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This is one of our Retrospect issues, published from time-to-time, that we try to sandwich between cover stories on the latest Hollywood blockbusters. This one's on the esoteric side, the story of Paul Blaisdell, Hollywood's forgotten monster-maker. For those of you under 30, too young to have seen Blaisdell's work on the screen or in early television revivals, this one's a real history lesson, but one we think offers a fascinating look at the way low-budget movie special effects were done in the '50s. For the rest of us, who remember the films fondly, despite or perhaps because of their crudity, it's a nostalgic treat.

Washington, D.C.-based film buff Randy Palmer chronicles Blaisdell's colorful career from his monster-making film debut on the Roger Corman-produced BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES in 1953, with sidebar articles on Blaisdell's most famous creations, including Corman's cucumber Venusian from IT CONQUERED THE WORLD (1956), THE SHE-CREATURE (1956), pictured on our cover, the bug-eyed aliens of 1957'S INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN (left), and the protean spacecraft stowaway from IT: THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE (1958), the film that inspired ALIEN. After his brief but prolific career in the '50s, creating some of Hollywood's most famous monsters, Blaisdell found himself abandoned by Hollywood to years of inactivity, and death in obscurity in 1983.

Palmer draws on interviews with Blaisdell and years of correspondence with the low-budget effects genius, Blaisdell reminiscing to a fan in later years, to draw a fascinating picture of '50s exploitation moviemaking. Palmer also interviewed longtime Blaisdell fan and colleague Bob Burns, who worked at the monster-maker's side, and who provided a treasure-trove of full color photos documenting Blaisdell's career.

Renewed interest in Blaisdell's unique monster designs has been prompted by the recent marketing of high-priced, limited edition, model kits of his best work. An interest in Blaisdell's work persists despite the fact that his films are completely unavailable on home video.

Frederick S. Clarke

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MAY, 1990

CINEFANTASTIQUE

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Writer Frank Miller, from Gotham City to... By Dan Persons

If you’ve spent any time discovering the world of graphic novels, or tracing the path that Tim Burton and Sam Hamm took to come up with their noir-inspired BATMAN, the linking of writer Frank Miller with the protagonist of 1987’s summer hit is likely to be cause for rejoicing. It isn’t just that Miller’s 86 graphic novel Batman: The Dark Knight Returns was undeniably successful in bringing the Caped Crusader home from camp. It’s also that, by accident or design, ROBOCOP’S media-laced narrative and satiric mise-en-scene seems very much the filmic equivalent of Miller’s style and world view. Now, with Miller’s script for ROBOCOP 2 being translated to the screen by producer Jon Davison (ROBOCOP) and director Irvin Kershner (THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK), Miller has the chance to prove whether his darkly humorous style has a life beyond the printed page.

Speaking by phone from the film’s production offices in downtown Houston, Miller—who wrote the script in conjunction with Walon Green (THE WILD BUNCH)—admits he was at least as surprised by the assignment as most Hollywood insiders: “The phone rang, Jon Davison called me up and asked if I wanted to do a ROBOCOP movie. And it sounded like fun. I loved the direction [of the original ROBOCOP], I loved the idea of the hero, I loved the sick humor, and I loved its all-out assault on the Reagan era. The character has a tremendous amount of mystique and depth, despite the obvious limitations. It’s a fascinating creation, in a way. The original writers [Ed Neumeier and Michael Miner] managed to outdo any of the comic book movies by developing a comic book character that’s made for film. ROBOCOP would not be that potent a comic book, but as a film, he’s a better character than what we’ve seen before.”

It became Miller’s task to carry forward that character without succumbing to the pitfalls that snare many sequels. “I didn’t want to do an imitation, or a repetition,” said Miller. “I’m a very different writer than the original writers were. Irvin Kershner is a very different director than [ROBOCOP’S] Paul Verhoeven. This is not a repeat of the first. We took it in a very different direction.

“It is a continuation of the same character, in the same world. But this sort of story always reflects the time of the telling. The first one did such a lovely job of parodying the Reagan era, when the yuppies were riding high. Now we’re in the post-Reagan era, and I think that some of the themes will be very familiar, although obviously stylized.”

To touch that responsive chord in audiences looking fearfully toward the 21st century, Miller’s story features the continuing disenfranchisement of Old Detroit’s poor, spurred both by mega-corporation OCP’s plans for the Trump-styled Delta City, and by the devolution of ROBOCOP’S fashionable, upper-class drug abuse into a lower-class crime wave fueled by a crack-like street drug known as Nuke. While Miller considers this aspect of the story, “a fresh and daring perspective on the drug epidemic,” he also expressed hope that it will reflect what he considers the Bush administration’s cynical manipulation of the so-called “drug war.”

“I felt that it’s being very shrewdly used, that it’s being used like the supposed ‘red threat’ was being used a couple of generations ago,” said Miller. “While the statistics on drug addiction around the country are absolutely devastating, and while it causes so much crime, the point I would make to the side of this is that, in every generation, it seems parents become terrified of their children and look for some alien, outside force to explain why their children aren’t the little, cute things they were a couple of years earlier. It’s been everything from communism to comic books. I do think there’s a lot of people saying, ‘If it wasn’t for these Panamanians and these Columbians, everything would be fine and our kids would be just like us.’

“This is not a political screed of a movie, by any means. This is an adventure movie. But much like Dark Knight, I have the opportunity to have a lot of fun and be a little sharper-edged than one normally is with an adventure movie.”

The heads at Orion Pictures are probably delighted to hear Miller emphasize the adventure aspects of ROBOCOP 2. Having first hired Neumeir and Miner to create the sequel, only to receive from the team a script that Miller termed, “a departure,” Orion now seems happy enough with Miller’s concept to have scheduled June 22 for opening the film. The film will be up against the likes of DICK TRACY, TOTAL RECALL, and GREMLINS 2.

Despite reports that, when it comes to development of a property, Orion executives are better seen and not heard (or at least not paid attention to), Miller found his experience with them to be largely pleasant. “They were very good—other writer friends of mine have been astounded at the lack of horror stories,” he said. “We did go through many drafts, and there were many charged arguments about this point and that, but once we got rolling it’s been a pretty tight team.”

Tight enough that, unlike many screen-writers, Miller has become something of a fixture on the ROBOCOP 2 location, flown down to Houston to work revisions whenever necessary. With considerable enthusiasm, he describes this rarely-bes-towed honor as “exciting as hell.”
Old Detroit.

Miller, “This is a big movie. I’m used to working alone and now I’m working with 100 people. Working with Kersh is an on-going education; I’ve been involved in an amazing amount of what’s going on; my opinions have been well-respected.

“One of the most pleasant surprises has been seeing what Peter Weller can do when the opportunity arises. He’s able to convey so much, despite the fact that 98% of his body is covered. Through his body language, through his voice, through his general attitude, he turns RoboCop into a real, three-dimensional character. I’ve found that I can throw him things that I kept myself from throwing him before—because he can handle it.”

Given the positive experience on number two, would Miller consider doing ROBOCOP 3? “Yeah. Every time I write something, I think beyond—I could have done four more books of Dark Knight. I’ve got tons of ideas where things would go, with these powerful themes we’ve set up. The point of view in RoboCop is an amazing method to get inside a character’s head. You can tell what he’s thinking, you can see what he’s remembering, all of it with this fun, computer stuff. The character is really, really well conceived. I feel very much at home.”

Right: Peter Weller returns as Robocop, patrolling the crime-ridden streets of Old Detroit. Below: Robo is up against Gayln Gorg as Angie, the gun-toting moll of the drug lord peddling Nuke, a crack-like narcotic.
Tales from the Darkside: The Movie

Horror inspired by the TV hit, from the producers who brought you PET SEMATARY.

By Alan Jones

Laurel Entertainment's hit television show TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE finally comes to the big screen four years after being developed as a movie property. Paramount Pictures green-lighted the well-thumbed project after the smash boxoffice success of producer Richard P. Rubinstein and novelist Stephen King's PET SEMATARY. The three-part fantasy anthology contains another King story, "Cat from Hell," a Sir Arthur Conan Doyle mummy classic, "Lot 249," plus a new tale from BEETLEJUICE scripter Michael McDowell titled "Lover's Vow." With a screenplay by McDowell and George A. Romero, and Dick Smith serving as makeup effects consultant, the $3 million anthology was filmed in Yonkers last August, and opens nationwide April 20.

"PET SEMATARY surprised everyone," said David Kappes, coproducer of TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE: THE MOVIE. "It meant all the pieces fell into place making this a reality. Horror is still big boxoffice, but most movies in the marketplace these days are either sequels or past hit trade-offs. PET SEMATARY broke the trend by being something new. Laurel knew what they were doing and now we are being trusted again."

Although Kappes produced an ABC pilot show for Rubinstein's Laurel Productions in the past, DARKSIDE: THE MOVIE is his first feature project for the company. The last big special effects picture Kappes was involved with was JAWS 3-D which he recalled as, "a nightmare year of my life spent underwater dealing with sharks." Since 1983 Kappes has been a Laurel consultant reviewing budgets and advising on potential projects, working with Laurel executive producer Mitchell Galin, who offered him the chance to produce DARKSIDE: THE MOVIE.

Directing is John Harrison, Romero's Pittsburgh friend, assistant director/actor in DAWN OF THE DEAD, and soundtrack composer for CREEPSHOW and DAY OF THE DEAD. "Once TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE was a television hit, the natural inclination was to bring it to the big screen," said Harrison. "Everyone knows it now and there is cachet to the title. The series was characterized by a sense of the macabre and wry humor without any heavy violence or gore. The film will reflect those elements with more gutsy action. Clever storytelling endeared the TV show to its audience and that will work here, too. Cinema means a captive audience in the dark, so the story can be told more visually with less expository dialogue. The luxury with the movie is being able to communicate story points nonverbally."

Harrison wrote many of the TV episodes and directed his share of the show's first four seasons. But when the movie was first talked about he resisted the concept. "I've been doing it for so long, and I was worried about pulling it off again as a feature-length movie," he said. "Would I be able to give it a separate identity or would it just come across as three TV episodes strung together? It took me a while to get under the script's skin. It's a great showcase for my feature debut, as each story has been done in a different style."

DARKSIDE: THE MOVIE's eclectic genre mix, ranging from an 1890s period adventure to contemporary King horror, eschews the comic book-linking conceit of Laurel's two CREEPSHOW anthologies. Its wraparound tale is a modern retelling of "Hansel and Gretel" starring Deborah Doane ("Don't call me Debbie anymore!") Harry. She has young Timmy (Matthew Lawrence) imprisoned in a suburban Bronzville house and he keeps delaying his imminent roasting by telling various tales to whet her appetite more than the thought of eating him. "This starts out in a very idyllic way, like a glossy TV commercial, until Debbie opens the door on a dump and fetid cell," said Harrison. "Debbie came through like a champ and gave much more to her role than I ever anticipated."

"Lover's Vow" has Rae
Dawn Chong romancing the stone James Remar. Making Remar a gargoyles instead of an unexplained entity is one instance of Kappes' many script clarifications. "It's essentially a fairy tale love story with a real hook," said Harrison. "It does get quite violent, so I've made it very fluid, lyrical, and magical, although the New York setting gives it a gritty street atmosphere. The monster is a magical creation redeemed by love before betrayal turns him back to stone."

"Cat from Hell" features William Hickey and pop star David Johansen in a story Harrison described as, "a bizarre, supernatural, dark action piece done totally balls-out for high suspense and weirdness. I wanted to eliminate as many feline shots as possible and invented the Cat Cam as a result. We are using prism and fiber-optic lenses to lend spooky movement to the cat's-eye views."

Romero originally wrote "Cat from Hell" from King's story, as one of five segments for Laurel's CREEPSHOW 2, and was unaware his script was being used for DARKSIDE: THE MOVIE. Speaking from the Pittsburgh location of his Edgar Allan Poe anthology TWO EVIL EYES, Romero said, "Those five stories I adapted keep being slotted here, there, and everywhere. Drafts kept being sent to me for comments but after the first five, I stopped commenting. I like John [Harrison] a lot and I wish him all the luck in the world with it."

"Lot 249" stars Christian Slater as a preppy student who buys a mummified Egyptian prince at an auction, unlocking an ancient curse in the process. Said the 20-year-old high-profile HEATHERS star, "I did a DARKSIDE episode six years ago about a guy sneezing his nose off. The movie was being directed by the same person and it fit neatly into a 13-day time slot between my last picture, THE WIZARD, and my next, PUMP UP THE VOLUME. I'm at my best while working constantly.

"I've always wanted to make a special effects movie and the Mummy is the best co-star I've ever had," Slater laughed. "He doesn't talk back! And I'm keeping him to decorate my apartment. I get to rip out his heart, burn him, and chainsaw his arm off, too. So watch out Dennis Hopper!"" Harrison said he's giving the segment a "definite film noir feel."

DARKSIDE: THE MOVIE was shot at a former schoolhouse in Yonkers due to Kappes remembering the disused facility from a prior film. "All the mental hospital scenes for Mickey Rooney's BILL were filmed there in 1981," said Kappes. "It went bankrupt soon after but I contacted the owner and got it cheap. A stage this size with full ancillary support would have cost us three times as much in New York. My job is to look with a gimlet eye at everything and I knew this school would give us as much production value as possible for the lowest cost."

Kappes has a reputation for being difficult with directors he considers dilettantes, but he had no such problems with Harrison. "I have no qualms about bloodying noses or going head on with someone," said Kappes. "There are a number of directors I'll never work with again and vice-versa. When I first met John for script discussions, we ignored the production board completely and just talked aesthetics for two days. John is easy and I enjoy working with him because he's sensitive and creative, with a good feel for the material. He was in tune with the back-story, knowing what to draw out and how to expand the characters for more living depth. He's dug his heels in a few times, as everyone should, but he's open about it, not autocratic."
Schwarzenegger Total Recall

It took an action star with boxoffice muscle to bring this costly science fiction epic to life.

By Bill Florence

It was born fourteen long, colorful years ago, inspired by a Philip K. Dick short story called "We Can Remember it for You Wholesale." Nurtured in the mind of a screenwriter named Ronald Shusett, it was not forgotten even when Shusett turned his attention to creating ALIEN with partner Dan O'Bannon. It miraculously survived numerous starts and cancellations throughout the '80s, accumulating a debt of over $6 million. Just when Shusett thought his brainchild was finally dead, the project emerged once again, this time with a vengeance, thanks to angel Arnold Schwarzenegger and his boxoffice muscle. TOTAL RECALL is now set to blitz theatres nationwide on June 15.

The project began to draw considerable interest in the film industry when Carolco Pictures resurrected it in 1988, paying the bankrupt DeLaurentis Entertainment Group (DEG) about $3 million for the rights. Carolco then signed Paul Verhoeven (ROBOCOP) to direct and Arnold Schwarzenegger to star, two of the industry's hottest names in their respective fields. In October the trade papers listed the film's budget at over $60 million, but fearing a negative reaction to this high cost, Carolco quickly dropped the figure to between $50 and $60 million.

"Carolco keeps changing the numbers themselves," said Shusett. "Only RAMBO III cost more than this, and it was from the same company. These guys are high rollers, and when they believe in something they go all the way with it. You have to give them credit for believing in their convictions of what they think will make money, and spending a lot to make the most magnificent movie they can." Every day of TOTAL RECALL's production cost Carolco $150,000.

Due to such large figures and impressive names, the movie is garnering high expectations. Some are looking for TOTAL RECALL to top BATMAN at the boxoffice. "The word around the industry is that we have a chance to make maybe $250 million, even $300 million," said Shusett. "If the movie loses a fortune, God forbid, then it will have been a mixed blessing."

But this science fiction epic is turning heads for more than just its huge budget and big-name star—its story contains an intriguing premise, Alfred Hitchcock-type twists, and non-stop action. Schwarzenegger plays Douglas Quaid, a man who is plagued by dreams of another life. Desirous of leaving his humdrum existence behind, he seeks out Rekall Inc., a company which sells manufactured memories. Their procedure accidentally unearths...
in Quaid a knowledge of a secret identity. Thus begins his search for answers, a search which takes Schwarzenegger and his pursuers to Mars. Along the way there is an almost constant stream of high strung fight and chase scenes, and even a romantic interlude for Quaid and Melina (Rachel Ticotin), a Mars colony rebel.

The hugely inflated budget is a result of the film's constant action sequences and unusual special effects, not to mention the reported $8-10 million salary Schwarzenegger is commanding. Early versions of the script were action oriented, to be sure, but each successive rewrite contributed new action and striking visual moments. Verhoeven put all of these extraordinary scenes back into the final draft, and writer Gary Goldman retaillored the script for Schwarzenegger. "The tone went back to being tough as nails, which was what we originally wanted anyway, and now it has more action than it ever had before," Shusett explained.

Some new scenes were invented for Schwarzenegger regardless of how expensive they were, or whether there were special effects involved. "We increased the incredible shows of strength and energy, which fits in with what today's market likes the most," Shusett said. "Explosive action! But not just normal action scenes—gosh, expensive to make, special effects action."

At one point, Shusett was afraid his script, co-written with O'Bannon, Steve Pressfield, and Goldman, was going to overwhelm the audience, "but there just is no such thing with today's audience," he said. THE TERMINATOR, according to Shusett, looks like it's moving in slow motion by comparison.

The story behind the story is amazing in itself. After Shusett and O'Bannon created the essential concept, numerous writers, actors, directors, and distributors entered the scene, sometimes left a mark on the project, and departed. Directors Richard Rush, David Cronenberg, and Bruce Baresford each came close to helming TOTAL RECALL; Richard Dreyfuss was set to star for Cronenberg in 1985 and Patrick Swayze was signed during Baresford's involvement in 1987. When O'Bannon moved on to other projects, Shusett brought in Pressfield to help him write a better draft of the script, and when Verhoeven was finally signed to direct, he brought in his own writer, Goldman, to tailor the script to Schwarzenegger's unique screen presence and his own directorial style.

Each time Shusett's dream came close to becoming reality, something—anything—would go wrong. In 1980, he and Disney could not agree on a re-write of the script's third act, which Shusett had never been happy with anyway. Then, in 1982, Dino DeLaurentiis said he would make the film; he didn't care if the third act wasn't as good as the rest of the script. Thus began a series of adventures with DeLaurentiis which would last six years. He and Shusett constantly tried to improve the third act, while attempting to attract directors and actors. When they did sign a director or an actor, the distributor that DeLaurentiis had found would drop out, disliking the creative people that had been hired. At various times, Universal was going to distribute TOTAL RECALL, then MGM, Fox, and Embassy, which DEG later bought.

Everything seemed to come together in 1987 when the third act problems were solved, Baresford was set to direct, and Swayze was set to star. The production was 60 days from shooting when DEG went bankrupt. "I thought that was finally the end," said Shusett. "The sets were already started, there was $6 million invested and all without a single frame of footage shot. No one in history, I believe, has had an invest-
By Sue Uram

Walter Koenig, who played Ensign Chekov in the original STAR TREK TV series and reprised the role in all of Paramount's up-to-now profitable feature films, has gone on record about plans afoot at Paramount for STAR TREK VI that are sure to be disturbing for fans of the series. Koenig revealed that the script currently under consideration is written by Harve Bennett, who produced STAR TREKS II-V. Bennett's story idea was originally proposed before the filming of last year's unprofitable STAR TREK V, and had been turned down by Paramount, according to Koenig.

"It is like a flashback story, set in the days of Starfleet Academy, starring a younger version of Kirk, Spock, Scotty and possibly McCoy," said Koenig about Bennett's idea for STAR TREK VI. "My understanding is that Harve Bennett re-wrote the script so that it is less like POLICE ACADEMY."

Koenig said plans call for recasting the cadet roles with younger actors, using one of the original classic cast members to initiate the flashback action by viewing Enterprise library tapes, or some similar plot gimmick. Koenig didn't know the title of Bennett's script idea—let's call it STARFLEET ACADEMY—which Bennett is rumored to direct as well as produce. Koenig said the script proposal dates back at least to the time of STAR TREK IV, because Spock was considered as the flashback initiative at the time when Leonard Nimoy was directing the STAR TREK films (he did III and IV). Koenig said the role is now uncast at this point.

George Takei, who plays Mr. Sulu on STAR TREK, confirmed last issue (20:4:5) that Bennett's STARFLEET ACADEMY idea is now under consideration at Paramount, but said that the studio is also considering options to bring back the old cast or make no film at all. Koenig said he is unaware of any other story ideas on the table other than STARFLEET ACADEMY. "My gut feeling is that, at this juncture, that is the storyline that Paramount is thinking most seriously about," he said.

Bennett declined to comment directly, but through office spokesman Kim Boyle denied Koenig's assertions about recasting STAR TREK with younger actors. Koenig said such a denial is understandable in light of past STAR TREK letter-writing campaigns mounted by unhappy fans. Rumor has it that STAR TREK creator Gene Roddenberry, a consultant on all STAR TREK projects, has rejected Bennett's script idea. Koenig thinks that in fact may be the case. "I think that Gene has made himself known on the subject," Koenig said. "He is not very pleased."

Roddenberry's office said he would not discuss STAR TREK VI but confirmed that no script has been approved. Roddenberry's spokesman denied speculation that Paramount could proceed on such a project without Roddenberry's permission, discounting a 1986 Variety story in which Roddenberry set the parameters of his control over the movie series. "They have to show me everything they do... from the first lines (through) all the rewrites and dailies," Roddenberry was quoted as saying. "I can comment, but the rule we make for myself is that they have no obligation to do what I tell them."

Koenig speculated that the change in Paramount's attitude toward recasting the STAR TREK movie series was prompted by the dismal boxoffice performance of STAR TREK V, which earned less than half of what the previous film had made. "However you interpret this—that the story was not as satisfying to the public, or that interest in the cast is beginning to wane because of their 'advanced age,' or even 'familiarity breeds contempt'—the feeling is that 'fresh' faces might be more appealing to a somewhat jaded public. I think that is the interpretation Paramount makes," Koenig also sees recasting as a cost-cutting measure by Paramount. Both Shatner and Nimoy earned a reported $5.5 million each on

William Shatner with the Starfleet junior officers of STAR TREK V, a boxoffice disappointment. Paramount now seems poised to dump Shatner as star and director but keep the space cadets.
BORIS & NATASHA
Cartoon genius Jay Ward's cold war icons come to live-action life from MCEG.

By Daniel Schweiger

After decades spent chasing "moose and squirrel" in animated syndication, Boris Badenov and Natasha Fatale are trying to conquer the material world for MCEG, who will wide-release BORIS AND NATASHA in April after extensive audience-pleasing revisions. With actor-turned-director Charles Martin Smith's (TRICK OR TREAT) cartoon-inspired sensibilities guiding Sally Kellerman (MASH) and SCTV's Dave Thomas as the indisputably inept spies, inspired by Jay Ward's '60 cartoon series ROCKY AND HIS FRIENDS, and THE BULLWINKLE SHOW, the movie promises to grab beyond the duo's cult audience, and show the boxoffice feasibility behind similarly-themed projects like THE FLINTSTONES, THE jetsons, and Disney's eagerly awaited DICK TRACY (see below).

As the 30 year anniversary of Ward's popular cartoon series approached, writer Charles Fraden hit upon throwing these ideologically outdated saboteurs into the glistening '80s, and pitched his high-concept story to MCEG head Jonathan Krane. One of Hollywood's major talent brokers, and producer of last year's sleeper hit LOOK WHO'S TALKING, Krane green-lighted the project, with the understanding that Kellerman, his wife, would appear as Natasha. After prolonged negotiations with Ward, MCEG went through 20 screenplays to give the characters believable flesh, a development process which saw the series cartoon stars, Rocky and Bullwinkle, virtually written out of the picture. With Krane's clients John Travolta and John Candy set for guest appearances, the medium budgeted BORIS AND NATASHA was ready to shoot after months of arduous preparation.

Kellerman also served as the movie's executive producer, offering "creative suggestions" at script conferences and screenings. Her biggest contribution was choosing Thomas, one of SCTV's beer-swilling McKenzie Brothers, for the part of Boris. "I gave Thomas the once-over, told him to get shorter, change his hair, and gave him the part," said Kellerman. "He's a real curmudgeon, exactly like Boris."

Having previously directed Charles Martin Smith as a KGB agent for the ill-fated EXPERTS, Thomas helped get the bespectacled actor the job of realizing BORIS AND NATASHA. Best known for his wonderfully nerdy characters in AMERICAN GRAFFITI and STARMAN, Smith was a natural choice to direct, his father having worked on every toon from Gerald McBoing-Boing to Popeye. "I also wanted to be an animator, but couldn't draw," said Smith. "I grew up in a household where we'd watch Jay Ward cartoons and silent comedies. Those wacko-drawn styles really influenced my sense of humor."

Smith worked on the script with Thomas, prior to shooting. "The script wasn't working, so Dave and I took it back to the drawing board," he said. "We wanted to give it a cartoon feel. Though the 'Bullwinkle' people didn't have input for the rewrite, I used their shows like a bible. "We ended up with this ridiculously overcomplicated plot, with everyone following each other around and getting blown up. It ends inside Mount Rushmore, where everyone steps out to tell you what's going on. It's very similar to a Buster Keaton comedy, because the 'fourth wall' is continually broken to remind audiences that they're watching a film. Even the narrator gets talked back to!"

Smith made BORIS AND NATASHA entirely in Los Angeles, shooting familiar locations to make it resemble an absurdly generic U.S.A. "My style lends itself to the characters, because I've loaded the film with bright colors, and photographed them for a two-dimensional appearance," said Smith. "It's also paced and edited like a cartoon. About the only time I slow down is to develop the relationships."

But the film's pacing and humor was found confusing by preview audiences, whose vital scorecards drove BORIS AND NATASHA back to the editing room for a year and a half, as Smith tried to improve the comic timing and make the picture even funnier. "We were constantly tinkering, because it's hard to get something like this right," he said. "Since everyone liked the broader gags and intrusive narration, we put in as much of them as possible."

DICK TRACY: COMIC BOOK BLOCKBUSTER

Be prepared to play Spot the Cameo when Disney/Touchstone brings Chester Gould's razor-nosed detective, DICK TRACY, to the screen, opening nationwide June 15. Under some of the most extensive—and inspired—prosthetics ever devised by Hollywood (or, rather, by makeup artists John Caglione and Doug Drexler), you'll find Dustin Hoffman, James Caan, Al Pacino, Dick Van Dyke, Estelle Parsons, and Michael J. Pollard. Appearing in the $23 million comic book spectacle as Tracy is Warren Beatty, who produced and directed as well as co-wrote the screenplay with Jim Cash, Jack Epps and Bo Goldman. Glenne Headly appears as Tracy's true-hearted love and Madonna shows up as the vamp who tries to turn his yellow-hatted head with songs written especially for the occasion by Stephen Sondheim.

The film also boasts the most extensive use of stylized sets since THE CABINET OF DR. CALIGARI—there isn't a single external shot in the picture in which reality intrudes. The production was designed by Richard Sylbert using a palette of seven primary colors to achieve the look of comic book graphics, photography by Vittorio Storaro, with special visual effects and matte work by Michael Lloyd and Harrison Ellenshaw.

Sheldon Teitelbaum
SCI-FI CHANNEL
Will cable viewers go for a 24-hour diet of science fiction?

By Mark Dawidziak

Cable TV has become a new frontier for narrowcasting pioneers, with channels devoted to sports (ESPN), rock music (MTV), business (Financial News Network), country music (The Nashville Network), news (CNN), religion (Eternal Work Network) and even the weather (The Weather Channel). But is cable ready for a 24-hour diet of science fiction, fantasy, and horror? Florida businessman Mitchell Rubenstein thinks the time is right, and he plans to launch his Sci-Fi Channel in December 1990.

"Cable is extremely well-suited for packaging genres," Rubenstein said. "The networks' programming is so generalized that it turns off the viewer very interested in a certain genre. That's where cable has been filling the gap."

But isn't there already enough science fiction on TV, counting the variety of old series, movies, and new programming scattered in syndication and on existing cable services? "People said that about ESPN," Rubenstein replied. "They said there already was plenty of sports on television. ESPN started with relatively obscure sporting events and grew into a major force. We heard the same thing about CNN. People said there was plenty of news on TV. They said there wasn't enough interest to support a 24-hour cable service. There was enough interest for CNN to operate two 24-hour news channels."

Rubenstein and Sci-Fi Channel co-founder Laurie S. Silvers are quick to point out the results of a 1989 Gallup Poll that asked cable subscribers what type of services they want added to line-ups. "Conservatively," Gallup concluded, "it appears The Science Fiction Channel would be at least as popular as Nickelodeon, and probably more popular than MTV for persons ages 12 to 49."

If Rubenstein is correct about there being an audience for his Sci-Fi Channel, he will be able to come up with enough programming to keep a 24-hour operation going. To help woo the science fiction community into his corner, the cable entrepreneur has appointed some giants from the fantasy field to his board of advisors, including prolific author Isaac Asimov, whose more than 400 books include the landmark Foundation Trilogy, and Gene Roddenberry, creator of STAR TREK.

While Roddenberry's role has been strictly advisory, Asimov has agreed to be the cable service's official spokesman. "One of the reasons Isaac is on the board is that we want to embrace the talent and get them behind us," Rubenstein said. "His presence gives us immediate standing in that community."

Programming will fall into one of three categories: library product, which includes old TV series and movies (starting with mostly public domain titles); series produced in-house, which include review and interview shows; and major co-productions, the most ambitious of which will be ISAAC ASIMOV'S UNIVERSE.

"Although it might be written by different authors each week," Rubenstein said, "ISAAC ASIMOV'S UNIVERSE will be episodic in nature, carrying on the same concept. The look and feel will be similar to THE TWILIGHT ZONE, but that was anthology. This will be episodic."

Another problem might be the very name of the cable service. Many science fiction fans don't like the abbreviated sci-fi label. Rubenstein said he's floated the name science fiction gatherings and hasn't met with any resistance. "It was the catchiest, most identifiable name we could come up with," he said. "Even Science Fiction Channel seemed a bit long. And nothing else seemed to fit."

Should all of the factors involved break in Rubenstein's favor, one major obstacle remains. Most cable systems now operate at a crowded capacity and don't have room for more services. Will there be room for The Sci-Fi Channel?

"The channel capacity issue is really a matter of the industry's growing pains," Rubenstein said. "There might not be all the room we would like when we launch, but over the next five years, most cable systems will be rebuilt to allow for expansion. That's when we will be plenty of room. We think we'll be successful in the long run. Most cable services project losses for the first four or five years, so we know we have to be patient. We're in this for the long haul."

"Our target is to start with 7 million subscribers. Realistically, we wouldn't start with less than 5 million. If we can start with that many, we'll keep adding systems as the demand for more channels grows."

THE GUARDIAN
The story of how director William Friedkin got out of his tree.

By Steve Biodrowski

Director William Friedkin's THE GUARDIAN, which Universal opens nationwide in April, features a monstrous, baby-devouring tree. During filming, Friedkin grappled with the problem of how to portray the tree without reducing the film to the level of a "monster movie." In the process, Friedkin abandoned the mechanics originally built for a ¾-scale tree, supplied by Peter Chesney's Image Engineering, and had a full-scale tree built for effects filming during post-production (costly work reportedly done on "golden" overtime).

Friedkin told the L.A. Times that his first tree "didn't work." A member of Chesney's crew disputed that, claiming that Greg Fonseca's production design for the tree was at fault. "The show was shut down because Friedkin wanted to redesign the ending," said Chesney's crewmember.

The ¾-scale version was to be used in high-angle shots of the tree leaning down to menace its victims. The prop was abandoned when Friedkin deemed video tests of the effect too reminiscent of a Godzilla movie. Friedkin redesigned the shots to suggest movement using the new full-scale tree.

The film's climax, which was originally to consist of Dwier Brown felling the tree with an ax, was expanded to include a chainsaw (with almost one thousand gallons of blood poured through the prop tree), and a more explosive demise. The revisions led to friction with Chesney's mechanical effects group, who were replaced by one headed by Phil Corey.

Jenny Seagrove as the nanny who worships the tree, filmed one eye-opening scene with the full-size prop sure to cause controversy if it makes it past the MPAA ratings board. The wounded Seagrove, wearing only a nightgown, rubs sap from the tree onto her injury, only to have the tree's branches begin to caress her, and ooze more sap. The ending features Seagrove in tree-like makeup by Matthew Mungle.
It's better than the last one, but will audiences go back again?

By Frederick S. Clarke

Steven Spielberg kicks off the summer movie-going season this year with BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III, which Universal Pictures opens nationwide May 25. Spielberg executive-produced the film for his Amblin Entertainment company, which shot the picture back-to-back with PART II (see review, page 48), released by Universal last November.

PART III, again directed by Robert Zemeckis, wraps up the story left hanging at the end of PART II, with Michael J. Fox as Marty heading back to the wild, wild west of 1890 to save Doc Brown (Christopher Lloyd). Though padded like PART II to stretch half a story to feature length (the decision by Amblin to stretch the plot over two films is rumored to have been prompted by the project's high production costs), PART III looks to be the better half, with an emotional, character-oriented payoff to the purely mechanical set-up of PART II.

Whether audiences will be enticed back to check it out is another matter. Though BACK TO THE FUTURE PART II performed well at the boxoffice last year, the film failed to soar to the stratospheric heights expected, given the mammoth promotional campaign that launched it, and the money-making track record of its predecessor. Just how eager audiences will be to see more BACK TO THE FUTURE so soon is an open question.

Another factor is the stiff competition BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III faces in the summer marketplace. The film opens the same day as two of the summer's most hotly anticipated releases, Paramount's DAYS OF THUNDER, a Tom Cruise action film about NASCAR racing from the creative team behind TOP GUN, and CADILLAC MAN, a Robin Williams comedy from Orion, directed by Roger Donaldson (COCKTAIL).

In BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III's favor is the new sequel's winning story, penned by scribe Bob Gale, who co-produced the film with Neil Canton. Picking up where the last film left off, Marty discovers from Doc Brown's telegram, written in 1890 but delivered to Marty in 1955, that the Doc is stranded in the past because the components needed to repair his DeLorean time machine won't be invented for another half-century. But Doc reassures Marty by telling him that he's happy in the past and has fallen in love with Hill Valley's school marm, played by Mary Steenburgen, the perky heroine of another time travel hit, Nicholas Meyer's TIME AFTER TIME. The love story provides an emotional core for PART III totally lacking in the too quickly paced, action-oriented scenario of PART II, and would have worked even better, sans all the padding, as the climax of one sequel, not two.

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III was filmed last year during Fox's hiatus from his TV series FAMILY TIES, shot on specially built western exteriors of Hill Valley in 1890, a town of some 25 buildings including its famous clock tower, a 4,000 square foot saloon, and a train station, constructed as a permanent set outside Sonora, California near the foothills of the Sierras. The location has been used before, on TV's LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE, and in features like Clint Eastwood's PALE RIDER, and was selected for its proximity to a tourist steam train line operated by Railtown. The train figures in the plot as the motive force used to push Doc Brown's time machine up to speed, in order to rocket Marty back to 1985 at the film's climax.

Thomas F. Wilson, who played Marty's nemesis Biff Tannen in the first two films, appears in BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III as Biff's wild west ancestor Buford "Black Biff" Tannen. Marty journeys back to 1890 after fixing the DeLorean which Doc had stashed for him in an old mine, because he learns that Doc is to be shot in the back by "Black Biff." Steenburgen's school marm is heart-broken when Doc tells her he has to leave her, without explanation.

Special effects in the new character-oriented sequel are at a minimum. The hoverboards from the last film make another appearance, as Doc uses one to save Steenburgen's life when she jumps aboard the steam train that is pushing the DeLorean back to the future. Perhaps most interesting is the steam-powered locomotive time machine that Doc and his new bride appear in at the end to shock a surprised Marty who believes them to be stranded forever in the past. Looking like an antique artifact of superscience worthy of an H.G. Wells or Jules Verne, Doc and his mate wave to Marty as the ship leaves the tracks to take flight up into the stars.

Marty (Michael J. Fox) and Doc (Christopher Lloyd) pose in 1890 with Hill Valley's brand new clock.
THE SLEEPING CAR

Direct-to-video horror features Kevin McCarthy as an eccentric ghostbuster.

By Mark Thomas McGee

The SLEEPING CAR, which his video store from Vidmark Entertainment May 16, was shot in and around Los Angeles on a seven-week schedule last year by producer-turned-director Douglas (THE PHILADELPHIA EXPERIMENT) Curtis. Once responsible for the development and production of projects for Azero Embassy, United Artists and New World (where he made BLACK MOON RISING), Curtis was looking for something of his own to direct when Greg O'Neill's script, written on spec, came to his attention. Curtis found backing from executive producer Mark Amin, chairman of the Santa Monica-based Vidmark.

The film stars David (AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON) Naughton as a college student living on the train of the title, set high on a hill and converted into low-rent apartments. Naughton's neighbor is the incomparable Kevin (the original INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS) McCarthy. "I'm on the part of the train that isn't haunted," said McCarthy who wears a hooded robe throughout the film. Rarely laid back, the actor sinks his teeth into one of the most bizarre characters of his career.

"Kevin's performance is almost comic relief (although I hate to use that term) because he's so much bigger than life," said Curtis. McCarthy attempts to exorcize the evil ghost of the sleeping car apartments known only as The Mister, a cameo by makeup effects expert John Carl Buechler.

Surrounded by buckets of green and yellow slime and an assortment of bloody body parts, his face hidden beneath the sinister The Mister makeup, Buechler described the film as a "moist" one. As he walked around the studio waiting for his moment in front of the camera, Buechler slipped into his role, shuffling like a man three times his age and talking in a voice distinctly not his own. Usually content to let someone else play the creatures he creates, Buechler said he had a grand time bringing one of his creepy characters to life.

Concurrent with Buechler's work on the film—his Magical Media Industries company did all of its special makeup effects—Buechler was overseeing the gory effects for the upcoming BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR as well as preparing for his next directorial bout, GHOULIES GO TO COLLEGE for Vestron. "But I wouldn't have it any other way," said Buechler.

Originally, Curtis planned to play down the graphically violent moments of THE SLEEPING CAR because he said he didn't want to make a slashers film. "But you can't back away from it because audiences today demand it," said Curtis. "I hired a young PA who's an expert on every horror film ever made because I wanted his input," said Curtis. "After we'd completed one of the murder sequences he asked me why I hadn't taken it all the way. So that's what I'm doing."

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BOXOFFICE SURVEY: 1989 RECAP

An analysis of the top-grossing films, as reported weekly by Variety, reveals that genre films accounted for 40% of all film earnings in 1989. This tops 1988's earnings (31.5%) by nearly 10%, breaking the decline that has plagued genre grosses since the mid-'80s. Boxoffice in general rose 8.8% over 1988 totals.

Top-grossing genre films of 1989 in the Variety totals at right. Titles are indicated as horror (h), fantasy (f), and science fiction (s), followed by the number of weeks in 1989 that each title made the Variety list. Please note that the dollar amounts listed represent only a sample of a film's total earnings (averaging one-fourth of a film's domestic gross).

Of the 322 titles that comprised the weekly listings, 38 were fantasy films, accounting for 11.8% of the total and 23.9% of receipts; 25 science fiction films, 7.8% of the total and 11.7% of the receipts; and 30 horror films, 9.3% of the total and 4.3% of the receipts. Science fiction rebounded nicely from 1988's 17% decline to wind up 28.8% above last year's grosses, while fantasy followed up last year's 42.6% revenue increase with a whopping 67.5% increase for 1989.

In breakdown by distributor (below), Paramount (director of INDIANA JONES AND THE LAST CRUSADE) grabbed the biggest portion of the genre's grosses, followed, surprisingly, by Universal, which outgunned BATMAN'S Warner Bros to register three of '89's top ten grossers.

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GENRE FILM REVENUE BY DISTRIBUTOR

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<tr>
<th>Distributor</th>
<th># of Films</th>
<th>Earnings</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>Paramount (Par)</td>
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* Indicates a film originally released before 1989
By Steve Biodrowski

The director who brought Edgar Allan Poe to the screen in a series of stylish motion pictures during the ’60s makes a triumphant return to the director’s chair. ROGER CORMAN’S FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND, a $9 million Tom Mount production, will open nationwide through 20th Century-Fox April 13.

John Hurt stars as Buchanan, a 21st Century inventor whose particle beam weaponry experiment accidentally sends him back in time to 1816, where he meets both Victor Frankenstein (Raul Julia) and Mary Shelley (Bridget Fonda). Newcomer Nick Brimble plays the monster, in makeup by Nick Dudman. Corman took a leave of absence from Concorde Pictures, his own film production and distribution company, to make the film.

The project dates back to the mid-’80s (16:1:11), when Corman wrote a treatment, set in a surrealistic, post-apocalyptic world, featuring a Frankenstein monster created through gene-splicing. Wes Craven was hired to develop the screenplay, but Corman deemed it too expensive for the budget at the time. The project was shelved until Corman remembered reading Brian W. Aldiss’ 1973 novel Frankensteint Unbound, which suggested the film’s futuristic time travel element.

“Aldiss’ novel was very interesting,” said Corman, who hasn't directed a film since 1970. “It went back in time—but to a world that never was, in which Mary Shelley, the creator, and Frankenstein and his monster, her creations, coexist. It wasn’t exactly the picture I wanted to make, but I thought of a couple ideas of my own.” Corman wrote the first draft of the screenplay himself to set the structure. At the suggestion of Mount, Corman brought in former film critic F.X. Feeny to write a second draft. Further dialogue revisions were made by Ed Neumeier (ROBOCOP).

Working with Corman, Feeny developed Aldiss’ time traveler into a futuristic equivalent of Victor Frankenstein, emphasizing the theme that science, when not guided by conscience, can lead to disaster. “My idea was to have the monster a device that is itself monstrous,” said Feeny. “When he meets Frankenstein, it’s like a buddy film between two mad scientists. That helps enhance the theme of moral responsibility. Having someone else who resembles him in his own eyes makes that dramatic.”

The production filmed at Lake Como in Italy, an historic location preserved by the Italian government, doubling for the story’s Swiss Lake Geneva. The location work marked a change from Corman’s approach to Poe, which was almost entirely stagebound.

Corman noted his directing style has changed since the old days, but was quick to add that despite his years away from the director’s chair, “The biggest surprise was how little it had all changed,” he said. “Driving to the set the first day, I was a little concerned. It turned out the set wasn’t quite ready. Immediately I said ‘Okay fellas, let’s move the props in; put the set decorations over there,’ and I was working again. It was as if I’d just finished shooting on the previous Friday instead of 19 years earlier.”

Corman said the film’s bigger budget and longer schedule allowed him more time to devote to the creative aspects of directing. Also, although he is co-producer of the film, he was less involved with the business aspects, handled by Mount, whose company produced the film. According to Feeny, “Mount thought, as he explained it to me, ‘Everybody in this town owes Roger. It’s time we did something for him.’ He gave him a picture where ideally Roger would not have to lift a finger as producer, just step in and direct his heart out.”

Sitting in the director’s chair again was apparently an enjoyable experience for Corman, and he has received several more directing offers. “Having done this film, I think it’s highly probable I would not wait 19 years before I do it again,” said the 64-year-old director. “At my age, I don’t think I can afford to wait that long!”
THE PAUL BLAISDELL STORY

HOLLYWOOD'S FORGOTTEN MONSTER-MAKER

Working in low-budget '50s exploitation films turned out to be a thankless job.

By Randy Palmer

When Paul Blaisdell died at the age of 53 on July 10, 1983, after a long illness, hardly anyone knew. The fantasy press didn't mention it, and, surprisingly, neither did the film industry's "bible," Variety. His exit from life was as silent as his cinematic debut had been in 1954.

During a brief but prolific career in the mid-to-late '50s, Blaisdell created some of Hollywood's best-known movie monsters. In an era before today's high-profile, high-priced makeup effects experts, Blaisdell worked for next to nothing for low-budget independent producers like Roger Corman and AIP. Though movie fans now buy up pricey model kits of Blaisdell's creatures from films like THE SHE-CREATURE (1956), IT CONQUERED THE WORLD (1956) and INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN (1957), the effects pioneer behind them remains largely unknown.

This obscurity was in part Blaisdell's own doing. After seeing his work showcased in the very first issue of the seminal Famous Monsters of Filmland magazine in 1958, the irascible Blaisdell reportedly badmouthed the publication long and loud to anyone within earshot. As a result, the magazine's publisher James Warren decreed that Blaisdell's name would never appear again in any Warren publication. And it never did. This blacklisting by Warren probably did more to maintain Blaisdell's anonymity than anything else. Readers who perused 26 years worth of Warren magazine articles on Blaisdell's monstrous creations never learned the name of the man responsible for them.

Blaisdell's entry into the land of celluloid dreams and nightmares in 1953 was as quiet as his retirement would be ten years later and his death 20 years after that. Truth to tell, Blaisdell more or less stumbled into motion pictures by accident. He had no previous experience in television or radio or on the stage; no family members had preceded him in show business; and he'd never entertained any dreams of becoming a hot Hollywood property.

As a matter of fact, it was at Famous Monsters editor Forrest J. Ackerman's suggestion that Blaisdell even bothered auditioning for his first film assignment—although "audition" may be a misnomer. In the early '50s Blaisdell was regularly contributing artwork to Spaceway, a science fiction magazine. He had been working steadily as a commercial artist, designing logos, letterheads, and trademarks for various companies. He also had found work as a technical illustrator for the Douglas Aircraft Company and...
"It didn't look right but no one was really to blame. It was just one of those rush-rush things that happen on a quickie budget."

- Monster-maker Paul Blaisdell -

Blaisdell's first Hollywood assignment in 1955, supplying the monster to match the title of an abysmal Roger Corman-produced low-budget for AIP, while there came up with the idea for a science fiction comic strip which ran for a while in Famous Funnies.

At the same time Blaisdell began contributing to Spaceway, Ackerman was submitting articles about upcoming horror and fantasy films. Although Blaisdell took little notice of Ackerman's articles or bylines, Ackerman noted Blaisdell's cartoonish oils, a blending of the grotesque and absurd that would surface dimensionally in his film work years later. Ackerman got Blaisdell's address and struck up a correspondence that led to his becoming Blaisdell's agent, selling his artwork to markets like Other Worlds, The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, and the Swedish magazine Hapna.

Ackerman got Blaisdell his first film job, making a monster for Roger Corman, who was producing THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES! (1954) for ARC, the forerunner of AIP. Company president James H. Nicholson came up with the film's colorful, outrageous, yet marketable title. Corman asked Ackerman where he could get a monster for the role—cheap.

Pretending he hadn't heard Corman's "cheap" stipulation, Ackerman suggested longtime friend Ray Harryhausen, and Corman audibly gulped on the other end of the line. "That man charges $10,000 a tentacle!" Corman was said to exclaim. (Ackerman claimed the conversation actually took place, even if it sounds like a publicist's fabrication.) Ackerman then suggested Jacques Fresco, who had done work on PROJECT MOONBASE (1953), but Fresco apparently was also too expensive.

"How much are you actually willing to pay for this?" Ackerman finally asked. Corman said he was willing to go as high as $200 for a properly done million-eyed beast. Ackerman said he clapped a hand to his mouth to stifle the laughter. Even in 1953, $200 was just not enough to buy a movie monster.

"Okay, okay," Corman relented. "I'll up it to $400—$200 for materials, $200 for labor." Ackerman said he'd check around and see if he could find someone, and on a whim Ackerman contacted Blaisdell. At first Blaisdell seemed hesitant, and wanted to see a copy of the script. Corman sent one, and Blaisdell discussed the proposed project with his wife, Jackie. Together they decided to take it on. Years later, Blaisdell reminisced, "We figured for a couple of kids who had grown up in the '30s when everyone was making model airplanes and kites and puppets, the assignment couldn't be all that bad.

All the script required was a miniature to come on for a few seconds and do maybe one or two things." This was before Blaisdell discovered that what the script said didn't mean much when you were working on a Corman film.

The day-to-day production and direction of THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES! was handled by David Kramarsky, who evidently patched the picture together with first takes. To wit: when the momentous appearance of The Beast at the film's conclusion was photographed, Blaisdell realized the cameraman had set up the camera angles all wrong. "The Beast was supposed to be about 20 feet higher than the actors in the film, who were looking up at it," said Blaisdell. "But they shot it in a straight-ahead medium close-up. It didn't look right at all, but no one was really to blame; it was just one of those rush-rush things that happens on a quickie budget picture. All of those scenes were shot in about ten minutes."

Corman got a good return on his $400 investment. The beast which the Blaisdells supplied for the film was a fully articulated automaton which stood 18 inches tall and was capable of a variety of movements. But due to the limited time they had to work with it on the set, the Beast was scarcely able to perform at all. Blaisdell gritted his teeth silently as the film crew climbed all over his mockup of Blaisdell's puppet slave of THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES!, seen only fleetingly in Corman's b&w film, sans wings, due to the rushed nature of low-budget shooting.
'50s Effects

IT CONQUERED THE WORLD

Blaisdell's Venusian cucumber only inspired laughs, thanks to Roger Corman's rushed job of low-budget filmmaking.

By Randy Palmer

The creature Paul Blaisdell made for Roger Corman's IT CONQUERED THE WORLD (1956), though anatomicallly correct (allowing that an alien monster from Venus could exist in the first place), elicited howling and catcalls from audiences. Famous Monsters magazine consistently referred to “It” as “the Cucumber Creature,” but Blaisdell insisted that he was not to blame for “Its” laughable appearance.

“The script [by Lou Ruoff] called for a creature that came from the planet Venus,” Blaisdell explained. “But when we made that film, the belief about the physiology of Venus was that it was hot, humid, and conducive to plant life but not well-suited to animal life. If anybody would care to think it out, we have vegetation right here on Earth that you wouldn't particularly want to fool around with. I'm not talking about a carrot or an ear of corn. I'm talking about something that grows in the darkness and dampness... something that might grow on the planet Venus... something that might, in lieu of animal life, develop an intelligence of its own. It would move like a perambulating plant, but it would not move very far. When it wanted to conduct direct action, it would send out small creatures which it would give birth to, and they would carry out its mission.”

Actually, Blaisdell’s “Venusian Mushroom” might have worked, had IT CONQUERED THE WORLD been filmed as written. In Ruoff’s script, the monster, after arriving on Earth via the remote-control guidance of Lee Van Cleef, maintains itself in an eerie, dank cave. It has no need to venture forth since its bat-like offspring (another Blaisdell creation) infects the human populace, allowing the Venusian to control minds from a distance. Accordingly, Blaisdell designed “It” (or Beulah, as he affectionately referred to it) as a stationary beast: “It” had no legs, just short, stubby tendrils that encircled its body at the base.

The few scenes which were filmed as written—with the creature inside the cave—are fairly effective (as '50s films go). The mist and the shadows give the creature an awesome appearance. However, the confrontation between “It” and Beverly Garland, and another sequence involving an Army private who rushes the monster with a bayonet, are less effective. Both scenes caused mass confusion among the crew, who were unaware that Blaisdell was having difficulty operating the creature from within its conical bulk.

Since the script had specified that “It” would be a stationary being ruling the globe from a granite perch inside the cave, Blaisdell constructed it using a heavy wooden frame, which severely hampered any possibility of locomotion. The arms, too, were unwieldy and difficult to operate, especially as Blaisdell’s cramped quarters in the creature’s interior necessitated constant kneeling and duck-walking.

When it was time to film Garland’s death scene, Blaisdell did his best to inch forward and raise the “It” appendages threateningly; and when Garland’s rifle jammed Blaisdell had to stall his attack on the actress, and ended up grabbing at just about everything in the cave except her neck, as scheduled. Puzzled, Corman refrained from yelling “Cut!” until the two had ceased grappling, and the sequence was later pieced together during the editing process.

In another scene where Jonathan Haze (who would play the Seymour role in Corman's LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS) rushes the alien while brandishing a bayonet, there was a minor commotion among some of the actors and crew members just before the camera was set to...
the desert and spaceship, dragging cables and moving lights. When they were finished lighting the shot Blaisdell could barely operate his creature, but Kramarsky insisted the scene be shot anyway, without further delay.

The end result is a rather dubious debut for Blaisdell: the Beast moves only in staccato bursts and is obscured by an eyeball superimposed during post-production. Not only that, it comes at the end of a motion picture whose scant 78-minute running time is sheer torture to endure. Undoubtedly, the best thing about THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES! is the title.

Incidentally, although Blaisdell's Beast sported a mere two orbs, that is what the script called for. The "real" Beast (the one with all the eyes) is never shown in the film because it was, in Blaisdell's words, "a malevolent entity [that could] look through the eyes of all the creatures on whatever planet it lands on, whether they are human or animal." The creature shown in the film is the Beast's slave, used to pilot its ship. Though this point is never made clear in the picture, Blaisdell's Beast features manacles and chains to suggest its servile status.

In addition to the Beast, Blaisdell was also required to come up with the spaceship for it to ride around in. This he did; but while the Blaisdells sweated away in their home workshop on the project, the prop crew slapped together what they thought an alien ship should look like for some brief scenes featuring a full-scale mockup (which ended up being omitted from the final cut). When Blaisdell arrived with his miniature starship, he was horrified. The full-scale version looked nothing like his miniature, and what was worse, the ship the prop men built was put together with obscure pieces from a junkyard—an airplane fuselage and nose, some Model-T Ford mufflers, and handfuls of iron rods and plastic cups.

"It was a disaster," remarked Blaisdell. Grumbling under his breath, Blaisdell tore his model down and rebuilt it to match the full-scale ship (as much as was possible), only to have Kramarsky then scrap the scenes with the life-size mockup. In the end, a newly built version of Blaisdell's first miniature was photographed against a mockup of the desert.

Variety summed up THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES! well, labeling it "tedious," "confusing," and "unnecessary." Still, with a title like that, the picture almost had to make a profit—and it did (thanks in large part to its almost negligible budget). Producer Corman geared up to plunge into another monster opus based on another Nicholson marquee title—THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED. Corman, however, now realized that the pivotal role of the director couldn't be entrusted to just anyone. Kramarsky had nearly ruined THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES! filming long, bland stretches of people walking around the desert while supervising the construction of a worthless prop ship. This time, Corman decided, he would direct.

The task of writing the new picture was entrusted to Lou Rusoff, a brother-in-law of AIP co-founder Samuel Z. Arkoff. While Rusoff was busy with scripting chores for the new production, Corman began assembling a cast. Blaisdell, it was decided, would play the role of the film's Atomic Mutant, because it would be easier for him to construct the monster suit to match his own build. Never mind that Blaisdell didn't know the first thing about acting.

Blaisdell called up Rusoff to discuss the role and between the two of them they decided how such a creature could evolve given the framework of the story. Blaisdell suggested it would grow metallic scales at an accelerated rate—a protective hide initiated by the atomic blast from which the creature came. Blaisdell also suggested that the survivors could escape a similar fate by hiding in a valley protected by a high ridge. Rusoff incorporated Blaisdell's ideas in his script. (Blaisdell's penchant for contributing seemingly logical principles to Rusoff's scripts would backfire when it came to filming IT CONQUERED THE WORLD in 1956.)

Blaisdell's mutant is the former boyfriend of the film's heroine, played by Lori Nelson. The mutant calls to her telepathically throughout the film and when she fails to go to him he comes after her at the climax. Recalled Blaisdell of the film's muddled script, "As I played the role, being a mute mutant, I was supposed to try and explain to her with hand gestures that I had no intention of harming her and that I'd just come back to find her." The boyfriend prior to mutating is only shown briefly in a framed photograph that Nelson turns face down on a dresser. If you look closely, you'll notice it is a photograph of Corman!

Like other film studios cranking out grade-B and C pictures during the '50s, AIP consis-
THE SHE-CREATURE

Blaisdell carved his most famous creation out of blocks of foam rubber and glued the pieces on a pair of long johns.

By Randy Palmer

AIP's THE SHE-CREATURE (1956) combined elements of hypnotism, spiritualism, and reincarnation (an immensely popular subject at the time) in an unusual blend of horror and the occult, based on an original script by Lou Rusoff. The story was something new; the She-Creature was no outer space monstrosity or inhuman beast spawned by radiation or an atomic blast. This creature's roots were in the sea and in the past, and monster-maker Paul Blaisdell complemented the freshness of Rusoff's script by creating one of the '50s most original and memorable monsters.

"THE SHE-CREATURE caused a great deal of excitement in the offices of the producers," Blaisdell recalled. "and everyone had a pet idea they wanted me to use. 'Give her a face like a cat.' 'Make her a prehistoric creature.' 'Give her an enormous tail.' 'Make her swim out of the water like an amphibian.' I ended up combining some aspects of all their ideas, so the finished product was a sort of compromise with the producers, who didn't really know what they wanted in the first place, and forgot what they said the day after they said it!"

After listening to the producers' bull sessions, Blaisdell went home and, with wife Jackie, commenced the costume construction, basing the design on a hundred sketches he had prepared during the production meetings. According to the script the She-Creature would have to rise from watery depths, break down a wooden door, overturn furniture, kneel gracefully as it gazed upon its human counterpart and otherwise perform in ways that, heretofore, no AIP monster had ever done. Blaisdell and his wife spent extra weeks on the creature, turning her into a beast that could perform numerous stunts without the hydraulics and cables common to movie

Blaisdell never sculpted a body mold for his other-worldly vision. Instead, he began with a pair of long johns which fit him snugly. The scaly body of the creature was built directly over the material. With Jackie's help, the scales (which measured about 1½"-2" thick) were cut from block foam and later fitted together to form a jigsaw-like design. Using contact bond cement, the foam rubber scales were fastened in place.

Once the scales had been applied (leaving room in the back of the suit for a zipper which would allow access to the completed suit), Blaisdell and Jackie went to work on the various She-Creature appendages—and this creature had appendages aplenty. Horns measuring about five inches in length were sculpted from pine and coated with latex rubber, and later bonded into place. A stubby set of wings were molded from scratch and, similar to the horns, coated with latex and cemented into place on the back of the shoulders. A feature Blaisdell dubbed "lunch hooks" on the abdomen served a dual purpose, allowing for ventilation, but also designed as an "attack mechanism"—Blaisdell's own idea. These were sculpted from pine and subsequently coated with latex. When the latex dried Blaisdell peeled the pieces away from the pine and bonded them into place.

The huge monster claws were constructed over a pair of welder's gloves, using smaller blocks of foam rubber and larger hooks created by the pine-latex method. Similarly, the feet were built around a pair of swim-fins, with a single horn protruding from the back of the heel.

The She-Creature's tail (barely seen in the finished feature) was mostly an assemblage of foam pieces simply bonded together at the center. It was light enough to allow easy manipulation, and Blaisdell believed—incorrectly, as it turned out—that his new creature's tail would impress 1956 audiences with its uncanny ability to slap back and forth wildly. (Director Eddie Cahn was in too much of a hurry to rig the mobile tail, so it ended up just dragging along behind the beast in Blaisdell's scenes.) Obscuring the zipper running up the back of the costume were twin sets of what Blaisdell referred to as "dorsal fins," which he sculpted from thin slabs of foam rubber. These fins were another She-Creature attribute barely discernible in the film, but quite noticeable in

continued on page 58
tently marketed their product in double-bills that paid off handsomely for the young and industrious film company. THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED was paired with THE PHANTOM FROM 10,000 LEAGUES (another Rusoff script desecrated by inept production values) and the box-office receipts convinced Nicholson and Arkoff to assign two new titles to Rusoff for scripting. IT CONQUERED THE WORLD (another Nicholson title) and THE SHE-CREATURE (an idea suggested to AIP by a Crown-International distributor).

Since the two films were to be made simultaneously, Corman couldn't direct both. Edward L. Cahn was brought in to craft THE SHE-CREATURE. (An unpretentious director, Cahn had a reputation for executing astounding quantities of shots in a single day, but his work for AIP and other film companies during the '50s doesn't appear any more hurried than that of his contemporaries.)

Blaisdell, unlike Corman, had no problem working on dual assignments, and agreed to create the title monsters for both pictures. Rusoff's script for IT CONQUERED THE WORLD (1956) called for an invulnerable monster which sat immobile in a niche in a cave, letting unearthly bat-like creatures (which it conceived) carry out its dirty work. Blaisdell's concept of the monster as a highly evolved "Venusian mushroom" proved visually arresting but dramatically laughable on screen (see sidebar, page 20).

Since Rusoff's script for THE SHE-CREATURE (1956) called for a fairly active monster that could move swiftly and which would be scrutinized in tight closeups, Blaisdell elected to spend most of his time perfecting the She-Creature, building into the suit a number of attributes which insured its usefulness and durability. In fact, the stability of the She-Creature led to its reuse in subsequent AIP productions like VOODOO WOMAN (1956) and THE GHOST OF DRASTIP HOLLOW (1959).

For the head of the creature Blaisdell began with what he called a "blank" of his own face. Some years earlier wife Jackie had helped her husband prepare a bust of himself. Blaisdell would paint latex "skins" (blanks) over this bust, which would become the basis for several of his '50s monster masks. Using such a blank, Blaisdell slowly worked up the face of the She-Creature, adding strips of foam rubber to shape, and covering the foam with rubber latex. Blaisdell designed the monster to move quickly, slam its tail wildly to and fro, and even pick up a dime from the seashore, if necessary—but none of these talents were ever used. "They were in too much of a hurry to do things right," scoffed Blaisdell of the filming (see sidebar, page 21).

AIP next asked Blaisdell to design a few stationary props for Corman's SHE-GODS OF SHARK REEF, not released until 1958. Then the makeup artist answered a call from Allied Artists. Blaisdell was asked to do some work on Allied's new Corman film, NOT OF THIS EARTH (1957). The Charles Griffith/Mark Hanna script called for only a handful of special effects (Corman liked that, of course; it meant he could spend less money) and one strange, head-crushing alien creature which would appear for only one scene. (Blaisdell liked that; it meant the project wouldn't require the months of hard work he'd endured to little effect on THE SHE-CREATURE).

Blaisdell's bat-like, flying "umbrella monster" for NOT OF THIS EARTH is undoubtedly one of the screen's most bizarre creatures. It was an original Blaisdell concept, made of rubber latex and plywood, which Blaisdell manipulated off-screen by an assemblage of wires which could open and close the creature's mouth as it enveloped a performer's head. "I certainly didn't enjoy our actor who had to hold in a mouthful of chocolate syrup for ten minutes so he could 'bleed' properly," Blaisdell recalled some years later.

Satisfied that Blaisdell could work minor marvels on a miniscule budget, Allied Artists requested his services again for FROM HELL IT CAME (1957). At the same time, Nicholson and Arkoff wanted Blaisdell to return to AIP to begin work on a new series of films scheduled for 1957. To accommodate Allied without offending AIP, Blaisdell promised only to design the creature, known as Tabanga, leaving Allied to call in someone else to build the prop and play the monster.

Richard Bernstein's script for FROM HELL IT CAME called for a tree, possessed by the vengeful spirit of a South American native, to uproot itself from the ground, carry a girl in its limbs and eventually sink from sight in a pool of quicksand. Blaisdell rendered a series of production illustrations which showed how tree bark could be realistically simulated using rubber latex. "It was a nice concept, and certainly an original one," Blaisdell felt, "but it was extremely awkward." Blaisdell's final design incorporated some of his usual trademarks: downward-slinking eyes and twigs growing like horns and anten-
Blaisdell's Venusian, made for Roger Corman's 1956 b&w low-budgeter, stored away in the basement of his Topanga Canyon workshop/home. Though Blaisdell's creations were featured prominently in AIP's advertising and promotion (left), the monster-maker received little pay or credit for his work. Below: "It's" attack bat.

Blaisdell dubbed his monster "Beulah," posing for a gag shot in happier times.

Nicholson's latest brainstorm of a title at AIP was THE CAT GIRL (1957), which became another Lou Rusoff script (his updated version of Val Lewton's CAT PEOPLE), co-produced by Rusoff with Herb Smith. It was the first of several new AIP productions to be filmed in Britain and featured Barbara Shelley, a distinguished actress who appeared in several Hammer films. AIP determined the picture would go out on a double-bill with the domestically made THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN (1957). Blaisdell had been working on the props for AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN at Nicholson and Rusoff's request, and didn't particularly relish the idea of a second assignment running concurrently with the tall tale—but after seeing director Alfred Shaughnessy's rough cut of CAT GIRL, it was decided the film needed some visual shocks to bolster its tepid psychological shudders.

Rusoff and Nicholson weren't interested in subtlety from Rusoff. Once the AIP duo decided the picture was unplayable, Nicholson got on the phone and convinced Blaisdell he had to "save" CAT GIRL. Although it was a Friday afternoon when Blaisdell got the call, Blaisdell agreed to deliver the needed makeup effect by Monday morning. Rusoff and Nicholson reportedly breathed a stereophonic sigh of relief.

Over the weekend, Blaisdell took one of his blanks and devised a were-cat mask which he could pull over the top of his head. In addition he made up a pair of oversized cat claws, and showed up with the props, as promised, three days later.

Abruptly, Blaisdell was pushed onto a bedroom set with a mirror and dresser and asked to don the monster props for a few quick insert shots, doubling for Shelley in cat-girl form. (Blaisdell's CAT GIRL headpiece would turn up again in AIP's HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER.)

CAT GIRL's co-feature, THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN, became one of AIP's biggest moneymakers.
“Able to work wonders, under the gun, on low budgets, with near zero time frames, Blaisdell demonstrated great ingenuity.”

- The Paul Blaisdell Story -

deciding Blaisdell’s monster was too costly. Zimbalist’s decision to rewrite the script and use stop-motion wasps was fine with Blaisdell, who had his hands full with other upcoming projects. Blaisdell said he did take exception to the fact that Zimbalist never paid him for his work and kept the drawings to boot.

Back at AIP, plans were afoot to make a new, super low-budget picture on a tight schedule. “It was producer Alex Gordon’s idea to make a quickie at the old Charlie Chaplin studios on a couple of winter weekend afternoons,” commented Blaisdell. Because THE SHE-CREATURE had performed so well the previous summer, Gordon rounded up the same stars (Marla English, Tom Conway, Lance Fuller, Paul Durov), hired the same director (Eddie Cahn), and asked for Blaisdell’s help in creating the screen’s first zombie woman. These were the ingredients for VOODOO WOMAN (1956), the picture which very nearly scarred Blaisdell for life. (“It was a real hard-luck picture!”

The script for VOODOO WOMAN, co-authored by V. I. Voss and Russ Bender (who played the role of General Patrick in IT CONQUERED THE WORLD), preserved none of the originality of THE SHE-CREATURE or the vitality of THE AMAZING COLossal MAN. Everything about it, in fact, was terribly ordinary. Blaisdell recognized this and worked diligently on a new, never-before-tried zombie-woman concept, producing a handful of production illustrations of which he was quite proud. “The zombie woman I designed for the picture would give you the dry heaves if she served you a cup of tea!” said Blaisdell.

But AIP wasn’t having any — potential for dry heaves at drive-ins across the country or not. Too much money, said producer Alex Gordon, during a meeting in the producer’s Hollywood office. Instead Blaisdell was asked to dust off his SHE-CREATURE outfit and strip away its frills to create the film’s low-rent VOODOO WOMAN. Blaisdell insisted on at least changing the head. But since Blaisdell would be occupied revamping the She-Creature, AIP’s accelerated production schedule didn’t allow enough time for Blaisdell to fabricate the new monster...
run over budget. The Chaplin studio was colder than most, a factor that contributed to the production’s vicissitudes. Marla English in the starring role, did her best under the circumstances, made even more trying by the presence of her seven year old niece on the set. The little girl required constant supervision, and Blaisdell attempted to perform that duty, sometimes in full zombie garb, much to the child’s delight. This didn’t do anything to placate Cahn, however, who was beginning to grate on everyone’s nerves.

What happened next might have developed into a major catastrophe. Cahn was preparing to film the scene where Tom Conway demonstrates his zombie creation’s indestructibility. The script called for Conway to pour acid onto the creature’s leg, which would smoke and bubble and froth, but remain unharmed. Since Blaisdell was not doing the special effects for VOODOO WOMAN the preparation of the “acid” was handled by someone else. When Blaisdell eyed the container with the liquid “acid” he asked if they were sure it wasn’t a kind of chemical smoke made from ammonia and hydrochloric acid. (Blaisdell: “We used to make that in chemistry class in high school. It gives out a beautiful cloud of smoke—as long as you don’t pour it on living tissue.”) He was assured it was a completely harmless substance known as “Brett Smoke.”

When Cahn yelled “action” Conway poured the liquid “acid” on the zombie, and the smoke poured out magnificently. But inside the suit, Blaisdell felt a strange warmth collecting on his leg, and as the scene dragged on, the warmth got hotter and hotter. When Cahn finally yelled “cut” Blaisdell jumped up, tore off the monster-suit and screamed for bicarbonate of soda for his burning leg.

After making sure Blaisdell would live, Cahn called for the

head. Blaisdell recommended another makeup man, Harry Thomas. “They were so determined to make this picture in record time,” said Blaisdell, “that there was simply no way I could handle everything.”

Blaisdell was never one to speak poorly of a professional associate. But Blaisdell’s long-time colleague Bob Burns told how it turned out. “When Thomas finished that VOODOO WOMAN mask, everyone was horrified...but not for the right reasons!” said Burns. What Thomas handed over to the movie crew was a simple latex skull-mask. “Thanks, Tom,” someone said, and ran off to a pay phone to dial Blaisdell’s number.
next camera setup and filming continued. In the end, VOODOO WOMAN came in on time and within budget, so at least AIP was happy, if no one else was. The stunning Maria English retired soon after finishing this and a clutch of other minor pictures, much to Blaisdell's lamentation. "She was so very beautiful, very statuesque, very lovely," he reminisced. "She was simply wonderful; ropes, pencils, and similar house-hold items, as well as a monstrous working telephone, to make the cast appear tiny in comparison. Like his work on earlier Gordon productions, Blaisdell's contributions, while competent and convincing, were hardly personally rewarding. AIP also reused Blaisdell's monster makes from INVASION OF THE SAU-CER-MEN, IT CONQUERED THE WORLD, CAT GIRL, and THE SHE-CREATURE as masks on display in the fiery climax of 1958's HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER.

Blaisdell worked for Bert I. Gordon again in 1958 on AIP's THE SPIDER. As was his custom, Gordon also took charge of the film's optical effects. Shots of the giant spider were filmed using a real tarantula, matted into the live action. Blaisdell also supplied an enormous, hinged spider-leg which menaced Cathy Downs during the sequence where the tarantula attacks a house.

One brief makeup highlight of the film involved the discovery of the body of a sheriff's deputy which had been drained of all its liquids by the spider. Blaisdell designed the makeup around the concept of an old man's withered flesh, stretched tightly across a distorted human skull. Due to the brevity of the scene an actor wasn't required. Blaisdell simply applied his makeup to a dummy outfitted in the actor's clothes. "We called the dummy Uncle Elmo," recalled Blaisdell. "We had a lot of fun with it after Bert finished the scene ... hanging it in a studio closet for some poor, unsuspecting secretary to discover! I think Bert took it home and kept it for himself." To minimize the gruesomeness of the scene producer/director Gordon showed the corpse for only the briefest of moments. The reluctance on the part of some AIP producers and directors to use horrific elements to their fullest potential consistently annoyed Blaisdell. For THE SPIDER Blaisdell had designed a rubber makeup appliance for the tarantula only to have it mixed by Gordon for being too scary. "Tarantulas have a kind of bony shield in back of their eight compound eyes, and this appliance fit over that bony shield," said Blaisdell. "The appliance made it appear as though the tarantula had two eyes instead of eight—two ghostly, cat-like, slitted eyes.

Blaisdell's wife, Jackie, with the giant fiberglass lobby displays made for AIP's release of Bert I. Gordon's THE SPIDER (1958), work taken on to make ends meet.
Blaisdell created the definitive bug-eyed monster for AIP, but the film turned out to be a Martian comedy of errors.

By Randy Palmer

In 1957 AIP president Jim Nicholson decided it was time to bring out one of the most famous monsters ever conceptualized. Strangely enough, this monster had never before appeared on a motion picture screen.

What Nicholson wanted to bring to cinematic life was the sci-fi pulp world's classic Martian monster: the little green man with the big, brainy head. Nicholson's idea was an instant hit among the AIP elite, and he even had a terrific new title they could use. The new film would be called INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN. Nicholson had no doubt it would be a big money-maker. Maybe even the biggest.

In a flurry of excitement, INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN was rushed into pre-production during the spring months of 1957. Nicholson was so enthused about his new brainstorm that he co-produced the film himself just to make certain everything turned out the way it should.

Unfortunately for Nicholson, it didn't.

Monster-maker Paul Blaisdell was consulted early during the film's pre-production stages to design the Martian monstrosities around Nicholson's one-line concept ("little, green, brainy"). Blaisdell liked the idea just as much as Nicholson and set to work on what would become the second most popular creature in the AIP monster menagerie (after THE SHE-CREATURE).

While Blaisdell worked on the Martians, Nicholson hired Bob Gurney, Jr. and Al Martin to write the screenplay. The fast and dependable Edward L. Cahn was asked to direct and the company lined up a cast which included such new AIP faces as Steve Terrell, Gloria Castillo, Lyn Osborn (who died shortly after the film was released) and Frank Gorshin. Even Russ Bender, who had scripted AIP's VOODOO WOMAN, was cast in a minor role. Ed (PEYTON PLACE) Nelson, who had just come off Corman's ATTACK OF THE CRAB MONSTERS (where, in addition to a straight acting bit, Nelson operated the giant crab), also appeared in INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN.

Buoyed by Nicholson's enthusiasm for the project, Blaisdell set up his workshop to create a total of four Martian costumes—a fully articulated outfit which he would wear in key scenes, and three standard ones which would be donned by a handful of dwarfs for the Martian crowd scenes.

To save time and money, Blaisdell constructed only the heads and hands. The Martians were to be clothed in black tights to obviate the need for full-body outfits. This also allowed the makeup artist to spend more time on a couple of specialties for the film: a disembodied Martian hand which could perform a solo act, and another hand with automated hypodermic finger nails and a roving eyeball.

The hypo-nails were used frequently in the finished feature as the Martians attacked humans, jabbed their nails into exposed flesh, and pumped them full of alcohol. The device was also used in a scene where the big(ger) Martian (Blaisdell in costume) battles a farmyard bull. Blaisdell created a hollowed Martian face which could be gored by the bull—a scene which still elicits moans of disgust from modern audiences. (It's interesting to note that the same director who approved this scene had objected to using THE SHE-CREATURE's "lunch hooks.")

For the sequence where the disembodied Martian hand crawls along a road and punctures a car's tire with its hypo-nails, Blaisdell came up with a jointed device that could be manipulated off-screen via a set of invisible wires. As the hypo-nails puncture the rubber, a cut was made to a closeup of the hand with the articulated nails (a glove-like prop continued on page 59
The effect was really eerie. [AIP executive] Jim Nicholson and I got down on the floor with the tarantula to test it out. The appliance didn’t weigh as much as a postage stamp, and it in no way interfered with the tarantula’s ability to see or maneuver, I put it on him and while the spider was trotting back and forth between the two of us we both looked at each other and agreed the effect would scare the hell out of the audience! That’s not my conceived opinion, by the way; that was the general opinion all around.”

Bob Blaisdell moved over to United Artists for his last assignment of 1958, writer Jerome Bixby’s IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE (see sidebar, right), Blaisdell’s last major monster creation. As the ’50s drew to a close, the nature of horror films began to change. Soon monster films would be supplemented almost entirely by “terror films” like AIP’s Edgar Allan Poe series and Hammer’s “classic horror.” One of Blaisdell’s last flings with monsterdom came in 1959 when AIP asked him to realize THE GHOST OF DRAGSTRIP HOLLOW.

But even this final fling was radically different. Monsters were on their way out, and the GHOST OF DRAGSTRIP HOLLOW was nothing more than a spoof of every-thing that had come before. It was another Lou Rusoff script—which only served to demonstrate that Rusoff was better off writing “straight” horror—his comedic touches for THE GHOST OF DRAGSTRIP HOLLOW were just that—hollow, and embarrassingly silly. In the film’s climax/low point, Rusoff’s script called for the unmasking of Blaisdell, playing himself, who then whined at the camera like Tiny Tim on speed, recalling the “good old days” of IT CONQUERED THE WORLD and THE SHE-CREATURE, and chiding the audience for patronizing AIP’s new non-monster thrillers like HORRORS OF THE BLACK MUSEUM (released the same year).

AIP’s penchant for self-advertisement was second to none, but this exercise in futility only served to cheapen the AIP legacy of films made cheaply anyway. Even Blaisdell admitted, “Who could ever forget THE GHOST OF DRAGSTRIP HOLLOW, where I had to come on like a real dingbat?”

As might be expected by this time, AIP wasn’t interested in shelling out for a new monster for their new pseudo-monster movie. The call that went out to Blaisdell was a parody in itself. “Revamp the She-Creature!” they ordered. Blaisdell winced inwardly, but dragged the suit out of storage as instructed. It would be the fourth time the same monster ended up on film. (And that wasn’t counting a 1956 CBS television special).

The She-Creature suit had been stripped down two years earlier for VOODOO WOMAN, so it was now missing its wings, tail, horns, fins and the other protuberances. The headpiece had survived intact (it hadn’t been changed at all for HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER), so to create a slight difference Blaisdell pulled off the bottom antennae, yanked all but two teeth, repainted the eyes, removed most of the “hair,” and added a single bat-winged “fin” in the center of the forehead. He quickly whipped up a new set of claws, patched over the “lunch hooks,” removed the quadruple-D breasts, and filled in the holes left by the other missing parts. Outfitted with sneakers, the She-Creature now became the Dragstrip Hollow Ghost. AIP was happy, Blaisdell received his paycheck, and the ’50s drew to a close.

When Blaisdell wasn’t working on a major makeup or costume project, he occasionally turned up in straight bit roles in various AIP movies. Blaisdell appeared as a wide-eyed corpse in Corman’s unusual 1956 feature, THE UNDEAD. “Frankly, I thought I was a pretty good corpse,” commented Blaisdell. The only problem he encountered was with some insulation from the studio ceiling which kept floating down and getting in his eyes.

Blaisdell also had bit roles in MOTORCYCLE GANG, VOODOO WOMAN, OKLAHOMA WOMAN, and IT CONQUERED THE WORLD. But his favorite acting story concerned AIP’s HOT ROD GIRL (1956). In his only scene Blaisdell was sideswiped by a speeding automobile, and producer Norman Herman was almost never satisfied with the way they filmed it. “They wanted to make it look like the car was going really fast,” explained Blaisdell, “so the producer told me, ‘Look, she’s really only driving 30 mph. Paul, you act real slow and fall over in slow motion. That’ll make it look like she’s going 100 mph.’ I said, ‘Sure, whatever.’ They would repeat the scene and Herman would say, ‘Let’s do it again one more time. That seemed to go on forever,” said Blaisdell.

Blaisdell’s involvement in motion pictures as the ’60s dawned in Hollywood was miniscule—and his employment situation would quickly worsen. For Blaisdell, there would be no more mutants, Martians, or other monsters to sketch, design, build, or portray. The peak of his career was behind him, but he didn’t know it. AIP became interested in importing Italian muscle men programmers which were proliferating in the shadow of Steve Reeve’s HERCULES. For reasons
By Randy Palmer

When United Artists planned to release a double-feature designed to infiltrate AIP's market mainstay—the summer drive-in crowd—they turned to Paul Blaisdell to head up the monster department. For the top half of the UA bill, Jerome Bixby came up with a simple but intriguing storyline about a Martian monster that stows away aboard a rocketship returning to Earth from the red planet, murdering its occupants one by one. Hiding in the ship's oxygen ducts, striking unexpectedly, stuffing its prey into antiseptic tunnels for later feeding, this was the picture that, 20 years hence, fans would recall as the prototype of ALIEN. Bixby's screenplay was called IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE, a title that breathed exploitation, seemingly cultivated from a clutch of AIP sound-alikes. In their effort to outdo AIP at their own game, United Artists also hired AIP veteran Eddie Cahn to direct.

Unlike the relatively loose way in which many of the AIP productions were made, the atmosphere on the United Artists film was dry and stuffy. Blaisdell, used to playing the roles of the monsters he created, was cut down early during preproduction and ordered to build the "It" suit to specifications suited to actor Ray "Crash" Corrigan. Explained Blaisdell: "Ed Small was the top dog in the United Artists production department, and when Ed Small wanted a guy that's about six feet tall, weighs 200 pounds, and had a reputation for playing in old Saturday afternoon serials, you didn't argue. He wanted Ray Corrigan to play the role of the Martian monster, and that was that. "Actually I was glad Ray got the part," Blaisdell revealed. "I think it gave a little boost to his morale. He was having financial troubles at the time and I'm sure he enjoyed playing 'It' and getting paid for it and being appreciated. I also think he did a very good job playing that limited part."

But Small's option to use Corrigan for the monster role wasn't the only difficulty Blaisdell encountered. He had designed "It" with none of the She-Creature's finesse or the Saucer-Men's durability. The bloodsucking alien's latex skin was gravelly and pockmarked; its claws ended in clumsy, three-fingered extensions; its face was box-like and ridged, marred by a horrendous "pig-nose" overhanging a long row of fangs. "It" was undoubtedly one of the ugliest monsters ever created—but when the mask was pulled down over Corrigan's head, Blaisdell and those around him were horrified to find that the mask wouldn't fit properly! Some quick thinking on Blaisdell's part led to some adjustments on the "It" headpiece, and—voila!—the mask fit, as long as Corrigan's bulky chin protruded from the mouthpiece! Blaisdell dabbed makeup on Corrigan's chin until the result appeared to look like a monsterish Martian vampire's tongue instead of an Earthman's simple chin. To cover up the obvious (parts of Corrigan's neck were visible once his chin began masquerading as a tongue), Blaisdell added an extra row of bottom fangs. Blaisdell's final touch was a pair of slanted, green-rimmed eyes that gazed out wetly from their deep, alien sockets.

But Ed Small didn't like the eyes, and ordered Blaisdell to remove them. Reluctantly, Blaisdell popped out the eyes and whipped up some colored latex for Corrigan which would allow the actor's face to blend into the headpiece. "I thought Ray's eyes were a little small for the scale of that monster," said Blaisdell, "but again, it was Ed Small's picture, and it was Ed Small's decision."

As occasionally happened on the set of the AIP pictures, an emergency came up during the filming when Corrigan accidently ripped open some of the scales on the costume. A phone call went out asking Blaisdell to report to the set without delay. Blaisdell recalled, "I went down there to patch Ray up because no
which are now obscure, the company asked Blaisdell to do all the production illustrations for GOLIATH AND THE DRAGON (1960), but the actual effects were executed in Italy.

Blaisdell, for all his hard work at the "Horrorwood" studios, was left almost empty-handed when AIP and its Grade-B brethren said "S'tong, pal." There were no fond farewells. Projects that went into production at the tail end of the '50s, like ATTACK OF THE GIANT LEECHES (aka THE GIANT LEECHES) and THE BEAST FROM HAUNTED CAVE (produced by Corman's Filmgroup) even managed to add insult to injury in their own particular fashion.

Blaisdell was originally contacted to create THE GIANT LEECHES (1959), but American-International deemed Blaisdell "too expensive" and someone else got the job. (Note that the Giant Leech costumes provided by "less expensive" monster-makers, Guy Buccola and Ross Sturlin, repeatedly ripped apart during filming, exposing—in at least one instance—the diving outfit airtank the actor inside was wearing).

When Corman wanted a monster for BEAST FROM HAUNTED CAVE (1959), Blaisdell was offered the gig. Perhaps, after five years of giving-more-than-your-money's-worth service, Blaisdell felt it was time to ask Corman for a raise. Instead, Corman hired 18-year-old Chris Robinson to create the Beast in return for just screen credit! (Of course, if you've seen the film, you've seen that Corman only got what he paid for. Imagine what Blaisdell might have designed if Hollywood had been just a wee bit kinder when it came time to pay the person who created the real stars of its monster movies.)

With his monster workshop now idle, Blaisdell took his first real vacation in years. His buddy, Bob Burns, continued to drop by, occasionally with copies of the latest monster magazines that were now celebrating the horrors of Hollywood. When Blaisdell casually suggested to Burns that they could probably do a better magazine themselves, Fantastic Monsters of the Films was born. Blaisdell and Burns published the magazine in partnership with a printer who insisted the word "monster" be in the title; they had wanted to call it simply Fantastic Films.

Fantastic Monsters was the first publication of its type to use a higher-quality glossy paper, color-toned pictures, and a full-color fold-out movie monster "pin-up" each issue! (Pin-up ghoul?) Blaisdell was listed as publisher and was given the title of "Editorial Director," although he had no wish to be an editor.

Now with a showcase all his own, Blaisdell featured coverage of his own creations. The first issue featured THE BEAST WITH A 1,000,000 EYES! in Blaisdell's how-to article on model building, and THE SHE-CREATURE appeared in all her glory as the first monster fold-out (slightly touched up by Blaisdell, the "reel" She-Creature never had those full, pouting, blood-red lips!). And Blaisdell himself appeared as the character "Count Down" in the magazine's "Tombstone Times" (a spinoff on Famous Monsters' "Graveyard Examiner").

The following four issues all featured Blaisdell's film work on the covers, and issue number five contained an article on Blaisdell himself.

It was during Blaisdell's reign at Fantastic Monsters than he was to create his last film creature: THE CLIFF MONSTER, a "featurette" done as a lark, according to Burns. Blaisdell designed the creature as a miniature akin to his entry into monsterdom, THE BEAST WITH 1,000,000 EYES! According to Burns, "Paul had designed a kind of—'clockwork mechanism' is the only way I can think to describe it—which rested inside the creature itself, and could be programmed in a fashion, to allow movement. It was really unique, especially for its time, which was around 1963 or 1964." THE CLIFF MONSTER featurette ran about 150 feet, and 100-foot and 50-foot versions of it were sold through Fantastic Monsters.

Blaisdell began work on a second miniaturized monster, a dinosaur, using the same kind of mechanism for programmable movement, but never completed the project.

Fantastic Monsters ended its brief run after seven issues due to a reputed insurance fire at the printer's shop. When the printer also eventually skipped town, never to be heard from again, Blaisdell found that he was not only out a hefty sum of money but was also cut off from his only contact in the magazine business.

Slowly, yet most assuredly, Blaisdell was beginning to tire of the whole movie industry and all of its film-flam trappings. After the Fantastic Monsters disaster, Blaisdell continued to "dabble" in film, but no new features materialized. He designed production illustrations for a movie AIP wanted to make about the invasion of Earth by "colonial Martians," based on a script by George Worthing Yates.

"It wasn't going to be just a 'slam-banger,'" Blaisdell piped up. "It involved the psychology of a people that had remained in the same environment versus a people who had learned to
live with a harsh environment. Of course, it would have the usual ‘Buck Rogers’-type trimmings, all of which I designed; but it was really almost like a Ray Bradbury story.”

The title of the planned-but-never-made feature was IN THE YEAR 2889. If you think you’ve seen the film, you haven’t; not really. The title of Yates’s script had been registered by AIP, and therefore it had to be used on something. It ended up becoming the title of Larry Buchanan’s godawful mid-Sixties remake of Cormen’s THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED (1956), fodder made for AIP’s TV syndication arm.

Another failed project was something entitled STRATO-FIN during its pre-production phase. The script was never finalized, but Blaisdell and wife Jackie designed the title object: “a rocket-submarine-ship capable of diving underwater, riding the surface, or soaring clear into outer space!” enthused Blaisdell. “The finished model looked like a great, gray shark with a gray topside and white underbelly. When it came to life it released rockets.” (STRATO-FIN sounds suspiciously similar to the Toho Films/AIP co-production called ATRAGON.)

Blaisdell had been an invalid for months when he died in obscurity in 1983, cared for by his wife Jackie in their Topanga Canyon workshop/home, where she continues to reside. “Needless to say, nothing is the same... nor will it ever be, for me,” wrote Jackie in 1984 in a letter about Blaisdell’s passing. “There are cherished memories, nearly 40 years of them, but they are certainly surrounded by an awful emptiness.”

In 1988 an abiding interest in Blaisdell’s film work was evidenced by the limited edition marketing of a detailed model kit of his Saucer-man from INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN, manufactured in Japan and sold by Billiken USA for the hefty price of $33. A hit with collectors, Billiken followed up with kits of Blaisdell’s IT CONQUERED THE WORLD Venusian and THE SHE-CREATURE, a stunningly detailed 14-inch high sculpture by Hama Hayao that accurately reproduces Blaisdell’s design, costing a whopping $48. And upcoming from Billiken, model kits of Blaisdell’s IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE and his mutant from THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED.

If Blaisdell has finally achieved the fame and renown that escaped him in life, his commercial exploitation by Hollywood appears to have continued. Substantial royalties from the Billiken model kits go to former AIP co-chairman Samuel Z. Arkoff, not to Jackie Blaisdell.

Though the films Blaisdell worked on may have been less than inspired, Blaisdell’s artistry has given us a low-budget legacy of monsters and mayhem, effects and makeup, props, masks, mockups, and a clawful of science fiction issues of Fantastic Monsters. What Blaisdell’s creations might have lacked in realism and big budget finessse was more than compensated for by that most important but least costly ingredient of all—imagination itself.

IN THE YEAR 2889, an unrealized AIP project designed by Blaisdell, based on a script by George Worthing Yates, the prolific scenarist of science fiction films like THEM! and George Pal’s CONQUEST OF SPACE, Blaisdell’s preproduction artwork shows a Martian ship approaching Mars and a Martian machine attacking a futuristic greenhouse. “It was almost like a Ray Bradbury story,” said Blaisdell. “It wasn’t going to be just a slam banger.” But AIP abandoned the project, using only the title.
Up from "The Abyss"

James Cameron on future plans after his underwater bellyflop.

By Ron Magid

James Cameron’s THE ABYSS hit video stores in March, but it’s not the longer version, eagerly anticipated by science fiction fans, containing the scenes Cameron cut for the film’s theatrical release last July. Cameron is preparing the fuller, special edition fans want for later release, but said he prefers his theatrical cut.

“That’s my true and proper cut of the film,” said Cameron by phone from his office last December. “I definitely want to make a distinction that when we release the special edition on video in about a year and a half, it is not the lost, archival, reinstated, true director’s cut of the movie—it’s an alternate reality concept. The longer version never really existed—there is no longer version I can sit and watch in a theatre. I would cut scenes and put them into the roughly assembled film, take them back out, and they would remain unfinished—a diamond in the rough—without music score, sound effects, or anything. To release a special edition of the film actually requires going back and mixing, finishing special effects, and building sound effects for 22 minutes of film.”

Though Cameron has directed science fiction films exclusively—THE TERMINATOR (1984), ALIENS (1986), and his less than auspicious debut, PIRANHA PART TWO: THE SPAWNING (1981), a film he now disowns—he doesn’t consider himself a genre filmmaker. “The only way I can [prove that] is with another film that isn’t in the science fiction or fantasy genre,” he said. “It’s a distinction only I make in my head. External reality says I’ve directed three movies, they’ve all been science fiction, I am therefore a genre filmmaker. But that is not the way I see myself, and my next film will not be a genre picture. You build a foundation and then use that foundation to go to the next level. I’ve gone to the highest level I can go to in making a science fiction film—I cannot do a project more physically or conceptually ambitious than THE ABYSS, nor do I have any in mind. So I’m going to go full circle and do a very modest picture and start broadening my base laterally instead of vertically.”

Though Cameron plans to abandon the genre temporarily, he remains high on science fiction and the potential the genre holds for films in the ’90s. “Everything goes through cycles,” said Cameron. “One of the first films ever made was a science fiction film, and I predict that a thousand years from now, we’ll still be watching science fiction films. We live in a technological world, and science fiction film and literature is a way for us to analyze and refract our relationship with technology and science, so it’ll always be with us. It’s a natural outgrowth of our nature as technological beings. As long as we remain technological organisms, there will be science fiction. It’s that simple. If we all go back to the farm, the literature may change. If the genre is at an ebb now creatively, some big shot in the arm in a year or so will pump it back up.”

Cameron is upbeat about his future prospects as a director despite the lackluster boxoffice response to THE ABYSS last summer. The film returned $40 million in rentals to distributor 20th Century-Fox, farless than its estimated $50 million in production costs. I’m fortunate,” said Cameron. “I’ve been making films long enough that I’ve established relationships with studios and I have access to resources that will allow me to do—at least for the next one or two films—whatever I want. It’s just a question of what happens afterwards—if those experiments are massive failures, I may have to scramble around a little more.”

Cameron has already mapped out an artistic strategy for the ’90s. I’d like to oscillate between science fiction or genre films and other types of projects, so I am perceived as a filmmaker first and a science fiction filmmaker second,” he said. “But I always intend to return to that field where I can fully utilize my visual design and other skills and interests. In other words, I’m going to set up a pattern that’s a little bit
different than what I've been doing. I always made my fast-
est strides when I first started out with Roger Corman and
they didn't really know what I was good at and I was always
doing something different. I've been doing science fiction
for awhile. I love the three projects I've done and I
wouldn't have it any other way—there are no regrets. But
there is definitely time to prove some other points now.

Which filmmakers does Cameron most admire? “My
friend says I don't like any other filmmakers,” laughed
Cameron. “They're all bums! If I say one person and not
somebody else, someone's going to get upset, so better to
offend them all equally!

“"You know who I like? Verhoeven. Even though a lot of
guys thought of ROBOCOP as a TERMINATOR rip-off, I
saw it as a totally separate film. It had a very unique vision.
We're all drawing from similar influences, and though I feel
there wouldn't have been a ROBOCOP without THE
TERMINATOR, I feel Verhoeven was handed a brief and
went to the mat with it and did a really good job. They're
probably sitting beside on my shelf!

"When I met Verhoeven, it was at one of these big dinners
where no one knows who any-

body else is. When he realized
who I was, he jumped up so
fast he knocked his soup over,
came running around the
other side of the table and
shook my hand. He said,
imitating Verhoeven's Dutch
accent] 'I studied your film
TERMINATOR many times on
the VCR,' and I said, 'I know.'
I was winding him up.”

But who besides Verhoeven
does Cameron feel has excelled
at directing science fiction, fan-
tasy, and horror? “There aren't
that many one would limit to
gene filmmaking," said Cam-
eron. “One could say Ridley
Scott because he's done two
milestone pictures—ALIEN
and BLADE RUNNER—but
on the other hand, he's also
done BLACK RAIN and
SOMEONE TO WATCH

OVER ME. Cronenberg is one
of the few who holds himself
within certain boundaries. I
think he's really a superb film-
maker. It's funny—I can di-
voke quality and craftsmanship and vision from actually
liking a movie. Some of his
films I don't like, but I respect
him as a filmmaker more
than many people whose films
I like. Carpenter seems to have
faded away lately. He's not one
of my favorites—ASSAULT
ON PRECINCT 13 is his best
film, I think, so he peaked
early. George Romero is not
about craftsmanship as a
filmmaker. He doesn't inspire me.
The guys that I like and watch
are Kubrick, Scott, Adrian
Lyne—people who use the
camera well. But they're not
restricted to the genre. David
Lynch is good. DUNE was
screwed up by Dino [DeLau-
rentiis], I think, because Lynch
is a real smart director. He's got
a very curious vision of the
world that I don't share, but
that doesn't mean I don't
appreciate his films.”

Does Cameron have any
more dream projects like THE
ABYSS? “To describe it that
way is accurate,” he said, “I
don't know if I have anything
else that I really feel I need to
get out. From now on, my films
will probably be more special-
ized—visions of the moment
more than something that's
been on my mind for a long
time. But I always draw on
ideas I had years ago, as well as
ideas I had days ago. You have
to do that. It's all sitting in
there, in the big Cuisinart.
By Kyle Counts

ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN represents a milestone in animation director Don Bluth’s career—not just because it’s his fourth full-length animated feature, but because its release marked the ten-year anniversary of Bluth’s resignation from Walt Disney (along with 16 other animators), on his birthday in September of 1979.

Bluth has since weathered boxoffice disaster (his first feature, THE SECRET OF NIMH in 1982, failed to recoup its $6.3 million cost), two bankruptcies and a troublesome union dispute involving his new business partner, Morris F. Sullivan. Any one of these dilemmas might have put an end to his goal to become a viable force in the commercial animation industry, yet Bluth held tight to his dream. And for the 52-year-old filmmaker, his is an anniversary worthy of a champagne celebration.

“It’s definitely an occasion to celebrate,” said Bluth via phone from a Washington hotel last November, two days into a promotional tour for ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN. “Would I do it any differently? The answer is no. And I would leave again if I had to. It was the correct move for us all, and it’s been a benefit to everyone, including Disney. We’ve managed to stay alive and also to make a profit. I understand that Walt nearly went bankrupt five or six times, so he went through similar growing pains.

“I like to think we’ve given Disney some serious competition, but they never come out openly and admit that,” added Bluth. “The day we left Disney, I remember saying something to the effect that if we did indeed go out and make quality animated pictures, we’d make Disney better. I figured that they would always want to compete with us, and to do that, they would have to work harder to stay top dog. I do think it’s caused them to do some reflecting and to try and make better pictures.”

If Bluth has spurred Disney’s effort, one of the effects has been to create stiff competition for his own product. Bluth’s THE LAND BEFORE TIME went head-to-head with Disney’s OLIVER AND COMPANY in November 1988. With the backing of Steven Spielberg, and a huge merchandising blitz, Bluth’s effort was at first a serious challenge to Disney, whose film eventually overtook Bluth’s in earnings, $53,000,000 to $46,000,000. Last November Bluth played David to Disney’s Goliath again, this time without Spielberg, and the results were not so close. As of January, Bluth’s ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN had earned $23,000,000, Disney’s THE LITTLE MERMAID $61,000,000.

And the battle will be joined anew next November, when Bluth releases ROCK-A-DOODLE, a musical comedy about a rock ‘n roll rooster whose crowing brings up the sun, which squares off against Disney’s THE RESCUERS DOWN UNDER, a sequel to their 1977 hit THE RESCUERS, set in Australia. Like Disney, Bluth is employing overlapping production schedules to produce an animated feature each year. “I think we’ll always go head-to-head from now on,” said Bluth about the desirability of November as a platform to launch animation projects in order to take advantage of both Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday playing time.

ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN was the first picture under Sullivan/Bluth’s $70 million joint venture financing agreement with Goldcrest Film and Television, an arrangement that calls for the production of three full-length animated features over a period of three years, all in the $13 million to $14 million budget range.

Bluth has SONG OF THE ICE WHALE in production for November 1991, based on a true-life incident that occurred...
in Alaska, about three grey whales trapped in the ice. The film will be up against Disney's version of the fairy tale classic BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. And Bluth has announced a TROLL IN CENTRAL PARK as the first new trio of films.

What does Bluth see as the essential difference between his product and Disney's? "Disney seems to be making films that are pretty much for the very young, while we try to make movies that satiate the entire family appetite," said Bluth. But critics don't necessarily agree that Bluth and creative partners Gary Goldman and John Pomeroy are making films that are substantially different from Disney's. Even a cursory viewing of ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN invites comparisons to assorted Disney classics: the film's orphaned heroine, Anne-Marie, looks like a miniature version of Snow White and, in her manner and speech, is reminiscent of another Disney orphan, Penny from THE RESCUERS; a Heavenly Whippet appears to be yet another variation on PINOCCHIO'S Blue Fairy; and the scene where neighborhood dogs assemble to aid dog hero Charlie plays much like a similar scene in 101 DALMATIANS. Has Bluth grown tired of such comparisons, and does he think they have any merit?

"It doesn't annoy me, because people will say what they say. There's never been a deliberate attempt on our part to ape or copy any of Disney's past achievements. In fact, we continually rack our brains to try and be fresh and different. I think my detractors may be talking about my use of symbols, which is similar to Disney's. That's what animation does, it talks in symbols. But there are only so many symbols you can put in a story: the good guys and bad guys, the other-worldly force that is directing the protagonist's life, the evil part that is trying to pull him in the other direction, and the chorus that moves around the hero. That's pretty much it.

You can change the names and faces of those characters, but you're basically telling the same five plots over and over.

As for the film's SNOW WHITE look-alike heroine, Bluth said the inspiration came from a real-life girl who sat in on a promotional screening for THE LAND BEFORE TIME, where he was asked why his movies didn't feature little girls. "I promised then and there to put that little girl in my next picture," said Bluth. "That's really where the idea came from. So you see, there was nothing premeditated about it. I anticipated that people would say we were copying Snow White, but I just ignore those types of criticisms. There are always people who say our pictures look just like Disney's, but in my opinion they don't."

Bluth's business partner, Morris F. Sullivan, has kept a low profile ever since coming to Bluth's rescue after two of his animation enterprises had gone bankrupt. "We call Morris our guardian angel," said Bluth. "My brother Sam had a friend who knew Morris. Sam invited Morris to take a look at our situation—he came to us as a specialist in the merger of companies. He took a look and decided to come out of retirement to help us get back on our feet. It sounded too good to be true. From that day forward, this man has been dedicated to making this work. He makes very good business calls. If it hadn't been for Morris, there would not have been AN AMERICAN TAIL. And, needless to say, working with Steven [Spielberg] was another key element in turning our luck around."

Sullivan is the one who urged Bluth and his associates to leave sunny Hollywood for the greener pastures of Ireland. Not only is it less expensive to produce animated features there, but corporations are taxed only ten cents on the dollar, as opposed to fifty cents in the United States. THE LAND BEFORE TIME was made entirely in Ireland, as was ALL DOGS GO TO HEAVEN (although some work was farmed out to Bluth's small, unpublicized studio in Los Angeles, an annex that employs some 100 workers on a contractual basis, many of whom were trained in Ireland). How does Bluth like his new stomping grounds?

"I've been living in Ireland three years now. There's a certain magic that I can feel when I'm there. Ireland is a quiet place to live; it's like moving to a small town. It's magnificent from an artistic viewpoint, and it's filled with tradition. If I were to describe the essence of the Irish people, I would say that they stop to smell the flowers. They're very proud. They're thrilled that their children have worked on these films. They know that the whole world is going to see these movies and realize that they were made in Ireland."

While Bluth acknowledged that he missed the United States, and all the friends he left behind, he hopes one day to return—a time he described as "not that far off." In the meantime, he is doing his best to counter an unflattering item in Variety that said he pays most of his employees below union scale and in many cases offers them no benefits. (In 1986, Sullivan settled a dispute with the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees Cartoonists Local 839, who demanded $103,000 in health, welfare, and pension payments due to them after Don Bluth Productions went belly-up in 1985. Sullivan agreed to pay the $103,000 plus the union's $20,000 legal fees.)

continued on page 58
By Alan Jones

Shapiro Glickenhaus Entertainment opened BASKET CASE 2 in February and plans to release FRANKENHOOKER in March. The films were directed back-to-back in 12 weeks last summer by Frank Henenlotter, New York's low-budget guru of gore, who scored big with horror fans with BASKET CASE, his debut feature in 1982, and 1988's BRAIN DAMAGE, his quirky story of a singing and dancing cranial parasite.

The SGE deal called for Henenlotter to clean up his shock act to obtain contractually mandated R-ratings for each picture. But artistic restraint in the blood-and-gore department hasn't slowed down Henenlotter, according to Edgar Levins, his long-time producer. "Our R is different than other people's R," said Levins, who has produced all of Henenlotter's films. "It's still a very subversive approach. The pictures are every bit as disturbing."

The SGE deal has been especially pleasing since Henenlotter's hook-up with Andre Blay's Cinema Group for BRAIN DAMAGE proved disastrous. "We made absolutely nothing out of BRAIN DAMAGE," revealed Levins in January, as he and Henenlotter wrapped up post-production on their new films. "Everyone is suing everyone else, and what the company owes us is such a small amount, no one will take our case. Foreign sales were so good, though, Frank has had an offer to direct a sequel, and it provided us with this dual opportunity. SGE basically hired us to manufacture the films and we have no say in either the domestic or overseas marketing."

Levins and Henenlotter made the deal at SGE with James Glickenhaus, company president and director of THE EXTERMINATOR. "Jim Glickenhaus is a Frank fan," said Levins. "He's in tune with the material. He understands it. And he isn't afraid of it. Frank does seem to threaten people with his story ideas. But as independent filmmakers we can't do smaller versions of the same movies Hollywood does because, who cares? The same elements that create your success will also limit it. And trying to get rich quick off movies is very unrealistic in the long term. If you tell the story right, the film will work, and you'll get more employment."

Henenlotter and Levins' chosen line of work means they are once again sleeping in their offices, working 100-hour weeks, and often driving themselves for 48 hours at a time. But Levins is philosophical about it all. "These films are paying our rents for another year and keeping Frank out of the Korean delis as a waiter," said Levins. "Sometimes the crew doesn't go home for days because Frank creates such a great atmosphere on set. Even if we did go home, we wouldn't have more fun. And we'd only think about the movie anyway, so why bother?"

Neither is Levins tired of making movies with all the inherent low-budget problems. "I don't look at it that way," he said. "Here we are making two movies in one summer. No, it's not easy. If it were, more people would do it. These are good problems, and we should have more of them. Flexibility has been limited on these shows. There's no room for alternatives once the machinery has gotten going at this level of inertia. Once everything was planned out and locked in, we had very little room to move. That's why the apartments are replicas of Frank's own again, like in BRAIN DAMAGE."

Special makeup effects for both movies are the responsibility of "Wild Man" Gabe Bartalos, who created Elmer for BRAIN DAMAGE. His 13-man crew had eight weeks of pre-production allotted to realize Henenlotter's brief, non-gory carnage. "There's no blood, just fire, explosions, sparkles, and streamers," said Bartalos. "Frank wants the audience to smile this time, not cringe, be charmed, not repulsed. For one scene [in FRANKENHOOKER] we had nine half-naked girls and tinted foam body parts all piled up in a heap. I added a bit of gore to see what effect it would have. It looked like a massacre and Frank screamed I was missing the whole lighthearted point."

Typical of Henenlotter's approach is FRANKENHOOKER, where the youthful, mad scientist sifts through a plate full of severed breasts, looking for the perfect pair, throwing the rejects over his shoulder. "Frank and I share the same mentality," said Bartalos. "We are getting back to the idea that moviemaking is supposed to be fun. I'm comfortable with the over-the-top nature of the projects because bravado boldness is the only way to go. This isn't grim or dark, but good for a
laugh.”

The FRANKENHOOKER of the title, played by Patty Mullen, is pieced together from the body parts of New York prostitutes who have exploded from smoking a new, lethal form of crack, the scientist’s effort to bring his dead girlfriend back to life and create the ultimate woman. “Mullen had to be knock-down gorgeous with just a hint of monster,” said Bartalos. “Patty had to go through 16 three-hour prosthetic applications, including a black forearm. Each foam piece was pre-stitched by hand so actual threads would show in close-ups.”

BASKET CASE 2 and FRANKENHOOKER shared the same crew with different casts, except for Beverly Bonner, who appears as “Casey” in all of Henenlotter’s films. In casting his scripts, Henenlotter continues to mine the sleaze end of the independent talent pool for extra added genre trivia mileage. Starring as the scientist in FRANKENHOOKER is James Lorinz from STREET TRASH. Also in the film, Woody Allen’s ex-wife Louise Lasser, Mullen from DOOM ASYLUM, and horror host Zacherle, the voice of Elmer in BRAIN DAMAGE. BASKET CASE 2 features Kevin Van Hentenryk, star of the original. Also in the cast are jazz singer Annie Ross, star of WITCHCRAFT, and Jason Evers from THE BRAIN THAT WOULDN’T DIE (1959).

In BASKET CASE 2 Ross plays Granny Ruth, who runs a shelter for persecuted freaks where Van Hentenryk hides out with his deformed brother, Belial. “Ross’ first question was, ‘Is Kevin back?’” said Levins. “When we offered her the part, she read the script and loved it, then rented BASKET CASE on video, and loved that, too. But she wanted to make certain Kevin Van Hentenryk was reprising his role before she accepted.”

Bartalos upgraded the technology of Belial’s super low-budget design from the first film, basically a hand-puppet in a basket, but said he did so with reservations. “The trouble is Frank and the world loves him,” said Bartalos. “We were stuck with basically the same design but I wanted to add more visual interest. So I brought the arm away from the torso to make him more dynamic and vicious. We made eight different Belials in all. Some carried his whole weight on lifted arms so he could walk, and one was made at 2/3 scale to jump out of his basket for a shock effect. Mechanics have made all the difference with regard to Belial’s diverse movements this time. We have full facial articulation and servo-mechanisms for the arms. All we have to do is get into a rig, make a movement, and the model follows. This approach gave Belial a lot more mobility than even Frank was expecting.”

Besides Belial, Bartalos also provided the film with its “House of Freaks” (as it was once subtitled during production), a line-up including Toothy, Mouse Man, Moon Man and Tumor Man. “The attitude we’re taking is not to offend any real freaks,” said Bartalos. “Anatomically disfigured persons in the audience won’t be made a fool of.

We had to design an army of 22 freaks, not including Belial, and they are all whacked-out broadstrokes. Frank had specific thoughts on a few. But the beauty of our collaboration is, we feed off each other. He asked us for a four-foot head which could sing opera and that’s exactly what he got.

“There’s more money on this show, and it has been channeled my way because the title is HOUSE OF FREAKS, not ‘House of Props.’ Some of the creatures are just slip-over masks but others have extensive bladder controls to register facial expression. Each creature has been fun to do because each has reached a nice level of individual artistry. There are so many good effects guys out there now doing lots of similar stuff. Frank’s encouragement to do it bigger and bolder has been a very important catalyst.”

Though the $5 million funding SGE allotted for both films marks them squarely as low-budget, for Henenlotter it’s more money than he’s ever had before. The extra money is buying frills like Dolby Stereo Surround Sound for both pictures. That’s a long way from BASKET CASE, which took four years to complete because Henenlotter and Levins kept running out of money, filming in 16 mm because they couldn’t afford to shoot in 35.

“Working with larger budgets has its advantages and disadvantages,” said Levins. “The major advantage is, we’re working. There was a six-year gap between BASKET CASE and BRAIN DAMAGE. A two-year one between the latter and FRANKENHOOKER. And between that and BASKET CASE 2 has been just three weeks. That isn’t bad at all, is it? But I won’t be happy until I get it down to 24 hours between each picture!”
Star Quest

Beyond The Rising Moon

How two Virginia-based movie entrepreneurs, John Ellis and Philip Cook, did it for less.

By David Rector

STAR QUEST: BEYOND THE RISING MOON is a low-budget effects-filled space opera, produced on a scant budget of just $175,000 for the video market. The first project of Washington, D.C.-based Common Man Motion Pictures Corp., the film was due to hit video stores in February, from Vid America. "Home video is the best thing that's ever come along for people like us, who want to make little films," said producer John Ellis, who spent five years making the film with writing and directing partner Philip Cook.

Cook's screenplay, originally titled simply BEYOND THE RISING MOON, begins with the discovery of a derelict spaceship and the attempt by a high-powered Japanese corporation, Kuriyama Enterprises, to gain access to its technologically secrets. Kuriyama dispatches Pentan, a genetically engineered female agent, to steal information about the ship, now in the possession of a rival company. But Pentan keeps the data and flees in an effort to be free of corporate masters. Pentan escapes to the planet Elysium, home of the scientist who created her, with agents from Kuriyama in hot pursuit.

The production called for 30 built sets, three planet environments and 270 complex special effects. "We tried to design a film with animation and effects that had a big look but was still cost effective," said Cook, who also served as the films' cinematographer. "Usually special effects in a big-budget feature is a major expense. For us, it's an asset instead of a liability. We did the effects ourselves as a way of keeping costs down. It's basically just us and our own home, building these things and trying to give it an epic, spacial look, as opposed to building enormous things or staging elaborate scenes."

Cook, 29, and Ellis, 34, were veterans of Broadcast Arts (Pee Wee's Playhouse), who decided to stay in Washington to make their movie when the commercials and effects supplier moved to New York. Ellis, once an illustrator who inked for Marvel Comics, was an animator and director for Broadcast Arts. Cook, who made films in high school and studied film production at the University of Maryland, worked at Broadcast Arts as a director of photography, and liked to dabble in special effects. It was a company screening of Cook's 8mm amateur production that first introduced him to Ellis, and cemented the partnership to make their own feature. "It was marvelous," said Ellis of Cook's amateur film. ""How could he do this in 8mm?" I thought. It had spacecrafts flying around, laserbeams—everything!" Later, Ellis was to learn how it was done—hard work.

According to Cook, up to 95% of BEYOND THE RISING MOON was shot in a warehouse outside Alexandria, Virginia, which was shared with several other businesses, including a storage facility and a branch of the Tropicana orange juice company. Sets were erected in an area of less than 2000 square feet. A strict production schedule was maintained, with sets torn down to make way for new ones that had to be built.

Production began in 1985, with four months of set building. Cook and Ellis learned to become pretty good scavengers. Most of the materials used for the sets were made up from whatever they found lying around the industrial park where the studio was located. Nearby dumpsters produced a rich cache of material that was incorporated into their set designs. Castaway hunks of...
mahogany from The Door Store, a furniture company, were carried off to become support wood. Used NASA electronics were rented to give their spaceship technology a state-of-the-art look.

Cook and Ellis cast the film with local talent from theatre groups. Their boldest decision was to make Pentan, the film’s lead role, a female, awarding it to Tracy Davis. “Somehow, the character as a woman became very intriguing,” Cook explained. “Instead of giving the audience what it usually gets, here’s the story of a strong woman and a space jock and an adventure constructed around this role reversal. The idea was to make something a little different and have it work.”

The part of the “space jock,” Harold Brickman, was given to local actor Hans Brinkman. One of the Kuriyama executives is played by the film’s most recognizable star, Michael Mack, who appeared in the PBS series, POWERHOUSE, about a group of kids who solve crimes. Many times during filming, Ellis said passersby called out, “There’s Kevin,” Michael’s name on the PBS show. Unable to find a Japanese actor to play the role of Kuriyama’s CEO, the filmmakers hired Japanese public speaker Ron Ikejiri. “We told him to just play it like yourself,” said Ellis. “He got right into it.”

The filmmakers got permits to close and shoot on a Washington bridge and in a tunnel across the street from the Pentagon. A farm in Culpepper, Virginia stands-in for the planet Elysium, its field plowed over several times to look like an alien world. After nine weeks of principal photography, eight months were spent to finish the complex post-production effects work. The grind of production took its toll.

“Making the film was a real trauma,” said Cook. “It was hard on our wives, it was hard on our families. It strained the relationship between John and me. We didn’t have enough personnel. I remember watching some rushes, and I heard this screaming and it’s me yelling, ‘What are you doing over here? I said I wanted the smoke on this side.’ John was the smoke person on location; which he shouldn’t have been. He’s the producer of the picture. But somebody’s got to operate the damn machine. It’s 40 degrees, you’re up to your ankles in mud in the middle of a cornfield, you try to do five days shooting in two and, all I know is, the damn smoke is not going right.”

To market the finished film, Ellis and Cook said they turned continued on page 61

Kuriyama troopers secure a foothold on the barren planet Elysium, actually a Virginia farmer’s field, plowed over.
Showstopping transformations are a specialty of Hollywood’s Burbank-based Chiodo Bros.

By Dennis Fischer

When Hollywood producers want eye-popping special effects with a sense of the wild and crazy for a nominal price, they call on the Chiodo brothers—Ed, Stephen, and Charlie. The Chiodos are best known for doing such sequences as the “Large Marge” transformation in PEE WEE’S BIG ADVENTURE (1985), where a truck driver suddenly turns into a grotesque freak, the tyrannosaurus car commercial in ROBOCOP (1987), and for their own freaky and funny feature KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE (1988). They also supplied the title creatures for both CRITTERS films and did the little seen but much appreciated ABC After-school Special COUSIN KEVIN.

Like Will Vinton, the Chiodos work some of their effects with clay animation, but also use traditional makeup effects. Their most impressive recent effort has been a throwaway shot in Weird Al Yankovic’s film UHF, written by Yankovic and directed by Jay Levey, where a technician turns around and suddenly transforms into a multi-eyed, screwball alien. Orion debuted the film last summer to lackluster critical and boxoffice response, and it is now available on video.

The producers of UHF approached the Chiodos because they had seen the Large Marge effect and wanted something like it. But they balked at the price. Eye-popping effects can be expensive. The Chiodos trimmed the budget by shifting overhead costs to UHF, using the film’s production facilities to bring in the effect for just $25,000. Plus they gave the filmmakers what they call “The Chiodo Bros Guarantee.” Said Charlie, “That means it’s going to be great and you’re going to love it!”

Charlie Chiodo first put together 50 or 60 alien designs which were submitted to the production company. They selected the face of one character and the three-eye design of another. Charlie then did a final composite for approval. “It had all these stalks growing out of its face,” said Charlie. “They asked us to put eyes on all the stalks. We hadn’t planned or budgeted for that.

We said, ‘If the animator feels like doing it, if he’s into it, we’ll throw that in.’

To alleviate producer apprehensions about transformation effects like that in UHF, the Chiodos submit pencil animation tests for approval, done for UHF by Cal Arts animator Mitch Bryan, who had worked on CRITTERS and KILLER KLOWNS FROM OUTER SPACE. Bryan’s pencil tests served as a blueprint for the dimensional effect that eliminated costly errors. And the tests allowed for creative input in the effects process from the production.

Approved test blueprint in hand, the Chiodos began fabricating the physical effect in pieces. “These consisted of replacement cycles for all the antennae, which were 12 frame cycles,” said Charlie. “The eyes themselves also had 12 frame cycles, and the entire duration of the shot was 69 frames. It was about three times as long as Large Marge.

“Glasses on the character had to drop off, a third eye had to appear, the teeth were replaced, and the hair had to be matched and manipulated properly. Did it grow? No, it shortened. That was the problem. We had to recede the hair, animate it off the forehead. We realized, as we were fabricating the elements, how tricky it was.”

The Chiodos shot the animation as a front light/back light matte for compositing into the live action by the pro-
The effect as it appeared in last summer's UHF, an Orion Pictures release now available on video, shown prior to being composited with the movie's live-action background. Construction of Charlie Chiolo's design was supervised by Edward Chiolo, with filming of the replacement animation directed by Stephen Chiolo, turning a likeness of actor Anthony Geary into a bug-eyed monster.

The actual animation of the pieces was done by Kim Blanchette, who received some assistance from Bryan, also in charge of the matte lighting. The shot took a total of 22 hours to complete. The material used was plastine clay with dye to color it, built around a fiberglass shell structure.

Said Ed Chiolo, "There were glass rods and tubing to brace it through all the replacement cycles. We used a lot of different waxes and had make-up applied to the piece so that, initially, it matched the actor's skin color." To further reassure the production company, everything involved in the shot was tested first on video to demonstrate the replacement cycles for the production's approval.

Stephen Chiolo, who directed THE KILLER KLOONS FROM OUTER SPACE, directed the insert shot, designed the armature and the camera setup, laid out the cycles with Blanchette, and oversaw the process from the cel to the final animation. Edward Chiolo supervised the technical fabrication and with Bryan built the character from Charlie Chiolo's designs, setting up the lighting with McKenzie Waggaman, who was the director of photography on the shot.

The Chiolos have a Saturday-morning live-action series, THE SEA MONKEYS, and several feature projects in development, including GUIDO COLUMBUS, to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Columbus' discovery of America, the story of Christopher's younger brother, who tries to prove the world is flat... and does.

"We like to think people come to us because we give a little bit of our personalities—we sort of have a wild and crazy nature, like the work that we do, a little offbeat, a little quirky, always a lot of fun," said Charlie. "We like being known for being able to do these outrageous things."

Working frame by frame, animator Kim Blanchette (left) and assistant Mitch Bryan.
The re-release of Herk Harvey’s ’60s horror
earns national acclaim.

By Daniel Schweiger

After decades of haunting late night television, the undead returned to Lawrence, Kansas for CARNIVAL OF SOULS’ 27th anniversary, an invasion timed to the film’s theatrical restoration by Panorama Entertainment. Leading these zombies was a pasty-faced Herk Harvey, who first rose from the Kaw River in 1962 to reclaim a drowned organist from the living. “I’m a bit on the kooky side,” said Harvey, about donning his makeup from the film again. “No one was surprised when I showed up as a ghoul.”

The anniversary was Harvey’s moment of unholy triumph, as over 300 fans celebrated his black and white exercise in psychological horror. The event garnered coverage from People magazine, and capped the film’s rediscovery by critics, thanks to Panorama’s re-release. J. Hoberman of New York’s Village Voice called the film “a subterranean classic...crudely poetic, genuinely creepy.” The film’s reissue even garnered TV accolades from the likes of ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT’s Leonard Maltin, as well as Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert.

“It was like a new premiere,” said Harvey, about the event, which created more excitement in the town where the film was made than its original showing. “There were extras who asked if I still remembered them. Even relatives of long-dead actors came.” Among the stars attending were Candace Hilligoss (Mary Henry), who’s now writing a screenplay about South Dakota, and Sid-
ney Berger (John Linden), currently heading the University of Houston's theatre department. "We went to most of the Kansas locations, including the Kaw Bridge, where the movie's opening wreck occurs. It was a real day for warming old ghosts."

Decades ago, Harvey and his writer John Clifford were contractually unable to stop the film's original distributor, Herts-Lion, from clipping nine minutes from CARNIVAL OF SOULS, a hack job that nearly destroyed the film's intended moodiness. "The theatrical version was really chopped up," Clifford said. "They cut out beginnings of scenes, and the timing just wasn't right." TV audiences soon discovered Harvey's offbeat film, while the original print lay inert in the vaults of Du-Arts Labs, a result of Herts-Lion's non-payment of the lab bill. Harvey was finally able to purchase his film back for a token amount after years of anguish. "I think Du-Art needed the space," he said, "and I was more than happy to get the copyright this time!"

Harvey feels it was really a Cinefantastique retrospective in 1983 (13:6/14:1:91) and a mention by author David Zinman as one of the great '60s films which really brought CARNIVAL OF SOULS back to the living. Archival buff and director Richard Haines (SPACE AVENGERS) read both articles, and then convinced Panorama Entertainment to restore and re-release the movie from Harvey's original interpositive. "It's a good thing we shot the picture in 35mm, black and white," Harvey said. "If we had photographed it in color, the visual quality would have really deteriorated. Thankfully, our print has remained in excellent condition."

The footage excised from CARNIVAL OF SOULS provided much-needed explanations, and four scenes are particularly vital to its disturbing psychological web. Before her Utah trip, a reverend played by Art Ellison, a guest at the re-premiere, has a conversation with a workman that clues us into Mary's icy behavior as she tours an organ factory, particularly in light of her near-lethal crash. "You'd think she'd feel a little something, like humbleness or gratitude," Ellison says, a conversation which ends when the worker remarks "If she's got a problem, it'll go right along with her."

As Mary's trip ends with Harvey's first terrifying appearance as "The Man," she pulls into a Salt Lake City gas station and glimpses the Saltair Pavilion in the distance. In restored footage, the attendant now reveals the gothic structure's history as an abandoned bathhouse, dance hall, and carnival, hinting that the place will become the ghostly source of Mary's angst.

When her disintegration begins, Mary's "doctor," played by Stan Leavitt, another re-premiere guest, visits her boarding house in the added footage and warns the landlady about Mary's psychological problems. Leavitt advises not to take Mary's ghoul-chasing stories seriously, adding he's puzzled why Mary visited him, since he is not a psychologist. The landlady reveals how she heard Mary moving furniture about the room all night. "I hope she does leave," the landlady says, to which Leavitt responds, "I hope she can." When Mary goes to Leavitt's office for the last time, her restored dialogue begins with, "I don't belong in the world. Something separates me from other people," a breakthrough which does little good as the chair turns around to reveal Harvey as "The Man."

Harvey isn't disturbed by modern viewers' sometimes campy reactions when watching the revised film. "I understand how people can laugh at it," he said. "You've got to remember the conventions that were in play when CARNIVAL OF SOULS was made. Some of it's really melodramatic, especially when priest [Art Ellison] grabs Mary's shoulder and screams 'Sacri-
lege!' I should have toned it down stuff like that."

"We're under no illusion that CARNIVAL OF SOULS is the perfect horror movie," Clifford added. "We wanted it to be a little funny. After all,"

Left: Assembled with the filmmakers for the reunion in Lawrence, Kansas, where the film was made, were members of the cast (shown below in their film roles), including (l to r) production manager Larry Sneegas, actor Sidney Berger, writer John Clifford, actors Candace Hilligoss, Stan Leavitt and Art Ellison, and Harvey.Router thes past
GASP FROM THE PAST
"I hope the biggest impact of the re-release is to make a point with today's filmmakers," said director Herk Harvey, "to go for the psychological terrors, not the physical ones."

Mary Henry (Candace Hilligoss), pursued by ghouls at the climax of Harvey's film. VidAmerica is scheduled to release the uncilt, restored version on video in May.

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Harvey as "The Man," the leader of the undead spirits pursuing Mary Henry.
**BEAUTY AND THE BEAST**
Directed by Ron Koslow. CBS-TV, 12/89, 60 mins. With: Ron Perlman, Jo Anderson, Roy Dotrice, Jay Acovone.

Gone was too much of the beauty when the beast was forced to become, well, more beastly. With Linda Hamilton opting not to return, Catherine is killed off and an evil-wicked bad-nasty character named Gabriel (Stephen McHattie) is introduced. Jo Anderson (DREAM STREET) joins the cast as detective Diana Bennett.

Series creator Ron Koslow manages to maintain some of the series’ literate and tragic qualities, but the delicate balance is smashed by the demand for more high-tech mayhem, more gunfire and more crude action. After dictating the changes, CBS decided to cancel the series, one of Jeff Sagarsky’s first acts as the network’s new entertainment president. Adding insult to injury, by pulling the show after its January 24th airing, CBS left three already-finished episodes unaired. It’s clear that beastly behavior by CBS killed off the promise of something fine and beautiful.

* • Mark Dawidziak

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**C.H.U.D. II: BUD THE CHUD**

This surprisingly likeable low-key comedy has almost nothing to do with its non-comedy inspiration, C.H.U.D. (1984). C.H.U.D. here are the outcome of government enzyme research into making a perfect soldier, one that will fight even after death. When funding is withdrawn from the research, test subject Bud (the late Gerritt Graham) is put in suspended animation, only to be stolen by two high school kids for their biology project.

Film makes excellent use of name actors in ultra-brief cameos as the victims, including lesser-known standup comics like Ritch Snyder and Jo Anne Dearing, and one walk-on gets no credit at all (Robert Englund). Robert Vaughn, in particular, has wonderful comic fun as a gum chewing military type.

Gripping and excellent in the largely muted title role, using his improv background and flair for physical comedy to good effect. Ed HOWEY (I SHRUNK THE KIDS) Naha wrote the sly script, but had his name taken off the credits. Aside from the fact the CHUDs are supposed to be cannibals, but act more like vampires, biting their victims and turning them into CHUDs too, the script, like the similarly themed RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD is that rare thing in horror comedy, one that doesn’t insult your intelligence.

* • Judith P. Harris

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**DAUGHTER OF DARKNESS**
Directed by Stuart Gordon. CBS-TV, 1/90, 120 mins. With: Anthony Perkins, Mia Sara, Jack Coleman, Robert Reynolds, D展开其余内容...
Hyde emerges as a ridiculous spectacle in lumpy layers of badly applied latex.

- Mark Dawidziak

**LEATHERFACE:**
THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE 3


This follow-up to one of the most deeply disturbing films ever made is superior to the obvious rehash of Part 2, but comparisons with the seminal classic are bound to suffer. As explained in the prologue, the real Leatherface was captured and executed in 1981. This one features a new clan of cannibals, including an artificial voice-modulated mother, a diabolical little girl and several rednecks with Southern accents and inbred personalities.

Clocking in at about 80 minutes playing time, large chunks of material, not just gore scenes to appease the ratings board, seem to have ended up on the cutting room floor. Written by rising slasher punk horror author David J. Schow, the buildup of tension between the weird family and its captives is blown by the sudden and unbelievable way characters are dispatched. Seemingly dead or seriously injured cannibals pop up again so often to carry on the action, it borders on the ridiculous.

Producer New Line Cinema will have to do a better job than this if they hope to sell Leatherface as the money-maker Freddy Krueger has become.

- Gary Kimber

**LOVE AT STAKE**


Made in 1987 under the title BURNIN' LOVE and shown at that year's Cannes Festival in a version four minutes shorter, this is an offensive comedy which tries (and mostly fails) to do for the Salem witch trials what Mel Brooks did for the Frankenstein legend. The film suggests witch hunts were thought up by Salem mayor Dave Thomas and town judge Stuart Pankin as a scam to confiscate property so they can build condos and a mall.

Despite the dismal script by Lanier Laney and ex-SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE impersonator of Nanny McPhee, Terry Sweeney, the cast generally plays it straight. Good performances are turned in by Bud Cort as an not entirely innocent clergyman and Audrie Neenan as his nasty, venal wheelchair-bound mother. Barbara Carrera is well cast as a real witch, played at the finale by the late Alsp Ramsey.

- Judith P. Harris

**MEET THE HOLLOWHEADS**


This one is mighty bizarre but to no very good purpose. Filmed as LIFE—SO THE EDGE, it seems as if it is set on an alien planet going through their version of the '50s. The plot is strictly '50s sitcom material—husband brings home a sleazeball boss for dinner to meet the wife and family with disastrous results.

Director-screenwriter makeup artist Tom Burman fills the screen with his creations, but neither they nor the film have a breath of life in them. The phony and unappealing rubber effects are about as interesting as watching goop oozze out of a squashed bug. In a word—yuck!

- Dennis Fischer

**NIGHT BREED**


Clive Barker may not be the future of horror, but he's sure got a hammerlock on the present. The film format of his latest multimedia assault (read the paperback, skim the comic book) is an atmospheric horrorfest that raises hell with a menagerie of misfit monsters in the mythical kingdom of Midian. Tormented by prothetic nightmares, Craig Sheffer seeks treatment with a psycho-therapist (a brooding David Cronenberg) even more deranged than he is. The film works best underground, displaying its demographically varied collection of changelings, mutants, freaks, and abominations, once Sheffer gets inducted into the subterranean night breed fellowship.

The male lead and his girlfriend are stiffs, Cronenberg is slumping, but the night breed are our kind of folks. Kudos go to the British makeup crew supervised by Bob Keen.

- Thomas Doherty

**THE PHANTOM EMPIRE**

Directed by Fred Olen Ray. Prime Entertainment. 1'29. 4 mins. With: Ross Hagen, Jeffrey Combs, Dawn Wilsdum, Robert Querry.

Uneven would be a kind word to describe the films of Fred Olen Ray. He's made a couple of decent ones, which may have been by accident, judging from the slew of terrible ones. This is one of the latter, extremely talky, slow, with bad sound, stupid dialogue, and poor acting. The characters spend a great deal of time laughing at their own jokes, which makes them even more unlikely than they otherwise might be.

A team of fortune hunters sets out to discover the lost civilization of Reliah, which they do with laughable ease, inside a cave. They are captured by an Alien Queen (played by Sybil Danning, whose shoulders are...
Slasher Pamela Springsteen in SLEEPAWAY CAMP 3. so wide she has to walk sideways through the caves), but are rescued by a mute cave girl played by the occasionally topless Michelle Bauer in the film's only good performance. Menace is provided by mutant cannibals in a dumb makeup.

Everything but the kitchen sink is tossed in to pep up this wasted effort, including Robby the Robot with a different head, and some brief but essential stop-motion dinosaurs animated by Bert Mixon. The animation is the only reason to seek out this dismal off-screen cassette.

RABID GRANNIES

Directed by Emmanuel Koya, Troona, 9/30, 90 min. With Danielle Davis, Anne Marie Fox, Jack Mayar, Elliot Lyon.

The title and concept of this Troona cheesie is a grand joke: family members arrive at the home of elderly matriarchs for a birthday celebration; most bring gifts, but the absent black sheep of the family sends an accursed gift which, when opened, exudes a vapor that turns the grannies into monstrous ghouls who quickly slaughter the rest of the family. It's all a macabre joke, but a minor one on which to base an entire movie, especially one so badly produced, with such execrable non-acting as this. Even the special effects, with the grannies turning into demonic, slime-coating creatures with razor-talons and spiked-teeth, reek of high school Halloween skits. It's the kind of messy horror made for videotape gore mongers, with little attempt to provide anything of value in story or characterization.

○ Randall D. Larson

Finn Carter (l), Fred Ward, and a dead "graboid" from TREMORS.

RED DWARF

Directed by Ed Bye. BBC North West TV, Fall '89. 30 min. With Chris Barrie, Craig Charles, Danny John-Jules, Norman Lovett.

This excellent 1988 British science fiction comedy series, nominated for an international Emmy, manages to comment cleverly on religion, video games, sex roles, music videos, and other contemporary topics. Set on the titular spacefaring mining ship of the future, its crew of 300 killed by a stasis leak, the ship is manned not by Craig Charles, a crewman who is revived from suspended animation 3 million years later. His cat, who was pregnant, has also survived, and her progyny has evolved into a humanoid creature (Danny John-Jules). Holly (Norman Lovett), the ship's computer with an IQ of 6,000 provides Charles with a holographic projection of his deceased family, Chris Barrie, the most unlikable person in the universe. In this futuristic ODD COUPLE, Charles is a slob and Barrie is obsessively neat. Aside from the cat and the computer, the only regular characters are two mute robots, called Scutters, which have no features but manage to endure themselves by their rabid fanatism for John Wayne. Scripts by creators Rob Grant and Doug Naylor involve time travel, parallel worlds and three-dimensional interactive video games.

○ ○ ○ Judith P. Harris

SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT III: BETTER WATCH OUT!


This is just another pointless slasher film which rambles on to its banal conclusion, without suspense or even the inventive murder methods which provide some incentive to stay awake during other films of this type. The killer, picking up from the previous film in the series, snaps out of a coma on Christmas Eve and kills people who remind him of Christmas—anyone wearing red, or Santa Claus outfits, etc. The killer is psychically linked to a blind girl and manages to waste most of her family (among others) before dying. There is one scene worth watching: the killer, his exposed brain visible under a plexiglass dome and clad in a hospital gown, hunches—and gets a ride! The driver says, "You look bad, man—did you have a hair transplant?" Also included are clips from THE TERROR (1963) on which director Monte Hellman assisted Roger Corman.

○ David Wilt

SLEEPAWAY CAMP 3: TEENAGE WASTELAND


There's a lot of missed opportunities in this attempt to perpetuate female slasher Angela Baker. Angela's back, a slob and Barrie is obsessively neat. Aside from the cat and the computer, the only regular characters are two mute robots, called Scutters, which have no features but manage to endure themselves by their rabid fanatism for John Wayne. Scripts by creators Rob Grant and Doug Naylor involve time travel, parallel worlds and three-dimensional interactive video games.

○ ○ ○ Judith P. Harris

SLIPSIT


Despite its panoramic aerial shots, this would-be, post-holocaust epic never takes off. A spate of natural disasters in the 21st Century has chopped civilization into tiny settlements. The police cruise in gliders through the turbulent air current of the title. Though from TRON director Steven Lisberger, starring STAR. But the Mark Hamill as an airborne cop, the picture looks as if it were forged by fledgling filmmakers. Its concepts are shoddy, incoherent, and cautious. It boasts few special effects, has minimal makeup, and uses costumes that look like leftovers from MAD MAX, BEYOND THUNDERDOME. Hamill plays against type as a mean shamus, but the role is uncomplicated. A rotten attitude and hair-trigger fingers are his only traits.

○ Peter Bates

TREMORS


While director Ron Underwood's tribute to Jack Arnold's desert science fiction classics has some relaxed banter that helps flesh out the main characters, does build suspense, and never becomes thoroughly predictable, it needs that sense of eerie atmosphere which characterized the Arnold films. The story's burrowing monster concept has been done better, notably, in "The Invisible Enemy" on OUTER LIMITS and Robert McCammon's novel Stinger. Next to monster-fighting buddies Fred Ward and Kevin Bacon the other characters come off as stock, carbon copies. But the main problem here is that the film isn't really about anything.

○ Dennis K. Fischer

TWIN PEAKS

Directed by David Lynch. ABC TV, 3/90, 2 hours. With: Kyle MacLachlan, Michael Ontkean, Piper Laurie, JoAnn Chae.

The signpost up ahead, your next stop...wait a minute. This isn't THE TWILIGHT ZONE. No, but Rod Serling certainly would have appreciated the attempt to take television in a bold and innovative direction. This pilot for a series, set in a bizarre community shaped by director David Lynch (ERASERHEAD, THE ELEPHANT MAN, BLUE VELVET) and Alfred Hitchcock thriller. That's very close to what Lynch has delivered. Throw in a dash of Raymond Chandler and sprinkle with satire, and you've got the basic flavor of this dark but fascinating concoction. Lynch being Lynch, the action is stocked with ambiguous, haunting and just downright odd touches.

○ ○ ○ Mark Dawidziak

THE YELLOW WALLPAPER


Based on a short story published in 1895, written by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, this is a first-person stream-of-consciousness story of a woman slowly being driven insane, partly by the misguided good intentions of those around her and partly by some hideous yellow wallpaper in the room where her husband has confined her for a three month rest cure. This Masterpiece Theater version of the slightly 18 page story has been strung out over 74 minutes, and a lot of the subtlety and horror has been lost to mold it into a forcibly feminist diatribe. The screenplay by Maggy Wadley is fairly faithful to the original—with its dramatic impact—and the small cast of British performers is fine.

○ Judith P. Harris
Sentimental, explosive, and celestial, it's signature Spielberg

ALWAYS

by Thomas Doherty

Steven Spielberg's latest is an updated remake of a weepy wartime melodrama called A GUY NAMED JOE, a film that, by the aging wonderkind's own account, has haunted the smokings of his memory since childhood. Flashing back to little Stevie, open-mouthed and teary-eyed, up past his bedtime, watching the Late, Late Show, one can see why the strange, moody fantasy stuck with the most famous inheritor and successful promulgator of the myths of classical Hollywood cinema. It's one-of-a-kind mesh of the sentimental, the explosive, and the celestial.

As the Victor Fleming-directed, Dalton Trumbo-scripted MGM original dictates so much of the Amblin revision, it's worth a brief recap. A hotdog bomber pilot (Spencer Tracy) heroically dies on a reconnaissance mission. In cloud-filled MGM heaven, a deficic commander (Lionel Barrymore) dispatches him to serve as a kind of guardian angel to tutor a young trainee (Van Johnson) in the ways of flight and romance with his earthbound love (Irene Dunne). Thematically steeped in its wartime context, the urgency and resonance of the film's contemporary meaning is transparently clear. It offered an assurance that the departed are still with us, an idea that granted guilty survivors—especially perhaps the girls back home who made up the bulk of the traditional movie-going public—the leave to get on with their lives.

According to Variety, Spielberg originally planned to retain the WWII milieu, but shifted the project to a modern setting after EMPIRE OF THE SUN, set in the Pacific theatre, bombed in multiplex theatres. Plus, conventional Hollywood wisdom deems the Second World War lousy box-office because the current crop of historical Mall crawlers finds the Great Struggle against Fascism as remote and irrelevant as the Peloponnesian War. For the blazing glory of fighting Nazis, Spielberg substituted the glory of fighting blazes, for the Battle of Britain, he serves up Yellowstone National Forest le flambeau.

So much the worse for ALWAYS. To its credit, the film knows it's lost in space and time—one character delivers a soliloquy about the anachronistic ethos of the firefighters, another imitates John Wayne—but this wry self-knowledge can't hide a basic, debilitating fact: without the Second World War, this trip can never really soar. Indeed, only Spielberg's ace direction keeps the crate from crashing into the tarmac.

Though ALWAYS is about humans over the age of 14, unbridled Spielbergia looms from the first shot: a plane settling down like a spaceship into the top of the frame to buzz a pair of innocent fishermen. The pilot is hotshot firefighter Pete Sandich (Richard Dreyfuss), who cracks witticisms, douses fiery forests, makes white-knuckled landings on a wing and a prayer, goofs with his best pal Al (John Goodman), and spats with his "feisty" girlfriend Dorinda (Holly Hunter). During a John Fordian barroom scene by way of SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS, the inevitable, signature shot occurs. Hit it, John Williams—a roomful of spectators look up (bathed in klieg light) and gaze in befuddled, admiring wonder at—not E.T., not the Lost Ark, not the Atom Bomb—but Holly Hunter descending a staircase, spraypainted into a white evening dress ("Girl clothes!" she gushes). This is known as auteurist development.

As in the original, the pilot's ordained termination comes after he decides to commit to the woman and to subsume his daredevil ways to the group enterprise—the latter being the main message for the WWII combat genre. For all the flak Spielberg has taken about telegraphing his moves, his specialty is the cinematic bushwhack. Like his idol Hitchcock, Spielberg delights in working up an audience's expectations and nailing them when their guard is down. We know Pete is doomed to crash in the opening reels, either from the advance publicity or from Dorinda's intuitive flash and flat statement, "Your number's up," but Pete's death scene is a real stunner.

Zooming over a pesky firestorm, partner Al gets into trouble—his engine is on fire, his fuel tank is about to go up—and Pete makes a perilously steep dive to drop his load of fire-retardant on Al's flaming engine. He executes the maneuver perfectly, goes into a careening nosedive, and—now he's gonna crash—pulls up and out at the last moment. A brief moment of shot/reverse shot rejoicing quickly follows and then Pete eyes his left engine. It's on fire. From Al's point of view see Pete make eye contact, give a half-shrug, and—kapowec!—get blown to hell.

Or rather to Audrey Hepburn, which is almost the same thing. Of the cosmic conversation between Pete and her angelic "Hap" (attributable to Army Air Corps General continued on page 61

The explosive: sweeping, forest fire-fighting dive bombers, courtesy of ILM special effects.

The sentimental: Dreyfuss and Hunter.
Sobering future mixes social despair and Oedipal horror

BACK TO THE FUTURE
PART II


Marty McFly
Marty McFly, Jr.
Marlene McFly
Dr. Emmett Brown
Lorraine
Lea Thompson
Biff Tannen/Griff
Thomas F. Wilson
Martin Berry
Harry Waters, Jr.
Terry
Charles Fleischer
Western Union Man
Joe Flaherty
Needles
Pat Finn
Jennifer
Elizabeth Shue

by Charles D. Leaman

As J. Hoberman astutely noted in The Village Voice, the BACK TO THE FUTURE series "allegorizes the story of American post-war rise and decline." And I would add, specifically for an '80s audience of would-be achievers, surrogates Marty was raised on Reaganite rhetoric and keyed to the stubbornly conservative agenda of FAMILIES' Michael J. Fox. Indeed, Fox is one of the era's premier pop-culture icons: a cute, feisty, puppy-dog embodiment of capitalist aspiration. BACK TO THE FUTURE (1985) launched this figure on a rollercoaster ride through history that now attempts, despite all odds, to weave Past and Future into a gift-bow, "best-of-all-possible-worlds" Present.

With Part II, director Robert Zemeckis and co-writer Bob Gale waste no time in rocketing Doc Brown's Delorean time machine to 2015's Hill Valley, a madly popular preview of middle-class life in the next century. Decked out in the latest mall finery—Velcro Nikes with a mind of their own, an ultra-leather outfit that conforms to its wearer's measurements—Marty's soon confronted by back-to-Reagan-era phantoms as Michael Jackson, the Ayatollah Khomeini, and the White House Big Man himself, all video waiter-robots that staff the Cafe '80s.

The movie's first third is crammed with so many comics-inspired Tashlinesque details (a scenery channel that stands in for windows; a hydrator oven that turns a tiny pizza disk into a 24-inch whopper) that it's easy to ignore the dissonance beneath the fun. Marty's girlfriend Jennifer (Elizabeth Shue) passes out almost immediately, remaining unconscious (and invisible) for most of the film; the irresistible conclusion is that men, whether old or young, are the prime movers of history.

Without comment, the film links suburban malaise to commerce's triumph. Jennifer is taken by the police to the future home she shares with Marty; the officers think she's just another refugee from suburbia's nest of alcoholics, pill-poppers, and tranquilizer addicts. The McFly household is depicted as windowless, dark, cheerless. Marty Jr. sits stoned before multiple TV screens ("Hy-rium mode, please!"). Marty's daughter Marlene ditzes aimlessly, Jennifer shops, and a worn, grey Marty is fired by his Japanese boss. For all the glittering gadgets and techy toys, life in 2015 does not look as joyful. Worse is to come.

Marty's nemesis Biff, now a crotchety, embittered old man like IT'S A WONDERFUL LIFE's Mr. Potter, steals the Doc's DeLorean and transforms our '80s into a grim alternate universe with his greedy time-tampering. Zemeckis and Gale put a supply-side spin to George Bailey's nightmare vision of Bedford Falls grown foul. Frank Capra's 1946 masterpiece has become firmly lodged in the national psyche as (among other things) a metaphor for American idealism and its concomitant paranoia over powerlessness and poverty. Marty finds that urban blight has invaded his hometown's tree-lined security, and that the familiar streets are now strewn with garbage, trashed autos, and the chalk outlines of murder victims. Most appalling of all, he discovers strangers living in his house (an echo of George's finding his home turned into a boardinghouse, and his mother's rejection). That the new inhabitants are black gives an ugly, racist overtone to Zemeckis' depiction of general decay.

Bill's fortress-like, Trump-style tower soars over Hill Valley like METROPOLIS' gaping Moloch, a hideous fusion of belching smokestacks and Vegas neon (even Frederic Jameson couldn't better its crystallization of the "post-modern moment!"). When Marty uncovers his murdered father's grave at the local cemetery, a haunting, hellish establishing-shot shows the industrial landscape with its noxious wastes rammed right against the cemetery's perimeter. The shot makes a brilliant, angry (if inadvertent?) connection between industry's apocalyptic waste and society's literal destruction. This is the dark heart of BACK TO THE FUTURE—PART II: a poetic, displaced image for its audience's sense of a "kinder, gentler" past inexorably overrun by the depredations of corporate capitalism.

The film never really recovers from this long central section wherein social despair meets up with Oedipal horror. Biff has killed Marty's father and married his mother (Lea Thompson), turning her into a prosthetically buxom alcoholic. The anguish conveyed by this, and the distasteful spectacle of youthful performers encased in the aging process, imparts a sour aftertaste that lingers through the movie's frenetic final third in which Marty roars back to '55 to set things aright.

For a film that's been viewed and reviewed as an upbeat, breezy lark, BACK TO THE FUTURE—PART II is an oddly sobering experience. Convulsively imaginative as it is (and blessed with Industrial Light and Magic's customary wonders), the movie can't quite conceal the desperation lurking behind its covert attempt to reconcile the '80s with both itself and a dawning century. If BEEFJUICE appropriated death as a subject for crazy farce in the midst of an AIDS epidemic, BACK TO THE FUTURE tries to tame history through personal intervention in a period of chronic social instability. But as WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT showed, Robert Zemeckis finds it nearly impossible to wrestle fantasy away from the darker realities of sex, violence, and time. However manic and inventive, however attuned to the edgy charm of its diminutive star, BACK TO THE FUTURE—PART II can't finally avoid acknowledging history's (and capitalism's?) grimming skull.

Oedipal shock: Marty (Michael J. Fox) learns that as a result of his time tampering villain Biff has murdered his father and married his mother (Lea Thompson).
BACK TO THE FUTURE II
Makeup and Special Effects Artistry

By Ron Magid

Ken Ralston, who supervised the effects for the original BACK TO THE FUTURE as well as Robert Zemeckis' WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT, again spearheaded the effects work at ILM on BACK TO THE FUTURE 2, assisted by Scott Farrar (supervisor, COCOON 2). Key to the work were the character makeup contributions of Kenny Myers and Michael Mills. The film's future "look" was the work of ILM designer John Bell.

Bell's designs for Hill Valley 2015 were actually executed in 1986, before a script had been written, when Zemeckis was set to make the film prior to WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT. When production started up again in September, 1988, Bell went back to work on the film, serving under production designer Rick Carter. "Read the script they'd written," said Bell, "and I noticed things I'd put in my sketches in 1986 verbally outlined, so I think my early ideas had a bit of an influence on the film."

Among 25 designers who worked on the film, Bell used his prior experience, working for General Motors, to come up with the film's Citronelike taxi-cab design, collaborating with Mike Schiff, whose company, Wonderworks, made the models. Bell also designed the inside of Hill Valley's Cafe '80s. "They didn't want a BLADE RUNNER future," said Bell. "That was definitely out. We wanted things to have a sense of humor to them, so I painted an optimistic, colorful future."

With the designs set, it was Ralston's task to supervise the main unit's effects work, including the intricate split-screen photography needed to depict the actors in their multiple roles. For the work, ILM created a new Vistaglidel motion-control camera system, using the same company, whose specially built for Zemeckis' WHO FRAMED ROGER RABBIT. "It's silent so you can shoot sync sound," said Ralston of the system that allowed the camera to move during multiple takes that could be composited into a single scene. "And it uses any standard dolly track."

Ralston and Zemeckis used video tapes to view each Vistaglidel camera pass, using quick video matting to judge how the action of the multiple takes would mesh. "Once we processed all the camera mixes, the actors would have to lock their performances down precisely," said Ralston. "Pre-recorded dialogue was piped through little earphones so they could play to themselves."

One of the cleverest splits has Old Biff pass the film's pivotal sports almanac to his younger self in the seat of a '50s roadster, as Marty watches from the back seat (see above). Ralston used a hard split line along the dividing edge of the windshield for most of the scene, but shifted to a soft split to help blend actor Tom Wilson's arm with that of a stand-in when the book is passed. "We rigged the arms to a servo motor hidden beneath the dashboard, which meant the movement of passing the book was completely repetitive," said Ralston. "That's combined with rear screen when Young Biff tosses the book into the Lack seat and it crosses the split behind Old Biff. That really sold the gag."

By far the most complicated split was one referred to as "the Pizza Shot," featuring Michael J. Fox as 47-year-old Marty, and as his own son and daughter, arguing over dinner at the kitchen table. Beginning with a close angle of three sets of hands reaching for a slice, the continuous shot of more than 2,000 frames took three days to shoot. The moving split combined one take for the foreground at the bottom of the frame, with two takes combined for the background at the top.

Ralston gives a lot of the credit for the success of the split scenes to the makeup of Myers and Mills, who were assisted by Sonny Burman, Nancy Hvasta, and Marvin Westmore. Most difficult were those scenes requiring Wilson to wear the makeup for Old Biff. Wilson would undergo the five-hour makeup job, beginning at 3 a.m. to be ready for filming at eight. Once Old Biff's scenes were on film, Wilson had the makeup ripped off his face in order to shoot the matching scenes of Young Biff, often on the same day. "Wilson's face was literally hamburger after a few weeks of this," said Myers. "We spent more time trying to patch up the red sores on his face for Young Biff shots than anything else."

Fox was also completely covered in prosthetics for his role as the 47-year-old Marty, with only his nose and chin exposed. As Marty's daughter, Fox wore paint, cosmetic lifts, and Pepsodent-white dentures. As Marty, Jr., sloppy hairstyling and greenish, overlapping dentures were all that was needed. The makeup were applied to Fox by Bron Royal for night shooting, since the actor was busy working days on his TV series, FAMILY TIES.

While Ralston supervised the split screen work of the main unit, assistant Farrar worked on a second unit with director Max Kleven, filming wire work shots of flying cars and stunts for the film's elaborate flipboard chase. "Sometimes we'd have fine little piano wires spread throughout the shot," said Farrar. "They were made invisible by the busy texture of the backdrop and because we used vibrators to jiggle them so they wouldn't show up on film."

For the hoverboard chase, stunt performers were suspended in harness rigs from a Chapman crane. The hoverboards held magnets which gripped grips in the shoes of the stunt actors. "We worked nights for a couple of months, and days for another month, doing the hoverboard chase on the Universal backlot," said Farrar. "It was a tremendous amount of work for every shot."

To fully realize the flying cars, ILM doubled miniatures for the full-sized vehicles in some scenes. "There are extraordinary miniature blue screen shots in this film," said Farrar. "Pat Sweeney and Peter Daulton, two of our motion control track camera operators, have done some wonderful work with match moves where a real car takes off on wires, passes behind someone and then is replaced by a miniature car. It was really tricky stuff because they had to match the miniatures size exactly to the size of the full scale car. It's seamless."

A miniature helped fully realize the shot of the Hill Valley courthouse-turned-Biff's-pleasure-palace. Said Ralston, "It's a big, Las Vegas looking building, with tracer bullets moving in sequence that had to match the full scale, live-action set as they spelled out 'B.I.F.F.'s.

The model was about nine feet tall to get the feeling of the scale we wanted for it. As usual, it's really complicated because Bob [Zemeckis] wanted the camera to tilt up to reveal the hotel."

Ralston said he strives to give the effects projects he supervises at ILM his signature touch. "That's getting harder and harder to do every year," he said. "There are hundreds of people working on this film, but if I'm with [director] Bob [Zemeckis] at critical times, making decisions that are vital, it means my approach to a shot is felt more than anybody else's. That's one of the few creative moments I have—after that, it's a technical nightmare."
Director Wes Craven on SHOCKER, fighting ratings censorship

By Steve Blodowalski

Director Wes Craven attempted to pre-censor himself on SHOCKER to avoid ratings hassles, but that failed to stop Richard Heffner and his M.P.A.A. ratings board from demanding several cuts before the film could earn its R-rating. "There's absolutely no consistency," complained Craven of his dealings with the M.P.A.A. "It's impossible to predict what they're going to object to. More and more they're objecting to intensity—which I think is really subversive. They claim they're protecting some little, mythical child who might be brought in by a parent who thinks it's safe because it's been rated 'R.' It's the backhanded way of looking at it. It's clear from all advertisements this is a scary film. Any parents who'd bring a really young child into that should be institutionalized themselves. I'd rather rate the parents-brand a scarlet 'R' on their foreheads if they bring a child to a film like this."

"I think what they're really afraid of is the audience getting out of control. [The ratings] people are so terrified of kids and the underclass of America that when they see audiences screaming and yelling and laughing, they're terrified the audience will be coming over their manicured lawns to get them next."

The M.P.A.A.-mandated cut which Craven most regrets is the shot of villain Horace Pinker spitting out the fingers he has just bitten off a prison guard, leading him to quip "Finger-lickin' good!" Said Craven, "In our test screening, the audience stood up and cheered that—it was a phenomenal moment."

Craven said the M.P.A.A. emphasized that he didn't have to make the cut, that the ratings system was voluntary. "They said, 'You don't have to have a rating—just go release it.' I said, 'That means the doom of the picture, because I can't advertise and it won't make any money.' To that Heffner replied, 'Well, now we're talking dollars and cents, aren't we? We're not talking art.' They make you out to be a money-grubbing jerk, but I think that fact is you're contractually bound to deliver an R-picture."

"There is no rating for an intense film, by their interpretation, so that gives them the right to censor anything and not call it censorship. I think it's the most invidious form of censorship: censorship that denies being censorship," said Craven, who contemplates joining other directors in a class action suit against the M.P.A.A. system. "It's really an infringement of my first amendment rights. And the audience should have much more to say in what they are willing to look at."

Craven finds the M.P.A.A.'s attitude toward the horror film audience condescending. "It's a put-down of the audience to think they're so impressionable that they're going to be damaged by this stuff—an absolute put-down by people who are tremendously smug control freaks," he said. Craven sees the audience as having fun with his films. "It's not the sort of fun where they go out and kill a cop on the corner," he said. "They go back to school and get straight A's. I've had many kids come in and meet me who are clearly well-adjusted and aren't turning into homicidal maniacs. They're just dealing with a lot of subconscious fears in a fun way. They're all bright kids, not kids who are torturing cats."

Craven has no specific plans for a SHOCKER sequel, but speculated that any follow-up would expand on the story's use of television. "It's not like we sat down and laid out the first five Horace Pinker movies," he said. "But as I was writing it, I felt like I was getting closer to pay dirt the more I got into television. The television chase at the end is so much a highlight that I'm sure we'll do a lot with that."

Craven sees what he calls the film's "electro-magnetic web of reality," as a variation on the dream reality that he explored in A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET. "What I always try to do is stay within human reality on some level," he said, explaining his approach to fantasy and the supernatural. "Pinker stands for the presence of evil on television. Not that television is evil, but something evil can get into it, and when it does, it's very pervasive on a subconscious level. Everything that Pinker is able to do, television is able to do. Television is able to enter your body or mind whenever the tube is on. If Hitler were to come to the United States today, he wouldn't invade across borders; he would invade first through television. That's the level of reality we're dealing with, and I think the audience buys it because they know television does that everyday. They don't have to think of it in supernatural terms. The [story element of] evil worship is a nod toward having some rational explanation for those who need it."

Despite his continued use of dream imagery, Craven doesn't worry that he is borrowing from himself. "I'm expanding on the notion that consciousness goes into a lot of nooks and crannies that we don't tend to recognize," he said. "They're very valid and familiar—once you show them, the audience recognizes them. If I made an entire film about dreams, then I'd worry."

For his next project, Craven is reading several non-genre projects, although he has no plans to give up horror for long. "SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW, THE TWILIGHT ZONE, and even SHOCKER—a lot of its lyrical passages have gotten a lot of attention. I'm looking to do something out of the genre, probably next. Then I'll come back and do my next Alive/ Universal genre film."

"That film, however, will not be a sequel to SHOCKER. "I'd rather do something original," Craven said. "I'd love to executive produce a sequel, and bring in some young director who's really hot. First of all, it's really..."
Flashy pyrotechnics, superhero violence lacks restraint

SHOCKER

by Bob Morrish

At the conclusion of SHOCKER, local hero Jonathan Parker (Peter Berg) is asked by a neighbor (played by director Wes Craven himself), “Was that real?” The question refers to a just-completed battle between Parker and the evil Horace Pinker (well-played by newcomer Mitch Pileggi), a duel which commandeered the TV airwaves-and-as one couch-potato-character remarks lends a new definition to the term “audience participation.” It is also a none-too-subtle comment upon the fact that, for increasing numbers of videophiles, the line between reality and make-believe has become myopically blurred.

It would seem that a little more intelligence, a little more restraint, is being asked of viewers. A reasonable appeal to be sure, but the sad fact is that if Craven would have paid a little more attention to his own preachings—if he would have exercised a little more intelligence and restraint—SHOCKER would have been an infinitely better film. By pandering to his urges for flashy pyrotechnics, superhero violence, and comic relief, Craven undermines the atmosphere of his own movie and destroys the audience’s suspension of disbelief. And the ultimate letdown is all the more pronounced due to the high hopes raised by the film’s auspicious beginning.

After the first few minutes of SHOCKER, it seems that Craven has graduated to a new level of filmmaking. These opening moments are nothing short of amazing, combining constantly-building tension, riveting imagery, and Craven’s now-customary blending of dreams and the waking state.

Craven sets his tale in the normally peaceful community of Maryville, now being terrorized by a mass murderer who invades homes and kills entire families mercilessly. Parker is introduced as a talented, if somewhat flaky, local college football player with a psychic link to the killer. Jonathan identifies the murderer as Pinker, a seemingly bizarre and reclusive TV repairman, who is caught and sentenced to death in the electric chair. Up to this point, Craven’s handling of the material builds tension to an almost palpable level.

It is during the prison scenes leading up to Pinker’s execution that the film begins to spin out of control. Beseeching the “God of electricity” for more power to help him withstand the rigors of the chair, Pinker is rewarded by a pair of Jaggeresque lips which loom out of a television set and pronounce “You’ve got it, baby.” The ensuing voltage surge knocks Pinker unconscious and a prison guard attempts to give him mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. We are then treated to Craven’s first dose of gratuitous violence as Pinker bites the guard’s fingers, announcing that they’re “finger-lickin’ good.” It’s clear that not only has the descent into the ridiculous begun, but also that all brakes are off. The rest of the film resembles nothing so much as an attempt to create a “new Freddy”—and if Craven has his way, get ready for SHOCKER II.

Pinker survives the execution and is suddenly able to change bodies at will. He affects his escape from the prison by taking over a Doctor’s body, but Jonathan is the only one bright enough to realize this. In the orgy of body-jumping that follows, any remaining vestiges of atmosphere and craft vanish. Things hit rock bottom when a little girl, possessed by Pinker, hops on board a bulldozer which conveniently starts right up, and then attempts to flatten Jonathan. The no-holds-barred gonomic battle between Jonathan and Pinker is good for a couple of laughs, which is all that one can hope for by this point.

Craven flashes moments of creative brilliance in SHOCKER, but until he learns a sense of restraint, he will never realize his significant potential.

Pileggi and prop hand, the challenge, steer clear of Freddy Krueger.

SHOCKER
Makeup by Lance and David Anderson

By Steve Biadowski

Two shots designed by makeup artists Lance and David Anderson for SHOCKER had to be trimmed to avoid an X-rating. These included Horace Pinker’s chopping off the fingers of a jail guard, and a scene in which Pinker possessed Coach Cooper (Sam Scarber) stabs a knife through his own hand, action that had to be eliminated entirely, in order to obtain an R-rating.

Interestingly enough, the makeup fate of another jail guard remained intact when Pinker bites his lip, we see it stretched out of shape—an effect which initially troubled makeup supervisor Lance Anderson. “I was afraid it would turn out cartoonish,” he said, “but it turned out gruesome.”

The only other makeup effect of Pinker committing mayhem was a broken neck appliance, barely glimpsed, for a police officer who gets his head twisted 180 degrees at Pinker’s execution. Asked to make a prop head for the shot, Anderson devised the makeup as a cost-cutting measure. “The shot didn’t warrant that kind of money,” said Anderson, “so we got to thinking about another way to do it.”

Anderson’s first assignment was to come up with the burn makeup for Pinker after he emerges from the electric chair. His major consideration was to avoid a look that would too closely resemble Craven’s previous supervillain, Freddy Krueger. “I thought it was more appropriate—and so did Wes—to have the head burned only where the helmet fit, where there was actual contact to the flesh,” said Anderson. “They brought me the prop hat, and I figured the contact points. The rest of his face is intact.”

Anderson devised a mechanical effect for the scene where Pinker stretches his fingers to insert them into an electric socket. The fingers actually twist so that Pinker’s fingernails are aligned with the socket, a detail that is obscured by the optical effect of Pinker’s video image. The stretching and twisting of the fingers was accomplished with a mechanical hand in the same frame with actor Mitch Pileggi. Then an appliance was attached to the actor from which the fingernails extended even further; ironically, the shot was done in close-up, so the audience cannot appreciate that the hand is not a prop but actually attached to Pinker.

Anderson, who worked for Craven on THE SERPENT AND THE RAINBOW, hopes to be involved with any future adventures of Horace Pinker. “I’m hoping—look out, Freddy!—there’ll be a sequel,” he said, although Anderson is unsure about how Craven will bring his villain back to life. “Maybe he’s hiding in a dry cell battery somewhere.”
Last year was a remarkably good year for genre film music recordings, and before the new decade is too far advanced, it's well worth one last look back at some of the CD releases of 1989 not otherwise reported here.

The statement that rock musicians make poor film music composers seems to me to be one of those rules with lots of exceptions, including most definitely Oingo Boingo's Danny Elfman. His powerful score for BATMAN (Warner Bros 9 25977-2, playing time 54:55) has to be the least over-hyped accomplishment of the decade's most over-hyped movie. Elfman writes with obvious affection for such past genre masters as Bernard Herrmann, yet clearly there is an original voice here. His use of the orchestra is generally sparing yet virtuosic. Effects are achieved through small combinations of instruments and massed sounds are only occasionally employed. Though the thematic material is thin (the "Batman theme" is as omnipresent as the "James Bond Theme" is for 007 flicks), Elfman and his talented orchestrator Steve Bartek never allow interest to flag. This is a darkly ruminative, deeply probing musical genre masterpiece.

One of the most talked about films of 1989 produced a film score of little distinction. Alan Silvestri's soundtrack for THE ABYSS (Varese Sarabande VSD-5235, playing time 47:08) serves up a cliché-ridden collection of ghostly electronic sounds, wordless female choruses and empty gestures. About the only things missing are whale calls.

Another deep dive of 1989 that hit shallow bottom was LEVITA-THAN, with a music score by veteran Jerry Goldsmith (Varese Sarabande VSD-5226, playing time 39:47). My admiration for Goldsmith's work knows no bounds, but even I found little pleasure in this utterly uninspired amalgam of rhythmic and thematic materials he's used to far better effect in other pictures. Goldsmith's work on WARLOCK (Intrada MAF 700-3d, playing time 54:38) is more interesting and inventive, though the film has gone unreleased in the U.S. market. Goldsmith has an ear for textures that is unmatched in the film, classical or pop fields. This ear, coupled with his uncanny ability to weave together traditional instruments and electronics, gives distinction to his music.

And for the Goldsmith devotee who wants it all, Canada's Masters Film Music has produced an album with the composer conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra in a collection of suites and themes (Masters Film Music SRS 2003, playing time 64:05). Genre contributions include suites from GREN- LINS and the theme from POLTERGEIST, a limited edition CD from Varese Sarabande.

It's getting to the point where I can truly say that I've never experienced a James Horner score that I haven't heard elsewhere. I remember thinking as I placed the silver disc recording for FIELD OF DREAMS (RCA NOVA 3060-2-N, playing time 50:29) into my player, "Here's hoping Horner hasn't heard Randy Newman's music for THE NATURAL." But nooooooooooo. A shimmering string background (your standard hot day in the cornfield), punctuated by bass keyboard notes garnished with wind chimes greeted me. All that was missing was the Aaron Copland fanfare and Robert Redford on the cover. The shame of it is that Horner has a real touch for gentle sentimentality and this score has some wonderful moments.

I am not yet ready to clamber onto the Michael Kamen bandwagon. This highly touted film music composer delivered a dud this season with a lackluster addition to the 007 saga, LICENCE TO KILL. His previous effort, for Terry Gilliam's epic THE ADVENTURES OF BARON MUNCHAUSEN (Warner Bros 9 25826-2, playingtime 54:09), is really too much of a smorgasbord to warrant repeated hearings. Bits of baroque pastiches, comic songs, and even a rafter rattling Strauss-like Waltz, all add up to something less than the sum of the parts.

A pair of exercises in the English manner also made the rounds this season. Music composed, arranged and conducted by Patrick Gowers for the highly regarded (and properly so) Granada Television series SHERLOCK HOLMES (Varese Sarabande VSD-5221, playing time 56:06) is very much out of the British pastoral tradition. The cues unfold with the comfortable familiarity of an old friend - albeit a somewhat understated and occasionally tendentious old friend. The energy quotient is much higher for George Fenton's exuberant romp HIGH SPIRITS (GNP Crescendo GNP 8016, playing time 52:42). The flavor of Irish fiddles and Uillean pipes is stirred into a full symphonic broth to generally delightful effect.

Finally, a pair from the underside of experience. Elliot Goldenthal's music for PET SEMATARY (Varese Sarabande VSD-5227, playing time 31:59) works its way through the standard horror music cues with dogged persistence and little style. In contrast, Christopher Young has put his original stamp on Ivan Passer's film about the 1816 house party that resulted in the creation of Frankenstein. Young's score for HAUNTED SUMMER (Silva Screen Film 037, playing time 55:35) is a masterful approach for a contemporary blending of instruments and electronics. The style has a pop feel with an emphasis on high string sounds, plucked and bowed. A brief statement by the composer about his score is included, a practice I heartily commend to all film music recording companies.
Terry O’Quinn’s psycho star turn tops Jason and Freddy

STEPFATHER II
MAK E ROOM FOR DADDY

Dr. Gene Clifford.................. Terry O’Quinn
Carol Grayland...............Matty Crimmins
Todd Grayland........Joseph Damons
Dr. Joseph Damons............ Michael B. Williams
Phil Geryland...............Caroline Williams
Mitchel Lawrence............... Jerry Brown

by Vincent Bossone

Jerry Blake is back. Only this time he’s calling himself Dr. Gene Clifford. And all he wants is a nice home with a loving wife and a cute kid. And when he gets it everything will be perfect . . . even if it kills them.

Although STEP FATHER II covers much of the same thematic and narrative ground as its highly acclaimed predecessor, the sequel nonetheless emerges as an expertly crafted thriller in its own right. That this should be so is a testament not only to scripter John Auerbach and director Jeff Burr, but to the titular character’s compelling persona realized by the original’s writer/director team of Donald F. Westlake and Joseph Ruben. Besides, with the gifted Terry O’Quinn reprising his role as the stepfather, the film could hardly miss.

Blake has miraculously survived the wounds inflicted by his last adopted family to take up residence in an institute for the mentally insane. He escapes by killing his therapist, whose identity he assumes. Once again in pursuit of familial bliss, he settles in the Palm Meadow Estates, which he has seen promoted on the game show DREAM HOUSE.

“Frankenstein was a monster. . .You’re the kindest man I’ve ever met,” says the comely real estate agent Blake woos, on seeing his surgical chest scars for the first time. Whereas Frankenstein’s creation, more sinned against than sinner, represented the fears of a simpler, more innocent age, it can be argued that PSYCHO’s Norman Bates ushered in a new kind of monster. And while he may have inspired Jason Voorhees and Freddy Krueger, Norman’s direct descendant is Jerry Blake.

With a pleasant face and easy charm masking a diseased mind, Blake networks himself into the fabric of the American Dream, which is found to be unraveling at the seams. Yet, as its subtitle suggests, while STEP FATHER II can be downright chilling, it also manages to leaven its intensity with some effective doses of satiric humor. One standout scene has Blake perusing tapes from a video dating service in his search for the perfect mate. His reactions to the candidates’ presentations, from befuddlement to horror, are precious, while the tapes themselves suggest some budding stepmothers.

The STEP FATHER films are a long-awaited return to form for psychological horror. Their willingness to forgo the cheap thrills offered by the scores of slashers films which have appeared ever since Marion Crane stepped into the shower at the Bates Motel in favor of careful plotting, character development and astute social commentary, identify them as mature filmic works which resonant beyond entertainment.

The creators of STEP FATHER II clearly showed no lack of respect for their source material and in so doing have fashioned a work that does not insult the intelligence of its audience. In short, it’s the kind of film the genre needs, not merely to survive, but thrive.

Wedding day jitters, stepfather Terry O’Quinn throttles bride-to-be Meg Foster.

Burr: “And they shot additional murder sequences of the salesman and the first guard that gets killed. They cut out eight minutes of character stuff, all for the sake of pacing, which was pointless, because it’s still a slow movie. They also shot new broadcasts throughout the film. All pointless. They haven’t destroyed the movie, just made it 20-30% less effective.” Would-be bride Meg Foster’s love-making scene with Terry O’Quinn, which flowed into Matty’s death scene, was all but eliminated, according to Burr.

Burr, a big fan of the original film, said his major problem was bringing back the title character, who was clearly dead at the end of the first film. “You have to make a leap of faith,” he said. “We didn’t sweep it under the carpet. We did deal with it. But, to be honest, you have to accept that the character wasn’t quite dead. He had a little life left in him.”

O’Quinn, back in the title role, gives a quietly forceful performance that banishes any thoughts about the story’s implausibilities. “The guy is amazing,” said Burr, “and we’ve just scraped the surface of his talent. He’s very easy to work with. I can’t wait to work with him again.”

Burr said the challenge in making the sequel was to come up with a different approach while remaining true to the elements that made the first film a success. “It’s like building on the foundation of a house without topping it,” he said. “THE STEP FATHER series—if it becomes one—is really character driven. You put him in a situation and it’s about how he reacts to the situation. THE
If every there was a director born to make horror movies, it was Tod Browning. In less than a decade spanning the crossover years between the twilight of the silent era and the birth of the talkies, Browning directed several of Lon Chaney, Sr.'s most powerful vehicles—including the "lost" silent, LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT (1927)—as well as the original Lugosi DRACULA (1931), the notorious FREAKS (1932), the fanciful DEVIL DOLL (1936), and one of the most atmospheric genre forays of the 30s, MARK OF THE VAMPIRE (1935).

More important than the films themselves, perhaps, was that they perfectly represented their director, his interests and preoccupations. Unlike James Whale, who, despite making four of the top genre movies of the 30s, basically regarded it as slumming, Browning was quite comfortable transferring such taboo themes as deformity, mutation, incest and revenge to the screen. Although a close study of Browning's features reveals that, from a technical standpoint, he wasn't much of a filmmaker (everything occurring after the first 15 minutes of DRACULA demonstrates that), his choice of subject matter, and the distinctive and original attitude he brought to it, made Browning ideally suited for horror.

The most significant partnership of Browning's career was not his collaboration with Chaney, but rather, his MGM contract under the direct supervision of Irving Thalberg, the wunderkind production chief who encouraged (in Browning, at least) eccentricities that other MGM executives—principally Louis B. Mayer—found repellent. Not surprisingly, Browning directed only one more film for MGM after Thalberg's death in 1936—the indifferent MIRACLES FOR SALE (1939). Thalberg considered Browning a unique and daring artist whose voice deserved to be heard—particularly since no one else made movies like him, and the films were making money. Beginning with THE UNHOLY THREE (1925), a crime drama in which two circus freaks and a transvestite plot the perfect robbery, Browning fashioned a filmography unparalleled in its strangeness. Chaney starred in all of the Browning films of any interest, until the actor's death from throat cancer in 1930.

Browning became a cult figure among genre buffs for three reasons: the uniqueness of his films, their relative inaccessibility (apart from Universal's DRACULA, none was released to TV, the traditional route of rediscovery in the '50s), and the fact that he retired from motion pictures in 1939. (Browning appears never to have been interviewed by any of the film journals of the '50s, so, apart from the unreliable fan press of the day, we have no way of knowing what Browning thought of his own career. Until his death at age 80 in 1962, he lived comfortably at a beachfront home along the Pacific Coast Highway. His celebrity had faded to the point where he was even listed in the Santa Monica phone directory.)

The main reason that Browning has now re-emerged, and is regarded as an important figure in horror film history, is, of course, FREAKS. Truncated by nearly 30 minutes after disastrous sneak previews, and eventually distributed by Depression-era schlockmeister Dwain Esper, the movie wasn't seen again in the U.S. until the campus film society vanguard of the '60s.

Several of Browning's silents have surfaced since the advent of the VCR, and they, along with the three talkies released by MGM/UA Home Video (FREAKS, MARK OF THE VAMPIRE and DEVIL DOLL), display a filmmaker of erratic technical competence, with an unerringly twisted vision. The direction of FREAKS' opening shot is so clunky it takes three separate camera set-ups just to dolly in a few feet to the carnival Barker whose spiel begins the film.

No prints are known to exist of Browning's Chaney silent LONDON AFTER MIDNIGHT, but judging from his remake, MARK OF THE VAMPIRE—about the longest 61 minutes in horror history—the film may not be the hidden masterpiece it is often regarded. Several Browning silent have recently turned up via Cinemacabre Video (P.O. Box 10005, Baltimore, MD 21285), a small, mail order service for collectors. Alongside the three MGM/UA talkies released in 1929, the Cinemacabre silents—1928's WEST OF ZANZIBAR (with its shocking incest subtext), 1927's THE UNKNOWN (in which Chaney has his arms amputated so Joan Crawford, who can't stand to be touched, will marry him), WHERE EAST IS EAST (1929), and THE UNHOLY THREE—give genre buffs a penetrating insight into the development of a fascinating, primitive artist. It's also worth noting that TNT, Ted Turner's new satellite channel showcasing his vintage MGM and RKO library, has unveiled pristine mint copies of FREAKS, MARK OF THE VAMPIRE, DEVIL DOLL, MIRACLES FOR SALE, and such non-genre Browning films as FAST WORKERS (with KING KONG's Robert Armstrong), clustered into late-night double and triple-features with Browning as the unifying factor.

If ever evidence was needed to show that Browning's work is ready for re-evaluation, it came recently in an installment of Fox Broadcasting's ultra-hip Sunday night animated series THE SIMPSONS, in a scene in which the father awoke from a nightmare to see his family chanting, "We accept you... One of us"—the freaks' refrain from Browning's classic. When you're absorbed into the lexicon of network TV, you've arrived.

THE LITTLE MERMAID
Fantasy Songwriters

By Kyle Counts

The Golden Globe award-winning songs of THE LITTLE MERMAID's most successful cartoon feature, were the work of composers Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, the team that scored the off-Broadway and film productions of LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS. Ashman had for years kicked around the idea of doing a musical based on the works of Hans Christian Andersen (his planned title: HERE ARE THE SONGS). When he was told of THE LITTLE MERMAID by Disney Motion Picture & TV Chairman Jeffrey Katzenberg, he expressed immediate interest in being part of it.

"Disney's animated fairy tales are really close to my heart—they're the films I love best," Ashman said from his home in New York. "It seemed like a once in a lifetime opportunity to try to revamp and rethink a story to do 'just one more.'"

Besides writing songs for THE LITTLE MERMAID, Ashman also served as the film's co-producer with co-director John Musker. Ashman and Menken met with Musker and co-director Ron Clements in New York to go over the film's final treatment (the final script was delivered in August of 1986). It was here that the songwriting team discussed with the directors how to musicalize the work—i.e., where to insert songs. Two of them—"Under Da Sea," a Busby Berkeleyesque musical number—is in the sense that deep sea living and "Part of Your World," a ballad that Ariel sings to Prince Eric upon carrying him safely from the shipwreck—were written before the collaborators temporarily relocated to California to complete the score and supervise the demo process (musical sketches of the songs sung by persons other than the actual performers). Ashman, in fact, was present throughout pre-production and remained through the early part of production, traveling between coasts twice a month for nearly a year.

As lyricist and co-producer, Ashman took responsibility for the structural aspect of the song score. "THE LITTLE MERMAID isn't a musical the way SWEENEY TODD is a musical, but it is in the sense that Alan and I tried to find organic opportuni-
Disney animation that ranks with the classics

THE LITTLE MERMAID

Ariel: Jodi Benson
Ursula: Pat Carroll
Sebastian: Samuel E. Wright
Triton: Kenneth Mars
Scuttle: Buddy Hackett
Flounder: Jason Marsden
Eric: Christopher Daniel Barnes
Louis: Rene Auberjonois
Grimsby: Ben Wright.

by Harry McCracken

The Little Mermaid, with its fairytale origins, pretty young heroine, handsome prince, cute sidekicks, and imposing villains, is clearly a Disney cartoon that wants to be compared to the studio's classics of the past. With all this and a slick, lavishly colorful, and even a bit strange. TheBarnes and Noble Animation Score by LITTLE SHOp OF HORRORS' Howard Ashman and Alan Menken, it's no wonder that the film recalls earlier Disney films—perhaps CINDERELLA above all—so much.

Fortunately, the resemblance is more than skin deep. Directors Ron Clements and John Musker and their superb crew of animators have turned Hans Christian Andersen's story into a confident, unabashedly Disneyesque film, and in the process proven the enduring ability of good animation to appeal to a broad, mainstream audience. While this story of Ariel, the little mermaid whose fascination with the human world disgusts her Trident-toting father and leads to her falling in love with a human Prince, doesn't resonate quite as deeply as those of SNOW WHITE and Bambi, it captures the audience's imagination and heart in ways that most latter-day Disney cartoons—despite their many virtues—have failed to do.

While Ariel wants desperately to become part of the human world, for much of the movie we humans in the audience are happily immersed in her wondrous deep-sea home. The inhabitants include inspired creations like Sebastian, her Jamaican-accented crab friend who leads an all-ambiphobic orchestra in the rousing number "Under Da Sea," and Ariel's father Triton, who as King Neptune is an overbearing, secretly-sentimental father. The visual fills of water and the technical virtuosity at work in the way characters bob about and blow bubbles.

Ursula, the massive, tentacled "Sea Witch" who is the film's villainess, makes her first major appearance only halfway through, and serves only a minor plot purpose; you can imagine this story being told without her presence. But this spellbinding, well-animated harridan, whose lair is one of the most ingeniously sinister locales in any Disney film, earns every minute of her screen time. When she belts out the song "Poor Unfortunate Souls" in Pat Carroll's voice, you may find yourself momentarily thinking that this animated-cartoon character is a gifted character actress stealing a Broadway show.

Then there's the title character herself. Animating realistic human beings is notoriously difficult, and Ariel is one of the best human (well, half-human) characters the studio has ever done. As Snow White was a 30s ingenue plunked into a Grimm's fairy tale, Ariel is a believable, bubbly 80s teenager, despite her Atlantis-like habitat. At times when the movie's sense of storytelling is less than perfect—it's always brisk, sometimes breakneck pace eventually gets dizzying—she holds the story together with her charm and effulgence.

Unfortunately, the film's inspiration lags in other ways once Ariel gives up mermaid life. The animators have made her Prince Eric exceedingly attractive and good-natured, but given him little personality beyond that. The best above-water scene, in which Eric's...
COMMUNION
Designing Aliens For An Eyewitness

By Bill Florence

The aliens and makeup effects of COMMUNION are the work of the Michael McCracken Studio, a Van Nuys company headed by the father-and-son makeup team of Michael McCracken, Sr. and Jr., who worked closely with novelist Whitley Strieber. "Whitley had an artist—the one who drew the cover of the book—do renderings, front view, side view, etc., of both the ' Visitors' figure and what we call the 'blue boys,'" said McCracken, Sr., company chief.

As McCracken and his crew began sculpting the aliens, Strieber personally supervised. "Whitley came from out East and stayed here," said McCracken. "We finally reached the point where he said, 'That is exactly it.' In a sense, it was a kind of police reconstruction. Our feeling was that if we added design elements, it took away from the whole thrust of the film. COMMUNION has been the most unusual thing we've done because of this aspect." Other McCracken creatures have included werewolves for SILVER BULLET and the multi-entacled creature for THE KINDRED, all fictional.

McCracken developed his own opinions of Strieber's bizarre story. "Whitley is an extremely sincere person," said McCracken. "I personally believe that what Whitley is saying. Whitley believes 100%. Now, whether it actually happened or not, who has the hell knows? It has affected his whole life. His conversations revolve around it. Whitley's brother had advised him against writing [Communion]. He felt, 'Shit, you're going to wreck yourself with this.' But Whitley felt he had to bring it out.

Assisted by Joe Podner, the McCrackens also provided the film with the monster mask shown wearing Strieber at Halloween, and a bus full of bug-eyed monsters he imagines after his traumatic close encounter.

Close encounters docudrama fails to convince the skeptics

COMMUNION

A New Line Cinema release of a Panna Dias Films presentation. 9/89. 109 mins. In color and Dolby.


Whitley Strieber as Whitley Strieber, depicting Strieber's true-life story of his abduction on a UFO by beings he termed "The Visitors," based on his bestseller.

by Dan Perez

I can't help but be skeptical when movies are made of bestsellers based on allegedly true incidents of the paranormal, such as THE AMITYVILLE HORROR (1979), THE ENTITY (1983), or, most recently, COMMUNION. I find myself asking what the filmmakers were hoping to accomplish. A documentary? Entertainment? Some uneasy mixture of the two? Whitley Strieber (who wrote the screenplay based on his 1987 book) and director Philippe Mora deserve some credit for taking a less sensational, more documentary approach to the movie version of COMMUNION, since that stance lends more of a sense of authenticity to the proceedings. However, our enjoyment of the movie now depends upon how much we've bought into the story it's telling.

Communion is Strieber's account of his abduction and examination (primarily in October and December of 1985) by strange alien beings he calls "the Visitors." It's no wonder the book made The New York Times bestseller list for 51 straight weeks: Strieber is an excellent storyteller, having made his success with popular novels such as The Hunger, Wolfen, and Warday. The latter, co-written with James Kunetka, is fiction presented in the style of nonfiction (and a very good job of it), which shows Strieber's ability to blur the line between fact and fantasy. This awareness was very prominent as I read Communion, which is subtitled A True Story. Whether the events chronicled in the book are true or not, there's no doubt it's compelling.

In addition, Strieber's timing couldn't have been better, since Communion rode the cresting wave of the New Age movement. The voices of his critics, including the Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal (an organization Strieber damps with faint praise in the book), were drowned by the excitement of the masses. Whether Strieber had suffered real poking and prodding by aliens or experienced some kind of delusion, the money rolled in, a sequel Transformation was written, and a movie seemed inevitable. It's worth noting that Strieber had just published a fictionalized account of an alleged UFO crash in Roswell, New Mexico, called Majestic, which incorporates elements of his experiences with the Visitors, which Mora and Strieber plan to film later this year.

In COMMUNION, Christopher Walken plays Strieber, who
lives and works in New York City with his wife and son. During an overnight stay at their remote cabin in upstate New York, the Striebers see strange, intensely bright lights over the cabin, but attribute it to dreams or some other normal phenomenon. The audience sees, however, what Strieber will only find out by undergoing hypnosis months later: that little blue men in his bedroom were zapping him with some gadget while his wife slept.

Mora's film is as faithful to the book as possible, given the time and budgetary constraints of the movie. Unlike the book, however, Strieber's screenplay draws no conclusions about the origin, nature or purpose of the Visitors. This noncommital view of the creatures gives the movie a curiously lackluster quality which undermines its sincere efforts to make us believe. Strieber's thought-provoking speculations about the Visitors, which comprised a good portion of the book, are given only a bit of lip service in the movie. Some of the pontification is downright annoying, as when Ms. Strieber (played by Lindsay Crouse) talks about the Visitors being one manifestation of "... the masks of God." That's an uncredited rip-off from The Masks of God, an examination of archetype in mythology by the late Joseph Campbell, and it comes off as nothing more than a cheap attempt to lend legitimacy to the proceedings.

Other things don't quite click in COMMUNION, as well. Walken gives a capable, quirky performance as Strieber, but he never makes the character particularly appealing, so it's difficult to empathize with his being victimized by the little blue guys. Crouse (a very underrated actress) fares better as Strieber's wife: she's complex and sympathetic. But they're both working against a plot that doesn't seem to have very much to say except "they're heeeeeere!" Mora's direction doesn't help matters. He infuses some scenes with elements of suspense, but most of what he does falls into the paint-by-numbers category. And the production values aren't terribly impressive, thanks to the low budget.

With all these things going against it, is COMMUNION worth seeing? If you're a big fan of the book and its successors, probably. If you're a skeptic (as I am) or someone who demands something conclusive or compelling in what is presented as a documentary, probably not.

By Bill Florence

Novelist Whitley Strieber is certain that the unaccountable experiences of his family, exemplified in COMMUNION, are not hallucinations. "There's no question in my mind about that," said Strieber by phone last October, shortly before the film's release. "The last few times we've had Visitors at our cabin, they've come, not to us, but to other people we've brought there for the purpose of seeing them—nine people, including three reporters, in June of 1988 and a documentary film crew last May. So they are obviously quite real. What I mean when I say 'real' in the context of the Visitors, I don't know."

Strieber wasn't the least bit hesitant in providing the names and phone numbers of his "witnesses." An informal poll of five of them, produced accounts of "experiences" at Strieber's cabin as seen in the film. All believe in Whitley's story and the existence of the Visitors.

One of the witnesses was Ed Conroy, a freelance writer and columnist for the San Antonio Express News. Conroy wrote a feature article on Strieber in May, 1987, and later accompanied a group to his cabin in June, 1988. On the first two nights spent in the cabin, Conroy said he had a dream in which he was conducted by a lovely stewardess into a waiting, white Toyota Supra, which flew him away into the starry sky. "I remembered later that several months prior to that Whitley had told me that he had had an experience of going out onto his back deck and going into something that looked like a Mercedes Benz, and taking off," said Conroy. "In the back seat there were bodies of the Visitors that were 'stacked like cordwood,' to use his expression. He told me that other people have had similar experiences of entering into vehicles on his back deck, and that often, the stewardess appears. I really have a tendency still to think of these things as, 'Oh, that was just a dream.' But I must say, I don't ordinarily have these sorts of dreams. I have dreams like other people. This was a rather unusual dream."

Strieber's strange experiences did not cease with the publication of Communion. His second book, Transformation, "is an attempt to describe what happened after that, in terms of my own personal experiences and the experiences of a few other people," said Strieber. "The coming of the Visitors completely changed my life. I don't think this world is what it seems to be at all. I think that most of our ideas about the nature of the universe and the nature of our place in it are just a load of baloney. Transformation is a description of what it is like to have some incredibly, unbelievably powerful experiences, like journeys out of the body, and seeing the Visitors get involved with my son, stuff which is extraordinarily hard to deal with."

"Speaking of journeys out of the body... that's supposed to be all hypothetical and involves various types of trance states and hallucinations. Well, I've taken journeys out of the body where the people who I went to were able to perceive me! And I saw them too. I've confronted people when I was in that state, and they knew it, and talked to me about it afterward. Some of them let me use their names in the book."

Whitley Strieber on the set with son Andrew, director Philippe Mora, Christopher Walken, and Mora's wife, Pamela.

Whitley Strieber on his encounters with The Visitors

In the film, the appearance of the Visitors is revealed to mask their true nature, one less humanoid.

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ANIMATION MAVERICK
continued from page 15

"We just recently offered our employees a profit-sharing plan," Bluth pointed out. "We've taken one-quarter of our movie profits and put them into an employee fund. We give our employees points according to their earnings. Now they worked on and their general overall effort. That money is like a royalty; no one else is giving royalties to their animators, and they never have. That's a pretty good benefit, I'd say."

And what of Bluth's dissolved relationship with Steven Spielberg, who's producing an AMERICAN TAIL II without Bluth's input? "Nothing particularly went wrong between Steven and me; I just think it's the course of business. When we finished THE LAND BEFORE TIME, I knew that brewing in the back of Universal's mind was an idea of making a sequel to AN AMERICANTAIL. I'm not real fond of sequels, because once you've made a picture, I hate to go back and make it again—I'd rather take on a new challenge.

Then Goldcrest came along and offered me a deal that even Steven could not beat, one that would allow me to own 50% of my negative, plus 50% of all spin-off and character rights. So Steven and I moved off in different directions. We're still open to working together again, and we're on very good terms right now. I can call him up on the phone and know that he'll take my call."

As far as AN AMERICAN TAIL II, it has "absolutely nothing" to do with Bluth. "It's being produced in London at the moment. I think Steven is starting his own animation studio. My contract with Universal on AN AMERICAN TAIL said that I had first right of refusal on any sequel. If I could not in good faith come to an agreement as to how to do a sequel with them, they were free then to seek out someone else to do it. We sat down and found that we could not come to an agreement, so they went elsewhere. Unfortunately, all my designs had to be signed over, so I have no further input regarding the matter."

Bluth characterizes himself as a perfectionist with a stubborn streak. "But bitter the sweet. If one has to hold a grudge, because as much as Steven took me, I took from him. Steven's name on the film helped tremendously, and it helped bring animation out of its nose dive. Who knows? Without his name, the movie might have failed. Now the question is: will someone go to a Don Bluth film that doesn't have Steven's name on it?"

THE SHE-CREATURE
continued from page 21

sticks and frame blow-ups.

Once the features had been shaped to his liking, Blaisdell added special tubing to represent the creature's hair. The so-called antennae, which were supposed to suggest a current of air or water around the creature, were added from rubber latex poured over candles which had been heated, bent, and notched into the appropriate shape. With all the finished pieces locked together, the costume weighed-in at an uncomfortably cumbersome 72 pounds.

Blaisdell had taken pains to design the suit in such a way that it could be photographed emerging from the sea. "Making a watertight suit like THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON— which was really a diving suit—was just not possible," said Blaisdell. "The budget simply was not there. So the She-Creature was neither watertight nor waterproof. However, she was water-resistant."

"During those shots, I'd get about 50 pounds of cold sea water in that suit," he said, "and adding that to the weight of the suit itself ... it created quite a bit of a problem trying to emerge at all! This was somewhat compounded when the director kept yelling, 'Move faster, Paul, move faster!'"

"Ron Randell [a co-star] was waiting on the beach to do his scene, where the She-Creature mauls him, and he thought the whole thing was ludicrous," remembered Blaisdell. "I finally managed to stagger up the beach so I could clobber him and I said, 'Look, mister, one laugh and you're gonna get hit over the head with a She-Creature's tail.' And he said, 'Okay, you're gonna take all the salt water in this suit back to the costume department with you!' After we finished that scene, Randell began complaining about the sand that got in his shoes while Jackie was trying to squeeze the salt water out of the creature's tail. Somehow it just didn't seem fair," sighed Blaisdell.

After long and laborious hours spent fine-tuning the She-Creature, director Cahn proved to be in too much of a hurry to utilize all its properties. Although Blaisdell spent hours dressing the creature—its eyes could blink and wink, the monster stared blankly ahead on celluloid.

Probably the greatest loss admirers of the film suffered was the operation of the She-Creature's lunch hooks. The device—the rows of "sideways teeth" seen in the middle of the monster's belly—could be operated, said Blaisdell, "by using your stomach muscles. The idea was when the She-Creature embraced somebody with her arms and drew them in close, her lunch hooks would sink into the victim's body," effectually disemboweling them. It was a new kind of interest some in our crew much too gruesome for the time. When Cahn first spotted the lunch hooks, the director called for a demonstration. Blaisdell complied, and was then informed the effect would be scrapped. "It was just too horrifying," said Cahn.

Cahn did contribute a quirky idea of his own, however. He decided that the She-Creature must sport a pair of behemoth bazaars—after all, she was supposed to be a female monster. Blaisdell moaned all the way back to his workshop, but complied with the director's request. As it was filmed, THE SHE-CREATURE was the first monster to stalk across cinema screens completely bare-breasted.

IT CONQUERED THE WORLD
continued from page 19

roll. Blaisdell's wife and co-collaborator, Jackie sensed adrenaline in the air, and suggested to her husband that he slip on one of the prop army helmets before shooting commenced. He did, and Corman called for "Action!" As Haze furiously rushed toward the Venusian invader, Jackie could hear the clink of metal striking metal, and when Blaisdell emerged from the suit, there was a deep scratch on the helmet where Haze's bayonet had struck.

"I wasn't exactly sure what had happened," Blaisdell reported later. His vision had been severely restricted by the single eyepee he wore. "I said to Cahn—"The costume—I short piece of pipe which was nestled between "Its" two rotating orbs—and Haze's approach was simply a darkened blur. "But I did feel the impact! Jackie probably saved my life in that instance!" Of course, once Corman had ensured that his actors and the monster were still "alive and kicking," it was time to move on to the next sequence.

Both the attack on Garland and Haze's unintentional cranium grazing were shot inside the cave using existing footage, all of the scenes involving "It" were to have been photographed inside the cave, but whoever was responsible for securing the generators to power the studio lights on location had forgotten to get them. Unless they were to go over schedule and budget (thus only a no-no on a Corman AIP film) which would mean having to return the following day with the generators—some other way of shooting the
climax of the picture had to be formulat-ed. At a loss for any-thing else of his predicament, Cor-mant decided the hither-to-im-mobile monster would chase its victims out of the cave so he could finish shooting the picture in the rapidly waning sunlight. Fortu-nately for Cormant, Blaisdell had built the Venustus Mushroom with castors on the bottom so it could be rolled from his workshop to the movie set, and this became the creature's walking gear.

"I operated the creature the best way I could—captured clumsy, and it looks clumsy in the movie," apologized Blaisdell. Variety liked the film, but agreed that "It" was "clumsy [and] inspired more tit-ers than terror."

INVASION OF THE SAUCER-MEN

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operated by Blaisdell.

Certainly one of the most out- rageous ideas Blaisdell had ever come up with was the roving eye-ball perched on top of the Martian hands. "The eyeball was very real-istic," he commented. "It could whip right around and look at something." This startling trick was never used in the film, how- ever, because Cahn didn't want to be bothered with the set-up. (Blaisdell: "His reaction was 'No time, no money, no film.' Blah, blah, blah.")

In addition, Blaisdell came up with the Martian ship seen only in one brief scene as it descended from the sky. Blaisdell had sculpted it from pine and, according to his friend Bob Burns, the finished starship was "marvel-ous." Blaisdell also built a mini-ature cow pasture set for it to land on, and practiced the wire-rigged effect to get a graceful arcing movement.

But when Blaisdell showed up on set, the supervising effects tech-nician balked at Blaisdell's set-up. Perhaps union politics had some-thing to do with it; but the result was that the scene was taken out of Blaisdell's capable hands and given to someone else. "Quick!" came the order from above. Get a miniature set for this doomed ship to land in!" Blaisdell stood by, most likely fuming silently, as he watched his detailed miniature cow pasture set replaced with a wooden slab with sand dumped all over it—plus a fern or two someone had grabbed from outside the studio and bal-anced on the set-up.

When the director yelled "Ac-tion!" Blaisdell's spaceship came straight down from above—no arcing this time. It descended flatty. "I guess 'their' miniature with the sand and the ferns didn't look so good," Blaisdell once remarked, "because that landing sequence went by in the blink of a Saucarian eye!"

Other script sequences called for side views of the spaceship as U.S. Army personnel attempted to penetrate its metallic exterior. Blaisdell constructed this mini-ature out of cardboard, of all things—perhaps because he knew the ship was destined to explode as the Army technicians uncovered a hidden fuse. In typical meticulous fashion, Blaisdell designed a fistful of tiny props for the "explosion" scene: strange-looking consoles, girders, weird machinery, and other similar equipment, which he believed would come flying out at the camera. (If you can find a videotape copy of the film and watch the scene using VCR frame-advance, some of these diminutive designs can be spotted.)

Blaisdell and Jackie also de-sign ed a couple of other-worldly tools which popped up in some publicity poses of the Saucer-men, but they've never seen clearly in the actual film. (One is used when the Saucerians are hanging a dent in a teenager's car.)

During production, Cahn and his cast decided to emphasize the story's humorous elements. "That's how INVASION OF THE SAU-CER-MEN became a comedy," said Blaisdell summed up, "it just sort of collapsed into one." Once the decision had been made to go for the laughs rather than the jugular, the cast and crew "really picked up on it," said Blaisdell. "And it turned into a very entertaining pic-ture."

IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE

continued from page 29
one there knew how to do it. Then I discovered that no one knew how to seal up Ray in the suit properly, either. The fellow in charge of the costume department hadn't the slightest inkling of what to do. So I did that myself as well. Then I decided I'd better hang around in case anything else went wrong, so they wouldn't waste a lot of time and so I wouldn't have to run back and forth between Topanga Canyon and Hollywood." While Blaisdell stood by silently as filming continued, he noticed the director of the production was stilted; almost unfriendly. I didn't hear anybody kidding around or laughing," he pointed out. "In fact, when I tried to check with the assistant director to ask if he got the extra monster arm that I'd built (so Ray wouldn't have to be the only one with a claw through a spaceship hatch in one scene) he came crawling out of the spaceship and said, 'Yeah, I got the extra arm, and who the hell are you?' He started chewing me up one side and down the other. I barked right back, and it was all downhill from there." It was the complete antithesis of the way things usually worked at AIP.

It was also the reason Central-Blaisdell ever worked for United Artists— a decision he made, not them.

LITTLE MERMAID

continued from page 55

crazed cook sings a wonderfully silly song while attempting to bake "Sebastian into a crab pie, is wholly fresh and unexpected.

As the happily-ever-after ending draws near, Ariel's first kiss from her Prince leads immediately to marriage, just like in SNOW WHITE and—well, wait a minute. Like most reviews of Disney animated films, it's tempting to dwell on comparisons to the studio's other cartoons, and that doesn't really do THE LITTLE MER-MAID credit. This unorthodox latecomer to 1989's underwater derby, which triumphs where DEEPSTAR SIX, LEVIATHAN, and THE ABYSs sunk, is simply an outstanding contemporary fantasy film, by any measure.

CARNIVAL OF SOULS

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humor has to be put into such a grim subject as death. Understand that today's thrillers deal so frequently with monsters that they've forgotten how real terror lies within the abstract.

While critics might be lauding CARNIVAL OF SOULS' rediscovery on the art house circuit, offers aren't pouring in for the 65 and 70-year-old director/writer team. Since leaving industrial filmmaking at Lawrence's Bradford Corporation, Harvey and Clifford have worked on such intended pictures as FLANNAGAN'S SMOKE, a comedy about knockout gas, and THE WABASH WIN-NING STREAK, a gambling adventure set in Las Vegas. "I'm not in a big hurry to get these films made," Harvey said.

"There was no conscious effort to do an art film with CARNIVAL OF SOULS, he added. "We were just trying to be scary and run with the surreal aspects of John's script. I hope the biggest thing the re-re-lease does is make the production worthwhile to hopeful filmmakers, to go for the psychological terrors instead of the physical ones."

"Looking back, I was surprised that we even had the guts to shoot it. If I had one message at the anniversary, it's that you can do anything when you get your mind up to make a film. The stress and strange luck will always come together on your side."
STAR TREK VI
continued from page 10
STAR TREK V, with DeForrest
Kelly's McCoy rumored to have
commanded as much as $2 million.
But the original cast might still
get a chance to "wrap things up"
before they are relegated to a Star-
fleet Retirement Facility. Koenig
has proposed a 15-step outline
storyline which would involve the
original cast for STAR TREK VI.
Instead of leaving the movie
sequel unfinished much as the
original television series was
unceremoniously dumped, Koenig's
idea would allow the classic cast to
exit with dignity. Not much to ask
for after two decades of work.
Though Paramount seems
determined to cut the umbilical
between STAR TREK fans and the
beloved original cast, Koenig
said he is not bitter or resentful.
"I don't feel shortchanged if they
decide not to do STAR TREK VI
with the original cast," he said.
"For my own emotional stability
and well-being, I consider it a fait
accompli. I am trying to come
to some sort of peace with myself
about it. I have been involved with
STAR TREK for 22 years. Nothing
lasts forever. Although I have
the strongest affection and
love about my involvement with
STAR TREK, I cannot let it
absorb me, so take me over that
I cannot handle the loss. But there
has to be a sense of loss.
"Paramount is rumored to be
planning to release STAR TREK
VI on the 25th anniversary of the
original television series, in the
Summer of 1991. But will it be
much cause for an anniversary
"celebration?"

COMMUNION
continued from page 57
Deanna Dube, a receptionist
worker in a Los Angeles cinema as a result of
reading COMMUNION, was one of those
two names and also among the
group of witnesses we checked
out. Like Conroy, Dube told of
having a dream, or what she
thought was a dream, in which she
saw Strieber and the Visitors.
Strieber, she said, was "bolting up"
through her sleeping. My heart was
pounding. I knew this wasn't a dream. I called
Whitley right away, but I couldn't get
through to him to alert all my
[Strieber had accidentally left his fax machine on].
"Finally, Whitley called me Sunday night and we
had several important stories. I'm in Los
Angeles. He's in New York! And
we've had other instances where I've
dreamt of seeing him and he's
corroborated the event."

Since writing Transformation,
Strieber said his alien visitations
and out of body experiences have
decreased in frequency. "After I
finished that book, little happened
to me, until June 1989. Then it
started up again. This time, the
array of witnesses was so extensive
that I cannot deny that the
experience is in some sense
physical and objectively real. But I
am at a complete loss to explain it."

Strieber seemed almost wistful
about the lessened frequency of his
once "disturbing" experiences.
"I've gone back to writing novels," he
said, "because I don't have
enough material on this subject to
continue to write about it, although
I would if I could. Maybe they [the
Visitors] will come back, perhaps in a
particular writing style, and they've gone
to someone else now."
MOVIE, though, because that may be biting off more than I can chew. But I'd love to do it, and no one knows it better than I do. □

STAR QUEST continued form page 39 to EVIL DEAD director Sam Raimi for advice. "He's a good friend of ours," said Ellis. A sales agreement was negotiated with New York-based foreign sales specialist Films Around the World, which had made a hit out of Raimi's EVIL DEAD. "Raimi told us that, if you want something to happen to your film, you've got to present it in a big way," said Ellis. "So in 1988 we took a 35mm copy to the Cannes Film Festival. We had industry screenings and the reaction was pretty good. We made a bunch of sales there, to Italy, France—10,000 cassettes of the film have been sold in Japan."

The U.S. deal with Vid America took longer to find, and was only signed last October. At their request for a shorter title, Ellis came up with STAR QUEST, but kept the original title as a tag line. Cook and Ellis have already begun production on their next movie, THE KILLING EDGE, which Ellis said is slightly more earthbound. "It concerns UFO's, the Air Force, and involves the stealth fighter program. It has aliens in it that are a little out of the ordinary. It's a new concept for alien involvement. But I don't want to reveal too much," Cook added. "It's an alien invasion like you've never seen before. It has humor and a lot of action."

Concluded Ellis, "I'm very excited about it. It's a contemporary picture so we don't have to build the world from the ground up this time," he said, with an audible sigh of relief.

Though eager to get started, Cook said he was haunted by memories of their first film venture. "Unlike before when we had only a sense of what we were getting into, now I know what it's like," he said. "I've kind of dismissed the bad things that happen; squatting in the mud in 90 degree temperatures, eating a baloney sandwich. But all this stuff is coming back to me now," he said with a shiver.

ALWAYS continued from page 47

"Hap" Arnold? the less said the better. This was hokum in 1943 and it has only calcified with age. Fortunately, what Heaven lacks in snappy dialogue it makes up for in cinematography and design. Wisely avoiding a cloudy cumulative decor or high-tech construction, Spielberg cuts with the diaphragm through a ghostly but natural burned-out forest, still smoldering in the dusk. As Hap and Pete chat on a small patch of green, the effect is nicely ethereal.

The remake is faithful to a fault to its inspiration—a whole dialogue exchanges, gestures, and camera placements are devotedly replayed. However, ALWAYS is most striking when it departs from the sacred text and injects some inspiration of its own. Two scenes are magical—a raving old man picking up Pete's ecolastic commentary and performing as a sort of "channeler" and the out-of-body experience of a stricken bus driver (Doug McGrath), who crosses the veil to stand beside Pete for a moment before revival and return to life.

The acting is uniformly swell—Spielberg's rep as a technical wizard has overshadowed his fine touch with performers. Being dead, Pete's love is really unrequitable and the Traceyuesque Dreyfuss registers the anguish of lost romance and missed opportunities in a way that does credit to his model. Of course, Pete's spiritual challenge is to relinquish his earthly ties to Dorinda, just as her earthly journey demands she give up his ghost. He must displace his romantic possession ("That's my girl") to paternal protectiveness over the new couple. ("That's my girl—and that's my boy.")

Unlike the original, Pete moves back and forth across dimensions too easily—talking with Dorinda in her sleep, dancing with her in a daydream, and appearing as an apparition to rescue her in the big climax. All of which serves to reinforce his connection to the world—and the girl—when he should be moving away. Adding to the emotional imbalance, Pete never really gets a chance to take his young charge and eventual surrogate (Brad Johnson) under his wing. Johnson is quite good, but his hunk-of-the-month looks and stature work against him. As Dorinda herself says, he's all "twisted steel and sex appeal," "too impressive a personality to seem to need a guardian.

And what to say about Goodman except that, natch, he steals every scene he's in—everybody's best friend, the guy you can always trust with your girlfriend.

Like horror, sentiment is a dangerous territory—when you fail in either, audiences just snicker. ALWAYS has its share of groaners, of lachrymose bits and unfeathered heart rending. But in a way very much like A GUY NAMED JOE, magic is the guy who has peddled more corn than the Jolly Green Giant gets the last laugh after all. □

TOTAL RECALL continued from page 9

ment of $6 million without starting the film. In essence, to save TOTAL RECALL would mean paying $6 million for the rights, which is just about unheard of. I was heartbroken."

But TOTAL RECALL would not star O'Neal. A couple of years prior to DEG's bankruptcy, Arnold Schwarzenegger had expressed interest in the project. When he heard that DEG had gone under and that the script had become available, he initiated the process which sent the script to Verhoeven. Schwarzenegger had met the director earlier and they had decided that they wanted to make a movie together. According to Shusett, Verhoeven was enamored with the script and wanted to do it, so Schwarzenegger called Caroleo and went with him from there. He had a contract and urged them to "put up whatever it takes to save the rights, and let's make this movie immediately." (An article in the Los Angeles Times quoted Schwarzenegger somewhat differently, reporting that he told Caroleo not to pay Laurentis anything near the $6 million-plus owed on the project.)

Once Caroleo picked up the rights for between $3 million and $5 million, a writers' strike froze the project for another six months, after which production began in fall. Principal photography was finished in Mexico last October, but Verhoeven continues to work feverishly in the editing room, with post-production efforts being supervised by makeup genius Rob Bottin and Dream Quest Images, the company pegged to win the effects Oscar for last summer's THE ABYSS.
The Little Mermaid—Uncensored

It was interesting to read about how much the Disney people worried about the matter of Ariel's breasts in The Little Mermaid [20:3:30]. This did not bother the Japanese animators of a version of the story filmed in the late '70s. Ironic, as well as interesting, considering how sexually enlightened we of the latter decades of the 20th century consider ourselves.

When the story was originally published, in the mid-1800s, there were seldom any qualms about illustrators showing the mermaid as topless. In spite of this, I believe that this was the supposedly sexually repressed Victorian era, virtually every 19th-century illustration of Andersen's mermaid showed her as bare-breasted. I enclose one typical example from the late 1890s. Perhaps such a license resulted from an attitude similar to the way we regard National Geographic, where bare breasts are permissible so long as they are not white ones. In the case of Victorian illustration, nudity was allowed solong as it wasn't strictly human.

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Not the Producer of Some of the Worst Horror Films Ever Made

When I agreed to be interviewed by Dan Persons [Mishkin: From Cradle to GRAVEROBBERs 20:4:35], it was subject to the condition that I could preview the article to prevent anything damaging to me or others from being printed. I realize that his opinions were not subject to censorship, although in retrospect, that was probably an error.

However, I never anticipated that after all of the time and material I gave you (you will admit that the publicity for the film from the article will certainly not be beneficial), and after going through the formality of letting me make limited corrections in the body of the article, that you would maliciously headline the article by calling me "the producer of some of the worst horror films ever made."

There is no legal action available for rudeness or being ungrateful, except when you print statements that are untrue ... that you could have researched to learn were untrue and cause damage. What you said certainly meets all of those criteria.

For your information, I was not the producer of any of the Milligan cheapie horror films referred to (and neither was Mishkin International, if you wish to try to interpret the headline as referring to the company, rather than me).

Lewis Mishkin
New York, NY 10036

[Our article was intended as an historical retrospective of the Mishkin company. The distinction between Mishkin, International, the company now headed by Lewis Mishkin, and its predecessor, William Mishkin Motion Pictures, was for such a low price because of the inherent tax advantages of this type of production. Send $9.95 to Richard Sanford Films, 3206 Cahuaen Blvd., Hollywood, CA 90066.

Right Glickenhaus, Wrong Shapiro

I appreciate your article on BASKET CASE 2 [20:4:11]. By and large, I found it to be accurate. One small point: Shapiro/Glickenhaus Entertainment is a merger between myself and Lenny Shapiro, not Irwin Shapiro.

Leonard Shapiro, President and Chief Executive Officer of SGE, founded Shapiro Entertainment in 1982, primarily as a foreign sales company and producers' representative. Prior to that time, he served as Vice President of Acquisitions and Marketing for Avco-Embassy Pictures, overseeing
It wasn’t Timerider
I have been pleased, in general, about your articles on my film Moontrap [20:4-8]. I can’t deny that it is a bit of a thrill to see them in a magazine that I have been a devoted reader of for some 18 years.
However, your last article about the production incorrectly stated that I was involved in Bill Dear’s film Timerider. I was not. Also, I understand that Timerider was not a failure, but went on to great success in video stores. Following the production, Dear continued his very respected career as a commercials director which led to his Amazing Stories episode “Mummy Daddy,” and Harry and the Hendersons.

Robert H. Dyke
Farmington, MI 48024

[Dyke, who currently has a development deal at Universal with Dear, declined to reveal the title of the Dear movie he worked on, referred to in the article. Timerider was our inference.]

Back to the Future II makeup credit
Your article on Back to the Future II [20:4-10] states that the “elaborate makeup are the work of Ken Myers. Myers took over from Ken Chase...” The work as viewed in Back to the Future II is very much the work of Ken Chase, who designed and established the makeup for Back to the Future II before leaving the production. Additional collaborative input from Michael Mills and myself fleshed out what was to be the makeup team for the production. Upon Mr. Chase’s leaving the production, day-to-day department duties were taken over by Michael Mills and myself until the show’s completion.

Ken Myers
Saugus, CA 91350

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