

Depp

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block and assorted demons. Filming on "Secret Window" began the week before "Pirates of the Caribbean" opened, and the casting process began long before that.

Director David Koepp said he had to convince the studio to hire Depp, who has a history of appearing in under-performing movies.

"I really had to work to get him into the movie," Koepp said. "Johnny's always been respected as a fine actor, but he's never been known as a person who opens movies."

"Of course, once 'Pirates' opened huge, we became the studio's favorite movie. Suddenly, we didn't cost that much to make and we had a big movie star."

Koepp, who wrote the screenplay for "Secret Window" based on a King novella, said he broke his own rule against assigning a particular actor's face to a character during the writing process.

"Johnny sort of popped into my head midway through the first draft, and he wouldn't leave. But the more I thought about, the more it made sense."

"In the first half of the movie, this guy is in the house not doing anything. I really needed an actor who's inventive and who will make enough idiosyncratic choices to make it entertaining to watch. And let's face it, Johnny Depp could make a nap interesting to watch."

His choice of roles has been questioned by others, but never by Depp himself.

"I have no regrets," he said. "I am glad I did every single role."

"My career was never about commercial success," he added. "I was in it for the long haul. I decided early on to be patient and wait for the roles that interested me, not the roles that would advance my career. I never wanted to be remembered for being a star."

"It wasn't that I was rejecting Hollywood; I was rejecting the idea of being a product."

So, when he met with a Disney executive to discuss the possibility of being a voice in an animated movie, he said he was not trying to make a smart career move.

"I only wanted to be in a movie



PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE GAMECOCK
Johnny Depp is trying to follow up his success in "Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl" with his role in the Stephen King-based thriller, "Secret Window."

that my kids could see. Then he mentioned that they were considering a movie based on the Pirates of the Caribbean ride, and I said I was in. There was no screenplay, no director, nothing. For some unknown reason, I just said I was in."

Depp, dressed in blue jeans, a long-sleeve blue shirt and a wristful of silver jewelry, said he had no idea that "Pirates" was a big-budget movie with strong commercial aspirations. That might have dissuaded him from taking the role.

"I thought it was a small movie until they showed us an early trailer while we were still filming in the Caribbean. All of a sudden, I realized I was in a big Disney film. It looked enormous."

Playing his pirate character as

a slightly effeminate, slightly inebriated version of Rolling Stones guitarist Keith Richards (a friend of Depp's who seems to have taken the impersonation good-naturedly), Depp unexpectedly found himself in unfamiliar territory—a bankable star fresh off a commercial success.

"I had never experienced that before," Depp said with a laugh. "And it's been fun to visit Hollywood and talk to studios as a bankable actor for a change."

"But I've been around long enough to know that one week, you're on the exclusive list of five or 10 guys who can open a movie, and then the next week, you're off the list. It's been a fun ride, and I'm enjoying it for all it's worth."

'Apprentice' displays reality of Trump job

BY WILLIAM SHERMAN
 KRT CAMPUS

So what's it really like to work for Donald Trump? Never mind the hit show "The Apprentice" and the infamous boardroom where losing contestants get summarily fired after a grilling.

That dimly lit luxurious room with its great polished table is a set piece and in fact does not exist at Trump's 26th-floor headquarters at 56th and Fifth.

Up there, in a warren of unpretentious, messy offices — including Trump's own — is where the real action is, where the mogul and a small coterie of trusted lieutenants and assistants run an empire of real estate, hotels, casinos and golf courses with more than \$10.2 billion in annual revenues.

"It is a dictatorship, not a democracy," said George Ross, 76, one of Trump's two advisers on the show, and in actuality his general counsel and executive vice president.

For the uninitiated, "The Apprentice," a reality series, features two teams of eight aspiring entrepreneurs who are given tasks by Trump. Each week one of them is fired and at the show's conclusion next month, the sole survivor will be rewarded with a \$250,000-a-year job in the Trump Organization.

Life on the 26th floor does bear some resemblance to the spirit of "The Apprentice."

The action is fast, but there is no sign of competition because everyone is on the same team.

Trump is more present here than the Trump of the show. He's faster, impatient and more dominant. Suddenly he appears at the doorway of Ross' office.

"How's it going?" he asks Ross about a particular deal.

"Donald, I think you left too much on the table," Ross ventured, suggesting that Trump had been too generous.

"I always leave too much on the table," Trump said laughing

as he whirled away back to his office down the hall.

"It's his money, and I can suggest, I can argue, but it's his final say," Ross said during a series of interviews with several of Trump's key employees.

And saying, "You're fired," is mild compared to what really happens when an employee is dishonest or disloyal, Ross said.

"Donald goes absolutely ballistic, screaming, yelling, cursing and you could not print the words he says, you wouldn't want to be there," he said.

Ross and Carolyn Kepcher, Trump's other adviser on "The Apprentice," described their boss as demanding but loyal.

Kepcher said she works 60- to 70-hour weeks, seldom getting home before 8 p.m. "I try to get home before the children get to sleep," she said.

Golf, Kepcher said, is Trump's passion. "He's always looking for ways to improve things, including his golf game."

Ross and Kepcher said Trump often fusses over details, right down to the color and type of doorknobs.

On other matters, infinitely more important than doorknobs, Trump delegates freely.

"He doesn't read contracts, no matter how big," Ross said. "I negotiate them, I write them, I read them and he signs them."

Time, on the 26th floor, seems to be Trump's enemy. On this day, he is way behind schedule. There is a line of four people with appointments in the reception area. One of them has waited for three hours.

Trump's desk is covered with piles of papers. There's a computer on a table 15 feet away, but Trump doesn't use it.

Paper is the medium here, memos and notes. When he approves, Trump customarily jots "OK — DT."

Foerderer said for all Trump's toughness and impatience, he likes to promote people from within his organization.

For example, she said, two former security guards hired more than 15 years ago are now in charge of various operations in New York and Florida.

"He likes to see what you can do and let you run with it," she said. "That is sort of like the show."

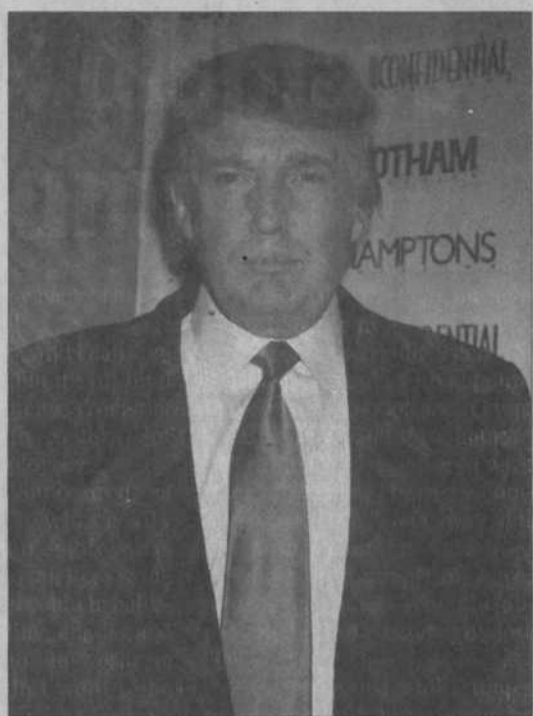


PHOTO COURTESY OF KRT CAMPUS
Billionaire Donald Trump will choose a new employee out of a group of entrepreneurs on his reality series, "The Apprentice."

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