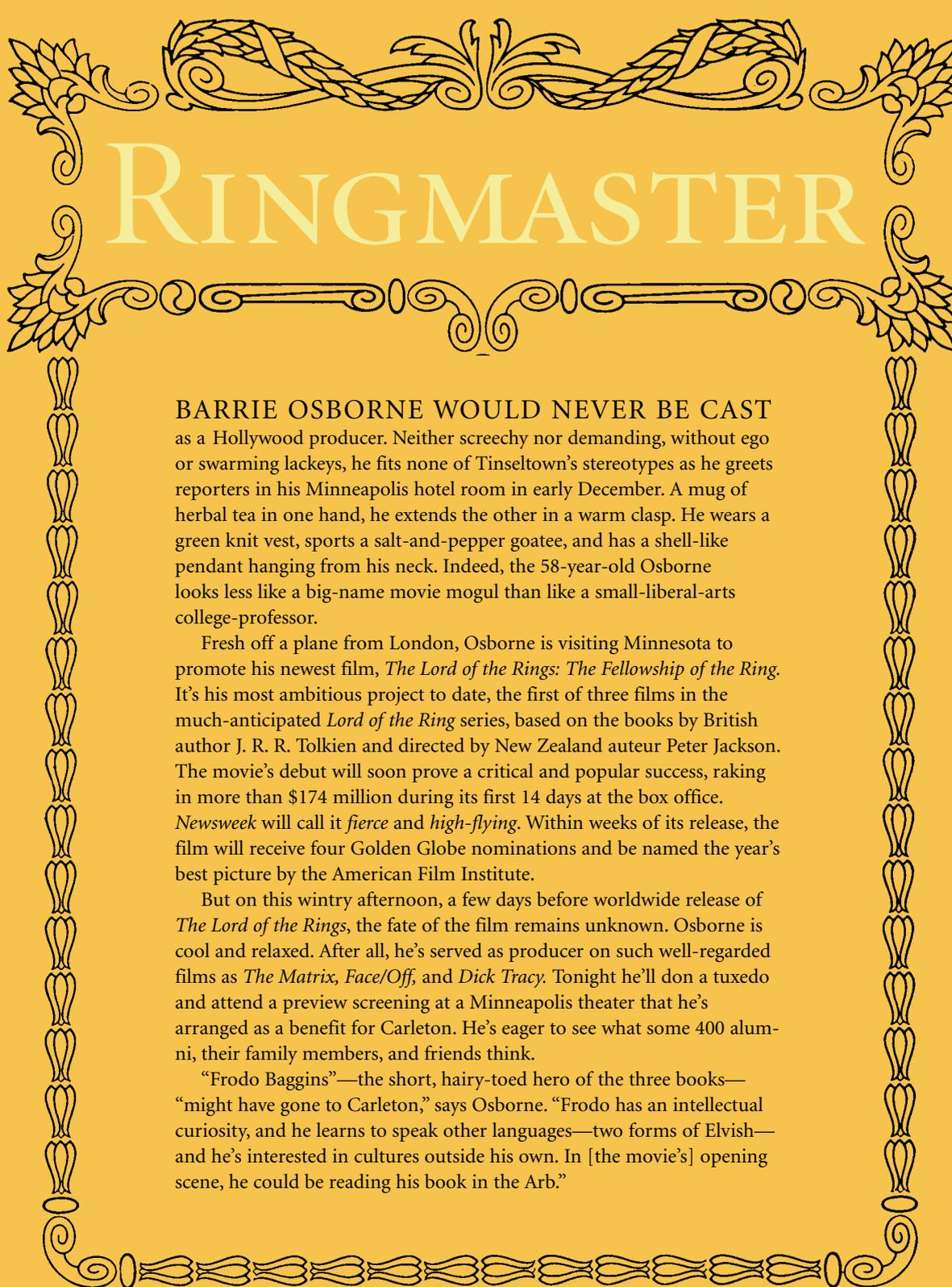




PRODUCER BARRIE M. OSBORNE '66

**HAS OVERSEEN A STRING OF
BOX-OFFICE SUCCESSES, FROM *THE
MATRIX* TO THE RECENT *LORD OF THE
RINGS: THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE RING***



RINGMASTER

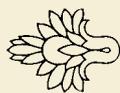
BARRIE OSBORNE WOULD NEVER BE CAST as a Hollywood producer. Neither screechy nor demanding, without ego or swarming lackeys, he fits none of Tinseltown's stereotypes as he greets reporters in his Minneapolis hotel room in early December. A mug of herbal tea in one hand, he extends the other in a warm clasp. He wears a green knit vest, sports a salt-and-pepper goatee, and has a shell-like pendant hanging from his neck. Indeed, the 58-year-old Osborne looks less like a big-name movie mogul than like a small-liberal-arts college-professor.

Fresh off a plane from London, Osborne is visiting Minnesota to promote his newest film, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*. It's his most ambitious project to date, the first of three films in the much-anticipated *Lord of the Ring* series, based on the books by British author J. R. R. Tolkien and directed by New Zealand auteur Peter Jackson. The movie's debut will soon prove a critical and popular success, raking in more than \$174 million during its first 14 days at the box office. *Newsweek* will call it *fierce* and *high-flying*. Within weeks of its release, the film will receive four Golden Globe nominations and be named the year's best picture by the American Film Institute.

But on this wintry afternoon, a few days before worldwide release of *The Lord of the Rings*, the fate of the film remains unknown. Osborne is cool and relaxed. After all, he's served as producer on such well-regarded films as *The Matrix*, *Face/Off*, and *Dick Tracy*. Tonight he'll don a tuxedo and attend a preview screening at a Minneapolis theater that he's arranged as a benefit for Carleton. He's eager to see what some 400 alumni, their family members, and friends think.

"Frodo Baggins"—the short, hairy-toed hero of the three books—"might have gone to Carleton," says Osborne. "Frodo has an intellectual curiosity, and he learns to speak other languages—two forms of Elvish—and he's interested in cultures outside his own. In [the movie's] opening scene, he could be reading his book in the Arb."

by Joel Hoekstra



AN EPIC IN THE MAKING

In *The Lord of the Rings*, young Frodo leaves his hometown for distant Mount Doom, embarking on a journey that is risky, complicated, and all-consuming. The same might be said of Osborne's own foray into Middle-earth.

Three years into the project, he is both exhilarated and weary. In an effort to save time and money, Osborne and director Peter Jackson agreed to shoot footage for all three films simultaneously. "After doing three films at once, I don't think I'd ever do it again," Osborne says. "The overlap of responsibility makes it extremely difficult. When you do two at once, you can actually lay out a schedule and it kind of makes sense. Trying to lay out a schedule for three is almost impossible. To get these things to overlap in a way that is productive was pretty hard.

"My role was keeping the film on track, helping with casting, overseeing the incredibly [complex] logistics, and working with the studio. I spent all of my time on the set and often I felt more like I was running a studio than running a movie."

Measured in numbers, the feat is astonishing: 274 days of filming in more than a hundred locations; more than 48,000 pieces of armor, weapons, prosthetics, and special-effects models; 1,500 costumes; a cast of 22 marquee actors, including Ian McKellen, Cate Blanchett, Elijah Wood, Viggo Mortensen, and Liv Tyler—plus innumerable extras, and a crew of 2,000 members who built more than 15 miles of road to reach remote shooting locations in New Zealand. Osborne, along with Jackson and two other producers, managed a budget of nearly \$300 million. When the last film is released in December 2003, the producer will have spent five years on the trilogy.

It all began with a trip to New Zealand in 1999. Shortly after the release of *The Matrix*, a multi-million-dollar blockbuster heralded for its innovative special effects, Osborne flew to Wellington to meet Jackson. The director, probably best known for his 1994 Academy Award-nominated *Heavenly Creatures*, had long been obsessed with Tolkien's books and had finally convinced executives at New Line Cinema that a film adaptation could be a box-office hit. Jackson proposed making two films simultaneously—a wildly risky move that would prove to be shrewd if the pictures succeeded and foolhardy if they flopped. As Osborne tells it, "Peter did a presentation, and Bob Shaye [chairman and founder of New Line] said, 'You want me to invest in two films? Why would anyone in their right mind invest in two films when they could invest in three?' It was a pretty gutsy decision to make."

Osborne found Jackson's ideas equally compelling. "I met Peter for breakfast at this little seaside restaurant called the Chocolate Fish," Osborne recalls. "And Peter came in with his short pants and his bare feet, looking like a hobbit, and he had this really great approachable demeanor and a wonderful sense of humor. I thought, 'I could definitely go through a movie with this guy.'"

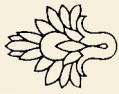


The Upper Cannon Flats Skiffle Ensemble (ca. 1966)—CLOCKWISE FROM THE TOP: Barrie M. Osborne on washtub bass, Rod Bellville on mandolin, John D. Bell on guitar, Philip Schleif on Tavola jug, William P. Goodrich Jr. on guitar, and Thomas Adler on banjo.

THE LIST

Barrie Osborne's movies:

- The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001, producer)
- The Last Place on Earth* (2000, producer)
- The Matrix* (1999, executive producer)
- Face/Off* (1997, producer)
- The Fan* (1996, executive producer)
- Rapa Nui* (1994, executive producer)
- Wilder Napalm* (1993, executive producer)
- Kinderspiele* (1992, executive producer)
- China Moon* (1991, producer)
- Dick Tracy* (1990, executive producer)
- Child's Play* (1988, executive producer)
- Peggy Sue Got Married* (1986, executive producer)
- Fandango* (1985, associate producer)
- The Cotton Club* (1984, line producer)
- The Big Chill* (1983, associate producer)
- The Escape Artist* (1982, production manager)
- Cutter's Way* (1981, associate producer)
- Apocalypse Now* (1979, production manager)



COFFEE, MR. COPPOLA?

Once upon a time, it seemed fantasy itself to suppose that Osborne would become one of Hollywood's most sought-after producers. "I remember Barrie as a lamb, not a lion," says Bill Dietrich '66, who roomed with Osborne at Carleton. "He was kind, soft-spoken, noncompetitive, and artistic—sort of a sheep among the howling intellectual wolves that prowled Carleton."

A colorful sheep, though. Typically dressed in a striped shirt, bomber jacket, and leather boots, he was rarely seen without his signature goatee and meerschaum pipe. The son of a Connecticut jeweler and his wife, he had a connoisseur's taste for wine. He played hockey during his sophomore year and strummed wash-tub bass in a student band. Ken Berk '66, another former roommate, recalls setting up a still to make beer in their dorm room: "Finally, we had to see if we had a product," Berk recalls. "It really smelled up the place, but when you mixed it with the orange juice in the machines downstairs, it didn't taste too bad. We called it Old Oz [after Osborne]. It was a specialty treat."

Osborne eventually majored in sociology, but John Bell '67, a longtime pal and onetime *Carletonian* editor, recalls thinking Osborne would have made an excellent journalist. Even then, Bell says, Osborne had "persistent curiosity, hunger for knowledge in diverse fields, a love of people and cultures, and a chronic thirst for a good story."

Osborne's future, however, was for Uncle Sam to decide when he graduated during the height of the Vietnam War in 1966. He built roads and bridges in Korea for the Army Corps of Engineers, rising to the rank of first lieutenant and honing his organizational, scheduling, and management skills. His ability to complete a project on time and on budget would prove useful in the years ahead.

By the time he returned from Korea in 1970, Osborne had his eye on the film industry. He took a job with a New York studio that made TV commercials. The work wasn't glamorous—"getting people coffee and running the Address-o-graph machine," Osborne says—but his boss took a shine to him. "He used to let me do budgets. I knew he would take my budgets and throw them in the waste can, but it was an outstanding chance for me to learn."

Osborne eventually used his commercial experience to obtain a prestigious internship with the Directors Guild of America. "The very first picture I was put on was *Godfather: Part II*," he says, recalling his good fortune. Work on *Three Days of the Condor* and *All the President's Men* followed. Osborne worked with such cinematic legends as Francis Ford Coppola and Sydney Pollack, and in ways large and small assisted with the production of such big-budget films as *Apocalypse Now* and *The Cotton Club*. During a brief tenure with Walt Disney Pictures in the 1980s, he oversaw creation of *Ruthless People*, *The Color of Money*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, and *Good Morning, Vietnam*. His executive producing credits include *The Fan*, *Child's Play*, *Wilder Napalm*, and *Rapa Nui*, among others.

His success makes producing look easy, but Osborne warns: "You have to have a lot of perseverance. It's extremely hard to get into the business and you'll get a lot of rejection. But if you really want to get into it and you're committed and interested and love the business, you can succeed. I started from the very bottom and had only two things to offer people—dependability and enthusiasm."



THE MIDAS TOUCH

Over the years, Osborne has built a reputation in Hollywood as a budget balancer and a dealmaker. He brings multi-million-dollar pictures in on time and on budget. With seeming ease and dexterity, he navigates the perilous shoals of the business: needy stars, egomaniacal directors, tightfisted studio execs. Rumor has it that he once kept a picture on budget by getting a director to pay for an expensive battle scene with his own money.

"At every step of the production, he's really good at cutting to the heart of the matter and solving problems. And he does it in a diplomatic and nonconfrontational way," says Jim Slocum '79, a Los Angeles-based writer/director/producer who tapped Osborne as executive producer for a small-budget film he recently completed, *The Last Place on Earth*.

What's more, Osborne is easygoing and affable—traits that aren't easy to come by in Hollywood. "Barrie stays focused and he's really nice," Slocum says. "People want to work with him."

And given the success of *The Lord of the Rings*, he probably won't be short of job offers anytime soon. Still, Osborne, who now splits his time between Hollywood and a New Zealand home that he shares with his companion, Carol Kim, insists that he'll be ready for a break when work on the Tolkien series finishes.

"I'd like to take some substantial time off to develop some ideas," he says. "The thing about the film business is, each time you go out it's a different set of challenges because you're telling a story. And each time you're telling a story, it's going to be different, so the demands will be different. That's why I like doing a wide range of pictures. If I were just doing studio pictures in L.A., I'd get bored."

For now, however, there's Frodo Baggins and his journey to contend with. It's a trip that has dazzled readers for decades, Osborne notes, and it's a story that seems particularly apropos in an era of jihad, anthrax, and anger.

"Many parts of the movie for me are about tolerance and openness to other cultures and other societies," Osborne says. "The whole fate of Middle-earth hinges upon these cultures joining together to fight evil. A liberal arts education goes a long way toward promoting tolerance. And what better place to get a liberal arts education than Carleton?"

JOEL HOEKSTRA, a Minneapolis writer and editor, is a frequent contributor to the *Voice*.

RING CEREMONY



It turns out that Hollywood and New York City weren't the only places to attend a premiere of one of the year's hottest films. On December 12, hundreds of Carls gathered at the State Theatre in downtown Minneapolis for a sneak peek at the much-anticipated *Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*.

Barrie Osborne '66, one of the film's producers, hosted the event—and helped bring the movie to Minnesota—as a benefit for Carleton. In addition to raising more than \$20,000 for the College, movie-goers got an advance screening of a film that went on to achieve a rare cinema trifecta: a critical and popular success that stays true to a much-beloved book.

Select ticketholders were invited to a prescreening reception at a downtown restaurant, where they had a chance to hear Osborne talk about shooting *The Lord of the Rings* in New Zealand, question him about his movie career, and get a *Rings* poster autographed by the producer.

"The reception was great," says Bonnie Wheaton '66, who traveled from Wheaton, Ill., to attend the event. "Barrie was articulate, interesting, self-effacing, and an all-around nice guy. His comments about good and evil and critical and independent thinking were very appropriate."

People who attended the sold-out main event were similarly enthusiastic about the evening. John Stout '62, a founder of the Minnesota Film Board, which helped organize the showing, says he was impressed by the movie and wants to see it again.

"Barrie is an incredibly talented producer," says Stout. "It was extremely well done—the set design, costumes and makeup, special effects, and acting. I haven't seen an undertaking on that scale before."

TOP TO BOTTOM: *Lord of the Rings* producer Barrie Osborne '66 autographed movie posters for guests at a December 12 premiere held in Minneapolis as a benefit for Carleton. Fans traveled from across the country to meet Osborne and to attend the first U.S. showing of *The Lord of the Rings*. Osborne and his companion, Carol Kim.



DAN MARSHALL



ABOVE LEFT: *The Lord of the Rings* screening planning committee members (from left): Tom Merritt '66, Kristen Henning Bartel '75, Joan Higinbotham '66, Vivian Klauber, Jennifer Hantho, Barrie Osborne '66, Rob Scarlett '66, Fred Krohn '68, John Bell '66, John Stout '62, Bob McFarland '66. ABOVE RIGHT: Ann Dayton '95 and Scott Dayton were among 200 Carleton alumni and guests who attended a prescreening reception with Osborne.



ABOVE LEFT: President Steve Lewis introduces Osborne to guests at the reception before the movie. ABOVE RIGHT: KARE-11 news anchor Diana Pierce interviewed John Bell '66 at the reception. BELOW LEFT: A *Lord of the Rings* board game, designed by St. Olaf grad Chris Peterson, was given away as a door prize to three lucky attendees. BELOW RIGHT: Classmates from the class of 1966 (from left): John Bell, Tom Merritt, Sharon Merritt, Joan Higinbotham, Barrie Osborne, Rob Scarlett, Bonnie McNaughton Wheaton, Martha Hulings Kaemmer, Bob McFarland.

