

Russell Boyd on **The Way Back**

***The Way Back* marks the sixth collaboration between six-time Academy Award® nominee Peter Weir and Academy Award® winner Russell Boyd, ASC, ACS. It is almost seven years since the Australians joined forces on the acclaimed *Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World*. "Peter and I had another, 20-year gap between *The Year of Living Dangerously* and *Master and Commander*, but the day after initial tests Peter told me: "There's still a shorthand between us that hasn't been lost after all these years."**



Inspired by Slavomir Rawicz's World War II experiences and stories recounted in *The Long Walk: The True Story of a Trek to Freedom*, *The Way Back* relates the epic journey across five hostile countries of a group of multi-national escapees from a Siberian Gulag "It was a physically demanding film," says Boyd, who shot on location in Morocco and Bulgaria.

"Peter likes his DP to undertake a lot of prep. He has so many ideas about how he wants to set up scenes and that allows time for the variations that add up to the look in mind. He also likes to work closely with the camera operators and I was very lucky to have Lorenzo Senatore on board as A camera and Steadicam operator, and Mark Vargo as 2nd unit DP and B camera operator. They contributed an enormous amount, particularly to the story telling."

Camera equipment was supplied by Panavision London and comprised two Panavision XL cameras, two Panavision Platinums and a Pan-ARRI 435, with Primo 4:1 and 11:1 zooms. An Angenieux Optimo 15-40mm zoom was used for Steadicam sequences. "Lorenzo supplied his own ARRIFLEX 235 for several scenes in which the small camera was an advantage."

"There was no question about shooting on film; Peter and I came through the traditional school," Boyd continues. "Full DI was with EFILM in Sydney. Senior Colourist Olivier Fontenoy has many years' experience in film timing and has crossed over to the digital realm without missing a beat. When I viewed some early tests with him, he remarked that KODAK VISION3 500T 5219 is the best film Kodak has released. It confirmed my belief that for a consistent look I should shoot with only one stock. 5219 gave me the wonderful saturation, sharpness and depth I wanted, with very little grain."

Much of *The Way Back* is set in snow and freezing temperatures, so a decision was made to build a Gulag and 'multi-purpose' forest at Nu Boyana Film Studios in Sofia. "The set provided complete control of the many dawns, days, dusks and nights of the shoot, some of which were in driving blizzards," recalls Boyd. "As the trees - some real, others fibreglass - were put into place, I realised that we needed to double the space lights to 120 to give me the T2.8 I needed."

Kodak Cinelabs Bulgaria supplied film stock for Bulgaria and Morocco, processed the footage, produced release prints and accommodated Peter Weir's team of 25. Dailies colourist, Ivo Velkov did the HD CAM transfer, often working at night, and 1st assistant editor Bin Li undertook HD editing and screening. "Kodak Cinelabs Bulgaria gave us a very clean and consistent negative and an excellent service," says Boyd. "The director and DP are prominent filmmakers and real perfectionists. We did our best to satisfy them," responds manager Margarita Petrova.

"Film and full DI at EFILM was the course we chose... thankfully. Olivier Fontenoy has taken some key shots out to film and it's wonderful to see them projected on a big screen with all the subtlety we worked so hard to achieve," concludes Boyd.

Key Data at a glance

Director	Peter Weir
Cinematographer	Russell Boyd, ASC, ACS
Cameras/Lenses	Two Panavision XLs, two Panavision Platinums and a Pan-ARRI 435,
Film stock	KODAK VISION3 500T 5219

1 (L-R) in red jacket, DP Russell Boyd, ASC, ACS, in green hat, Director Peter Weir