*

LEAVING THE OFFICIAL AND QUASI-OFFICIAL sites and moving to the more peripheral areas of the target, we reach the realm of fan sites that receive no input at all from the studio or filmmakers, directly or through linking to multipliers. These sites arise spontaneously and display the enormous range of interests and imagination of their founders and contributors. The marketers cannot control what these sites do. It may be hard for executives in New York or Los Angeles to understand why fans treat comments signed by Iluvatar or Fatty or Ancalagon seriously. In a few past cases, not liking how some fans have appropriated their work, Hollywood filmmakers and producers have tried to squelch sites devoted to their franchises. Ultimately they seem to have realized that such coercion simply calls more attention to the sites and makes the studios look like ogres. New Line has adopted the general attitude of the industry: toleration, acceptance, or even in some cases cautious encouragement. After all, these fans are, in their own way, promoting the films they love. As Lieberman and Esgate say above, the industry depends on obsessive fans.

Once fans socialize in cyberspace, they often want to meet each other. Many *Rings* sites have provided the means for organizing parties, and in a few cases New Line has accepted them as well.

## THE BLACK RING: INDIVIDUAL FAN WEBPAGES

Lilith of Sherwood's first *Rings*-related page was created on 28 January 2002, shortly after the release of *Fellowship*, but she was no newbie. She had read the novel at the age of ten in the late 1960s and had been a devotee ever since. Like many fans, however, she chose to ignore most of the prerelease *Rings* coverage, trying not to get her hopes up that the film would live up to the novel.

Also like many fans, Lilith became an immediate convert upon seeing *Fellowship*. She recalls, "I went on opening weekend and loved it desperately. And then spent the next couple of months catching up on the Internet on everything that I hadn't read." A longtime Ian McKellen fan (she had traveled regularly from Chicago to London to see him on the stage in the 1980s), she also became fascinated with Elijah Wood. A veteran of a number of fandoms from the late 1970s on, Lilith already had a website devoted to her other main interest, figure skating, that hosted a sci-fi/fantasy site started, as she recalls, in 1999. On 28 January 2002, she added a *Rings* section to the latter with a layout of fourteen photographs of Wood headed, "Happy Birthday, Elijah."<sup>1</sup> The *Rings* portion soon took up so much time that by the end of the year Lilith handed the running of the skating site over to a friend and removed the sci-fi/fantasy pages.

Lilith's Lord of the Rings Site (<http://lilithlotr.com/>) is an excellent example of a small site that does not try to stay current by posting news items each day. Rather, it reflects its owner's personal tastes. The primary content is photographs, grouped by actor. The links on the home page lead to sections on Wood, McKellen, Orlando Bloom, Sean Bean, Viggo Mortensen, and Liv Tyler—though Lilith admits to neglecting the Bloom section, given how many websites on him sprang up. A keen amateur photographer herself, Lilith sets her site apart by attending events and posting exclusive images of them. She estimates that during the time that the films were being produced and released, she made significant trips to events five or six times a year.

Like many owners of individual fan sites, Lilith works in a completely unrelated job as an administrative assistant in a real estate appraisal company. After twenty-five years with the same firm, she has a flexible vacation schedule that allows her to travel to places where the actors appear. For years she devoted most of her free time to the site and has spent a considerable amount of money on it—not so much for hosting and bandwidth as for travel and purchases of items to scan and post. "My highest cost is when I was maintaining my articles section, which is now way behind. My articles section I saw as sort of what defined my site, because it was so much more complete

than anyone else's. I was quite often spending two hundred dollars a month on magazines until February of this year [2004], when everything pretty much started tapering off for *Lord of the Rings*."

We have seen that a big site like Ain't It Cool News or The OneRing.net can fund itself and even make a profit. Lilith has almost no income from her site. She has had five separate hosts, mostly paid for, though when I interviewed her, she was temporarily being hosted for free on a larger site. Her commercial links, including to Amazon.com, bring in barely twenty dollars a year. She has a small income from selling duplicate collectibles and copies of her own celebrity photographs on eBay, which has helped underwrite her purchases of items for scanning.

Lilith's home, a one-bedroom apartment in a pleasant older brownstone on the north side of Chicago, resembles a self-storage unit stuffed with *Rings* collectibles, magazines, videotapes, DVDs, photographs, posters, and, of course, books. In between, as if added as an afterthought, are a few modest chairs, a mattress, and a desk. The main furniture consists of shelves to hold her collection, which occupies most of the floor space as well.

Lilith is, she would unashamedly admit, totally obsessed, but she is no antisocial depressive hiding from the world. She is articulate, intelligent, confident, witty, and generous. She was pressing *Rings* paper plates and bookmarks on me as soon as I arrived and by the end of my visit was lending me rare videotapes to copy. She knows many like-minded fans and gets together with them at film festivals, fan conventions, and other events where the *Rings* actors appear.

Gatherings of fans and public appearances of cast or crew members at conventions and parties have been an important facet of Lilith's site. For example, she went to New Zealand in 2003 to take a special tour of *Rings* locations offered by Red Carpet Tours in celebration of the world premiere of *Return* on 1 December. A photographic diary of that trip can be found on her website (figure 20), as can collections of photographs from Comic-Con 2004, the Lincoln Center screenings of the trilogy with several stars in attendance in January 2004, and various appearances by cast and crew for book signings.

There is a distinctly altruistic side to the contents of her site, which she views as an archive preserving ephemeral material. Just as her own first birthday greeting to Wood is still on the site, she has hundreds of texts and images available for others to enjoy. Lilith talks about the fact that she is one of the few to cite the sources of the articles she posts. (I first encountered Lilith when using her website to read articles I had not been able to track down.) Now that the film is over, Lilith foresees no fundamental change in her site.

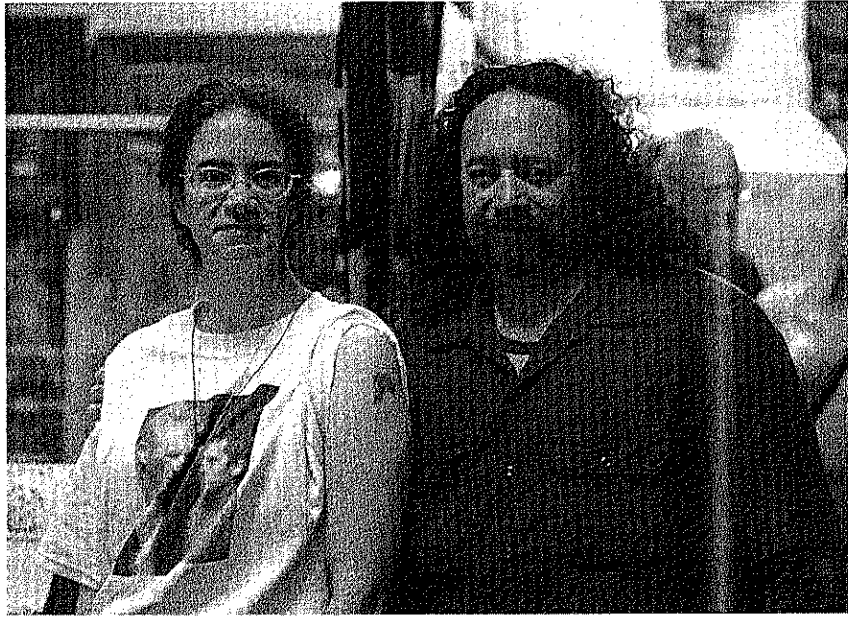


Figure 20. Lilith of Sherwood in Wellington, following in the footsteps of the *Fellowship* actors by getting a tattoo. (Photograph © Lilith of Sherwood, used by permission.)

For one thing, she has a huge backlog of *Rings*-related material to scan and upload: “It’s going to take me another three years just to catch up. Because mine is just driven by me and not what anybody else wants to see, I may concentrate more on, say, Ian and Elijah than other things.”

For Lilith, fandom has been personally fulfilling. She loves photography, and the site allows her a forum to present images that many people want to see. She gets to travel to interesting events and occasionally interact with the celebrities she admires. Like most fans, she loves being in the presence of the celebrities and being able to talk with them, but she quite clearly does not want to be a pest. She speaks of standing in lines at book signings, trying to think of something to say that might interest the star. She also disapproves of some of the antics fans indulge in to draw attention to themselves: “I can understand the compulsion to be noticed at all costs. I guess I can theoretically understand it because I want to be noticed myself. If I can’t be noticed for something that is at least interesting, if not wonderful, I would rather not.”

Is Lilith noticed? When I interviewed Keith Stern, I asked whether he recognized the name. He recalled having received e-mail messages from her and

said that he and McKellen have come to recognize a group of fans who show up at the actor’s theatrical performances, book signings, and premieres: “You look around and say, ‘Where are they?’ so, yes, there’s that core, which on *Lord of the Rings* could have been fifty or sixty people.” Far from being dismissive of such enthusiasts, Stern adds, “If you’re going to be an obsessive fan, I think Ian McKellen is as good an actor as you can find to be obsessive about.”

#### ON THE MARGINS: FANFICTION AND FANART

At the beginning of 1970, Tolkien was struggling to complete *The Silmarillion*, which he would leave unfinished at his death three years later. He wrote to one of his sons, “When you pray for me, pray for ‘time’! I should like to put some of this stuff into readable form, and some sketched for others to make use of.”<sup>2</sup> Seemingly he realized that the world he had created was so vast as to invite other writers to contribute to chronicling it. He could not have conceived, however, just how vast and varied a body of Middle-earth writings and artworks would eventually arise from the ranks of his novel’s fans and later from those of the film.

Fans have been creating their own artworks based on films, TV shows, and books for many years, but the Internet has allowed the broad dissemination of works that used to be strictly personal or shared with a few like-minded people. Henry Jenkins, one of the first scholars to study fan creativity, has termed this activity “textual poaching.” Fans around the globe are using the characters and images of *Rings* in a way that may appear to violate copyright or trademark laws—though such activity has been credibly defended as fair use.<sup>3</sup> Whatever the legal status of these creations, their sheer quantity would make enforcement extremely cumbersome. Moreover, some companies are perhaps reluctant to harass fans who are, after all, providing free publicity of a sort. The companies may also not want to draw attention to unapproved sites.

#### *Humor and Parodies*

Whole websites and pages exist to collect or link Tolkien-related humor, whether inspired by the novel or the film. Among the more prominent are Tolkien Sarcasm (<http://flyingmoose.org/tolksarc/tolksarc.htm>) and Ringbearer.org’s humor section (<http://www.ringbearer.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=Sections&file=index&req=listarticles&secid=3>). Links to a number of items can be found at [directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Movies/Titles/L/Lord\\_of\\_the\\_Rings\\_Series/Humor](http://directory.google.com/Top/Arts/Movies/Titles/L/Lord_of_the_Rings_Series/Humor). These include the pair of “En-

grish Captions” pages, featuring frame captures with risible English subtitles from the Asian bootleg DVDs. These include Galadriel’s comment during the mirror scene in *Fellowship*, “You are a wing baron Frodo” and Merry’s assurance to Treebeard in *Towers*, “We are not oaks we are hobiks.”<sup>4</sup>

One of the most famous humorous websites resulted from a typical fan tendency to seize upon seemingly trivial aspects of films and run with them. Two students, Iris Hadad from Israel and Sherry de Andres from England, became fascinated with one of the Elves present at the Council of Elrond, although he does not speak and occupies all of three seconds onscreen. After meeting on TheOneRing.net and discovering their shared devotion, the two decided to celebrate the Elf’s beauty by naming him and creating a website for him. The reaction “Frodo is great—who is that!?” gave rise to the acronym Figwit, and this highly un-Tolkienesque name stuck. Figwit Lives! went online in March 2002 (www.figwitlives.net; figure 21).

Hadad and de Andres were amazed when their site quickly became a sensation. A link posted on TORN led to a flood of hits, so many that the site, then hosted on a small, free Geocities account, went down within five minutes. Even upgrading to a larger paid site later in the day was not enough, and only after a friend agreed to host some of the files could Figwit Lives! cope with its sudden popularity. Now having a name to connect with the face, other Figwit fanciers created additional sites devoted to the Elf, universally described as “pouty.” The phenomenon was big enough to attract major media attention, with *USA Today* running a story on Figwit Lives! and Bret McKenzie, the extra who played Figwit. The story quotes de Andres on the secret of the Elf’s appeal for fans: “His enigmatic broodiness worked its magic on them.”<sup>5</sup> In August 2002, the pair got the chance to meet the object of all the fuss when McKenzie and his partner Jermaine Clement brought their musical group, Flight of the Conchords, to a comedy festival in Scotland. The Scottish Tolkien Association threw a garden party for McKenzie and his admirers.

Unlike most fan sites, Figwit Lives! actually influenced the filmmakers. Some members of the cast and crew were well aware of the Figwit phenomenon, and the producers decided to bring McKenzie back for a walk-on role in *Towers*, but he was out of town. Later, the filmmakers needed an Elf to say a single line in the *Return* forest scene where Arwen decides to stay in Middle-earth. This time McKenzie was available, and the scene allowed “Figwit” to return and finally to speak—though he appears in the credits simply as an “Elf Escort.”

The three writers’ discussion of this scene in their commentary on the

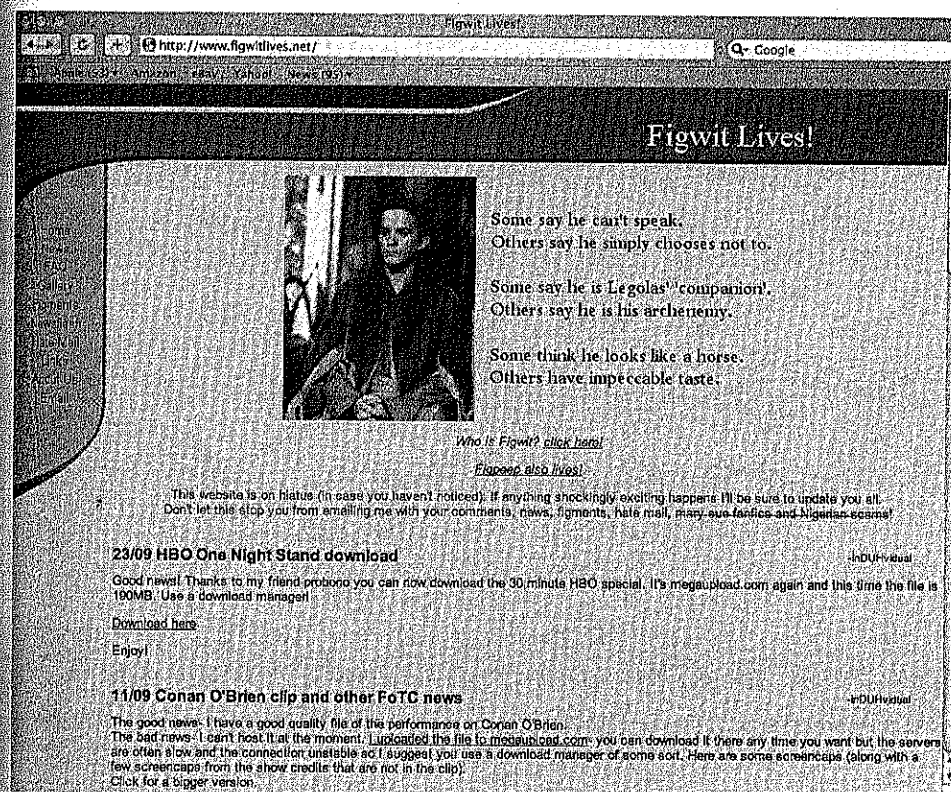


Figure 21. The home page of Figwit Lives! with Bret McKenzie as the pouty, silent Elf. (Courtesy Figwit Lives!)

extended-version DVD tends to confirm that Jackson was not as au courant on fan sites as some of those fans might have imagined:

- JACKSON: That was Fidwit, isn't it? What's his name, Fid-, Fij-, What's his—?
- WALSH: No. Figwit.
- JACKSON: Figwit. That was actually put in just for fun, for the fans, because we didn't even know about this character. I can't even pronounce his name, yet this guy was created by the fans, really. He was an extra in the Council of Elrond scene, and so much fuss had been made about him over the last couple of years that we had this moment where we wanted to have just this brief moment with an anonymous Elf, but we thought, well, rather than making him anonymous, let's make him Fig-, Figwid.

WALSH: Figwit.

JACKSON: What?

WALSH: "Frodo is great . . . who is that?"<sup>6</sup>

Even the official licensed products associated with *Rings* were affected when in July 2004, Decipher Games included a trading card depicting the Elf as he appears in *Return* in one of its game packs. Although the card names him (with an apparent pun) as "Aegnor, Elven Escort," a note below declares, "Affectionately referred to as 'Figwit' by his contemporaries at Rivendell."<sup>7</sup>

The links section of Figwit Lives! lists eleven other sites devoted to McKenzie's character. That number remained constant from January to October 2005, so it appears that the phenomenon had leveled off. Figwit Lives! is seldom updated. McKenzie has moved on. The Flight of the Conchords has become more prominent, featuring on Rolling Stone's "Hot List" in 2005, a BBC 2 radio series, and late-night American talk shows. In September 2006, HBO announced that it had ordered a pilot and 11 episodes of a half-hour comedy starring the Flight of the Conchords.<sup>8</sup>

One of the cleverest and most elaborate parodies of the film occupies the site Lord of the Peeps (www.lordofthepeeps.com) based on candy Peeps, the little marshmallow chicks and bunnies typically sold in the United States around Easter. A whole genre of Peeps websites has evolved on the Internet (a list of which can be found in the links section of Peeps). The creators may simply place the Peeps in real locales and take a series of photographs of them, but the animal shapes and the blandness of the candies encourage costuming and elaborate staging in miniature sets.

The Lord of the Peeps (Peeps) uses this approach. Its creator, Genevieve Baillie, has been building the site with the help of her parents since 29 May 2002, when she was a chemistry major about to graduate from college. She and her mother were devotees of the novel and were at first skeptical about the films, but *Fellowship* converted them into fans. The Peeps site centers on an elaborate re-creation of the film's mise-en-scène in miniature, with costumed bunny Peeps playing the characters and chicks doing duty as horses. (As Baillie says, "At the end of the day I've often sat there and said to myself, 'I just spent the whole day dressing marshmallows.'")<sup>9</sup> Computer-generated imagery provides eyes, landscapes, weather effects, and the like (figure 22).

The density of the site comes only partly from the "movie," however. Peeps parodies the fan culture around the franchise. Its home page has numerous links of the type that one might find on a large fan site: News, Previews,

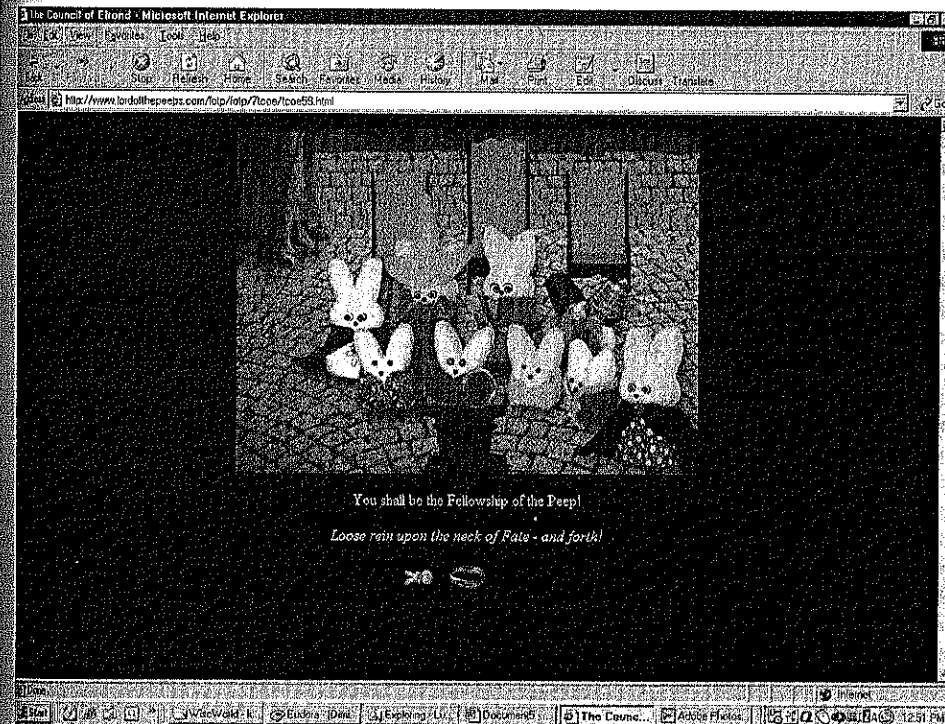


Figure 22. The Fellowship is formed in The Lord of the Peeps. (Courtesy The Lord of the Peeps.)

Movie, Images, Interviews, Extras, Reviews, Comments, Links, and Shop. According to Baillie, "That's really been the most fun—not just writing the book chapters, but writing all the interviews, news stories, and other extras, and being dead serious about the whole thing. I've even written horrible 'Peeps' fanfiction!" The shop contains tiny clay "action figures" of Gandalf ("With hat-wearing action") and Frodo ("With staring action") in packages that replicate the color and graphic design for the licensed *Fellowship* merchandise. The remarks in the reviews section vary a theme: "Someone has too much time on their hands. Very cute, though, meig; 'Could I \*PLEASE\* have a little of the free time these people obviously have in such abundance?' Tracy." The interviews section includes conversations with Bunny Boyd, Sean Peepstin, and Orlando Peep ("Well, I'm into the whole extreme sports thing. Which doesn't really make the producers happy, but hey, you're only fresh once. But I get in big trouble with the makeup crew if I stay out at the beach

long enough to get caramelized.”<sup>10</sup> The Extras section offers a screen saver of Frodo that juxtaposes a large image of the Peep/Hobbit on the left with three smaller images in boxes arranged vertically at the right—the same layout used in lordofthering.net’s many *Fellowship* screen savers.

Such features, along with the links section, take the Peeps site beyond the level of movie parody. Some links take the visitor to real websites “that cover Tolkien’s work and a movie version that stars human actors.” The most notable, however, connects to another Baillie creation: The One Peep, with home page graphics, layout, and typeface that closely match those of TheOneRing.net. The One Peep contains departments paralleling some of TORN’s. A “Spy Photos” site uses Peeps to re-create actual spy photos posted on TORN during the film’s production (such as actors in Black Rider costumes smoking between takes). The “Fan Section” offers a few parodies of fanfiction and fanart. Another link on The One Peep’s home page leads to a Forum section, where the threads, postings, and noms de net have a nuttiness that is almost indistinguishable from what sometimes appears on real LiveJournals and Yahoo! lists.

Baillie “thought Figwit was such a delicious fandom phenomenon that I couldn’t resist including him.” Hadad and de Andres noticed this and immediately started a Figpeep Lives! site (figure 23), an homage to an homage to an homage. As with The One Peep, Figpeep Lives! replicates the layout and style of its original, Figwit Lives!

Although the traffic on Lord of the Peeps fell off during 2005, Baillie thinks this may be due partly to the lack of updates. Having started graduate school, she no longer has “too much free time on her hands,” but she and her parents hope to continue building the site.

#### *Fanfiction: Gen, Het, FPS, and RPS*

Those who use the Internet primarily for news or shopping can have little sense of just how many fans are creating stories (“fics”) and artworks based on characters and situations from books, films, comics, video games, cartoons, and TV shows. In the pre-Internet days, far fewer fics or artworks were created, and they were either shared only among family and friends or published in small photocopied magazines, universally referred to as “zines,” which typically were sold through the mail or at fan conventions. The Internet caused an explosion in the number of fandoms and the number of fics and artworks being created. Zines still exist, but they are now marketed over the Internet as well as at conventions.<sup>11</sup>

*Rings* seems to have generated a moderate level of fan creativity before the

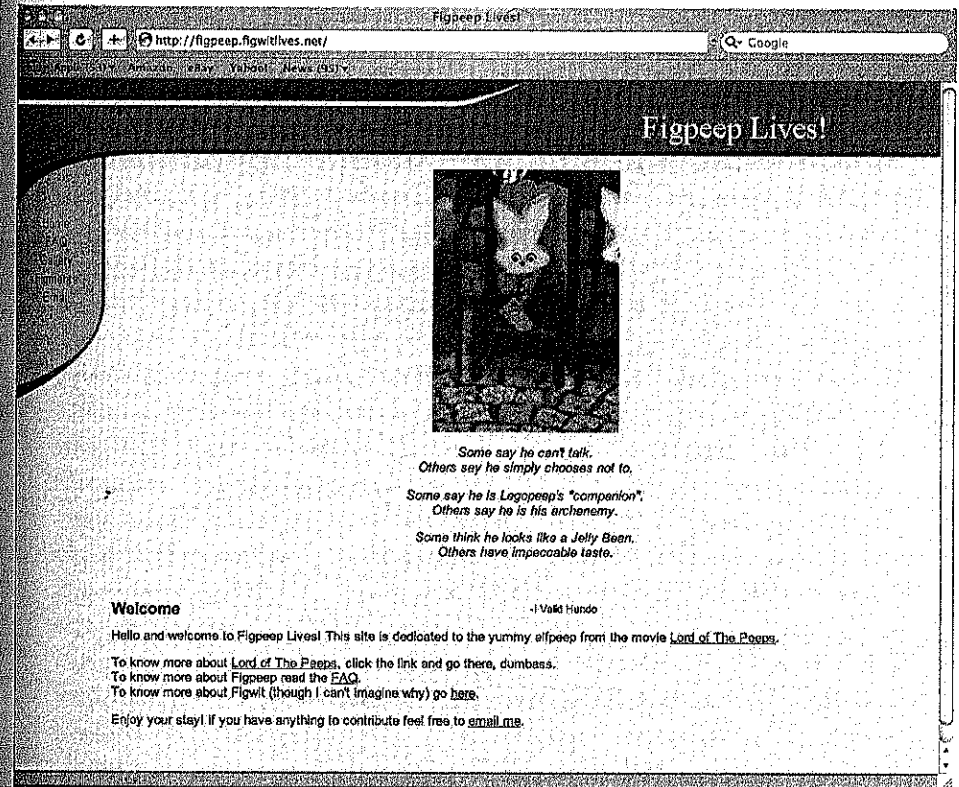


Figure 23. The home page of Figpeep Lives! (Courtesy Figpeep Lives!)

release of the films, but within weeks of the December 2001 release of *Fellowship*, Yahoo! groups and archives of fics and fanart were being created by the hundreds. More recently LiveJournals have become a popular way of posting stories and images. Authors write scenes that could fit plausibly into the worlds of the novel or the film, adhering to “book-canon” or “film-canon” (also termed “book-verse” and “film-verse”). Many authors, however, simply adopt the settings and characters’ names to spin narratives that have virtually nothing to do with the plot of either.

There are many genres of fanfiction, all of which fall into the broad categories of gen (general), het (heterosexual), FPS (fictional-person slash, usually just referred to as slash), and RPS (real-person slash).

Gen fics typically take situations from the books and flesh them out, as when some of the minor Hobbits who have only a few lines in the book be-

come the protagonists of new tales. Het stories are pretty much what one might expect: male/female romances, with or without erotic content. "Slash" fics center around same-sex romance, also with or without erotic scenes. Far and away the majority of *Rings* slash stories are male/male, though there are occasional female/female pairings as well, known as "femmeslash." "Slash" refers to the punctuation mark used to indicate the pairing, as in one of the most common *Rings* couples, Aragorn/Legolas. Fanfiction groups and archives have widely adopted the Motion Picture Producers Association ratings, from G to NC-17—though most NC-17 fics contain scenes far more explicit than anything in mainstream American films with that rating.

One clearinghouse for fics is fanfiction.net, which compiles writing based on all sorts of mass-media sources, from books and cartoons to movies and television programs. This is the place to find romantic tales written by girls frittering away their time in chemistry lab and boasting about it. As of 9 January 2006, the site listed 38,806 *Rings*-related works; it lumps book-verse and movie-verse together. (An additional 1,775 pieces were based on Tolkien's unfinished epic, *The Silmarillion*.) This body of material comes in a distant second to the 227,046 based on the Harry Potter books and films, but Tolkien material is developed on other sites too (especially given that fanfiction.net bans explicit erotica). Hard numbers are impossible to obtain, and any estimate is a guess, but it seems likely that the number of *Rings*-based stories could approach a hundred thousand. If one includes role-playing games, which are essentially group-authored stories, the total rises considerably.

### Gen

Most gen fics based on *Rings* are book-canon, since the vast history of Middle-earth sketched out by Tolkien in *Rings*' appendixes and unfinished manuscripts provides endless narrative possibilities. The doings of minor Hobbits, Aragorn and Arwen's lives after the novel's end, and major events stretching back through the First, Second, and Third Ages all form the launching point for "fillers" that extend the author's mythology.

Fans have, however, filled in the film's action as well. For example, Pipfan's "Seek and Find" details Pippin's role in the Battle of the Pelennor, including his search for Merry and the two Hobbits' experiences in the Houses of Healing afterward. Anso the Hobbit's "A Light in Dark Places" similarly has Pippin and Merry in Minas Tirith telling each other about their experiences while apart—using the events and dialogue from the film rather than from the novel. Slightly Tookish's "On the Shores of the Sea" expands the Grey Havens scene

to focus on Pippin's farewell to Gandalf after the friendship that unexpectedly developed between them.<sup>12</sup>

There are variants of canon fanfiction as well. "AU" indicates an "alternative universe," where major premises of the plot are changed and the story written to fit the new chain of cause and effect. "Crossovers" involve different fictional universes interacting, as when characters from the Harry Potter series appear alongside those from *Rings*. Such genres appear in erotic as well as gen fics.<sup>13</sup>

### Romantic and Erotic Fanfiction: Het and Slash

Inevitably, fans have involved the *Rings* characters in romantic situations, often with considerable erotic content. These are usually posted on specialist archives and lists and are labeled with warnings and ratings. The paucity of female characters in *Rings* makes het fics relatively rare. The ones that do exist often carry the taint of the widely despised "Mary Sue" plot, where a thinly disguised figure representing the author, usually an idealized young lady sporting a vaguely Elvish name, finds herself in Middle-earth and has a romantic adventure with one of the characters—usually Legolas. (The equivalent fantasy written with a male character representing the author is a "Marty Stu.") Many fanfiction lists have rules against posting Mary Sues, but they flourish on fanfiction.net.

The obvious romantic heterosexual couples are Aragorn-Arwen, Éowyn-Faramir, and Sam-Rosie. The small Estelio Ammen archive ([www.phoenixfyre.net/forherlove/fanfiction.html](http://www.phoenixfyre.net/forherlove/fanfiction.html)), for example, features more than two dozen movie-verse Aragorn-Arwen romances, mostly in the PG to PG-13 range. These include Bellemaine Chercœur's "Taking Leave from Rivendell," a movie-canon filling-in story showing Aragorn and Arwen together the night before the Fellowship departs on the Quest.

One fic centering on Sam, Rosie, and Frodo in a ménage à trois, "Pretty Good Year" by Mary Borsellino (March–May 2002) created a little subuniverse unto itself. Other fans started writing fics based on the same premises, filling out the original narrative or creating stories loosely inspired by it. These have been gathered in the "Storytellers" archive ([www.phoenixfyre.net/forherlove/fanfiction.html](http://www.phoenixfyre.net/forherlove/fanfiction.html)).<sup>14</sup>

The vast majority of romantic fanfiction created around *Rings*, however, has been slash. Most researchers trace the slash phenomenon back to around 1967, when fans of the original *Star Trek* began creating and writing for zines.<sup>15</sup> Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock, like so many partners and buddies in male-centric TV series, proved easy for some fans to reimagine as a romantic cou-

ple. Other fandoms—*The Man from U.N.C.L.E.*, *Starsky and Hutch*—inspired slash stories as well. A traditional statistic claims that around 90 percent of slash is written by women, with the rest of the authors being bisexual and gay men. Figures that precise are impossible to determine, given the anonymity offered by the Internet. Many members of Yahoo! groups do not fill out the profile that asks for age, gender, and home country. I ran through the memberships of several lists, and among those who did provide this information, my unscientific impression was that men were in the distinct minority, plausibly under 10 percent.

*Rings*, with its large, mostly male cast of characters, lends itself to slash and is considered one of the main fandoms for slash fiction.<sup>16</sup> The novel had generated a body of fan writings of this sort, but the appearance of Film 1 led to an outburst of slash writing, much of it by people who had never read Tolkien. A small number of femmeslash stories are written with such pairings as Arwen/Éowyn, but they are very few in comparison with regular slash. (Éowyn features in 30 fics on the Library of Moria site, including all pairings, while Legolas had 361 stories linking him with Aragorn alone.)

*Rings* slash fiction gained its own online archives. On 10 September 1999, Amy Fortuna founded the Tolkien\_Slash group on Yahoo! and a week later the earliest Tolkien-slash archive, Least Expected. For a long time Least Expected was one of the two largest Tolkien-slash archives, but it crashed and disappeared in 2003. In early 2005, Fortuna announced that she and her husband would be rebuilding Least Expected.<sup>17</sup> Least Expected's demise left the Library of Moria, established on 1 January 2002, as the largest and best-known Tolkien-slash archive. Stories are searchable by character and pairing, and the range of characters is vast. Even Figwit appears in several fics (though often under the purported Elvish version of his name, Melpomaen). The library is one of the few sources for femmeslash, which can be located by clicking on any of the female characters' names. (Femmeslash is very much a minority taste among slashers, and its authors risk getting "flamed" with adverse feedback.) The Library of Moria also contains a links section that can direct the reader to additional sites, many dedicated to specific pairings or characters. Increasingly fans are posting fics on LiveJournals, as with Cassandra Claire, the "original pervy hobbit fancier" and author of the well-known "Very Secret Diaries" series (<http://www.livejournal.com/users/cassieclaire/>).

Fans on the Internet are fond of abbreviating phrases, and slash writers have devised acronyms to indicate various types of stories. "OTP" refers to authors who devote themselves entirely to "one true pairing." The Yahoo! site Axe & Bow ([groups.yahoo.com/group/Axe\\_Bow](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Axe_Bow)), for example, posts pri-

marily fics involving the friendship or romance between Legolas and Gimli. Other common OTPs are Frodo/Sam and Aragorn/Legolas. The label "PWP" means "Plot? What Plot?" and refers to fics that are essentially sex scenes with minimal narrative context.

The same genres have inspired fanart as well. A large gallery of both professional and amateur images, none of them adult-oriented, is offered on War of the Ring. Slash photomanipulations (based on film images) ranging from romantic to soft-core appear on the Theban Band website. The Library of Moria also contains a fanart section.<sup>18</sup>

### RPS

FPS may seem about as far away from the official areas of the *Rings* Internet campaign as you can get. The fics are pure expressions of the fans' imaginations, lying well outside the marketers' control. There is, however, one related area of fan activity that lies even further away, at the very margins of our cybertarget. Rather than elaborating on the film's characters and story, some fans write or read about fictional relationships among the actors. These stories belong to the subgenre of RPS, or real-person slash.

As of 6 December 2005, the two largest RPS groups on Yahoo! were LOTR\_RPS, with 2,756 members (founded 28 December 2001, or ten days after the release of *Fellowship*), and Closer\_than\_Brothers (founded 28 April 2002), with 1,497 members. Only the former currently has an associated archive, Mirrormere.<sup>19</sup>

RPS came to prominence in fics written about members of boy bands, though it had had a small and controversial presence in slash fandom from the start. *Rings*, with its predominantly male cast, was one of the films that helped expand the genre to actors (even though, as Ian McKellen pointed out to me, it was the straightest cast and crew he had ever worked with). Initially RPS was looked down upon by many FPS writers as being intrusive and exploitative—and as drawing unwelcome attention to slash from the filmmakers, especially the cast. An early article on *Slate*, otherwise sympathetic to slash fiction, declared that "actorfic" violated fanfic's basic principle of being fantasy: "Writers risk enraging straight actors. Slash infuriates actors even when it focuses only on fictional characters."<sup>20</sup> This attitude toward RPS slowly changed across the period during which the three parts of *Rings* were being released. McKellen perhaps inadvertently contributed to this change in December 2002 when his E-Post answered a fan's inquiry about what he thought of RPS fics: "Do you consider them slanderous to your good character and/or to the good character of any actor/movie/etc?" McKellen



(who had by that point read at least one NC-17 fic about himself) replied fairly cautiously, "I am not well acquainted with slash but find nothing harmful in sharing fantasies about favourite characters or their interpreters. Within the context of such sites even Real Person stories seem unobjectionable as they are clearly fictional."<sup>21</sup> This response was widely debated on fan groups. By the time *Film 3* appeared, RPS was somewhat more tolerated. As an indication of the change, on 1 January 2004, the Library of Moria added an RPS section.

After the trilogy's release, the actors departed to their separate projects, and *Rings*-devoted sites became diluted with pairings involving one of the actors with his costar in a subsequent film. Some among them appeared in public with female companions. RP het fics have resulted. These are often, however, Mary Sues or jealous fantasies in which the star and his girlfriend or wife break up.

#### THE FILMMAKERS AND THE INTERNET

Pete probably more so, I think.

Fran and I would tend to be on eBay shopping.

PHILIPPA BOYENS

on the scriptwriters' Internet monitoring

Fans were aware that members of the cast and crew were looking at *Rings*-related websites. McKellen's E-Post contains the following exchange:

Q: Do you and Peter Jackson ever visit Tolkien sites on the Internet?

A: I don't know where Peter gets the time but he seems to be au fait with the Tolkien sites and often refers to them in detail. I make occasional anonymous visits and am sometimes tempted to correct the wilder speculations in the correspondence columns. Having this outlet, I keep quiet. And so, it seems, does Peter.<sup>22</sup>

Those running such sites could imagine that the filmmakers were occasionally hovering near them in cyberspace.

Many fans probably thought that the polls run by some of the main *Rings* sites were a means of gathering information that would guide decisions during the lengthy production process. Such a belief would give a sense of fan access to and involvement in the making of the films—and hence perhaps a tolerance toward changes made in the adaptation. Certainly some of the ques-

tions asked on TORN appeared to solicit opinions with this thought in mind: "If you had to remove a character from the movies to save time or streamline the story, who would it be?" and "Who is your ideal composer for the LOTR movies?" The cofounders of TORN have assured me, however, that none of the questions used was suggested by the filmmakers or New Line.<sup>23</sup>

Jackson has repeatedly declared that fan writings on the Internet had little if any effect on decisions regarding the making of the film. He told me:

A lot of interviewers have asked me, "Did the Internet ever make you change the way that you did the movies?" and the answer is, no. I can't think of an example of something we read or saw on the Internet that made us go, "Oh, we have to change the film, or we have to change the script," because we were making a movie, and the people out there were speculating, and so we just felt we knew what we were doing. But the speculation is what's interesting. You basically know what you're doing, because you're the ones who have a script—they don't. You're dealing with the actors every day, you're shooting a movie, you know the designs of everything, they don't. So you know what you're doing. What the Internet is, is it provides an interesting piece of entertainment as to what all the speculation is [about] what you're doing. So you read it out of curiosity.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, producer Barrie Osborne has made it clear that the Internet's role lay primarily in stimulating and maintaining fan interest and enthusiasm, despite the risk of spoilers. "It's always a fight about how much imagery gets let out. And a lot of stuff went out on the net that you wish had been held back. But I think it was great. Peter's a real internet fan and he's on it all the time. I'd go by his house early in the morning and you'd see his lights on and know he's on the net or he's doing emails at 4:30 in the morning. And I think that informed some of what we did."<sup>25</sup>

Jackson says that he was not on the Internet as frequently as his colleagues have suggested. I mentioned Osborne's remark about seeing his light on in the wee hours, and Jackson replied, "Probably doing e-mail, or doing script revisions is more likely at four o'clock in the morning." When I asked whether he had looked at some of the fringe sites, the fanfiction and so on, he said, "I've never really looked at many sites. Was there fanfiction? No, I never read any of that stuff." He did monitor a relatively small number of sites, such as AICN and TORN, regularly.

Although some RPS writers seem fondly to believe that they fly under the radar of the studios and escape the notice of cast and crew, many of the people

involved in the film have been well aware of them. Casting director Liz Mul-lane remarks on the differing reactions among the actors: "Some of them just dealt with it brilliantly. Others got a bit spooked by it. But it was sort of the Kiwi way. We just thought it was hilarious." Among those who coped were Elijah Wood and Dominic Monaghan, who were often paired in fics. Both actors have taken the whole thing in good humor. During the same month in the autumn of 2005 *Newsweek* happened to speak with both of them. Monaghan's interview included this exchange:

- NEWSWEEK:* Do you read what they say online?  
*MONAGHAN:* I check out all these scandalous rumors about me and Elijah Wood having beautiful sex with each other.  
*NEWSWEEK:* Are they true?  
*MONAGHAN:* About Elijah and me being boyfriend and boyfriend? Absolutely true. We've been together for about nine years. I wooed him.

Wood's interviewer pursued the theme:

- NEWSWEEK:* A couple of weeks ago Dominic Monaghan told *Newsweek* that you two were having an affair.  
*WOOD:* Dom's actually going to have my child. We're very excited, very proud. We're going to name it Frodo.<sup>26</sup>

There is a small contingent of writers who truly believe that Wood and Monaghan are an item, but the vast majority of writers and readers are aware that fics are just fics. Kristina, the co-moderator of LOTR\_RPS, when she heard that I would be dealing with RPS in this book, wrote, "I just hope you point out that it's not like we're deluded stalkers believing our stories to be real!"<sup>27</sup>

New Line did not issue any directives to the actors on how to respond or not respond to RPS. However distasteful many associated with the film might have found such material, it served as one more way of publicizing the film, and slash authors, both FPS and RPS, were among the repeat viewers of the films, combing the scenes for "plot bunnies" (inspiration). Kristina sums up the value of fanfiction to the studios: "These are the FANS' contribution, their hard, unpaid work. I mean you can buy PR all you like, but the FF writers (and I mean FF in general) do a heck of a job keeping the interest alive. Free of charge for The Powers That Be. Merchandise doesn't buy that kind of devotion."<sup>28</sup>

In his memoirs Harry Knowles recalls being a film geek discovering the Internet: "I realized that, like generations before me—through the late-night radio signal of some midwestern station, through tattered Xerox copies of out-of-print poets or long-lost manuscripts—I was not alone. There were others out there like me."<sup>29</sup> There had always been people with all sorts of obsessions, but the Web gave them a way of finding each other with remarkable speed and all over the world.

For film studios and filmmakers, that ease of communication proved a double-edged sword. Obsessions meant that fans were eager for material fed to them and willing to pass it along to others. But again, as Knowles says, for fans there is never enough information. To probe the filmmaking process, they will resort to spying and gossip. Inspired by the film and the actors, they will create new scenes and story lines and relationships. The variety of websites demonstrates that the studio-generated and studio-controlled campaign constitutes a relatively small portion of a large-scale, popular film's presence on the Internet. The studio may control the distribution of the film through copyright and the production of ancillary merchandise through licenses, but the control of publicity campaigns through "exclusive" media access is dwindling.

Any faint hope the studios might have had of using copyright or other legal means to quash fan websites has most likely disappeared as publicity departments and licensees and filmmakers become more intertwined with the whole fan phenomenon. Fans are now being actively encouraged to write fiction using the characters from films. In mid-July 2005, in anticipation of the upcoming release of *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *Entertainment Weekly's* print version ran a small notice: "Write your own Harry Potter-style tale at ew.com/potter." The film franchise's producer-distributor, Warner Bros., is part of Time Warner, which owns *Entertainment Weekly*.<sup>30</sup> In February 2006, Electronic Arts and TheOneRing.net announced a fanfiction contest linked to a forthcoming video game: "Create your own short story about the Dunedain and the struggles of the northern kingdom to win great prizes." So many fics were entered that the announcement of the winners had to be delayed. For the second One Ring Celebration (licensed by New Line) in 2006, a *Rings*-related fanfilm contest was held, and on 6 March, TORN added a new section to showcase the entries online.<sup>31</sup>

In 2006, New Line found itself in the midst of a fan-generated phenomenon as its upcoming low-budget genre release, *Snakes on a Plane*, became an object of obsession on many unofficial websites. Some of these included dialogue made up by the fans, and New Line went so far as to use a slightly modified line from one of these websites in the film. Once studios begin do-

ing such things, they can hardly object to fans borrowing characters and plotlines for their own creations. New Line invited David Finkelstein, owner of "Snakes on a Blog," to the film's premiere, echoing the studio's treatment of the founders of its former nemesis, TORN, asking them to the Cannes preview of *Rings* and the trilogy's premieres.<sup>32</sup>

*Rings* provided an early demonstration of how a filmmaker could, against his producer's wishes, connect directly with the fans. The explosion of fan sites created an unofficial wing of a franchise, and Jackson's response provided a model that the industry is gradually imitating.

#### FANS IN RL

On fan websites and lists, "RL" stands for "real life." Just as the Internet had proven a remarkably quick way to bring like-minded people together in cyberspace, it provides a new and efficient way for them to organize social events in RL. One of the simplest and more widespread has been the line party. Groups of fans assemble to entertain each other during a long wait outside a theater. Such parties predate the Internet, but the online fan community has systematized them to a new degree.

Chat rooms and bulletin boards can spawn parties. TORN provided a registration system for parties, which then attracted people who signed up as members. For *Towers*, 771 parties were organized, with more than ten thousand people pledging to attend. The largest such party, in Salt Lake City, attracted nearly a thousand. Local stores sometimes donated *Rings*-related prizes, and at the larger parties, manufacturers of licensed goods might show up to demonstrate games and give away products. Charity raffles, trivia contests, and other activities filled the waiting time. As with websites, fans were willing to donate their time and money to organize these events. The official Fan Club magazine wrote approvingly: "These leaders—who volunteer weeks and sometimes even months of personal time and often their own financial resources in exchange for 'thank you's' as payment—are the real movers and shakers of the line-party movement."<sup>33</sup>

Diane Greenlee, of Madison, Wisconsin, knew about small, informal parties but discovered the possibility of organizing one at TORN. Trilogy Tuesday, marathon screenings of the extended editions of the first two parts and the premiere of *Return* in about a hundred cities nationwide, was approaching. After someone else dropped out of running a line party for the December 2003 event, Greenlee decided to arrange one herself. Twenty-seven fans signed up. Greenlee made badges for the group, came up with prizes for trivia con-

tests, and brought an Aragorn standee to mark the party's place in the line. The group began gathering at 7:00 A.M. (the earliest the theater would allow people on the grounds, for security reasons). The first film did not start until 2:00 P.M., but given the very cold weather, the theater opened its doors at 10:00 A.M. Once the group got settled in the theater, they passed the time with the trivia contest and other diversions. Greenlee commented on how vital the Internet is in such activities: "I can't imagine any other way that a diverse group of people from so many places could come together and do such a thing as a line party. I also think the Internet makes it easier for fans of movies like LOTR or Star Wars to easily find other fans. Until I got on the Internet, I pretty much felt isolated regarding my fandom activities, but it's incredibly easy to find other like-minded fans."<sup>34</sup>

More traditional parties—indoors, in normal facilities—brought fans into proximity with their idols. Once more, the studio and filmmakers realized that they should cooperate with the fans to strengthen the franchise, and the webmasters were ideally positioned to serve as point people. The most famous *Rings* parties were thrown by TheOneRing.net each year on the night of the Academy Awards. The first came about at the suggestion of Carlene Cordova, a contributor to the site and later the director of the documentary on fan culture *Ringers: Lord of the Fans*. Having had some experience organizing parties, she directed the planning. Sideshow Weta's close links to the site led it to sign on as the main sponsor the first year, paying the deposit and lending the event a legitimacy that brought other support on board. "The One Party to Rule Them All" took place on 24 March 2002, on one floor of the Hollywood Athletic Club. The four cofounders of TORN had never met in RL, and Erica Challis recalls, "We all had a moment of 'Is that you?' when we first met, which is weird seeing as how on the screen we're so familiar."

There was entertainment, with Cliff Broadway as emcee and a giant-screen TV for watching the Oscars. The cast and crew had been invited, but, as one of TORN's cofounders, Bill Thomas, says, "The first year we had *no* commitment that anybody from the productions was going to come. The morning of the first party, we heard that Peter Jackson had called Ian McKellen and said, 'Are you planning on going to the OneRing.net party?' Eventually they showed up, and it was just incredibly exciting." Shortly after midnight, Jackson, Walsh, Boyens, McKellen, and Ordesky arrived, along with Oscar winners Howard Shore (best score), Jim Rygiel, Randy Cook, and Richard Taylor (special effects). Around two in the morning they went on to other parties. McKellen says he went simply because Jackson asked him to. Despite all the fan input on his website, "That was the first time I really real-

ized how personally people were relating to these films." Afterward he called the other actors and told them he had had a good time.

The second year TORN ran "Two Towers—One Party" (23 March 2003), which occupied the whole Athletic Club. Not only was it larger, but there was space enough to provide for a VIP room, allowing the cast and crew to escape at intervals from their adoring fans. The sponsors were a who's who of New Line licensees: Sideshow Weta, EA Games, Games Workshop, Houghton Mifflin, and the Noble Collection. The Iraq war had just started, and Jackson and Walsh stayed in New Zealand. McKellen was absent, but on his recommendation Billy Boyd, Dominic Monaghan, and Sean Astin were there, as well as many of the main designers, Barrie Osborne, and others of the cast. Some of the licensees, along with New Line, provided items that were combined into packages for a raffle, and a silent auction to raise funds for TORN included signed posters and Sideshow Weta collectibles. Tickets for the party itself were sold through Sideshow Weta's website starting on 8 January, and by 24 January all eight hundred were gone.

*Towers* may only have won two Oscars, but TORN presented Osborne with a "Golden Gandalf"—an Oscar-like gilded statuette with Gandalf's head and hat, made by Sideshow Weta. It was in the awards case in the Three Foot Six lobby, along with the BAFTAs and other honors, when I visited seven months later. Broadway again emceed and says that of all the celebrity guests he introduced that night, Alan Lee, Tolkien illustrator and production designer for the film, got the most thunderous applause. "They loved him, and I almost felt that I had brought J. R. R. Tolkien onto the stage himself." Bibliophile Cordova recalls, "I felt this swell of pride, that these people were the coolest people in the world because they gave the loudest ovation for the *illustrator*."

TORN had made money off the first two parties, and the "Return of the One Ring" party, on 29 February 2004, proved a shock. The new venue, the American Legion's VFW building, was much bigger, and new antiterrorism regulations resulted in unexpectedly high costs for fire marshals, armed security guards, and metal detectors. Bill Thomas, who runs the financial side of TORN, points out that the building was just a big, bare room, and they had to rent lights and audio equipment. A VIP tent for the celebrities had to be set up in back. "To say 'tent' doesn't quite convey it. You can have a very, very *nice* tent with a floor and heating and bathrooms and such and a full bar." Not all the usual sponsors wanted to continue to lay out money now that the trilogy was over, and none of the extra costs had been factored into the ticket price. TORN owed approximately \$70,000 to Premiere Events, the company that had organized the party. Pirrotta considers

that the evening was worth it. (TORN managed to pay off the debt in a little under a year.)

The third party provided an ironic reflection of how powerful the biggest fan site had become. Because the venue was close to the Kodak Theater, while New Line's own party was a long drive away, Jackson took the entire *Rings* group to TORN's party after leaving the Governor's Ball. To add injury to insult, the TVs at the New Line party could not receive ABC's signal for the first hour of the broadcast, leaving the filmmakers who had not been invited to the live ceremony unable to watch their colleagues receive their awards. The Film Unit's Sue Thompson recalls being so frustrated at missing the film's mounting triumph that she was one of several people tempted to push the technicians aside and tackle the repairs. *Entertainment Weekly* reported that the champagne also ran out, though Thompson assures me that the martinis did not.<sup>35</sup>

At TORN's party, the winners stood on the stage and displayed all twenty-seven Oscars to the cheering guests. Some of the cast stayed on at the TORN party, and Osborne recalls:

By the time we got back to the New Line party, I think New Line had given up on us, and the New Line party was starting to break up. In fact, most of the parties were breaking up, because nobody with an Oscar was showing up at any of these other parties. So we were left to go back to Peter's room until the Four Seasons decided they'd had enough complaints and asked us to go to sleep at about 5:30 in the morning.

*Variety* noted of the New Line party, "Guest of honor Peter Jackson didn't arrive until 1:30 A.M., having stopped by a fans party nearby."<sup>36</sup>

There were other fan parties. TORN held one in Wellington the night before *Return's* world premiere. The official Fan Club ran an "Into the West" party in 2004, for those who were unable to get tickets to the TORN party. Tickets sold out in about ten minutes. And of course there were numerous smaller, more informal fan parties across the country, both for the Oscar nights and on many other occasions.

#### FILMS ABOUT FANS

When I attended Trilogy Tuesday in December 2003, the packed house of five hundred included perhaps half a dozen people dressed in vaguely Middle-earth-style costumes. Naturally, during the intermissions the local TV reporters singled them out to interview. There is no doubt an impression that

*Rings* fans all run around in costume reciting Elvish, though this is far from the case. In costume or not, these fans are an enthusiastic, witty, and articulate lot. Several of the actors have remarked on how intelligent and educated *Rings* enthusiasts are in comparison to many members of other fandoms. It was inevitable that documentaries would be made about them.

In early 1999, a young man named Stan Alley applied for a job working on *Rings* in the art department, and he was a “standby props” person throughout the production. During the period of the pickups for *Fellowship*, in early 2001, he was sharing a flat with Bret McKenzie, the actor who played a non-speaking role as an Elf at the Council of Elrond. When McKenzie was suddenly made famous in fan circles by the creation of the Figwit Lives! website, Alley conceived the idea of a documentary about the phenomenon. Work on *Rings* delayed the project, but eventually Alley followed McKenzie to Edinburgh, where the Flight of the Conchords was performing in a comedy festival. There he met the two founders of Figwit Lives! at the Scottish Tolkien Society’s party, an event filmed by Alley. Since that point, Alley says, “It’s really just got a lot bigger than I ever thought it would be. Partly because the events there unfolded and the story was so good.” He was also able to interview Jackson, Ordesky, Osborne, and various cast members about “Figwit.” The narrative of Alley’s film fortuitously developed to a dramatic conclusion when McKenzie was cast for the small role in *Return*. Alley was on-set and recorded the actor as he ran through his one line over and over before the scene was shot.

The result is a charming one-hour documentary, *Frodo Is Great . . . Who Is That?!* (coproduced and codirected by Hannah Clarke and Nick Booth). It contains *Rings* footage, however, and negotiations with New Line over rights and what might ultimately be done with the film dragged on. Along with Costa Botes’s making-of documentary, New Line agreed to have it shown at the Wellington Film Festival in 2004. As of early 2006, there remains the possibility that it will receive a DVD release or perhaps be broadcast on TV or shown at a *Rings* convention.<sup>37</sup>

At the time *Fellowship* came out in late 2001, Carlene Cordova was working at Sony Pictures Entertainment, running the company’s websites and producing red-carpet interviews with celebrities to put on them. She met Cliff Broadway, one of TORN’s writers, at a book signing. In January 2002, Cordova was laid off from Sony when its Internet department was dissolved. Since her husband was earning a good living, she started volunteering for TORN. Using Cordova’s show business contacts, she and Broadway began shooting brief interviews which Cordova edited on her computer and which were then

posted on the site. They came to know the actors, as well as filmmakers like Jackson and Walsh who visited Los Angeles.

That summer, while covering a book signing by Viggo Mortensen, Cordova and Broadway found themselves increasingly talking to the fans. The same thing happened at the 2002 Dragon Con (a major fan event held in Atlanta each Labor Day weekend). According to Cordova, “We shot a bunch of stuff there, and I was like, ‘You know, this is a movie. There’s a movie here.’ That was really what cemented it.” They decided to make a film on *Rings* fandom, ultimately titled *Ringers: Lord of the Fans*. With no funding, they were confined to the local area, shooting interviews at places like the *Towers* line party at the Vista Theater. At Comic-Con in July 2003, they set up a “confessional booth” in the *Rings* display area, flanked by licensees’ exhibits—EA, Sideshow Weta, New Line, Houghton Mifflin, and the Noble Collection—where fans could sit in private and answer questions.

Cordova and Broadway attended the 2003 Dragon Con as invited guests, drawing standing-room crowds for their presentations on the *Ringers* project. Soon they had some investors and were able to travel to England and interview Tolkien scholars and fans. Barrie Osborne invited TORN (which was hosting the *Ringers* website) to cover *Return*’s world premiere in Wellington, and while covering it for the website, the pair also interviewed fans who were taking Red Carpet’s special tour planned around that event. The filming, intended to last for a few months, extended to sixteen. A friend of Cordova’s provided an editing suite, and the filmmakers began to assemble a feature from around 150 hours of shots. Some of the footage that made it in included a brief interview with Genevieve Baillie and a comment from Lilith of Sherwood during the “confessional booth” segment. Dominic Monaghan provided *Ringers*’ voice-over narration. The film premiered at the Slamdance Film Festival in January 2005. On July 14 the filmmakers announced that *Ringers: Lord of the Fans* had been sold to Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, and it was released direct to DVD on 22 November 2005.

Again and again in fan writings on the Internet and in the pages of the Fan Club magazine, people speak of the “communities” that have been formed through *Rings*. The “Fellowship of 22,” a group of Fan Club members from around the world, traveled to Los Angeles for the first TORN Oscar party. Most of them had never met before, and they came early to socialize. They visited the Fashion Design Institute, which had a display of *Rings* costumes, and toured an exhibition of Viggo Mortensen’s art.<sup>38</sup>

Out of the online bonding and RL events came lasting friendships and genuine community. In the Fan Club magazine, Jincey, a volunteer on TORN,

expressed the sentiment succinctly as she praised its cofounders: “Thanks to these four folks, who met for the very first time in ‘real-life’ on Oscar Sunday, we have all discovered that we are not alone; that we are part of an immense worldwide community.” After the last party, Challis reflected on the fans and how they had traveled from many places to attend it:

But that is just the least tremor of the earthquake that these films were. For many people, the books and the movies turned their lives around in ways they could never have foreseen. They followed their strong attraction to *The Lord of the Rings* and what it represented for them, and their feelings pointed them toward new friends, new pastimes, new talents, new jobs, new countries, a new life entirely. This is not something that we intended to happen; nor did the film-makers. I don’t know if this is something you can plan for.<sup>39</sup>

Challis herself discovered a love of writing while working on the website. After taking a journalism course, in November 2005, she began writing travel articles for a newspaper. She was doing what she wanted to do at the start, hiking around New Zealand and talking about ways people could enjoy it.

### PART THREE

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## *Beyond the Movie*

stein, "New Line Online," *Variety.com* (22 Aug. 2004): [www.variety.com/article/VR1117909436?categoryid=1757&c=1](http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117909436?categoryid=1757&c=1).

23. One press swag bag associated with *Return* included a copy of the third volume of Tolkien's novel (with a cover photo of Viggo Mortensen as Aragorn); a paperback copy of Brian Sibley's tie-in book, *The Lord of the Rings: The Making of the Movie Trilogy*; *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King Photo Guide* (aimed at children but providing a handy rundown of the plot for reporters); Jude Fisher's *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King Visual Companion*; a PlayStation 2 version of "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" video game; a CD of the film's sound track; a licensed Wrebbbit "Perfalock Poster Puzzle" of Gollum; a small action figure of Sharku on a Warg (actually from *Towers*) by Play Along; a folder containing miscellaneous press information; and a pink suede bag containing a bottle of Very Irresistible Givenchy, a perfume that featured Liv Tyler in its publicity.

24. Michael Learmonth, "Jolie's Junket Jangle," *Variety* (20–26 June 2005): 6; Mike Goodridge, "Summer Madness," *SI* (17 June 2005): 7.

25. For a detailed description of press junkets using *Legally Blonde 2* and *Terminator 3* as examples, see Dade Hayes and Jonathan Bing, *Open Wide: How Hollywood Box Office Became a National Obsession* (New York: Hyperion, 2004), 193–235.

26. Sean Smith and David Ansen, "Picture Perfect," *Newsweek* (31 Jan. 2005): 48.

27. Nicole Curin-Birch, "Picturing Success: Philippa Boyens," *Air New Zealand* (Dec. 2003): 73.

28. Bernard D. McDonald, "The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers," *Pavement* 56 (Dec. 2002/Jan. 2003): 86.

29. Smilin' Jack Ruby, "Tales from the Junket Circuit: The Return of the King, Part One," *CHUD.com* (11 Dec. 2003): [www.chud.com/news/deco3/dec1junket.php3](http://www.chud.com/news/deco3/dec1junket.php3). Ruby extensively transcribed his recording of the interviews, and this five-part series provides a good sense of what such events are like. The *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* comparison comes from the fact that New Line had distributed it two months earlier.

30. *King Kong: Peter Jackson's Production Diaries* (Universal Studios Home Entertainment, 2005), disc 1, 26 November 2004 track.

31. *The South Bank Show* (A LWT Production for Granada, 2004).

32. Margy Rochlin, "A Night Out with: Middle Earth [sic] Ambassador Ian McKellen," *NYTimes.com* (24 Dec. 2003): [www.nytimes.com/2003/12/14/fashion/14NITE.html?ex=1072535906&ei=1&en=1cf7cd4624961906](http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/14/fashion/14NITE.html?ex=1072535906&ei=1&en=1cf7cd4624961906).

33. Quoted from a 2003 interview by Epstein in his *The Big Picture*, 305.

34. Melissa J. Perenson, "King of the Ring," *Sci Fi* (Feb. 2004): 47.

35. Sean Smith, "Steely Man," *Newsweek* (12 Sept. 2005): 67.

36. Melissa J. Perenson, "Shire Reckoning," *Sci Fi* (Feb. 2004): 50; Kevin Fitzpatrick, "Up Close and Personal: A Day with the Stars," *LotR/COMM* 2 (Apr.–May 2002): 43.

## CHAPTER 5: Click to View Trailer

1. Kathy A. McDonald, "Gordon Paddison, New Line Cinema," *Variety.com* (1 Aug. 2000): [www.variety.com/index.asp?l=story&a=VR1117784472&c=1009](http://www.variety.com/index.asp?l=story&a=VR1117784472&c=1009).

2. The site itself is gone, but its index page is reproduced in Craig E. Engler's review, "Sci-Fi Site of the Week," *Sci-Fi.com* (1998): [www.scifi.com/sfw/issue67/site.html](http://www.scifi.com/sfw/issue67/site.html).

3. John Leland, "The Blair Witch Cult," *Newsweek* (16 Aug. 1999): 44–49.

4. Patrick Goldstein, "Hollywood Is More Than Just Browsing," *Los Angeles Times* (25 June 2000): [members.tripod.com/VanTassell/article/la06252000.html](http://members.tripod.com/VanTassell/article/la06252000.html); Ann Donahue, "Season on the Brink," *Variety.com* (15 Oct. 2000): [www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=ev\\_print\\_story&articleid=VR1117787784&categoryid=17](http://www.variety.com/index.asp?layout=ev_print_story&articleid=VR1117787784&categoryid=17).

5. The site [www.lightsoutentertainment.com](http://www.lightsoutentertainment.com) no longer exists.

6. See [www.theonering.net/perl/newsview/8/1032296044](http://www.theonering.net/perl/newsview/8/1032296044).

7. This posting is no longer on the site, which lost its 2003 archived news through a computer problem. These images were immediately posted on other sites.

8. Harry Knowles, "Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers Special Preview Trailer," AICN (25 Mar. 2002): [www.aintitcoolnews.com/display.cgi?id=11838](http://www.aintitcoolnews.com/display.cgi?id=11838).

9. "A Sneak Peak at the TTT Trailer," Tolkien Online (24 Sept. 2002): [www.theonering.com/articles/7449.1.html](http://www.theonering.com/articles/7449.1.html). I do not wish to imply that these reactions are unique. Numerous sites appealing to fans of various genres (e.g., Hong Kong martial arts films) have similar lists of comments with strings of exclamation marks.

"Tolkien Online—The One Ring" has since changed its name to The One Ring, not to be confused with TheOneRing.net.

10. "Peter Jackson Answers THE GEEKS!!! 20 Questions about Lord of the Rings!!!" AICN (30 Aug. 1998): [www.aint-it-cool-news.com/lordoftherings.html](http://www.aint-it-cool-news.com/lordoftherings.html); "Peter Jackson Answers THE GEEKS!!! 20 Questions about Lord of the Rings!!!" AICN (31 Dec. 1998): [www.aint-it-cool-news.com/lordoftherings2.html](http://www.aint-it-cool-news.com/lordoftherings2.html).

11. "Stuntman Wins Name Suppression—for Now," *Onfilm* (Aug. 2000): [www.onfilm.co.nz/editable/Onfilm\\_0800a.html](http://www.onfilm.co.nz/editable/Onfilm_0800a.html).

12. Ian Pryor, unable to obtain the cooperation of the filmmakers, became a spy to obtain information on *Rings* for his unauthorized biography, *Peter Jackson: From Prince of Splatter to "Lord of the Rings"* (New York: Thomas Dunne, 2003). His account in chapter 14, "Spies in Middle-earth," gives a vivid sense of the travails undergone by such spies.

13. New Line's main site, [www.newline.com](http://www.newline.com), also carried publicity for the film, as well as housing the official shop. Other AOL Time Warner websites cooperated as well. Here I am focusing on sites where significant amounts of specific, unique material were generated for the franchise.

14. That link has been replaced by a link to "Official Conventions," leading to the website of Creation Entertainment, licensed by New Line to put on commercial fan cons.

15. Scott Edelman, "Taken by Tolkien," *Sci Fi* (Feb. 2003): 6.
16. For more on the early Internet campaign, see Erik Davis, "The Fellowship of the Ring," *Wired* (Oct. 2001): 119–33.
17. Dana Harris, "'Rings' Wizard Weaves Web of Magic," *Variety* (16–22 Dec. 2002): 8.
18. Davis, "The Fellowship of the Ring," 128.
19. Todd McCarthy, "'Lord' Rings Up Internet Users," *Variety.com* (11 Apr. 2000): [www.variety.com/story.asp?i=story&a=VR1117780448&c=13](http://www.variety.com/story.asp?i=story&a=VR1117780448&c=13).
20. See, for example, Rick Lyman, "Movie Marketing Wizardry: 'Lord of the Rings' Trilogy Taps the Internet to Build Excitement," *New York Times* (11 Jan. 2001): B1.
21. Gordon J. Paddison, "Designing the Marketing Program for *The Lord of the Rings*," in Rafi A. Mohammed, Robert J. Fisher, Bernard J. Jaworski, and Gordon J. Paddison, *Internet Marketing: Building Advantage in a Networked Economy*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill/Irwin, 2004), 569–623. Information on [lordoftherings.net](http://lordoftherings.net) not otherwise cited in my discussion here derives from this source.  
Paddison had been on the cutting edge for the first edition as well (2001) when he assisted on a similar case study of his website for *Austin Powers: International Man of Mystery* (585–617).
22. Frank Ahrens, "'Rings' Has Two Targets," *Washingtonpost.com* (19 Dec. 2001), [www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A62589-2001Dec18](http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A62589-2001Dec18).
23. *Ibid.*
24. Mohammed et al., *Internet Marketing*, 607.
25. Ann Donahue, "Getting the Word Out on the Web," *Variety.com* (18 Sept. 2000): [www.variety.com/story.asp?i=story&a=VR1117786213&c=1009](http://www.variety.com/story.asp?i=story&a=VR1117786213&c=1009).
26. University of Otago, "Profiles: John Forde," *Otago Infosheet: Communication Studies* (n.d.): [www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/pdf\\_infosheets/Communication%20Studies.pdf](http://www.otago.ac.nz/humanities/pdf_infosheets/Communication%20Studies.pdf).
27. The series is indexed at [www.eonline.com/Features/Specials/Lordrings/contents\\_location.html](http://www.eonline.com/Features/Specials/Lordrings/contents_location.html). Forde describes his experiences as an extra in the 1 May 2000 entry.
28. Mohammed et al., *Internet Marketing*, 608.
29. "The Return of the King" (17 Oct. 2001): [www.corona.bc.ca/films/details/lordoftherings3.html](http://www.corona.bc.ca/films/details/lordoftherings3.html).
30. Carla Atkinson, "The Fan Club 'Family,'" *LotRFCOMM* 3 (June–July 2002): 6.
31. "MailBaggins," *LotRFCOMM* 8 (Apr.–May 2003): 9. The Shore interview had run in issue 5.
32. Typing its former address, [www.lotrfanclub.com](http://www.lotrfanclub.com), links one to a *Rings* page on Fan Headquarters, a company offering discounts on various film and other brand merchandise ([lotr.fanhq.com](http://lotr.fanhq.com)).  
With the club's website now gone, the magazines remain as the main evidence of its existence. Though out of print, issues surface regularly on eBay.
33. *Lord of Misrule: The Autobiography of Christopher Lee* (London: Orion, 2003), 340.

34. There was a website devoted to Elijah Wood, but apparently he was not interested in it. His agent cooperated with it, but Wood later denied that it was his official site, and it closed at some point after the premiere of Film 1.

35. Forde, "Force" (1 Feb. 2000): [www.eonline.com/Features/Specials/Lordrings/Location/000201c.html](http://www.eonline.com/Features/Specials/Lordrings/Location/000201c.html).

36. According to Stern, after McKellen.com went online in September 1997, it received 250,000 to 500,000 hits a month. Once *Gods and Monsters* and *Apt Pupil* appeared in 1998, the average rose to around a million. Anticipation of *X-Men* boosted the level to 2 million monthly hits in 1999 and early 2000, and the film's July 2000 release sent it to 4 million. Interest in *Rings* helped maintain the level at around 4 to 6 million through 2000 and 2001. The 19 December 2001 release of *Fellowship* led to an average 8 million hits for a few months, with the figure sinking back to 4 to 6 million for most of 2002. The same pattern, with slightly larger figures, followed the release of *Towers: Return's* effects were "phenomenal," says Stern, "building beyond 10 million hits per month in the last quarter of 2003 and for 5 or 6 days after [the] release in Dec[ember] we greatly exceeded our capacity of about 20–25 million per month. The site had to be spread over four or five servers to try and distribute the traffic. The 20 million level endured through January 2004, then declined to 16 million in February and 10 million in March. By autumn of 2004, the site was housed on three servers and was steadily averaging 3 to 4 million hits a month."

A "hit," the standard measure of website traffic, consists of a user viewing one item (image or page). A single user may visit several pages on a site—especially one that has grown as large as McKellen.com.

37. *Parkinson*, BBC (13 Apr. 2003).

38. E-Post sections devoted to *Gods and Monsters* and *Richard III* were added within a month, along with the miscellany, "Bits and Bobs." A "Shakespeare" section followed later in the year. The only subsequent separate E-Post sections have been for *X-Men 3* (1 Mar. 2005) and *The Da Vinci Code* (21 June 2005). The latter film also has a brief diary, parallel to the Grey and White Books, in "Teabing's Chronicle," beginning 30 July 2005.

39. "Potjy" (clearly not a native English speaker) wrote a charming inquiry about this subject: "It's really surprised me that you do many writing for your website and answer fanmails too. It's certainly that you must live a very busy life. How can you have time for all this quite 'trivia' things, especially answering the fan mails? At first I think 'that cannot be 'him,' but the writing style is just right. :-)." McKellen responded with a brief summary of the process; see "E-Post Bits and Bobs" (24 Oct. 2002): [www.mckellen.com/epost/m021024.htm](http://www.mckellen.com/epost/m021024.htm).

40. "E-Post: The Lord of the Rings" (5 June 2001): [www.mckellen.com/epost/LOTR/](http://www.mckellen.com/epost/LOTR/). The fact that a fan could ask such a question more than six months before *Fellowship's* premiere suggests how familiar fans were with the visual material used in the extensive publicity.



41. Gillian Flynn, "Nobody Beats the Wiz," *EW* (18 Jan. 2002): 50.
42. Adam B. Vary, "Middle School," *EW* special forecast issue (2002): 108.
43. Harry Knowles, *Ain't It Cool? Hollywood's Redheaded Stepchild Speaks Out* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 45, 47–50.
44. *Ibid.*, 204–6.
45. *Ibid.*, 61.
46. "To Kong or to Hobbit, That Is the Question," AICN (30 Oct. 1997): [www.aintitcool.com/display.cgi?id=213](http://www.aintitcool.com/display.cgi?id=213); "Cool News: Lord of the Rings!!!" AICN (3 Nov. 1997): [www.aintitcool.com/display.cgi?id=224](http://www.aintitcool.com/display.cgi?id=224).
47. AICN (23 Feb. 1998): [www.aintitcoolnews.com/display.cgi?id=682](http://www.aintitcoolnews.com/display.cgi?id=682).
48. "Dammit, Why the Hell Did They Do That?" AICN (14 July 1998): [www.aintitcoolnews.com/display.cgi?id=1219](http://www.aintitcoolnews.com/display.cgi?id=1219). No sequel to *Total Recall* (1990) has been made, though there have been rumors of such a project.
49. "Peter Jackson Answers THE GEEKS!!! 20 Questions about Lord of the Rings!!!" AICN (30 Aug. 1998): [www.aint-it-cool-news.com/lordoftherings.html](http://www.aint-it-cool-news.com/lordoftherings.html). The second twenty-questions session had the same title (31 Dec. 1998): [www.aint-it-cool-news.com/lordoftherings2.html](http://www.aint-it-cool-news.com/lordoftherings2.html).
50. "Quint's First 'Real' Report from RETURN OF THE KING Set! Much Better Than the One Moriarty Posted!!!" AICN (n.d., ca. 2 Sept. 2003): [www.aintitcool.com/display.cgi?id=15594](http://www.aintitcool.com/display.cgi?id=15594).
51. Jo McCarroll, "The Fellowship of the Ring," *Sunday Star-Times*, "The Lord of the Rings Souvenir Magazine" (2001): 12.
52. Many of these dates derive from a chronology, "TORN Notable Events Information" (11 June 2004) kindly drafted at my request by Jincey, longtime staff member of TORN.
53. Challis's lengthier reports are gathered at [www.theonering.net/features/exclusives](http://www.theonering.net/features/exclusives).
54. Snatched candid photos and reports from clandestine eyewitnesses to the filming were posted. Even now one can get a flavor of those heady early days, when so little was known, by visiting TORN's "Spy Reports" archive. Unlike many sites, TORN keeps virtually everything it has posted in its archives (though sometimes undated). Some links in the news sections are dead by now, but many articles that have disappeared from the original source sites remain here.
55. Forde, "Force" (12 Jan. 2000): [www.conline.com/Features/Specials/Lordrings/Location/000112.html](http://www.conline.com/Features/Specials/Lordrings/Location/000112.html).
56. Links to all five parts of "Where the Stars Are Strange" Green Books section, TORN (26–30 Nov. 2001) can be found at <http://greenbooks.theonering.net/quickbeam/>.
57. Paddison, "Designing the Marketing Program," 611.
58. Goldstein, "Hollywood Is More."
59. Aliya Sternstein, "New Line Online," *Variety.com* (22 Aug. 2004): [www.variety.com/article/VR1117909436?categoryid=1757&c=1](http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117909436?categoryid=1757&c=1); Ty Braswell, "In Search of QEIB:

Gordon Paddison Interview," *imediconnection.com* (8 May 2003): [www.imediconnection.com/scripts/printver.asp](http://www.imediconnection.com/scripts/printver.asp).

60. Francis K. Lalumière and Jon B. Snyder, "Spinning The Lord of the Rings Web," *LotRFCOMM 1* (Feb.–Mar. 2002): 72. This article also profiles two other major *Rings* fan sites.
61. Ben Fritz, "Net Heads Finally Get Some Respect," *Variety* (12–18 Apr. 2004): 9.
62. "DVD Producer Saddled with Kong-Sized Task," *stuff* (29 Oct. 2005): [www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/print/0,1478,3460107ar860,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/print/0,1478,3460107ar860,00.html).
63. "Behind the Scenes," *EW* (16 Dec. 2005): 69.
64. Tim Lucas, "King-Kong—Peter Jackson's Production Diaries," *Video Watchdog* (May/June 2006): 59.

## CHAPTER 6: Fans on the Margins, Pervy Hobbit Fanciers, and Partygoers

1. This modest page can still be viewed via a link at the bottom of the "Elijah" index page at <http://lilithlotr.ejwsites.net/Elijah/birthday/birthday.htm>. (Lilith is in the process of moving her site to [www.lilithlotr.com](http://www.lilithlotr.com), but the site should remain accessible via links.)
2. The letter is dated 1 January 1970. See Humphrey Carter, ed., *The Letters of J. R. R. Tolkien* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981), 404.
3. Rebecca Tushnet, "Legal Fictions: Copyright, Fan Fiction, and a New Common Law," *Loyola of Los Angeles Entertainment Law Journal* 17 (1997), reprinted on the author's website, [www.tushnet.com/law/fanficarticle.html](http://www.tushnet.com/law/fanficarticle.html). Tushnet teaches at Yale's law school.
4. The *Fellowship* captions are at [users3.evi.net/~eekfrenzy/captionspage/badfotrprologue.html](http://users3.evi.net/~eekfrenzy/captionspage/badfotrprologue.html); the *Towers* ones were at [public.www.planetmirror.com/pub/english/ttt\\_captions/index.htm](http://public.www.planetmirror.com/pub/english/ttt_captions/index.htm), but on 3 February 2003, New Line sent a message calling them "unauthorized" and demanded that they be removed, even though parodies are clearly protected by the fair-use law. The owner took them down. New Line's letter can be read at [home.online.no/~gremmem/english\\_ttt\\_captions/](http://home.online.no/~gremmem/english_ttt_captions/). The only place where I could find the *Towers* captions as of April 2006 is [http://sleepygeek.org/stuff/mirror/english\\_ttt/](http://sleepygeek.org/stuff/mirror/english_ttt/). With luck by now New Line has found better things for its lawyers to do than harass its own fans. (The *Return* bootleg, though it contains equally amusing subtitles, never received this treatment.)
5. Susan Wloszczyna, "'Lord' of the Extras: Elfin Charmer Nets Fans," *USA Today* (6 Aug. 2002): D1. I am grateful to Iris Hadad for providing information on Figwit Lives! via a series of e-mail messages in April 2006.
6. Director/writers' commentary, *Return* EE DVD, track 9.
7. See detailed accounts, including an image of the card, on Figwit Lives! <http://fanhq.com/TCG/Card.aspx?gameID=7&cardID=3829>.
8. Kimberly Nordyke, "HBO on Board with 'Conchords,'" *HR* (11 Sept. 2006): 4.

9. Alex Keown, "N.C. Family's Thespian Peeps Are a Hit Online," *USA Today* (13 Apr. 2004): [usatoday.com/tech/webguide/internetlife/2004-04-13-lordofthepeeps\\_x.htm](http://usatoday.com/tech/webguide/internetlife/2004-04-13-lordofthepeeps_x.htm). This story, written as an Easter feature for the local newspaper in Wilson, North Carolina, was picked up by the Associated Press; information on the background of the site has mainly been taken from this account and from my "interview" via e-mail with Genevieve Baillie (7 Oct. 2005).

10. In the true spirit of fandom on the internet, the Orlando Peep interview actually was written by Laura and posted on her E-Zine site, "The Penguin Files." It was "reprinted" in the interviews section on Peeps. See [thepenguinfiles.tripod.com/id12.html](http://thepenguinfiles.tripod.com/id12.html).

11. For a good general summary of fanfiction, see [en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanfiction](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fanfiction). A less up-to-date version of this entry containing a much-expanded timeline and additional links is at [www.answers.com/topic/fan-fiction?method=5&linktext=fan%20fiction](http://www.answers.com/topic/fan-fiction?method=5&linktext=fan%20fiction). *Rings* fanfiction zines (including some containing slash) are available at [www.agentwithstyle.com/](http://www.agentwithstyle.com/) and [www.skeeter63.org/~silvablu/Spider\\_web/LOTR\\_zines.htm](http://www.skeeter63.org/~silvablu/Spider_web/LOTR_zines.htm).

12. "Seek and Find," Stories of Arda (n.d.), [www.storiesofarda.com/chapterview.asp?sid=2458&cid=9697](http://www.storiesofarda.com/chapterview.asp?sid=2458&cid=9697); "A Light in Dark Places," [www.livejournal.com/users/talechallenge03/9612.html#cutidl](http://www.livejournal.com/users/talechallenge03/9612.html#cutidl); "On the Shores of the Sea," [www.livejournal.com/community/talechallenges15/2340.html#cutidl](http://www.livejournal.com/community/talechallenges15/2340.html#cutidl). Thanks to Marigold—obviously a Pippin fan—for her recommendations.

13. For those wishing to dip a toe in the ocean of fanfiction, a good place to start would be the Mithril Awards site ([www.storiesofarda.com/chapterview.asp?sid=2458&cid=9697](http://www.storiesofarda.com/chapterview.asp?sid=2458&cid=9697)). The Mithrils, the Oscars of fanfiction, have been awarded since 2003, and the lists of past winners and finalists link to the original fics—many of which are book-canon (and a few of which are adult oriented). The big fan sites like TORN and WOTR contain fanfiction sections that are mostly gen and often film-canon.

14. See Amy H. Sturgis, "Reimagining Rose: Portrayals of Tolkien's Rosie Cotton in Twenty-first Century Fan Fiction," *Mythlore* 93/94 (Winter/Spring 2006): 165–187, which includes an extensive bibliography. Sturgis is perhaps the most prominent historian of slash fiction focusing on the *Rings* novel and film.

15. One of the most influential early studies of slash focuses on *Star Trek* and other television-based fanfiction. See Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 185–222. In 2004, slash came full circle and went mainstream with the release of German film and television director Michael "Bully" Herbig's (*T*)*Raumschiff Surprise*, an over-the-top *Star Trek* parody with the crew of the spaceship portrayed as gay.

16. Two introductory essays on *Rings* slash are Susan Booker's "Tales around the Internet Campfire: Fan Fiction in Tolkien's Universe" and Amy H. Sturgis's "Make Mine 'Movieverse': How the Tolkien Fan Fiction Community Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Peter Jackson," both in *Tolkien on Film: Essays on Peter Jackson's "The Lord of the Rings"*, ed. Jane Brennan Croft (Altadena, CA: Mythopoeic Press, 2004),

259–305. For a plausible explanation of the phenomenon of slash, see Catherine Salmon and Donald Symons, *Warrior Lovers: Erotic Fiction, Evolution and Female Sexuality* (2001; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

17. Amy Fortuna, "Least Expected: The Crownless Again Shall Be King," *Tolkien Slash* (12 Mar. 2005): [groups.yahoo.com/group/tolkien\\_slash/message/17249](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tolkien_slash/message/17249).

18. See [www.warofthering.net/gallery/galleries/](http://www.warofthering.net/gallery/galleries/), [www.squidge.org/~praxisters/lotr.html](http://www.squidge.org/~praxisters/lotr.html), and [www.libraryofmoria.com/fanart/index.html](http://www.libraryofmoria.com/fanart/index.html).

19. See [groups.yahoo.com/group/LOTR\\_RPS](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/LOTR_RPS) and [groups.yahoo.com/group/closer\\_than\\_brothers](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/closer_than_brothers). *Mirrormere* can be found at [avia.silverbloom.net/mirror/index.php](http://avia.silverbloom.net/mirror/index.php).

20. David Plotz, "Luke Skywalker Is Gay?" *Slate* (14 Apr. 2000): [slate.msn.com/id/80225#ContinueArticle](http://slate.msn.com/id/80225#ContinueArticle).

21. "E-Post: The Lord of the Rings," McKellen.com (23 Dec. 2002): [www.mckellen.com/epost/lotr/1021223.htm](http://www.mckellen.com/epost/lotr/1021223.htm).

22. "E-Post: The Lord of the Rings," McKellen.com (16 June 2000): [www.mckellen.com/epost/lotr/1000616.htm](http://www.mckellen.com/epost/lotr/1000616.htm).

23. For an archive of TORN's polls, see [www.theonering.net/theonering/polls.html](http://www.theonering.net/theonering/polls.html). The two quotations are from the 31 October 1999 and 6 May 1999 polls, respectively.

24. For similar comments in a published interview, see Jon B. Snyder, "Update with Peter Jackson," *LotRFCOMM* 2 (Apr./May 2002): 25–26.

25. Bernard D. McDonald, "Barrie Osborne: The American Producer," *Pavement* 56 (Dec. 2002–Jan. 2003): 125.

26. "Newsmakers Q & A: Dominic Monaghan," *Newsweek* (12 Sept. 2005): 87; "Newsmakers Q & A: Elijah Wood," *Newsweek* (26 Sept. 2005): 71.

27. Kristina Johansson, e-mail to the author (6 Jan. 2005). My thanks to Kristina for sharing her knowledge of *Rings* RPS on the Internet.

28. Kristina Johansson, e-mail to the author (23 Feb. 2004).

29. Harry Knowles, *Ain't It Cool?* (New York: Warner Books, 2002), 57–58.

30. This invitation constituted an about-face for Warner Bros., which had initially sought to squelch Harry Potter fanfiction by intimidating owners of small websites. Henry Jenkins summarizes this early approach to fanfiction and the studio's subsequent change of attitude, as well as the more general issue of copyright and fan creativity, in his *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 184–191. Jenkins's book deals with several key issues relating to fan culture and new media.

31. "Now on EW.COM," *EW* (29 July 2005): 8; "The Challenge," EA Games (n.d.): [www.theonering.net/giveaway/contestEA.php](http://www.theonering.net/giveaway/contestEA.php); [www.theonering.net/fanfilms/](http://www.theonering.net/fanfilms/). (This site includes the winning entries.)

32. Devin Gordon, "Movies: Snakes on a What?" *Newsweek* (10 Apr. 2006): [www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12112809/site/newsweek](http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12112809/site/newsweek).

33. Larry Curtis and Nanette Morris, "A Towering Lineup," *LotRFCOMM* 8 (Apr.–May 2003): 12–14.

34. Thanks to Diane Greenlee for answering my questions (via e-mail, 20 Jan. 2004) about the line party and to the entire group for helping pass the hours and divert my attention from the fact that I was gradually losing all feeling in my toes. Thanks also to Ethan De Seife for purchasing a Trilogy Tuesday ticket for me while I was on the other side of the world doing research.

35. Gillian Flynn, "The Big Night," *EW* (12 Mar. 2004): 44. Brief footage from the third TORN party is included in the "Passing of an Age" supplement on the second disc of the *Return* EE appendixes.

36. Dianne Garrett and Bill Higgins, "Life of the Parties," *Variety* (8–14 Mar. 2004): 55.

37. Program notes, *Frodo Is Great . . . Who Is That?!!* in *Telecom 33 Wellington Film Festival* (17 July–1 Aug. 2004): 122. My thanks to Stan Alley for showing me a nearly complete version of his film.

38. Dan Madsen, "The 'Fellowship of 22' Celebrates the Oscars," *LotRFCOMM* 3 (June–July 2002): 11.

39. Tehanu, "Where to from Here?" TORN (29 Apr. 2004): [www.theonering.net/features/notes/note22.html](http://www.theonering.net/features/notes/note22.html).

## CHAPTER 7: Licenses to Print Money

1. Ian Markham-Smith, "Lord of the Rings Films and Products Set to Out-magic Even Harry Potter," *tdctrade.com* (28 Dec. 2001): [www.tdctrade.com/imn/imn190/films05.htm](http://www.tdctrade.com/imn/imn190/films05.htm).

2. Simon Ashdown, "Merchandising the Trilogy," *KidScreen Magazine* (1 Jan. 2001): [www.kidscreen.com/articles/magazine/20010101/30567](http://www.kidscreen.com/articles/magazine/20010101/30567); "Getting the Goods," *The Entertainment Weekly The Lord of the Rings Ultimate Viewer's Guide* (May 2004): 74; Gregg Kiday, "Return of the 'Rings' Merch," *HR* (28 Apr. 2004): 13.

3. For Richard Taylor's own anecdotal account of the development of the relationship with Sideshow and the approach to making the collectibles, see his "Merchandising," [www.wetafx.co.nz/workshop/collectibles/merchandising.htm](http://www.wetafx.co.nz/workshop/collectibles/merchandising.htm).

4. For coverage of the traditional sorts of *Rings* collectibles (i.e., with scant DVD coverage and none for video games), see George Beahm, *The Essential J. R. R. Tolkien Sourcebook: A Fan's Guide to Middle-earth and Beyond* (Franklin Lakes, NJ: New Page Books, 2004).

5. "Te Papa Strike Unusual Deal with Jackson," *stuff* (8 Dec. 2005): [www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3504479at4297,00.html](http://www.stuff.co.nz/stuff/0,2106,3504479at4297,00.html). The million-dollar estimate came before the exhibition's second Te Papa run.

6. For a fuller description, see "Movie Exhibit Dazzles Fans," *LotRFCOMM* 1 (Feb.–Mar. 2002): 8–9.

7. For photographs of the Marshes and other exhibits, see "Toronto Hosts Middle-earth," *LotRFCOMM* 7 (Feb.–Mar. 2003): 15–16.

8. Visions Con was one of the last big fan-run cons, and its organizers lost so much money that they had to give up in 1999. My thanks to longtime fan Emma Abraham for sharing her knowledge of cons. E-mail to the author (10 Dec. 2005).

9. Ring\*Con's website is [ringcon.de](http://ringcon.de). For descriptions of the first two cons, see Ian Smith, "Ring\*Con 2002 a Hit with Fans," *LotRFCOMM* 7 (Feb.–Mar. 2003): 16–18, and Ian Smith, "One Ring\*Con to Rule Them All," *LotRFCOMM* 13 (Feb.–Mar. 2003): 12–16.

10. As of April 2006, descriptions of both Fellowship Festivals remain at [www.aaaevents.co.uk](http://www.aaaevents.co.uk). For brief mentions of Ring\*Con and the Fellowship Festival's origins, see Ian Smith, "One of a Kind . . . The Lord of the Rings Fans," *LotRFCOMM* 18 (Dec.–Jan. 2005): 60–63.

11. On Creation Entertainment, see [www.creationent.com](http://www.creationent.com) and an interview with co-CEO Gary Berman, Alex Kingsbury, "Q&A with Gary Berman: Lord of the Rings Fans," *U.S. News & World Report* (21 Jan. 2006): [www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/060121/21lord.htm](http://www.usnews.com/usnews/news/articles/060121/21lord.htm). Its eBay shop is at [stores/ebay.com/CREATIONENTERTAINMENT](http://stores/ebay.com/CREATIONENTERTAINMENT).

12. Thomas K. Arnold, "Power Brokers," *HR* (13–19 July 2004): 26, 28.

13. For a thorough definition of Easter Eggs, see The Easter Egg Archive, <http://www.eeggs.com/faq.html>.

14. Keith Collins, "A Brief History," Supplement: "Bob Shaye & Michael Lynne," *Variety* (23–29 Aug. 2004): 16–26; Samantha Clark, "New Line Stretches DVD Boundaries Again," *Video Business* (16 Apr. 2001): [www.videobusiness.com/article/CA620332.html?text=lord+of+the+rings](http://www.videobusiness.com/article/CA620332.html?text=lord+of+the+rings).

Easter Eggs had originated early in the video game age, when Atari game designer Warren Robinett hid his name in "Adventures" in 1979. Jensen, "Videogame Nation," *EW* (6 Dec. 2002): 20–29.

15. Jennifer Netherby, "Universal Sales Eclipse \$1 Billion in Fourth Quarter," *Video Business* (19 Dec. 2001): [www.videobusiness.com/article/CA619242.html?text=lord+of+the+rings](http://www.videobusiness.com/article/CA619242.html?text=lord+of+the+rings).

16. Jennifer Netherby, "DVD Outlook: The Cart before the Horse," supplement: "Showmen of the Year: Bob Shaye & Michael Lynne," *Variety* (23–29 Aug. 2004): 101–102.

17. Scott Hettrick, "Q&A: Juggling All Three Rings," *DVD-premieres.com* (29 Oct. 2002): [www.dvd-premieres.com/HTMLNews/NewsQAKurtti-Pellerin.html](http://www.dvd-premieres.com/HTMLNews/NewsQAKurtti-Pellerin.html).

18. *Ibid.*

19. Adam Dawtrey, "Will 'Lord' Ring New Line's Bell?" *Variety* (21–27 May 2001): 66.

20. Cristina Clapp, "Mastering Middle-Earth," *NewBay Media* (1 Apr. 2003): [www.uemedia.com/CPC/printer\\_6561.shtml](http://www.uemedia.com/CPC/printer_6561.shtml).

21. Matt Hurwitz, "One DVD to Rule Them All," *Videography.com* (6 Aug. 2004): [www.uemedia.net/CPC/videography/article\\_9454.shtml](http://www.uemedia.net/CPC/videography/article_9454.shtml); Hettrick, "Q&A."

22. Eric Moro, "It Takes Two Towers," *Cinescape* (3 Dec. 2003–4 Jan. 2004): 52.