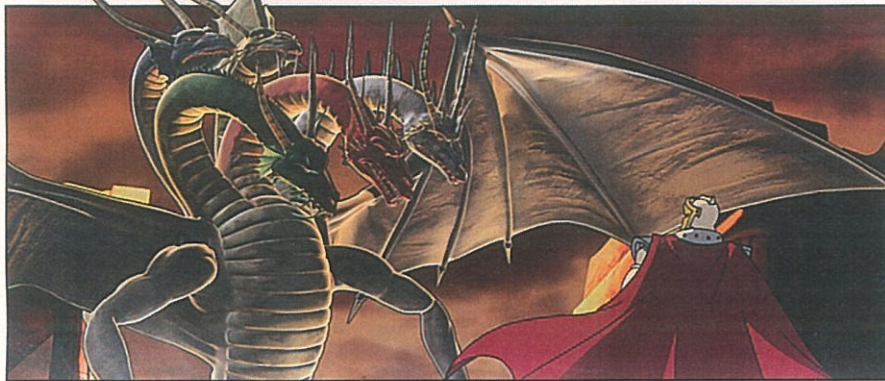


## PIPELINE



*Dragonlance: Dragons of Autumn Twilight*

# A Fancy for Fantasy

Paramount brings 'Dungeons & Dragons' inspired novel to DVD

By Billy Gil

**FANTASY** Audiences are spellbound by fantasy films. While *Enchanted* and *Beowulf* are ruling the box office, a slew of fantasy-themed DVDs are marching to DVD.

Fantasy fans have long been clamoring for a film version of "Dragonlance," the book series spawned by authors Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman. They'll get their wish when Paramount Home Entertain-

ment releases the direct-to-video animated film *Dragonlance: Dragons of Autumn Twilight* Jan. 15, 2008, (prebook Dec. 4) at \$19.99.

*Dragons of Autumn Twilight* follows a party of adventurers who regroup after having split from one another five years before. Led by a half-elven warrior (voiced by Michael Rosenbaum of "Smallville"), the group encounters a barbarian princess (voiced by Lucy Lawless of "Xena") and helps protect her against dark forces who seek her mysterious healing staff. The film is rated 'PG-13' for fantasy action violence.

Weis and Hickman started the franchise, based on the "Dungeons & Dragons" pen-and-paper game system, in 1984, with the best-selling novel *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, the first in the three-part "Dragonlance Chronicles" series. The duo said they wanted to see a filmed version of their novel since writing it more than 20 years ago.

"Our editor, when it first came out in 1984, took us out for a party lunch," Hickman said. "She had written a joke letter that said, 'congratulations, your book has been optioned to be produced by Paramount Pictures.'"

Paramount is fulfilling that prophecy with a DVD laden with bonus material, including featurettes on the voice acting and music. Weis and Hickman not only had a hand in nearly every aspect of the film's production, they helped produce the bonus material as well.

"Working with George (Stray-

ton, who adapted the screenplay) and Will (Meugniot, director) and (composer) Karl Preusser has just been a gift," Weis said. "Certainly, hearing horror stories with authors that have no say with the adaptation, the fact that we were included every step of the way, even getting to participate in recording sessions for the music, it's just been wonderful."

"The very fact that they showed us an early version of the script, took notes from us and made changes, is amazing to us both," Hickman added. "That level of participation between novelists and filmmakers is unprecedented."

Weis and Hickman were given such a say in the film that at one point the authors protested a scene being cut in which the sorcerer Raistlin (voiced by Kiefer Sutherland of "24") takes pity on a dwarf creature, showing the inherent goodness in a dark character. The scene went back in.

The authors said they couldn't be happier with the film thus far, that they'd like to see more films from the series (there are now more than 190 "Dragonlance" books) and are open to the possibility of live-action adaptations.

"I think the perception for a long time has been that DTVs are somehow children of a lesser god," Hickman said. "The fact of the matter is, going DTV with this particular film almost ensures we can go back and do the second and the third books."

In the meantime, fans can see previews of the DVD on YouTube as well as dragonlance-movie.com.

### ■ More Upcoming Fantasy:

■ *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (Warner; Dec. 11): DVD \$28.98, two-DVD special edition \$34.99, Blu-ray Disc or HD DVD/DVD combo \$35.99, and boxed sets of all five "Harry Potter" films (DVD \$119.97, Blu-ray or HD DVD \$149.99)

■ *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire* (Warner; Dec. 11): Blu-ray or HD DVD \$29.99 each

■ *Blade Runner* (Warner; Dec. 18): five-disc *Ultimate Collector's Edition* \$78.92 DVD, \$99.98 Blu-ray or HD DVD; four-DVD *Collector's Edition* \$34.99; five-disc *Complete Collector's Edition* Blu-ray or HD DVD \$39.99; two-DVD *Final Cut* \$20.97

■ *Stardust* (Paramount; Dec. 18): DVD \$29.99, HD DVD \$39.99

■ *Pan's Labyrinth* (New Line; Dec. 26): Blu-ray Disc or HD DVD \$35.99

■ *Dragon Wars* (Sony Pictures; Jan. 8, 2008): DVD \$28.95, Blu-ray \$38.95, UMD \$24.94

■ *Beauty and the Beast: The Third Season* (Paramount; Feb. 5, 2008): three-DVD set \$50.99

■ *Turok, Son of Stone* (Genius/Weinstein; Feb. 5, 2008; prebook Dec. 26): DVD \$19.95

