**The Dark Knight Rises: the team behind the trilogy's epic finale**

From cinematographer Wally Pfister to Bane's body double, meet the brains and the beefcake who brought the Batman series to such a spectacular end





Wall St, Manhattan during filming of The Dark Knight Rises. Photograph: LMK

**THE BEGINNINGS**

Wally Pfister. Photograph: Alexa Hann/WireImage

**Wally Pfister, cinematographer**

1. The Dark Knight Rises
2. **Production year:** 2012
3. **Country:** Rest of the world
4. **Cert (UK):** 12A
5. **Runtime:** 164 mins
6. **Directors:** Christopher Nolan
7. **Cast:** Aidan Gillen, Anne Hathaway, Christian Bale, Daniel Sunjata, Gary Oldman, Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Juno Temple, Liam Neeson, Marion Cotillard, Matthew Modine, Morgan Freeman, Sir Michael Caine, Tom Hardy
8. [More on this film](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/141046/dark-knight-rises)

Chris [Nolan] and I evolved our process of how to approach action pictures together, and it was very helpful that what we did in between were very different kinds of projects. There's a bit of release between these movies that allowed us both to grow in different directions and explore different approaches. After Batman Begins, we did [The Prestige](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/115437/prestige), a 19th-century period piece about magic; it had very little action but an awful lot of fascinating character studies, so we applied some of the things we learned to The Dark Knight. Then we shot [Inception](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/video/2010/jul/13/inception-leonardo-dicaprio?intcmp=239) in lots of different countries, and Chris really applied that to The Dark Knight Rises, which opened up a fresh approach to scale. I believe there's only one foreign location in The Dark Knight. Here, we have multiple cities and international locations.

**Chris Corbould, special effects supervisor**

I got the usual call: "We're ready to go, come out and read the script." Chris is very protective of his scripts, secrecy-wise. So I had to go out there and read it. It was just what I was expecting from him: the scale is massive. The scope, the characters, the story, all the toys … everything's there.

**Wally Pfister**

When we started [Batman Begins](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/106557/batman.begins) I wondered how to deal with the conventions of a comic-book film. Chris backed me off of those notions. He said, "I really want our approach to be the same as it's been on [Memento](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2000/oct/15/features1) and Insomnia; I want to take a very naturalistic approach to what you do. Just do what you do, I don't want it to be hugely stylised or a different approach in the photography." He wanted Gotham City to be real and gritty.

**Chris Corbould**

I consciously try to avoid watching other films [for work]. I'd never seen a whole Batman film before I did Batman Begins, and I didn't watch any, because I didn't want to be subconsciously swayed by anything. I've worked on a lot of Bond films, which are close to Chris's heart, and sometimes we talk about that. But I have to be careful not to harp back to that; I want it to be as fresh as possible.

**Wally Pfister**

Chris and I always watch other films to get inspiration. They don't have a direct influence necessarily, you just pull things out. This time, I chose [Sidney Lumet](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2011/apr/09/sidney-lumetdies-86)'s 1981 film Prince Of The City, because of how dark it was. One of the films Chris had chosen was [The Battle Of Algiers](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/movie/36100/battle-of-algiers); we watched the battle sequences and talked about the overall scale of it. In The Dark Knight, the story with the Joker was confined to his antics with the underworld bosses in Gotham. But with [Bane](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/filmblog/2011/aug/05/dark-knight-rises-fight-footage), Chris has taken the antics to a larger scale. It's not just a city under siege, but a pretty major-scale takeover. You see the full-on national ramifications of a crazy fucker like Bane.

**THE BIRTH OF BANE**

Buster Reeves. Photograph: Imeh Akpanudosen/Getty

**Buster Reeves, fight co-ordinator and Tom Hardy's stunt double**

I was [Christian Bale](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/christianbale)'s stunt double on the first two Batman films, and I helped put all the fights together. This time they wanted me purely as an outside eye to make sure the fights were exactly as Chris Nolan wanted them to look. It's not the same fighting style as the last two, he wanted to go in a whole different direction. Because Bane's his biggest adversary yet, Chris wanted Batman to evolve his fighting style. We've added a bit of Jeet Kun Do, some Silat [an Indonesian martial art], a bit of Thai boxing. Bane's a big brute, and it takes about 15 shots to deliver what he can do in one blow, so Batman had to be less aggressive, more clever. I had to think about how he could be a bit like [Muhammad Ali](http://www.guardian.co.uk/sport/interactive/2012/jan/17/muhammad-ali-70-boxing-interactive), hit and not get hit. Mike Tyson versus Floyd Mayweather was what I had in mind.

**Lindy Hemming, costume designer**

I was working with Chris when [he and his brother, Jonathan Nolan] were still writing the script, so we were discussing where Bane came from, why he ended up wearing that mask. We were asking questions like: What is that mask? How did it come to be made? Where did Bane's clothes come from, and why is he wearing them? It was really intensive. I drew hundreds of masks, faces, shapes. We always knew that he was being fed the "Venom" steroid – in our case the anaesthetic – because of his past injuries, and I wanted him to look like a snarling baboon. The reference pictures we were taking and finding were very much angry wild animals. And of course then adding into that the situation that we thought that his gear had been made by somebody military, or somebody using military parts. A mercenary camp somewhere, where there are clever people making bombs and equipment, and he's got them to make his equipment.

**Wally Pfister**

One of our challenges was to make Bane look bigger, like he's towering over the other characters. Tom Hardy is not physically larger than Christian Bale or the other thugs that are around him, so really, in terms of photography, the approach was to keep Bane looking mysterious and massive.

**Lindy Hemming**

Bane's got two coats. The first is a kind of mercenary jacket. We didn't want to use leather, and we pretty much ruined it before he got to wear it. That's meant to be part of his past, jumping in and out of jeeps and travelling around, eventually ending up in Gotham. And then the second coat he wears, the sheepskin coat, is a kind of French revolutionary, slightly Romantic coat. Think of a French revolution frock coat and a Swedish Army cold-weather parka; I sort of amalgamated the two. That's what Bane wears when he sees himself as taking over Gotham. He has a romantic, aggressive image of himself.

**Harry Lu, armourer**

I worked with practically every character except Batman. Batman does not need guns – and there are some big guns in this film. We have a Barrett .50 caliber at one point, which is about a big a weapon as a man can carry. It's heavy! I worked with Tom Hardy a little bit, but his character's physical power is his main weapon.

**Buster Reeves**

I became Tom's stunt double because the guy who was originally going to be doubling for him blew out his anterior cruciate ligament really close to one of the big fights between Bane and Batman. They said to me, "Look, can you pack on a bit of beef in two weeks and do the fighting?" I wasn't too far off: I just had to eat a bit more protein, do a little less cardio, a bit more lifting and I just blew up. I have that kind of frame. I was very impressed at how quickly Tom had bulked up. He came in as a normal-sized guy and put on 25lbs of muscle in eight weeks. He was so fit, when we were doing some of the fight scenes with him we had to tell him to slow down. He was too fast for some of the guys to react to.

**Lindy Hemming**

He was so fit, it was incredible.

**CREATING CATWOMAN**

Anne Hathaway as Catwoman. Photograph: Allstar

**Lindy Hemming**

The giant worry for me was how to do Catwoman without it looking like the previous Catwomen, and where to go with her. That was a huge conversation, it took a long time to discuss. Chris wanted it to reflect something of Batman's suit, he wanted there to be a feeling that they were both people who don these garments for practical reasons. We decided to develop a new fabric which would look technological but would be very simple. Very quick to put on, almost like she could have it in her handbag, because it's for opportunist cat burglary, she has to have it with her and slip into it. But the main design objective was coming up with the idea of why this woman has those ears. After a lot of research and thinking I think I came up with the idea - you know the jeweller's loupe where they look at diamonds through a magnifying lens? We talked about that a lot, and then tried to make them flip up on top of her head so that there was something pointing upwards. And then from that Chris said because of what she does they should also be night-vision goggles, so I amalgamated the idea of her mask with night-vision goggles and the magnifying lenses, and we designed and had made these wonderful glasses which, when she needs them she wears them down, and when she doesn't need them, for instance when she's on her motorbike, she flips them up on top of her head. And by quite a lot of design ingenuity and cunning they look like ears, and the mask is left on her face. I think it works really well. We had to make them out of hi-tech fabrics and plastics and give them a carbon fibre finish here and there, we put lights in them so that she could have a little directional beam at what she was looking at in the dark. We made them completely from scratch in our workshop. It was a fantastic design adventure.

**Luisa Abel, makeup department head**

It was a process to get the look that suited Anne, that made her look fabulous. A lot of the looks before [for previous Catwomen] were very stylised, and we wanted this one to be timeless, we didn't want a look that would attribute it to any era.

**Buster Reeves**

We developed a very slinky and feline type fighting style for Catwoman, almost balletic.

**Harry Lu**

Anne Hathaway was just amazing, athletic, wonderful to work with. She'd had some previous firearms experience, we just needed to bring in new styles and ensure that all her moves were graceful.

**BATMAN REVISITED**

Tom Hardy as Bane. Photograph: Allstar

**Luisa Abel**

For this film we did Batman's eye makeup completely differently to the previous ones, because I wanted to make sure that it was comfortable and would hold and last all day and not smudge. It was tested to make sure it was sweatproof and exactly the right colour to match the costume. Products change all the time; we have ones now that stay longer and are more waterproof. There are always ways to improve!

**Lindy Hemming**

In the second meeting I had with Chris on Batman Begins we discussed the fact that we would like to change the Batsuit, and we wanted to change it radically. We wanted to make it more modern – more believable as an item that someone would wear for protection and agility – and get away from the rubber suit. We didn't achieve as much as we wanted, but by The Dark Knight we'd worked it out and completely redesigned it. It's the same suit for this film; the only modifications are to do with things that he does in the story. Bruce Wayne is still in his Armani wardrobe, but due to his long absence from the Batsuit, as it were, he's not quite as elegant at the beginning of the story. He later becomes more elegant.

**A BIGGER BANG**

**Chris Corbould**

The football stadium sequence was such a thrill. We did something like 80 explosions, which set the scene for the CGI people to take over and manipulate it into a great big crater. We had 12,000 people who turned up, just to watch the filming. We expected them all to get bored and disappear at lunchtime but they were all still there at 7pm.

**Harry Lu**

We performed several show-and-tells to present Mr Nolan with the firearms we'd selected. If there's one gun for a character, I'll bring out four other choices. Once they're approved, the rubber reproduction for the gun needs to be cast so they can train with the rubber guns first for the stunt sequences and make sure they're safe. Mr Nolan has a very good knowledge of firearms. Sometimes before I can even open my mouth he'll say, "Switch to rubbers, it'll be safer." He knows what he's doing, which makes my job a lot easier.

**Chris Corbould**

My main concern with the Bat [Batman's flying vehicle] was that on any other film it would probably be almost 100% CGI. It became quickly apparent that Chris wanted to do as much as he could in camera, and that he wanted to give the CGI guys something that was based in reality. I don't think I was quite ready for the amount he wanted to do for real. We built two of these flying machines and they went on every single rig you can imagine. They were mounted on specially built vehicles so we could drive them around roads at 60mph; we hung them under helicopters, on highwires … At one stage we had to get the Bat on top of a skyscraper. It was 28ft long, 17ft wide and 12ft high, and all we had to get it to the top of the building was a service lift. That created a bit of a challenge. And once Chris saw the results he used those systems more and more. I think the highlight was when we suspended it under a heavylift helicopter and flew it around LA; that was quite bizarre. You get the adrenaline rush, this big helicopter thumping over your head, and the wind rushing around … When it takes off, it looks so majestic. You can't beat that adrenaline.

**BRINGING DOWN THE CURTAIN**

Christian Bale as Batman. Photograph: Allstar

**Wally Pfister**

I wanted to play around with the colour palette and do some things a bit differently this time, with a little less colour, a little more neutral, trying to really challenge myself and not be stylised. I never want the audience to feel the lighting in any overt way. At one point in the story, when Gotham is going through a really dark period, Chris was making an effort to not do practical lighting. We shut off all the lights, so there's a point when there's no practical lighting at all. I was bored and needed a challenge, so we did a bit of messing around. I was really excited about it.

**Chris Corbould**

For the end sequence, you've got all the vehicles, all the characters. It's full-on. We shot it on the streets of Pittsburgh, Los Angeles and New York. There's a big battle sequence in the middle of New York. I was dumbfounded that we were allowed to do it, but when Chris sets his mind on doing something he always manages to achieve it.

**Buster Reeves**

It was really satisfying to complete such an awesome trilogy. That was a personal thing to me, I wanted to see all three through. I met my wife on the second film. I didn't really care what aspect I'd be involved in on the third film; being fight co-ordinator was a bonus! It's great to be part of a trilogy like this that will stand the test of time.

**Chris Corbould**

It's been great going through it all with Chris, seeing him grow in stature and learn all about shooting action films. I've got such a lot of respect for the guy. What he's written and directed with this is amazing. I can't wait to see it …

* **More on this story**
* [](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/jul/24/dark-knight-rises-figures-official-charity)

[Dark Knight Rises: box office figures officially confirmed](http://www.guardian.co.uk/film/2012/jul/24/dark-knight-rises-figures-official-charity)

Christopher Nolan's final Batman film confirmed as third highest opening of all time, while Warner Bros pledges donation to charities supporting victims of US shootings