

## Press Release



# The Lord of the Rings: Gollum: How We Made Movie Magic

by [Andy Serkis](#)

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Alchemy of Acting and Technology Brings to Life One of Literature's Most Unforgettable Creations

## About the Book

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In *The Lord of the Rings: Gollum*, Andy Serkis tells the behind-the-scenes story of a breakthrough cinematic achievement — the creation of the world's first completely lifelike computer-generated (CG) character. Serkis, the actor who breathed the life and soul into Gollum, describes in his own words how an amazing synthesis of acting, animation, and digital technology produced the most engaging, interactive, and authentic CG character ever to appear in a live-action film. Serkis shares with readers every stage of his journey, including the sometimes surprising sources of his inspiration. More than a hundred exclusive behind-the-scenes photos and drawings in the book illustrate his experience.

Although Serkis was originally meant to provide only the vocal performance for Gollum (during a three-week period), his contributions were ultimately much greater and spanned five years, during which he endowed the character with an "emotional backbone." Serkis's voice characterizations and body and facial movements served as the electronic blueprint for the animators and technicians who conjured up the onscreen character, and it was Serkis's physical presence and fully realized acting performance — later removed digitally — that served as the foil for the other actors.

Serkis explains the myriad of complex processes that went into each and every Gollum shot, including:

- **On-set performance:** recording positions and performance on 35mm film
- **Motion capture:** taking what the actor does physically and converting it, in real time, into the computer-generated Gollum model
- **ADR (Automated Dialogue Replacement):** laying down vocal tracks for the animators to work from

- **Animation:** developing and refining the character, frame by frame, using all of the above as a touchstone for putting Gollum into the scenes with the other actors

Chris Ward, an ADR recordist, remarks that "people find it hard to believe that there is no electronic processing applied to the original vocal track to enhance the texture or timbre of Gollum's voice, and even other sound editors have difficulty believing that the magic is one hundred percent pure Andy." But it is.

Serkis found an unlikely influence for Gollum's unique voice — a sick cat! Using his cat as a model, Serkis created a voice characterized by pain and anguish, emotions he had to act out fully in order for the voice to work. Although it was physically demanding, Serkis chose to crouch on all fours on the recording stage, in order to ensure that his vocal quality was coming from the right part of his body. (And aiding in the process was a concoction called Gollum juice, which Serkis describes as a mixture of "lemon, honey, ginger, and hot water — which I consumed by the bucketload to keep everything well oiled.")

While he looked to a cat for vocal inspiration, Serkis turned elsewhere to understand Gollum's psyche. He found most of what he needed in Tolkien's rich writing; and sketches by the renowned Tolkien illustrators (and conceptual designers for the films) Alan Lee and John Howe influenced him significantly as well. One pencil sketch by Howe, in particular, which portrayed Gollum "as a cross between a homeless junkie and a survivor of a concentration camp," was a defining image for Serkis. The actor found the concept of drug addiction, specifically, to be key — "a tangible metaphor" for the corrupting power of the Ring.

Serkis's passion and dedication to getting at Gollum's core were instrumental in making the character as real and textured as he is. Also instrumental were the artists, animators, and technicians who pushed the boundaries of film technology. **GOLLUM** features commentary from many members of this talented creative team and celebrates their pioneering work.

Bringing Gollum to life was truly a collaborative effort and one of the most ambitious projects in the making of *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. It was a daunting challenge (after all, "this one lone character had the emotional, psychological, and physical depth of one of the most complex personalities in literary history," says Remington Scott, the motion capture supervisor), but everyone involved met the challenge and, indeed, even exceeded expectations. What the group achieved was filmmaking history.