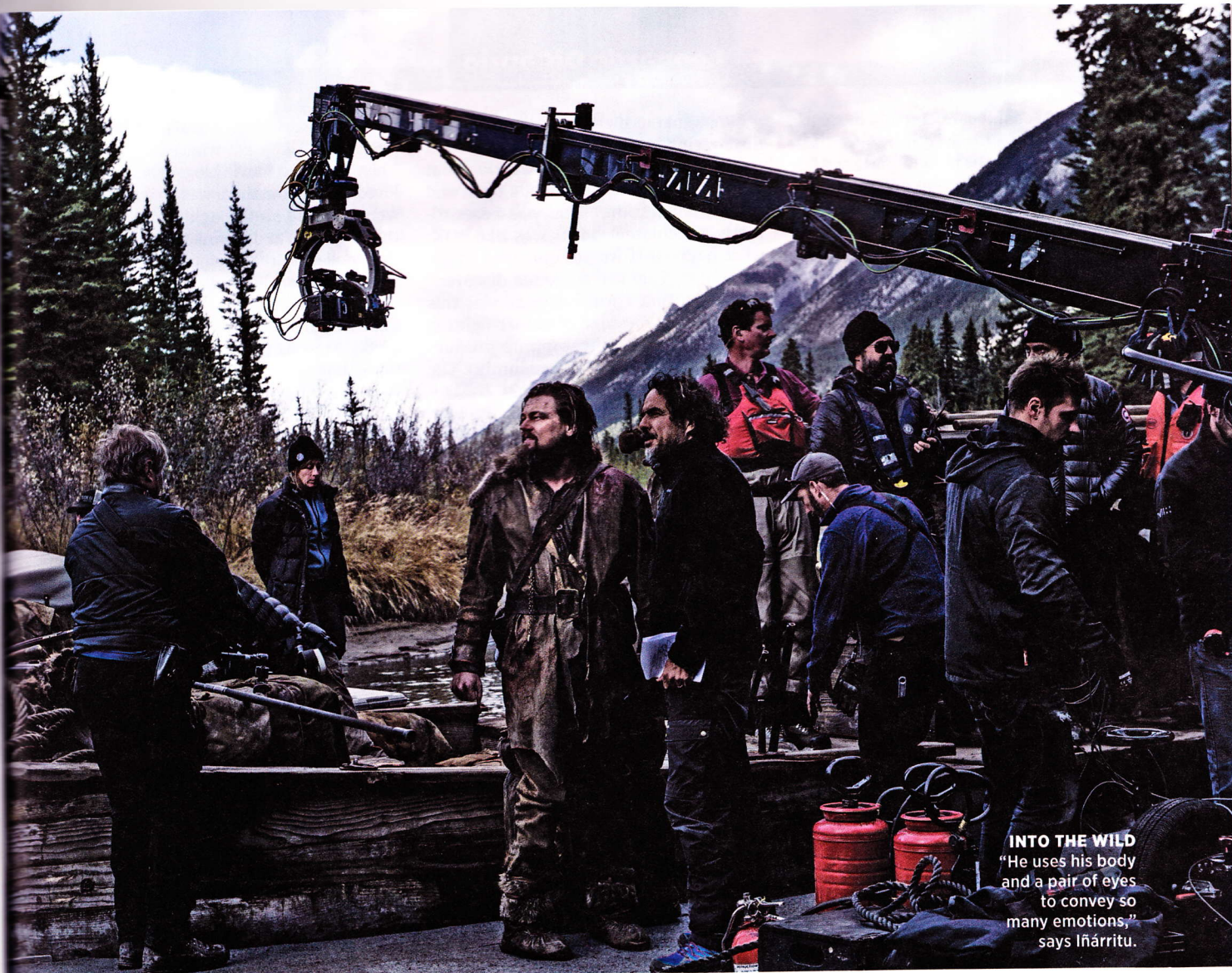




INTO THE WILD
 "He uses his body and a pair of eyes to convey so many emotions," says Iñárritu.

HERE'S THE TRANSITORY question on the table: Is this the year Leonardo DiCaprio finally wins an Oscar, after four nominations?

"Sure, everyone likes to be recognized, but that's out of my hands — other people control those things," DiCaprio tells me as he preps for an interview with a hurricane expert. "I will say it would help the film, bring it to more people."

The Revenant is like free guacamole to hungry film critics, with *Birdman* director Iñárritu at the helm and best-living cinematographer Emmanuel Lubezki shooting scenery that out-Malicks Terrence Malick. But it could be a tough sell to punters plopping down \$10 at the West Des Moines multiplex on date night. There are only two female characters in the film. One is murdered; the other is gang-raped by French trappers. The film is 156 minutes long, and it becomes quickly evident that any white character not named Hugh Glass is going to make the worst possible moral choice imaginable. But DiCaprio's performance holds this cinematic hellscape together. (When Iñárritu saw him with his long beard, he exulted, "This man is a fucking trapper!")

DiCaprio is largely silent for the film, a feat harder than it sounds.

"He uses his body, which is wounded, and a pair of eyes to convey so many emotions in takes that are six or eight minutes long," says Iñárritu. "He has to make us believe that he is cold, that he is wounded, that he is devastated, that he is angry, that he is hopeless. Without one word, you have to understand what this guy is thinking and feeling." There's a scene where DiCaprio finds his dead son and is broken. But he hears a crow singing beyond the trees. You can see him taking in death and life simultaneously.

"He was interacting and listening to every piece of nature and wind, and reacting to that," remembers Iñárritu. "That's the most difficult thing to do, and in the moment that he did that, I said, 'This guy is really present. He has this rhythm, and he owns that rhythm.'"

FOR DICAPRIO, THE ROOTS OF *The Revenant* and his environmental work all began with a meeting with then-Vice President Al Gore in 1998. DiCaprio had grown up with a melancholy for extinct creatures — he once impressed Dr.

Kirk Johnson, the director of the National Museum of Natural History, with his knowledge of the long-gone great auk, a bird hunted to extinction in the 1800s.

"I remember the thing that I got the most sad about when I was little was the loss of species that have been as a result of mankind's intrusion on nature," says DiCaprio, whose Los Angeles home features a massive fossil collection. He then mentions three species, only one of which I'd ever heard of: "Like the quagga or the Tasmanian tiger or the dodo bird."

Titanic came out in 1997, and DiCaprio went from promising actor of his generation to one of the most famous faces on the planet. There was the requisite news of bawdy behavior and a slew of model girlfriends, some of which still trickles out in the tabloids, as he remains single. You can ask him about it, but he will wave it off, saying, "I liked it when you went to see a movie and you didn't know everything about the actor."

Like Warren Beatty, Robert Redford and Paul Newman before him, DiCaprio longed to be seen as something more than just a panty-dropper. A friend set up a meeting with Gore. The vice president sketched out the planet and the atmo-