



THE NORTHMAN

PRODUCTION DESIGNER - CRAIG LATHROP
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THE NORTHMAN

OFFICIAL TRAILER

THE NORTHMAN – PRODUCTION DESIGN STATEMENT

CRAIG LATHROP – 16th OCTOBER, 2022

The Northman was my third collaboration with Director, Robert Eggers and DoP, Jarin Blaschke. Having worked together on The Witch and The Lighthouse, this was our largest Production to date.

A very challenging script, set during the turn of the 10th Century, it proved a rich setting for an enormous amount of detailed and insightful research.

Primarily, there were three main exterior builds:
Hrafnsey, a large village, somewhere North of Scotland.
The Land of the Rus, a sheltered community in what is now Western Russia
Freysdalur, an Icelandic Viking settlement

We were based in Northern Island, and it provided us with enough variation, to give each village a unique identity.

Hrafnsey, was built at Torr Head, a wild location on the North Coast. At the bottom of a steep rise large gates opened onto the dramatic coastline. The village was arranged along a track leading up to a longhouse perched atop the hillside. Built over approximately 12 weeks, it was a major achievement against the elements, and a testament to the skill and tenacity of our construction team.

Land of Rus, was designed around an extended action sequence. Beginning outside of the village, the Berserkers make their way over wooded terrain, to climb a timber palisade, before wreaking havoc throughout the village in a series of carefully choreographed vignettes. The shots came about through many meetings, involving stunts and camera, with the design gelling everything together, accommodating each department.

Freysdalur, is the bucolic background for some of the most devastating scenes in the film. Each building was a ply carcass, upon which the Greens Department spent many weeks laying thousands of peat bricks, before finally turfing the roofs.

Interestingly, because of Covid we were forced to go on hiatus one week before filming. Upon our return two months later the change was dramatic. The peat and turf huts had taken root and grown into the landscape, in the most wonderful and natural way. For once Covid had played into our hands!

In conjunction with the exterior locations, we had two Viking Longships built in the Czech Republic. With a lead time of approximately six months, preparation began very early. Each at sixty feet in length, they were sizeable and not without operational problems. But to see them under full crew was a joy to behold.

Interior sets, included Hrafnsey and Freysdalur longhouses. Both highly detailed and richly adorned with carving and sculpture. Traditional building methods wherever possible were closely observed, in an attempt to be as authentic as possible.

Two idiosyncratic studio builds were The Warrior Kings Burial Chamber and the Underground Ritual Cave. The Burial Chamber, was a large cavernous structure built around massive timbers, which once lined Belfast Harbour. The Ritual Cave provided the uncomfortable backdrop, to the psychedelic vision of Amleth's bloodline

The Northman was for me a unique opportunity to realise the immense wealth of design, craftsmanship and ideas that The Vikings had amassed over the hundreds of years that they flourished. Their vast empire providing an eclectic backdrop, to this amazing fable, as imagined by the Icelandic poet Sjón and Director Robert Eggers

Budget – Production Band 3