

A photograph from the movie 'Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End' featuring Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Swann and Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Sparrow. Elizabeth Swann is on the left, wearing a dark, ornate, scale-like dress with gold embroidery and a dark, pointed hat. Captain Jack Sparrow is on the right, wearing his signature brown leather pirate hat with a red band, a dark coat, and a red sash. They are standing outdoors with a bright, hazy background. The image is framed by a dark green border at the top and bottom.

Keira Knightley as Elizabeth Swann and Johnny Depp as Captain Jack Sparrow in *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*

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Ted Elliott & Terry Rossio: *Pirates III*

When wrapping up the most celebrated franchise of their 20-year partnership—and one of the most lucrative trilogies in movie history—Ted Elliott and Terry Rossio hit a few rough waves.

Says Rossio, “Personally, what I learned is by the time you get to the third movie in a trilogy—you’ve got too many characters! All of our actors are amazing, and all the characters are compelling (to us at least) and you find out that there isn’t enough screen time to do them all justice.”

According to Elliott, tying up storylines for legions of characters is as simple as mass casualties: “We’d joke that the whole thing would be a lot easier if, at the end of *Dead Man’s Chest*, a whole bunch of characters just got hit by a bus. It didn’t get a lot of laughs from the actors, though.”

Script asked the duo to shed some light on their collaborative process, the films that influenced them, and what’s next for the writers.

favorite genre would be R&B, particularly 70’s R&B. I do find myself humming *Fugue for Tinhorns* from *Guys and Dolls* a lot ... also, Elmer Bernstein’s theme from *The Comancheros* ... stop asking hard questions.

2. What is your favorite film?

Terry: Well, there are films that I admire or that I think are the best, like *Casablanca*, *It’s a Wonderful Life*, etc. And then there are films I think are underrated, like *Darby O’Gill and the Little People*. But if you ask my favorite, I have to say the one I’ve watched the most, and I think that would be *All That Jazz*.

Ted: Ah, this one’s easy, but not a particularly original answer: *Casablanca*.

4. What do you feel has been your most important professional accomplishment to date?

Terry: I’m not sure any of my professional accomplishments are important. I have a distinct feeling that I haven’t really done much yet.

Important to me, I guess, are the stories that have been imagined but are yet to be written, which I think hold promise. I think perhaps our screenwriting website, Wordplay.com, has been useful to a lot of people.

Ted: I think it was the opening night of the first *Pirates* movie, seeing a little girl talking to her grandmother about the movie on the way out of the theater, and they were both smiling and laughing ... that sums it up pretty well.

“[Watching all 1,800 episodes of *Dark Shadows*] teaches you that the first rule of entertainment is conviction, absolute commitment to what you are doing.”

—TERRY ROSSIO

1. What is your favorite piece of music?

Terry: I can do an elaborate line-by-line analysis of the lyrics to *Maggie May* by Rod Stewart and *Hotel California* by Don Henley. But, I guess if I check out the play count on my iTunes® list, it turns out Barbra Streisand with *The Way We Were* holds the number-one spot. I’m haunted by the line, “If we had to do it all again, would we? Could we?”

Ted: Well, that’s ... interesting. I don’t know that I have a favorite piece of music ... my

3. What is your favorite TV program, past or current?

Terry: *Dark Shadows*. My girlfriend and I are in the process of watching all 1,800 episodes in order. Gothic melodrama, ghosts and vampires, coffins and werewolves. It teaches you that the first rule of entertainment is conviction, absolute commitment to what you are doing.

Ted: Hmm ... I think I’d have to go with *The Rockford Files*. Or *The Dick Van Dyke Show*. Or—you know, this “favorites” thing is killing me.

5. Which project do you feel didn’t live up to what you envisioned?

Terry: We had our vision abandoned on *Godzilla*, which is too bad because our screenplay, with Jan de Bont directing, would, I daresay, have been the film people wanted to see.

Ted: Yeah, that one was tough. *The Road to El Dorado* was another one that stings. That was so compromised and infantilized from what it should have been, it’s just painful to think about.

