

Brad Pitt to star in a sci-fi version of Greek classic, The Odyssey

Brad Pitt, the actor, is to star in a futuristic version of Homer's The Odyssey, according to US reports.

The big screen adaptation of the Greek epic will be produced by Warner Bros and will see Pitt return to acting in the ancient classics.

Pitt has previously starred in Troy, which was based on Homer's epic poem The Iliad.

Although critics considered Wolfgang Petersen's Troy a failure, the actor who is married to Angelina Jolie is ready to return to era of the Trojan war.

But this Hollywood remake of The Odyssey promises to be very different as it will be a science fiction

version based in space, according to the reports in Variety, the entertainment magazine.

The storyline centres on the 10-year journey home of Greek general Odysseus following the fall of Troy and will be directed by George Miller, the director of Mad Max, according to the paper.

Miller is currently directing a forthcoming superhero tale 'Justice League' which will combine Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman in one film.

Pitt has just finished filming David Fincher's 'The Curious Case of Benjamin Button' and Terrence Malick's 'Tree of Life' and he is about to star in Quentin Tarantino's World War II film, 'Inglourious Basterds'.

CAPTION: Spaced out: Brad Pitt to star in sci-fi version of The Odyssey Photo: AP



Greek scientists use lasers to clean Acropolis

ATHENS (Reuters) - In the past two and a half thousand years, the temples of the Acropolis have suffered fire, bombing and earthquake. Now, scientists are trying to save them from a new modern enemy: pollution.

Standing on a hilltop at the centre of Athens, a city of 4 million people, the Acropolis' elaborately sculptured stones have fallen prey to a film of black crust from car exhaust fumes, industrial pollution, acid rain and fires.

A team of Greek engineers and restorers are using an innovative laser technology system to clean the surface of the ancient monuments, uncovering colours and ornamentation hidden for decades.

"It is very serious," said Maria Ioannidou, director of the Acropolis Restoration Service, of the pollution. "It destroys sculptural, structural and painting details. One of our aims is to regain these cultural details using new technology."

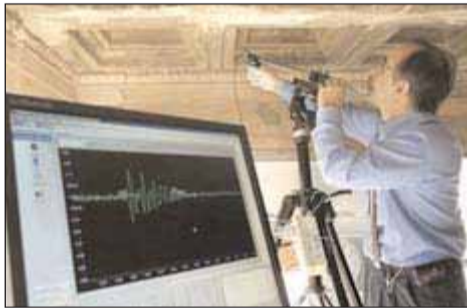
For years the team tested 40 different methods, including mechanical and chemical processes, to find the safest solutions to restore the white of the marbles without losing detail.

The winner was the brainchild of Crete's Foundation for Research and Technology, which created a system that uses two laser beams of infrared and ultraviolet rays simultaneously.

These rays have been used separately to clean ancient marble, but it was found that one left a yellow tint while the other left a grey one. The new system blasts off layers of black film leaving the marble details intact, without discoloration.

But it is a risky process.

"If you remove something you cannot put it back in place, so we must be quite sure that we remove unwanted pollutants and leave ... all the information on



the original surface," said Evi Papaconstantinou, the chemical engineer in charge of the team.

The system was first used on the sculptures of the west frieze of the Parthenon temple in 2004. Now the team has begun a second operation on the porch of the Caryatids, where besides pollution they must erase soot from fires and the mistakes of past restorers who tried to mend the roof with cement.

Scientists first scan the marbles with ultrasound and an infrared imaging and spectroscopy system to reveal what lies beneath the black crust. To their astonishment, they found colours, ornamentation and script that had been hidden for years.

Even wearing goggles, restorers can work only for two hours a day because of the flashing rays from the laser. They lie on a reclining doctor's chair to carry out the time consuming process on the roof inch by inch.

Restoring the Caryatid porch is expected to take one year, but the cleaning will continue as long as pollution persists.

"The conservation team will remain on the rock because the marble is alive. It will remain exposed to the atmosphere," said Papaconstantinou.

For years, archaeologists and scientists have debated how to protect the monuments from pollution, some even suggesting the temples be covered with domes. The creation of an Athens subway helped reduce pollution, but vehicles still cram the streets and the Greek capital remains blanketed in a thick smog. Acid rain has eroded some fine details from the porous marble of the Acropolis sculptures, including the Caryatids, and have had to be moved to museums and replaced with replicas. "We can't stop the pollution, but we can lessen the effects," said Ioannidou.

Greece to honour foreign warriors on Lord Byron's death date

ATHENS -- Greece will hold events to honour the English poet Lord Byron and other foreigners who fought in the early 19th century Greek war of independence from Ottoman rule, officials said on Thursday, cited by AFP.

A decree signed by Greek President Karolos Papoulias establishes April 19, the day Byron died fighting the Turks in 1824, as the "day of philhellenism and international solidarity," a Greek parliament statement said.

Byron died of a fever inside the besieged city of Messolonghi, western Greece, around a year after arriving with money and resources for the bedraggled Greek revolutionary forces.

His sacrifice inspired other young men from Britain, France, Italy, the United States and other countries to join the uprising which eventually liberated Greece with the intervention of the British, French and Russian governments.

Migrant pupils 'excluded'

Most of the country's schools have been unable to absorb foreign pupils, even though they account for a tenth of school-children, chiefly due to an absence of Greek language lessons on the syllabus, education experts say. Apart from failing to run regular Greek lessons, most schools use textbooks that reinforce the concept of a monocultural rather than a multicultural society and as a result immigrant pupils feel excluded and many drop out of school, according to a study by Thessaloniki's Aristotle University. The comprehensive two-year study, conducted on a sample of 4,500 teachers and 16,000 immigrant pupils, found that the 260 secondary schools that hold regular Greek language lessons for their foreign pupils have observed a marked improvement in these children's academic performance and in their social integration. Of the 16,000 foreign pupils questioned for the study, 6,000 had been attending Greek classes, according to Zoe Papanou of Aristotle University's pedagogical unit, who said these lessons played a crucial role in their social integra-

tion. "There are pupils who told me that the Greek lessons are what keep them at school," Papanou told Kathimerini. "These children have received the boost they needed but they also feel good because an effort has been made on their behalf," she added.

The study – titled "The Integration of Repatriated Greeks and Immigrant Children into Secondary Education" – is also reported to have been beneficial to some 4,500 teachers who were trained in the principles of multiculturalism. These teachers were provided with a guidebook suggesting the most "balanced" choice of textbooks. "Most textbooks do not take account of the multicultural nature of our society," Papanou said. According to figures from the National Statistics Service for 2005, the most recent available, there are 124,684 foreign pupils attending the country's primary and secondary schools. Of these, 34,500 were registered at state high schools. These figures are believed to have increased significantly over the past three years.