



Guillermo Navarro explores

# Pan's Labyrinth

*Pan's Labyrinth* takes the audience on a journey with an 11 year-old girl who travels between the grim realities of a brutal civil war in Spain and an alternate fairytale universe. As the story evolves, the boundary between reality and the warm dreamworld becomes hazy. The audience discovers through the eyes of the girl that there are good and evil beings, and moral choices to make in both worlds.

The film is the fourth of five collaborations for Guillermo del Toro and Guillermo Navarro, ASC, AMC, dating back to *Cronos* in 1993. The concept and script are products of del Toro's fertile imagination. He directed the Spanish language (with English subtitles) film and collaborated with Navarro in the creation of

a unique visual language. The cinematographer then rendered images onto film like an artist dabbing paint on a canvas.

The story is set some 60 years ago. The Nazis have been defeated in Europe, but Franco's fascist forces are prevailing in Spain, where they are hunting down the scattered armed resistance from the old republic in the mountains and forests. The film revolves around the girl, whose name is Ofelia (Ivana Baquero). Her widowed and pregnant mother has married Vidal (Sergi Lopez), a captain in Franco's army.

In an opening scene, the mother and daughter are being driven to a rural area to live with Vidal. The mother is bedridden soon after their arrival, and Vidal is busy

hunting insurgents. He is brusque and uninterested in Ofelia, but the girl is befriended by Mercedes (Meribel Verdu), the housekeeper who is secretly aiding the resistance. She encourages Ofelia to get out of the house and explore the countryside.

## Fairytale

The girl meanders through an old mill that is Vidal's headquarters, and discovers a nearby labyrinth in the forest. That's where the magic begins. Ofelia meets a creature that looks like a giant faun with ram's horns, mysterious opaque eyes, cascading blond hair and a strangely jagged body. He tells Ofelia that she is a long-lost

princess of a fantasy world. The faun tells her the labyrinth is the portal to that world, but first she must pass three tests, including stealing something from the Pale Man.

The Pale Man is a scary looking, faceless being whose eyes are on his hands. Other creatures that Ofelia encounters include a large, repulsive toad, fairies and various giant bugs. These strange beings from the fairytale world are a blend of animatronic puppets, humans in costume with prosthetic make-up, and CG images.

*Pan's Labyrinth* was produced in Spain, mainly in an area near Segovia, in the middle of a forest with mountains in the background. The location was about an hour's drive from Madrid, where they also

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**Products**

Camera/Lenses

Moviecam Compact, ARRI 435 ES Zeiss Ultra and Variable Primes

Stocks

KODAK VISION2 200T 5217 and 500T 5218 films, KODAK VISION 250D 5246



filmed on two soundstages. The sets on location included the mill, which was the main interior, and the labyrinth.

Navarro and del Toro shared their ideas for creating alternate universes with different looks and color palettes with production designer Eugenio Cabellero and costume designer Lala Huete. They decided that the real world had a cool palette with blue and green tones. The exception to that general rule was the rebel's camp in the mountains, which was warmer. The fantasy world they created was warmer with deep crimson and golden hues. Those differences were meant to be subtle. They were something the audience would feel rather than notice on a conscious level.

As Ofelia travels through both worlds, it is as though she is building bridges between them. The use of colors and coverage begins looking more and more alike.

“The little girl is an incredible actress,” Navarro observes. “She

portrayed her character perfectly, always hit her marks and found her light. That allowed us to do very complicated set-ups, especially when we were dealing with CG elements in empty spaces, where the fairies and all other creatures were inserted later. I think it helped that del Toro and I are both parents. We created a friendly environment where she felt comfortable.”

*Pan's Labyrinth* was produced in Academy aperture 1.85:1 format. Navarro says there was no need to discuss that decision. All of his films with del Toro have been framed in that aspect ratio because that is how human beings see the world.

They planned to cover most of the action with a single camera with the exception of more complex set-ups where Ofelia interacts with characters that would be created later in CG and digitally composited. When there was room on a set, they had a second camera “stealing moments” from a different perspective.

“She (Baquero) just needed cues like when and where a bug landed, so she could find an eye line to interact with,” Navarro says. “She had a different expression on her face when she was looking at something close to her and something far away.”

Navarro brought his own cameras and lenses to Spain. They included two Moviecam Compact cameras, and an ARRI 435 ES that he used for visual effects shots, along with a range of Zeiss Ultra Primes and Variable Primes.

He also brought a mini-crane that he purchased in Spain when they filmed *Devil's Backbone*. Navarro affectionately calls it “puchi,” which was derived from “push in.”

“It is a great piece of equipment that one grip can push around on a track or wheels,” Navarro says. “We used it to make all kinds of moves, including craning up and down. We also had an extraordinary Steadicam operator from the Czech Republic, Jaromir Sedina, and a talented local focus

puller, Juan Levya. My other Spanish crew members were young but they were talented and enthusiastic.”

The camera was constantly moving, searching and revealing new things in the fairytale world, and it was comparatively static in scenes depicting reality. Navarro explains that was another way to inform the audience which world they are in at any time.

**Specialized palette**

Navarro had three Kodak emulsions with specialized imaging characteristics on his palette. He used KODAK VISION2 200T 5217 and 500T 5218 films, as well as KODAK VISION 250D 5246 film. He used 5217 for day-for-night scenes shot in the forest and under-exposed the negative three to four stops, using silver boards and reflectors to direct light. There were also day-for-night shots at more expansive locations that would have been impractical to light.

1 Cinematographer Guillermo Navarro, ASC, AMC prepares to shoot a scene with actress Ivana Baquero for *Pan's Labyrinth*.

2 Actor Doug Jones in a scene from *Pan's Labyrinth*, shot by cinematographer Guillermo Navarro, ASC, AMC.

3 Director Guillermo del Toro discusses a scene for *Pan's Labyrinth*.

4 Actor Ivana Baquero in a scene from the film.

Photos by TERESA ISASI. © 2006 Picturehouse.

They had a 13-and-a-half week production schedule. It was one of the driest, rain-free summers in that part of Spain in decades. Navarro notes that foliage that was supposed to be a lush, verdant, green forest was dry and brown. He framed scenes in those exterior environments carefully. Navarro also knew there was a budget for digital intermediate (DI) timing, which would enable him to put finishing touches on colors, light, darkness and other elements of shots during post-production.

He lauds his crew, including gaffer David Lee and key grip Rick Stribling, with whom he has worked on various other projects, for helping to keep production on track without making creative compromises on challenging scenes. Though they were planning DI timing, Navarro knew from experience that it was important to get as much information on the negative as possible.

"Every shot was the result of a lot of thought," he says. "We were practically editing in camera, so there was no need for a lot of extra coverage. We want the audience to see things as they happen."

The light looks and feels natural in scenes that take place in the real world. Navarro treated the sets where the main characters lived like real locations. He lit dark interiors through windows with a single source. At dramatic moments, he modeled faces with light that was tinted the right hue with gels on lamps.

When they were shooting on interior sets, Navarro had

inconspicuous holes punched in walls, and orchestrated angles, intensity and colors of light through them with a dimmer board. He and Lee took digital still images on the sets and manipulated them with a computer to provide visual references of his intentions for the dailies timer and DI colorist.

### Seamless integration

The audience doesn't know until they get very deep into the film whether the fairies and other creatures are real or just products of Ofelia's imagination. Toward the end, the rebels attack and pour into the compound. It was a very hot summer day when they shot those scenes. Fires were burning in the woods and the authorities banned the use of anything that could create sparks. Navarro and del Toro knew what to do. They created believable explosions by using compressed air to throw bits of cork and dirt into the air, and lit those clouds with warm gels on tungsten lights that were dimmed up and down.

There is an important scene filmed in the labyrinth, which is a dark and twisting tunnel. Navarro lit that shot with a sausage-shaped balloon light gelled with a steel blue hue. He timed lighting so that the audience feels like their eyes are getting used to darkness.

The integration of live-action cinematography and visual effects is seamless. Navarro and del Toro designed coverage of scenes with animatronic puppets, creatures wearing costumes and prosthetic



make-up, and CG images as though they were real.

Pan, who guards the labyrinth, is portrayed by a costumed actor in prosthetic make-up, but his blinking eyes were digital effects that were composited into the shot during post-production. The animatronics were created by DDFX and special effects by Café FX, Inc. The visual effects supervisors were on the set during production, so everyone involved in those complex shots was on the same page.

The negative was processed at Image Film Lab in Barcelona. After the film was edited, the conformed negative was scanned at 2K resolution and the digital master file was shipped to Deluxe Labs in Toronto, Canada, where the DI was timed.

Navarro says that the promise of DI timing didn't affect how he approached shooting *Pan's Labyrinth* except for decisions about day-for-night scenes, where he knew he could isolate the sky and make it darker. He and

del Toro timed the film with DI colorist Chris Wallace and added subtle final touches to colors, light and darkness for both believable continuity and to augment emotional tones.

*Pan's Labyrinth* is an independent feature produced by Picturehouse.

Postscript: As we went to press, Guillermo Navarro's cinematography on *Pan's Labyrinth* had earned the Oscar, the Independent Spirit Award, the Goya, and the Golden Frog at the Camerimage International Art of Cinematography Festival, as well as top honors from the Boston, Florida and New York film critics. Navarro received BAFTA and Cannes nominations as well as various other award accolades.