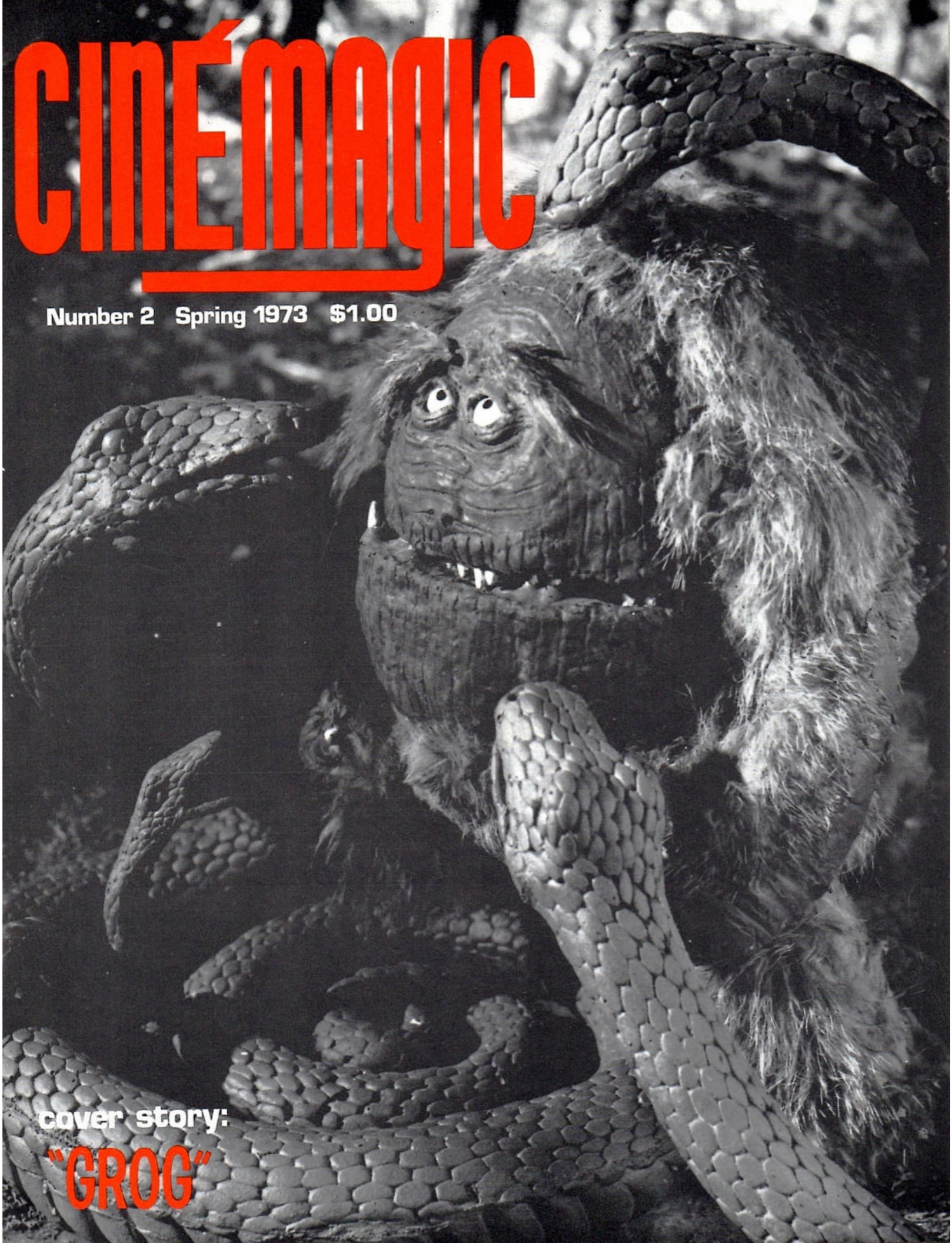
CINÉMAGIC

Number 2 Spring 1973 $1.00



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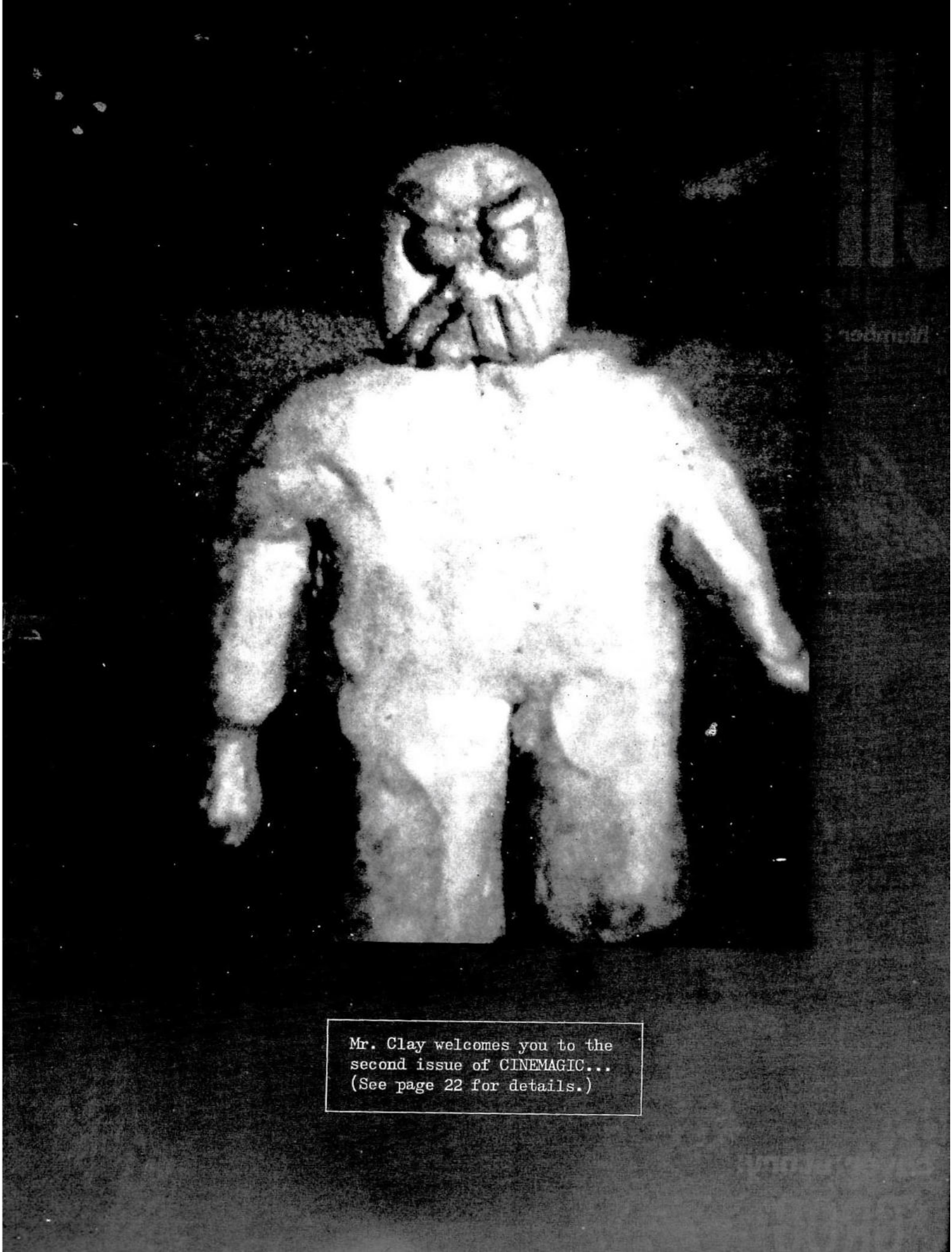
"GROG"



Mr. Clay welcomes you to the second issue of CINEMAGIC... (See page 22 for details.)

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NOTE TO OUR READERS: CINEMAGIC is now officially published in February, May, August, and November--a change from the schedule announced in our first issue. We expect this new schedule to allow us to get the magazine out on time, without the mailing and other production problems which plagued our first two issues.

Please note the new address for CINEMAGIC correspondence: P.O. Box 125, Perry Hall, Maryland 21128. This is now our official mailing address for all articles, ads, and so on.

CINÉMAGIC

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CONTENTS

CINEMAGIC is published quarterly, in February, May, August and November, by Cinebug Productions, Inc., P.O. Box 125, Perry Hall, Md. 21128. Single copy price: $1.00. Subscriptions (4 issues): $4.00. Foreign: Single copy: $1.50. Subscriptions: $6.00 (payable in International Money Order). Contributions are welcomed, although we cannot assume any responsibility for loss or damage of material. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope for the return of rejected material. The film plots and characters that appear in CINEMAGIC are fictitious (unless otherwise noted), and any resemblance to real persons or events is purely coincidental. First printing: Apr. 1973

Editorial VIOLENCE Mark Estren

A lot of us make what people call gory or violent movies -- and as we all know, the whole question of violence in American life has become a major topic of conversation. Violence on the screen has become more and more common, and psychiatrists, psychologists, and sociologists are trying to cope with this fact through more and more abstruse analyses of people's reactions to violence. Governmental commissions are organized to find out how violence affects people; the amount of violence on Saturday-morning TV kiddie shows is reduced; the violence in professional movies is more and more universally deplored.

Where do we, as effects-oriented filmmakers, stand in relation to the problem of screen violence? This is by no means an idle question: some of our readers have already reacted strongly to the graphic violence of movie scenes in CINEMAGIC #1 (with details, yet, on how to do it yourself!). Many of us have put together movies more graphically violent than most professional films; and we ought to examine how we feel about what we have done (and continue to do).

The standard middle-class public attitude toward violence was nicely expressed in the March 4, 1973 issue of *Family Weekly* (a "newspaper magazine" distributed with weekend editions of papers that don't print their own magazines). This *Family Weekly* contained an article by Joan Rattner Heilman called "Why Do People Love to Watch Gore?" There was also a list of "A Critic's Ten Most Violent Movies," the critic being William Wolf.

The list of movies gives some idea of how confused people are on the subject of violence. Wolf's list includes, in alphabetical order, *A Clockwork Orange, Across 110th Street, El Topo, Last House on the Left, Night of the Living Dead, Straw Dogs, The Godfather, The Wild Bunch, Ulzana's Raid,* and *Viva La Muerta.* What is extraordinary is the lumping together of films made for so many different reasons, in so many different ways, and in which the violence is used for so many different purposes. It never occurs to critic Wilson, or apparently to most amateur observers of violence in movies, that Sam Peckinpah doesn't do the same thing in his films that Fernando Arrabal does in *Viva La Muerta*; that the slick and exploitative *The Godfather* shares only a veneer of professionalism with *A Clockwork Orange*, which if nothing else is based on a far more psychologically aware novel; that *Night of the Living Dead* (which makes explicit the scenes which most horror films, by showing the horrified faces of spectators, merely imply) doesn't belong in the same list as *Last House on the Left*, a purely exploitative movie offering certain middle-class, middle-aged types revenge on two rapists through a graphic castration and slicing a man apart with an electric saw (after the rape-murder of two girls has been shown equally graphically, with such added touches as the killers chopping off one girl's hand).

How can movies of such varying intent and quality be combined into a list of "Ten Most Violent Movies"? The answer, perhaps, lies in the rest of the *Family Weekly* article, which consists of opinions by various researchers on movie violence -- opinions which say that movie violence can encourage real-life violence; that American society is becoming increasingly immune to violence (perhaps because of Vietnam) and that moviemakers are thus becoming more violent to gain any effect at all; and that violence in movies is in essence exploitative.

This sort of simplistic approach to violence on the screen is all too common, and is reflected in William Wolf's "Ten Most Violent" list and the lumping together of completely different films it represents. Wolf, and the researchers in the *Family Weekly* article, have difficulty seeing anything *but* graphic violence when there is in fact such violence on the screen. Twenty years ago and more, similar groups of people saw only rempant immorality whenever there was sex, even merely implied sex, in movies. True, violence in movies today is a lot more graphic than sex was in the past -- but the blind spots are the same. Certain people have problems realizing that sex and violence in movies can be used to make points about society or humanity in general. Maybe they don't want to admit that -- they might prefer watching the more "civilized" violence of football....

Not all violent movies, of course, are making any sort of point through their violence, as not all sexy movies are using sex for anything but titillation. Where there is a real problem is in determining why people enjoy the movies which don't even *pretend* to be more than graphic sexual or violent displays. In a future issue, we'll present an article suggesting (in, of necessity, rather technical language) some of the psychological factors which keep people fascinated by explicit sex and violence on the screen. Until then, though, we would like our readers' opinions on the subject -- opinions you can express not only as viewers but as occasional creators of violent movies. If you've never thought about what you enjoy in such movies when you make or watch them, spend a little time analyzing your feelings and send us a letter. We all have reasons for what we do and the way we do it, and in the case of making violent movies we may have reasons which, however personal, also reflect certain aspects of our society as a whole. Let us have your comments. ■

HOMEMADE ANIMATION MODELS

CREATING A WEIRD, OTHER-WORLDLY DRAGON

by Britt McDonough

I am in the process of making a new film, entitled *The Sorceress*. A key sequence in the movie involves a fight between a fantastic, other-worldly dragon and the film's main character. After making a few sketches of about how I wanted the dragon to look (overall design, color scheme, etc.), I proceeded to build a stop-motion model for the movie.

The dragon is a very challenging model to build, but I think that the results are worth the time and effort. The general procedure is the same as for a spider model (see CINEMAGIC #1), except that the dragon involves several elaborations and extensions of techniques. Hopefully those of you who notice repetition in this article will bear with me. Eventually, after building a few models, you will be able to place a demand on the materials and techniques, being able to create any creature you want -- transforming it from a concept to a bendable, three-dimensional reality.

Liquid latex is used for the dragon's skin and (along with acrylic paints to color it) is the prime ingredient in its construction. Because the creature is a complicatedly multi-colored beast, I mixed latex with acrylic colors *before* attempting to paint it, and stored the individual colors in medicine bottles. This way the shades of color were consistent; and it is a convenience in working.

MATERIALS

The more unusual ones are listed first; the ones likely to be found in most households, last:

LIQUID LATEX RUBBER: This material is imperative for the flexible skin of the dragon. I buy it in quart cans ($3.50) from:

American Handicrafts, Inc.
3102 Columbia Pike
Arlington, Virginia 22204.

Latex can also be purchased from:

General Latex and Chemical Corp.
666 Main Street
Cambridge, Massachusetts.

RED CREPE HAIR (theatrical crepe): Check your phone book (yellow pages) for the nearest costume rental company or theatrical supply store, or contact one of the following:

Junior Mode
3146 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22201.

Paramount Theatrical Supplies
32 West 20th Street
New York, New York.

Crepe hair is usually sold by the yard or foot, at 50¢ per foot.

NUMBER SIXTEEN GALVANIZED WIRE: This is used to form the model's skeleton, and is available at hardware stores.

STYROFOAM CUPS: You will need one or two of these. The dragon's teeth are cut from styrofoam cups, as are the pointed "stegs" in its back.

PLASTIC PEARLS: The eyes of my dragon are small, imitation pearls painted glossy with model paint. I salvaged some artificial pearls from an old discarded necklace. Eyes might even be made out of other common materials such as painted navy beans. Phony pearls have always been my favorite solution.

PLASTIC FOAM: It is sold at dime stores for about 89¢ a sheet and is taped over the wire frame of the skeleton to form the body of the dragon.

ACRYLIC PAINTS: You will need tubes of either Hyplar or Liquidtex (better quality) acrylic paint in the following colors: red (acra-violet), yellow, blue, and black. From these the additional colors of purple and green can be mixed. Mix the acrylics one part paint to two parts water, and store them in medicine bottles (available at drug stores) until you are ready to use them. Be sure to keep them tightly capped! They will be mixed with three parts uncolored latex to complete the special latex paint that is used to color-coat the dragon.

PAINT BRUSHES: Cheap brushes from a dime store or hardware store will be needed to paint latex on the model. Stiff-bristled ones are good for painting raw, uncolored latex on large areas of the model's body; small, fine, soft-bristled brushes (the kind used for painting details on plastic models) are most useful for painting a smooth color coat on the model.

Problems will arise in cleaning latex out of brushes, because if it dries into a hard rubber "glob" on the brush it will be useless for applying successive coats. The solution is to rub the brush against a cake of soap and water *before* putting it in liquid latex. Work up a lather and then finger off the excess from the brush. When through painting latex, wet the cake of soap and rub the latex-filled brush in the soap. Rinse the soap in water (not the brush directly) and repeat this procedure until the latex is out of the brush. Small clumps of latex may cling to the brush, but can be pulled out with your fingers. Then soak the brush in soap, allowing it to dry full of soap. The next time the brush is used to paint latex, it does not have to be wetted with soap because it will already have a protective coating on it. You need only loosen the soap-stiff bristles with your fingers before using the brush again.

These last items, also necessary, are common household ones:

Black enamel paint	*Elmer's glue*
Cotton	*Paper toweling*
Facial tissue	*Aluminum foil*
Scissors	*Scotch tape*

A WORD ON THE COLOR SCHEME...

The variety of acrylics you buy and use depends on how colorful you want your dragon. Factors such as personal preference and how much time you want to spend carefully painting individual colors will influence your interpretive decisions. The dragon this article describes has orange-red wings, a green head, purple and orange segments along its neck and tail, a purple body, green feet, and legs covered with red hair.

SHAPING THE WIRE SKELETON

Number sixteen wire might seem too stiff to use at first; nevertheless, this is necessary for the skeleton as a whole to hold up against repeated bending and the pressure of latex rubber on it.

1. Overlap the wire to form a loop. The loop should be long and thin, like a hot dog. It will become the body of the dragon, and the ends of wire will be the front legs of the dragon. ILLUSTRATION 1.

2. Twist the loop tightly a few times to secure it. Attach another piece of wire, by looping and twisting it on, to the bottom end of the long "body" loop. This will become the hind legs of the dragon. ILLUSTRATION 2.

3. Add another piece of wire to the middle of the "body" loop. It should exactly divide the body loop in half. This wire will act as a frame for the dragon's wings. ILLUSTRATION 3.

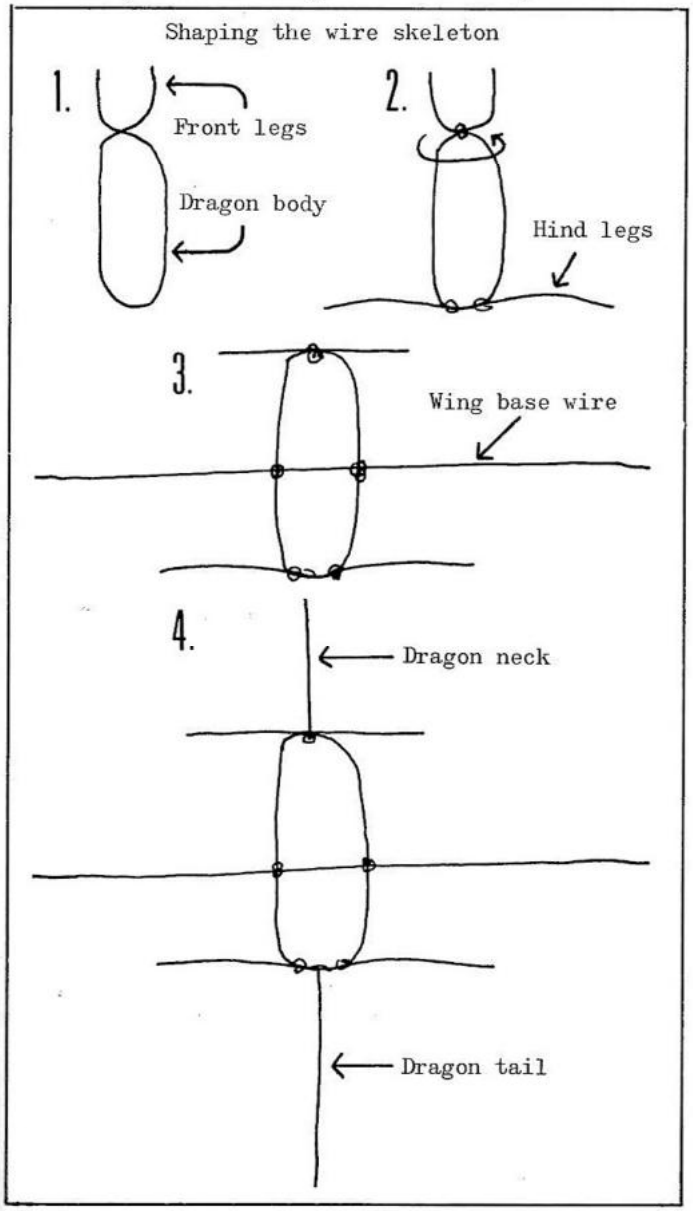
4. Attach a final, long piece of wire, looping it at the base of the front legs, the middle of the "wing" base wire, and the base of the hind legs. This wire will act as the neck and tail of the dragon. The wire skeleton is now complete. ILLUSTRATION 4.

MAKING THE WINGS

Before forming the limbs of the dragon, I chose first to completely finish its wings. The wings are cut from paper toweling, to conform to the length of the "wing base wire" (photo 1). A bat-like edge is drawn onto the bottom of the paper toweling as a pattern prior to cutting. The paper toweling is folded over the wire at the top, overlapping it securely, and taped (photo 2). Finally, the bat-edge pattern has been cut out.

This is the base of the wings. All that is left to do is coat the paper toweling with four to five coats of latex mixed with red acrylic paint, at a mixture ratio of about three parts latex to one part acrylic paint. To mix acrylic and latex paint together, the red acrylic should be mixed with water, in a small medicine bottle. The acrylic-paint-and-water mixture should then be poured into another medicine bottle containing about three parts uncolored latex.

This mixture of latex and red acrylic is used to paint the wings. Don't worry if the red



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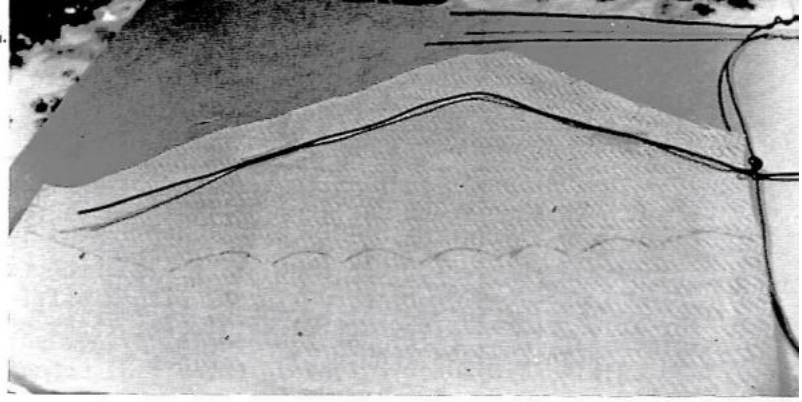

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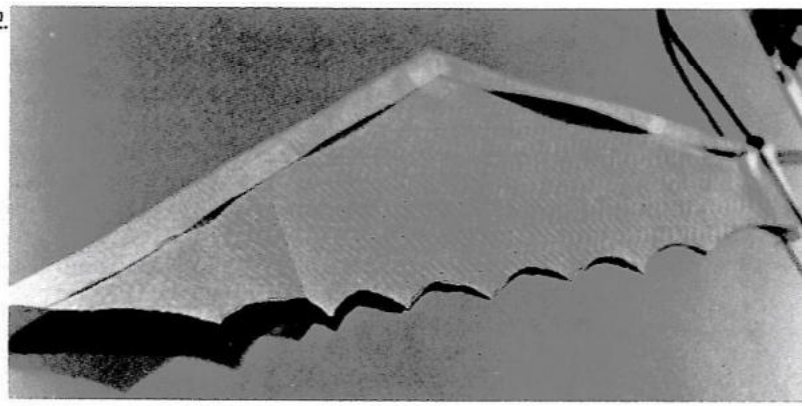


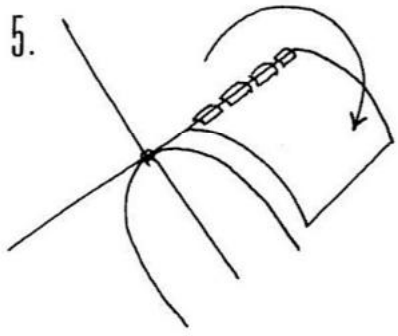
paint looks too light or "pink," since latex dries dark and always looks about a shade too light when wet. When the red color coat is finished and dry, the wings should be thoroughly powdered with baby powder (white) or they will stick together and be ruined.

FORMING THE LIMBS

When the wings are completed and dry, the limbs of the model (neck, legs, and tail) are wrapped with paper toweling. The procedure for wrapping an individual limb is as follows:

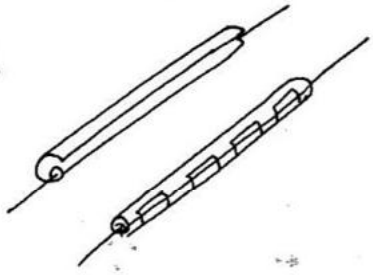
1. Tape the paper toweling to a limb. Then wrap it around the limb:

5.



2. When the paper toweling is completely wrapped, tape it securely to make a finished limb:

6.

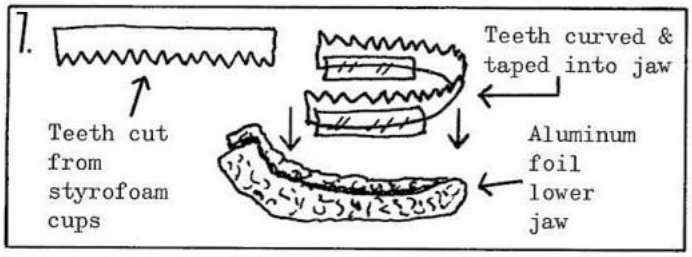


BODY

The dragon's body is constructed of plastic foam, taped around the wire frame. With the paper-towel limbs and plastic body securely taped and in place, the model is given three to four coats of uncolored latex with a stiff-bristled brush. Be careful not to get latex on the finished wings (photo 3).

HEAD CONSTRUCTION

The dragon's head is modeled out of aluminum foil. It is a two-part construction that is fastened together into a hinged movable jaw with two brass paper fasteners. Into the upper and lower head parts are taped styrofoam teeth cut from cups, in a pattern similar to illustration 7. The two pieces of the modeled aluminum jaw construction are shown in photo 4. They are attached together with paper fasteners. Photo 5 shows the aluminum foil head assembled, and coated with four to five coats of latex. The head is eventually attached to the neck by pressing the smooth, fresh latex base of the head into the sticky surface of the neck. (The head is attached to the neck of the dragon after the neck and tail modeling is completed.)



MODELING THE EYE SOCKETS

The eye sockets are made by:

1. Painting a small (one-inch diameter) dot of latex on a smooth, non-porous surface.

2. Putting a small amount of cotton, shaped like a small doughnut, over the wet latex.

3. Covering the cotton with tissue.

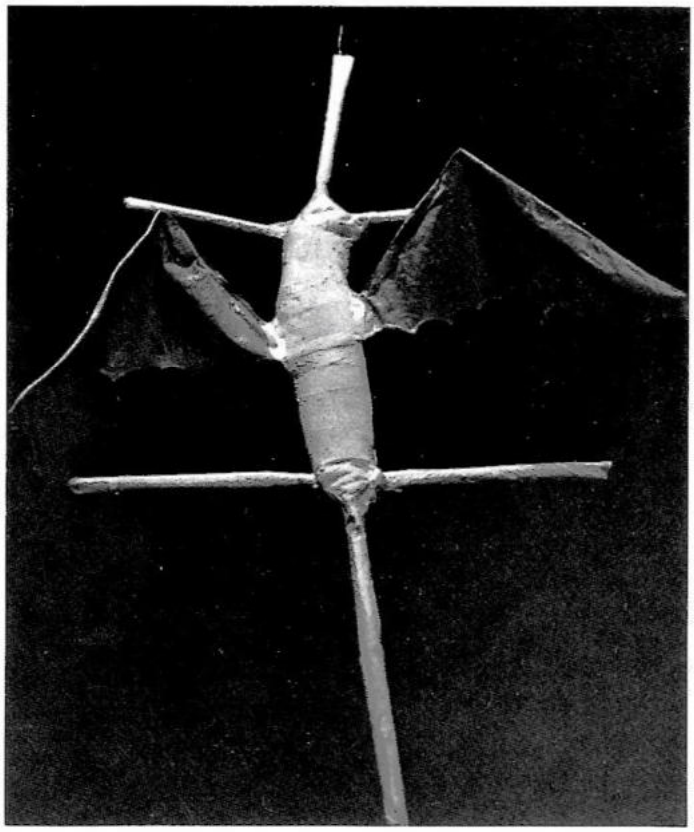
4. Painting the tissue with latex.

5. Inserting a "pearl" eye, painted black with model paint, into the latex socket.

6. When the latex has dried, painting the eye socket with red latex paint (the same mixture used for the wings).

7. Finally, peeling the latex socket off its smooth surface, trimming it down with scissors to a much smaller size (to match the head proportionately), and squeezing the ends of the socket together. This "squeeze" gives the realistic crease to the corners of the eye.

3



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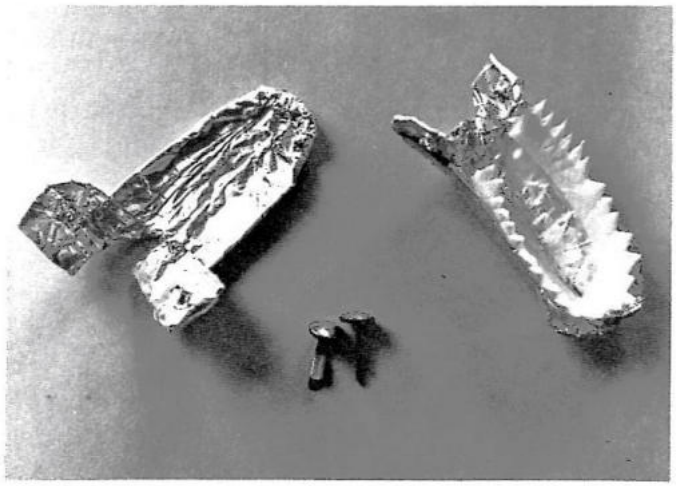

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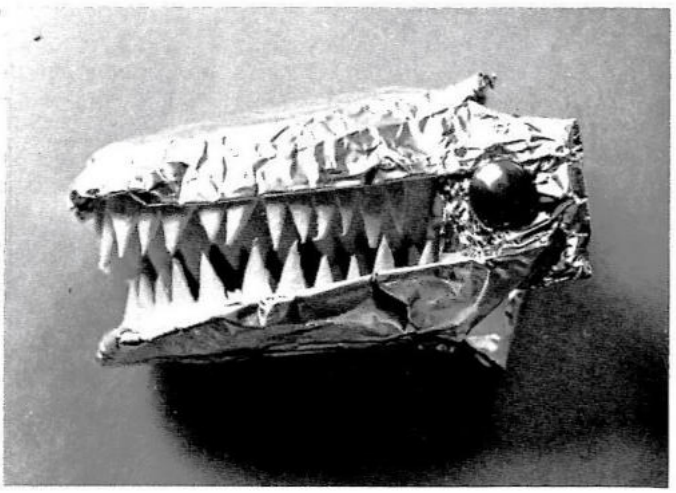

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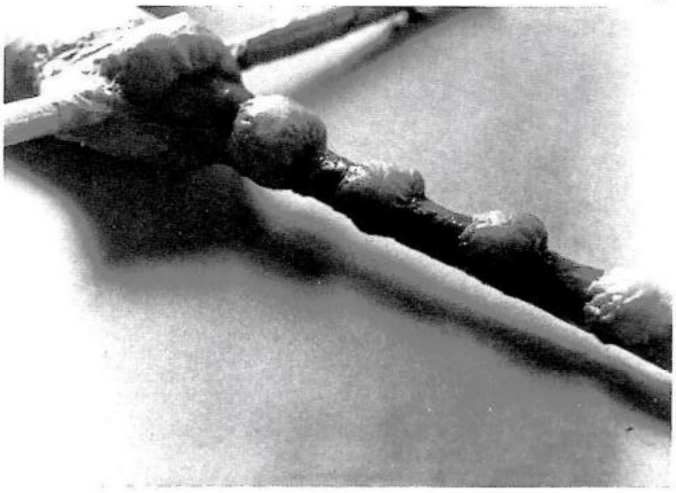

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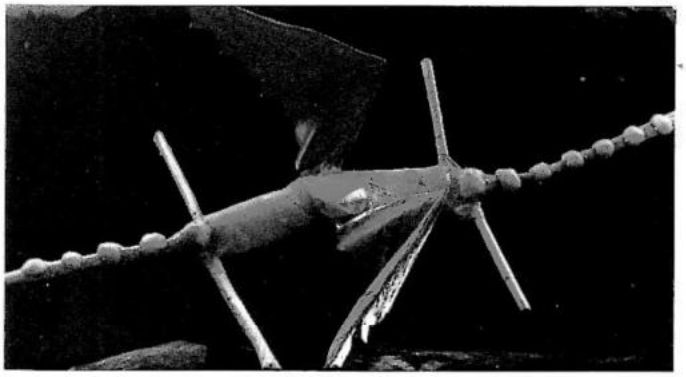

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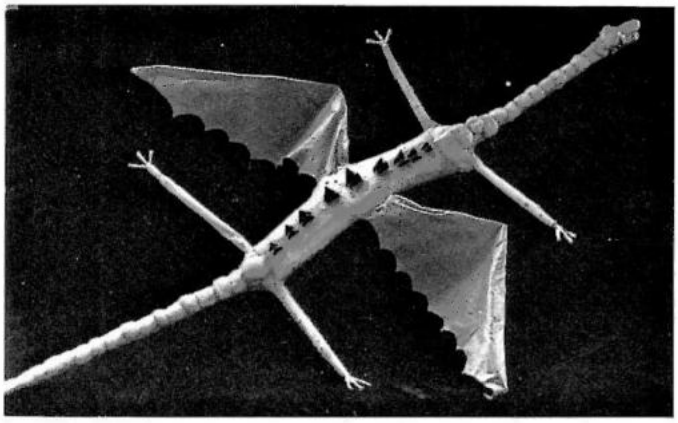

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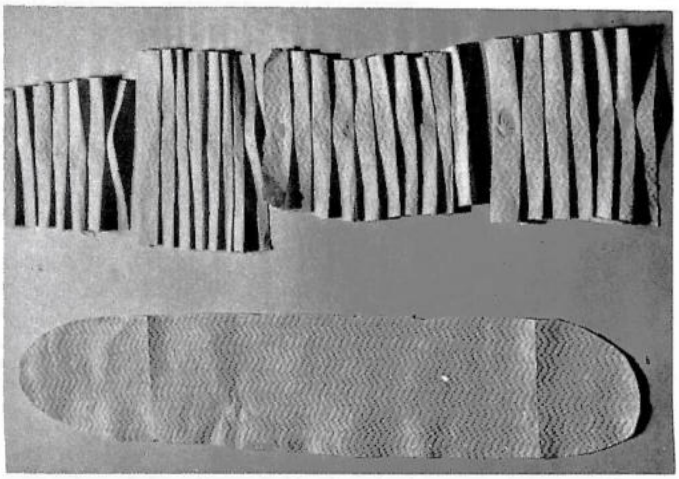


MODELING THE NECK AND TAIL

These parts of the dragon are now built up with cotton, tissue, and latex. The procedure is a two-step one consisting of:

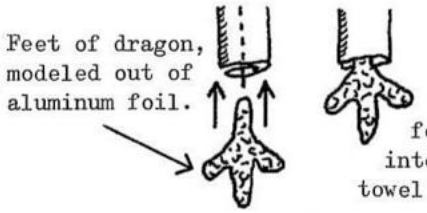
1. Gluing cotton balls, using latex, along the length of the neck and tail, and (at evenly spaced intervals) covering them with pieces of tissue.

2. Painting the tissue, thus covering the cotton balls with latex *indirectly*. The latex cannot be painted on the cotton directly because the cotton would soak up too much latex, becoming too hard and stiff to animate properly when dry. The tissue acts as an effective intermediary between the cotton and latex (photos 6 and 7).

When the spaced lumps are dry, more cotton segments should be modeled between the first set to complete the "segmented" neck and tail (photo 8).

FEET

The dragon's feet are modeled out of aluminum foil. They are then stuck into the ends of the paper towel legs and given five to six coats of latex to make them thick and smooth. I painted the feet of my dragon green (with orange polka-dots), applying about four to five coats with a fine brush.



CONSTRUCTING THE UNDERSIDE OF THE DRAGON

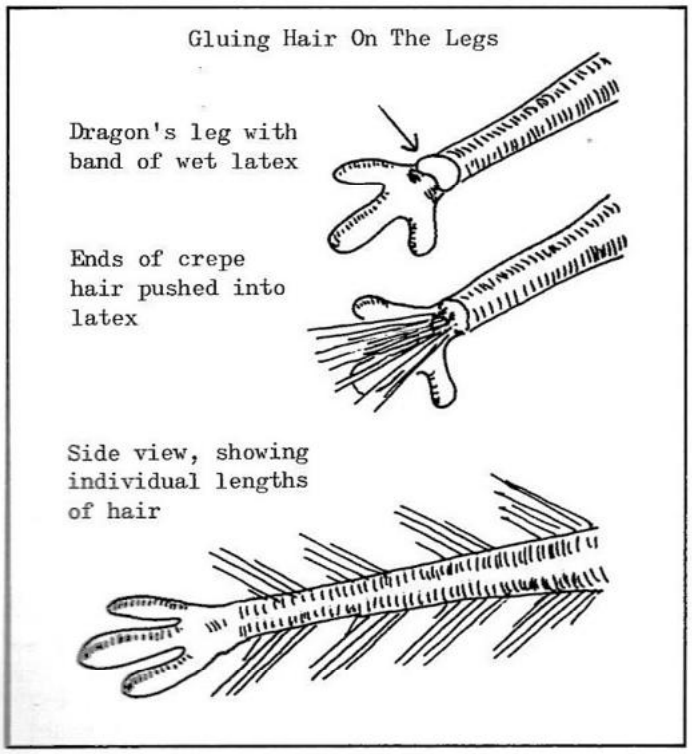
The lower neck, belly, and lower tail of the dragon are covered with specially folded paper toweling and painted yellow. Fold the paper toweling into overlapping lengths, gluing the folds down with Elmer's glue (photo 9). This folded structure is made long enough to extend from the neck of the dragon to its tail. One strip can be folded for the neck/tail area and cut in half; a wide, belly-shaped strip is needed for the abdomen. Once trimmed in lengths to fit the dragon's underside, the strips are painted yellow (on the side of the folds) with acrylic/latex paint. The strips are glued to the underside of the dragon by first painting the unpainted sides of the strips with a coat of uncolored latex. Once dry, the strips should be carefully aligned, and then pressed into the underside of the dragon. The fresh latex will stick readily to the smooth, latex-coated model.

ATTACHING THE ARMORED PLATES

The pointed plates on the dragon's back are cut from styrofoam cups. They get progressively taller as they run, in pairs of two, from the base of its neck to the area between its wings; they decrease in height as they go down from there to the base of its tail. The plates are first painted with black acrylic paint, and then given a coat of latex "glue" on their bottom edges. The bottom edges of the "stegs," which come in contact with the back of the dragon, are left unpainted. Owing to the fact that latex sticks to itself, the armored plates are easily pressed into the back of the dragon. They will readily adhere until further latex, applied around the edges, will cement them on permanently.

PAINTING THE DRAGON

The model is now ready for painting. As discussed earlier, color choice will be outlined according to the way I built this dragon; however, it is something that is ultimately up to the individual animator to interpret according to his needs. The neck and tail segments were alternately painted purple and orange. This took five to six coats of each color of paint, applied with a cheap, small, soft-bristled brush. The paint had been mixed prior to this point (in a ratio of three parts latex to one part acrylic) and stored in tightly capped medicine bottles. The top of the dragon's body was painted purple with orange polka-dots. The underside of the beast, its scaly stomach, was painted yellow. Lastly, there is a thin strip of green that runs from the dragon's head to the tip of his tail.



GLUING RED HAIR ON THE LEGS

After painting is complete and paint is dry, the model is ready for this final step. The hair used is theatrical crepe hair, which comes braided when purchased. Before use, the hair must be unbraided, soaked in hot water, and fastened to two objects in such a way that it's stretched while drying out. I usually tie one end of the wet crepe hair to the shower curtain rod in my bathroom and weight the other, lower, hanging end. Stretching the crepe makes it much longer (four to five times) and easier to comb.

Uncolored latex is used to glue the hair to the dragon. Take a length of crepe, comb the end of it, and cut off about two and a half inches of it. Spread it out in your hand, dip a small stick into the latex, and apply a small band of the latex to the dragon's leg. Now stick the crepe hair into the band of wet latex, pushing the ends of the hair into it.

Glue hair starting at the ends or tips of the legs, working toward the dragon's body; it just doesn't work the other way! When the hair is dry, use a comb to merge the separate rows of hair into a uniform mass.

When the hair is dry it can be trimmed with scissors if desired. The model is now complete, but should be given a thorough powdering with white baby powder, so it does not stick to itself (especially in the neck and tail areas). Photo 10 shows the dragon model complete and ready to animate.

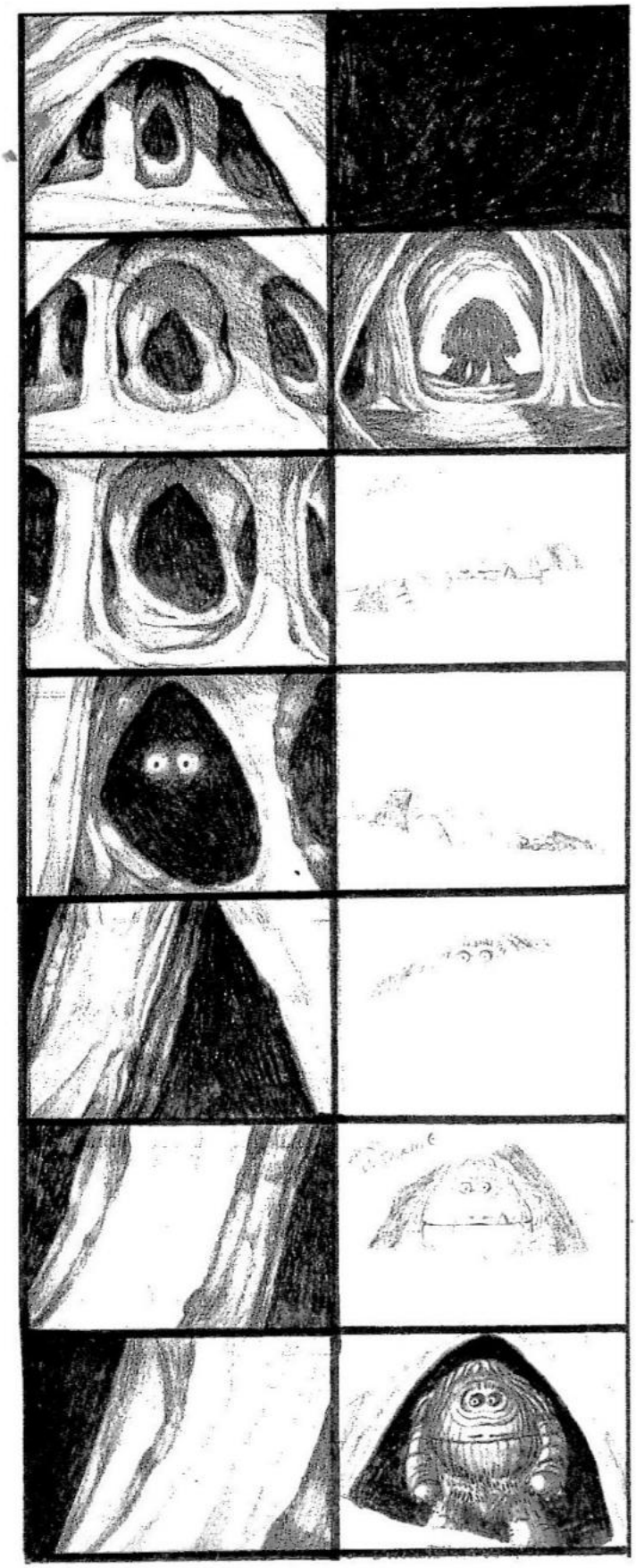
-- Britt McDonough

10

GROG

ARTICLE AND PHOTOS by BRUCE DODS

Grog is a comedy about an imaginary forest creature and the events in part of a day in his life. The movie is 16mm color silent. It is about ten minutes long. The primary technique employed was stop-motion animation. All of the sets were miniature with rear-projected backgrounds. It took me over three years to make *Grog*, working in my spare time. That might seem like a long time to spend on a ten-minute film, but I had to learn a lot before I could do it.



Above: The storyboard of Grog's first appearance in the film. This is a pencil sketch, and was one of the more elaborate pre-production drawings for the film.

THE ACTION

The camera dollies slowly forward through a sunlit forest. In the distance there is a cave in the side of a hill. The camera moves towards the opening, enters the cave and continues forward into the darkness. In a closeup, two eyes glow and blink. A shot from deep inside the cave shows a shape standing in silhouette by the opening; it faces out into the forest. The shape exits from the cave, back to camera, walking slowly into the sunlight. When first shown, outside the cave, the thing is seen only in tight closeups -- feet walking slowly forward, eyes blinking and looking back and forth -- as shadows pass across to indicate movement. When the creature is finally revealed full length -- by a rapid track backwards -- it is surprisingly humorous. It is Grog.

Grog plops down on the forest floor and begins to consume huge quantities of shrubbery. He wags his tail happily. There follows some comic business with the shrubs. Slowly the camera starts tracking backwards, moving away from Grog. The camera is behind him moving deeper into the forest. It passes a rock on which a snake is perched. The camera stops. The snake is watching Grog. Slowly, the snake slithers forward towards Grog's wagging tail. The snake is shown slithering first in an overhead shot and then in a ground-level shot with the snake coming directly at the camera. The action cuts back and forth from the unsuspecting shrub-eating Grog to a snake's eye view with the camera "slithering" back and forth as it moves towards Grog's tail. The snake finally reaches Grog and stops. The snake is about the size of Grog's tail, which wags back and forth in a steady rhythm. Grog is oblivious. The snake strikes out at the tail, but misses and is clobbered on the tail's return stroke. A track-in to Grog's face shows that he is now aware of something. The snake is angry: it strikes at the tail, biting it repeatedly. The tranquil Grog becomes a monster. His fur bristles; his teeth are bared. Grog leaps up and a fast track-in to his eyes shows anger. The light intensity on the screen increases, and Grog whirls around to face the snake. A chase through the forest follows. This sequence begins at a moderately fast pace and builds in speed and intensity. The chase is made up of a series of tight closeups. Each shot is shorter than the one which precedes it, some of the final scenes being only twelve frames long. The chase climaxes when Grog stomps on the snake. This is shown by Grog's eye view of his own foot descending on the snake and then by a snake's eye view of the foot coming down on the camera until the screen is covered. Pause. Long shot: Grog slowly moves his foot off the snake and looks down. The snake has been neatly flattened; it looks like a wide letter "S." Pause. The snake moves; it "limps" off into the forest, first slowly, then quickly, until it is out of the frame. Grog looks after the snake, pauses, plops down on the ground, and resumes eating shrubbery.

The camera slowly leaves Grog and catches up with the little squashed snake; it stays with him as he returns home and explains the situation to his mama, who is furious. Both snakes return to the "scene of the crime." The mama confronts Grog; she is twice Grog's size. Grog is intimidated. Attempting to make amends, Grog takes hold of the little snake; he inserts the tip of the squashed tail into his mouth and, with one big puff, inflates it like a balloon. It is restored to normal. The mother is stunned; she quickly regains her composure and it is evident that she still is not satisfied. Mama immobilizes Grog as it is revealed to the viewers that the little snake has moved to Grog's rear and is once again poised to strike at the tail. It *does* strike -- fast and hard. This is more than Grog will tolerate, outsized and outnumbered or not. There are no cuts in the following scene: the camera does a fast track-in to Grog's eyes; they are furious. Light pulsates on the screen; the camera moves upwards, rising over Grog and over the snakes. The pulsating light is left below. The camera moves up through the tree branches. The audience cannot see what is happening below. The camera rises; it goes higher. It comes to a bird sitting on a limb and stops. Suddenly, the limb and tree start to shake. They shake violently for some time and then stop. The camera tracks forward to a close shot of the bird. The bird leans forward and looks down. It slowly shakes its head from side to side. *Blackout.*

Fade-in to a slow upward tilt over the forest groundcover. The camera stops when into the frame come two flattened snakes -- a big one and a little one -- "limping" off into the forest. *Blackout.*

Cut to Grog munching on shrubbery. The movement is very slow. Grog yawns and gets up. He reaches down and pulls a "blanket" of groundcover off the ground and over himself. Grog goes to sleep.

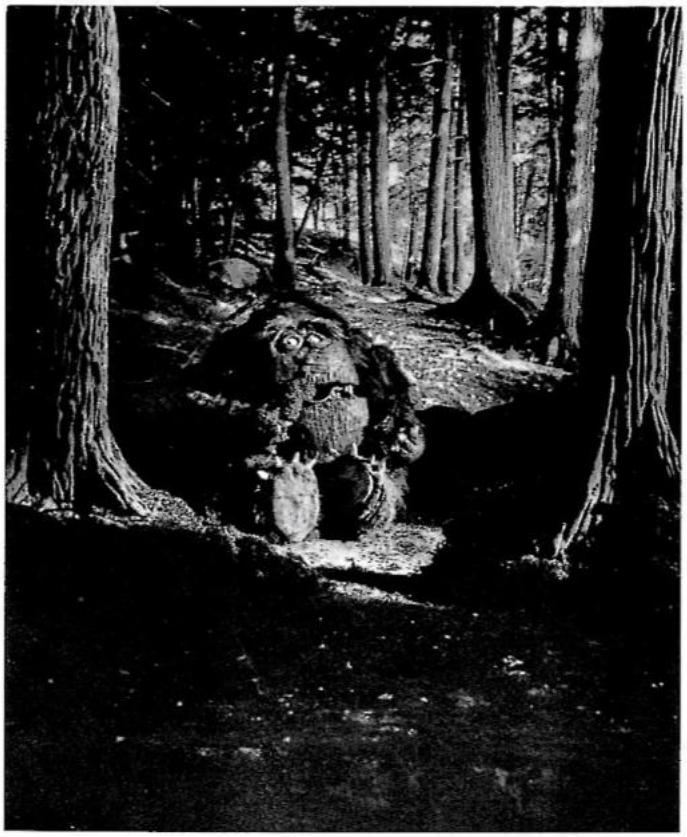
THE END

MAKING THE FILM

THE MODELS

Making the Grog model took up the longest portion of the production time. Grog #1 had a hand-carved balsa wood skeleton; it was too fragile -- it kept breaking and had to be rejected. Grog #2 had a hard wood skeleton with ball and socket joints; but the joints wore down quickly with use and became loose; it was rejected. Grog #3 -- the one used in the film -- has metal ball and socket joints which don't break and have yet to become loose. The skeleton was covered with latex rubber "shell castings" and with animal fur.

The snakes were much simpler to construct. Originally, half the film was shot using a clay snake model. Shortly after, I learned how to work with foam rubber and I decided that it would be worth the extra work to construct new, superior models and re-shoot some of the scenes.



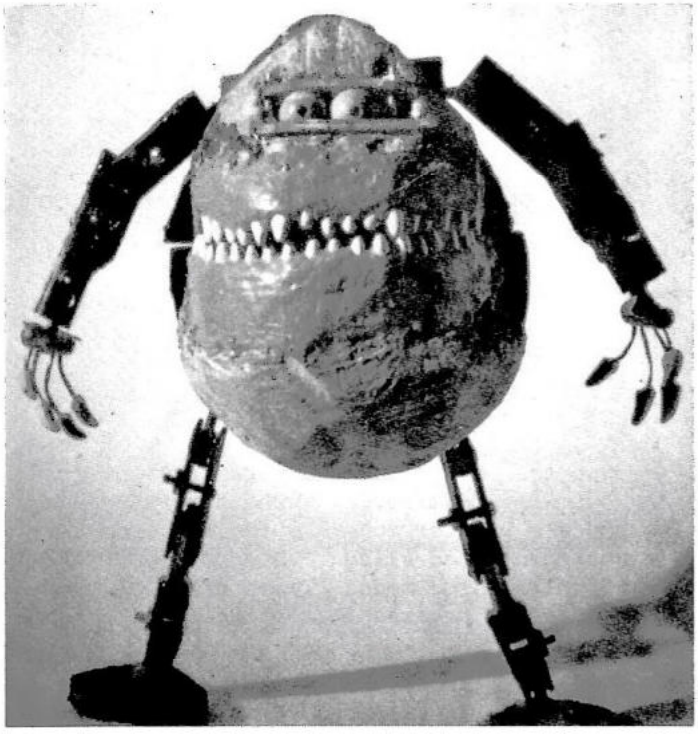
Top photo: Grog enjoys his favorite pastime of munching on leaves. The two foreground trees are plaster models; the background is a rear-projected slide. Bottom photo: The very first Grog model (made of balsa wood) was rejected because it kept breaking apart.

Above: The snakes surround the materials they were made from: liquid foam rubber five-part set (from Paramount Theatrical Supply, 32 West 20th Street, New York City), and paint which was made by mixing half latex wall paint and half liquid latex.

The new models were solid foam down to their skeletons of heavy electric wire. Since there was nothing to making the skeletons, the real work was in the clay sculptures and then the plaster castings of the sculptures. The large mama snake had to be sculpted three times before a satisfactory mold could be produced. Originally, an involved mama snake model was built using tiny light bulbs in the eyes. The bulbs were connected by concealed wires to a rheostat which could gradually vary the light intensity. That model was rejected because the light bulbs looked too much like light bulbs and not enough like eyes.

A special problem in model making was posed by the need to show the snake smoothly slithering forward. The animators reading this will understand the difficulty of making that kind of slithering motion look smooth. A special snake model was constructed to be used in conjunction with a special set unit. The model had a flexible plastic strip molded into its bottom half; the strip protruded one inch and fit into a thin slot in the set unit. The slot set the path that the snake would follow and guaranteed that it did not vary from that path as it slid forward bit by bit. The slot in the set was concealed by the groundcover. There were three other models representing the little snake: a small one for long shots, a bigger one for closeups, and a head and neck for extreme closeups of the snake's face.

Below: The Grog skeleton, which was carved from wood, and used metal ball and socket armatures for the arms and legs. Below right: Grog samples some of the materials that went into his creation: balsa wood, animal fur, wire, gooseneck material, plywood, epoxy, liquid latex, steel ball bearings, nuts, bolts, carved wood (teeth and nails), clay (eyelids and tongue), wooden beads (eyes), and miscellaneous metal parts in the skeleton structure.



THE SETS

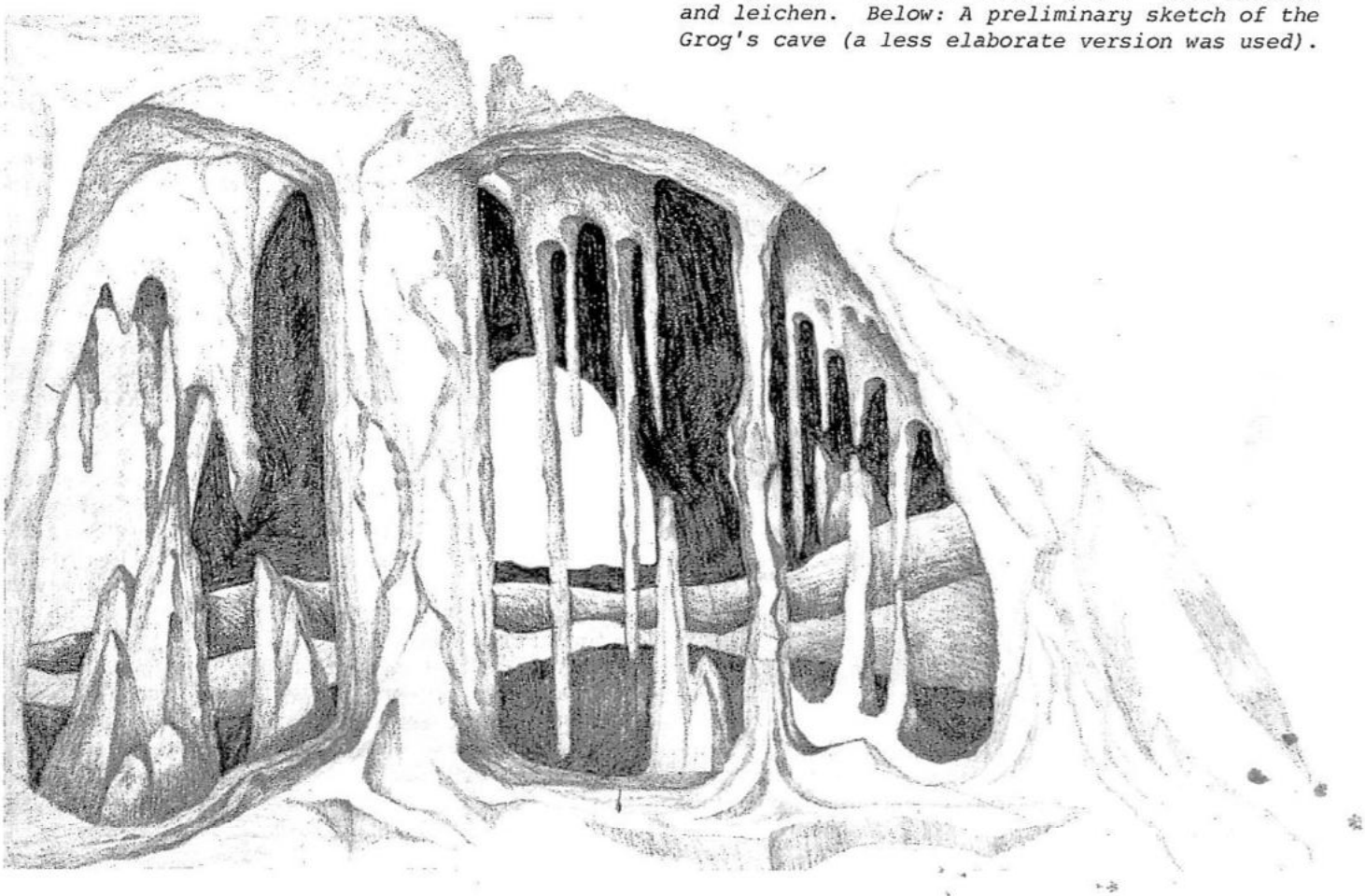
The sets were made quickly once the right materials were found. My first sets were made of wax. That is every bit as strange as it sounds, but it was the only sculpture material that I was familiar with at the time. In *Grog* I used plaster on a styrofoam base. Finishing touches included carving texture into the plaster, coloring with a water base paint, and applying lichen and miscellaneous substances for groundcover. The set units were used in conjunction with rear-projected backgrounds in order to add depth to the scene while eliminating the need for extensive set construction.

LIGHTING AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Low camera angles and side lighting with a single DVY movie light combined to make little plaster trees look like big forests. A white reflector provided fill light where needed. Cardboard masks in front of the DVY kept light from where it wasn't wanted, such as the rear projection screen and unimportant areas of the frame. A rheostat made the light intensity variable. Small camera apertures kept the depth of field under control. Fadeouts were accomplished by rotating two polarizers to block out the light gradually.

(continued on next page)

The sets (above) were made of styrofoam, water base paint, wire and crepe paper (the vines), and leichen. Below: A preliminary sketch of the Grog's cave (a less elaborate version was used).



ANIMATION

The model animation was unexpectedly simple as long as I kept remembering that twenty-four movements equaled one second of action. The job became difficult when additional things, such as the camera, had to be animated. The camera could track up and forward, tilt and pan. The focus, aperture, and light intensity often had to be adjusted bit by bit.

In one shot the set itself was animated to simulate camera movement. A circular set was rotated 180 degrees. The light was attached to the set so that the shadows would not change. It was an aerial shot so that the background did not have to show.

When several of these things had to be done per frame, progress was very slow. All of the action was filmed to be projected at twenty-four frames per second to allow for the possibility of adding a sound track. When very slow movement was required, I exposed two frames per subject movement instead of the usual single one. Although I was afraid that this short-cut method would result in jerky motion, it did not so long as the subject movements were very small.

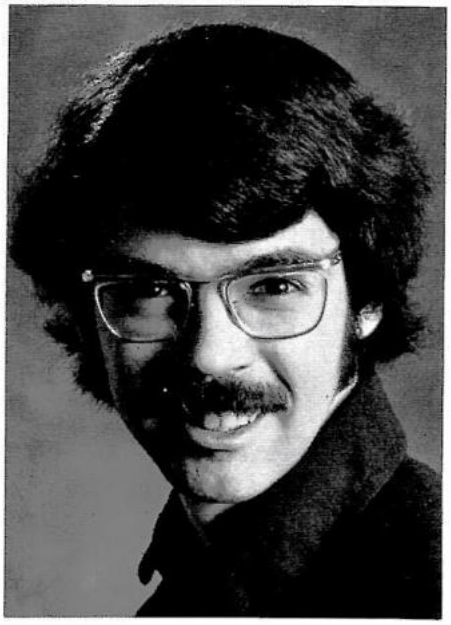
PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

During the editing, I found that I had not planned sufficiently for continuity. Several scenes were off in color balance or light position in relation to scenes which preceded or followed. During the filming, scenes which were supposed to be happening at the time were often shot months or even years apart. Memory was not adequate to match the necessary elements. So several minutes of film had to be reshot.

The first time I saw any of the completed film was after a long day of editing. I had viewed the footage when it came back from processing but, since it was shot totally out of sequence, it was only a jumble. I sometimes feared it would remain so even when the scenes were arranged in their correct order. After all, some of the sequences were made up of dozens of bits of film shot from all different angles. Would they fit together to make sense? The first five minutes of *Grog* had been completed. I threaded the film nervously through the projector and tried to believe that what looked good on the storyboard years ago would now look good on the screen. I turned the machine on. For five minutes my animated world came to life in front of me. If I had forgotten what made me work for so long on a film that never seemed to be near completion, I remembered it then. Now, as I work on my new film, I remember it often.

-- Bruce Dods

About Bruce Dods



At the age of five, Bruce Dods (who is now twenty-four) watched a TV program with stop-motion characters: stylized animals dressed in clothing. He knew that they weren't real animals; they were better than real animals could ever be. But he didn't know what made them move. His mother said that they were hand puppets or somehow had strings attached, but Bruce knew she was wrong....

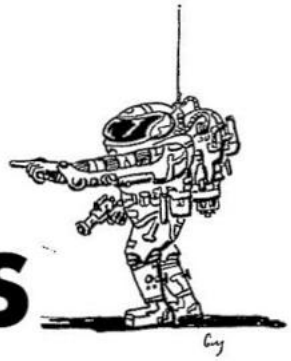
During the summers when he was growing up in Metuchen, New Jersey, Bruce produced plays, "fun houses," and "spook houses" in his basement. And sometimes he'd see one of those stop-motion films on TV and wonder what made the movement happen.

It wasn't until later, while in high school, when his interests turned toward movies and artwork, that Bruce finally read about the term "stop-motion animation" in a magazine called *Famous Monsters of Filmland*.

After a year at the Hartford Art School, Bruce knew that he didn't want to be an artist, so he turned to movies and planned to make a film with stop-motion models featuring an original character (Grog). He then worked in a retail store until he saved enough money to buy a 16mm camera and pay for a few night school courses in movie and still photography. He had never been able to find suitable "how to" books on animation, so he tediously learned about it on his own.

Nowadays, Bruce makes his income from free-lance photography. He plans to become involved professionally in motion pictures, eventually. But at least for now, he *has* made a film with stylized stop-motion animals; and they are better than real animals ever could have been. Bruce Dods is very proud of them; they *aren't* hand puppets and they move *without* strings attached.

PRESS NOTICES



Have a horror, science fiction, or fantasy film currently in production? Send the details about it (title, type of film, names of actors, effects, etc.) to *Press Notices, c/o CINEMAGIC, P.O. Box 125, Perry Hall, Maryland 21128*, and we'll include a write-up about your film in this section.

AKP and *Universal, Jr.*, amateur film companies from New Jersey, are combining to produce *The Forgotten Clue*, an action/crime film using several special effects. Dean Kasturas (*AKP*) is the producer-director-writer and Kevin Shinnick (*Universal, Jr.*) is doing the special effects and make-up. Kevin and Dean are in the cast, along with Jim Heinbuch.

BMRC Productions of Bruce Lane is in the midst of preparing an amateur version of *Willard*, using at least fifteen gerbils (in place of rats). The gerbils are being trained by Bruce, who is also writing and directing the film. In the cast are Mike Melie, Kevin Shinnick and Ray Cucinotta. Filming was slated to begin last December.

The Brothers Three, an extremely productive amateur film company consisting of Phil, John, and Rob Preston of Trenton, Michigan, are putting the final touches on their new fantasy film, *Trinity Circle*, which was shot in Single-8 color, and is to have sound-on-film.

Bill George, the Baltimore film student whose film, *The Late Show*, was featured in our first issue, has announced plans for an elaborate, revamped version of *The Late Show*. The new version will be done on a professional scale, with fully synchronized sound in 16mm. Bill intends to distribute the film on the college and film festival circuits. Make-up artist Ed Litzinger will provide special effects, Phil Guntner will assist in production, and George Stover will play the lead role in the film.

Britt McDonough, our associate editor, is busily preparing sets, props, and models for *The Sorceress*, a fantasy film employing myriad special effects. Created for the film are two animation models: a skeleton and the dragon featured for this issue's "Homemade Models" article. Britt also plans to use rear-screen and traveling matte processes. Being filmed in Single-8, color, and sound.

SIX STEPS TO A FOAM APPLIANCE

Article by
BILL SCHWARZ
Photos by JIM FITZGERALD

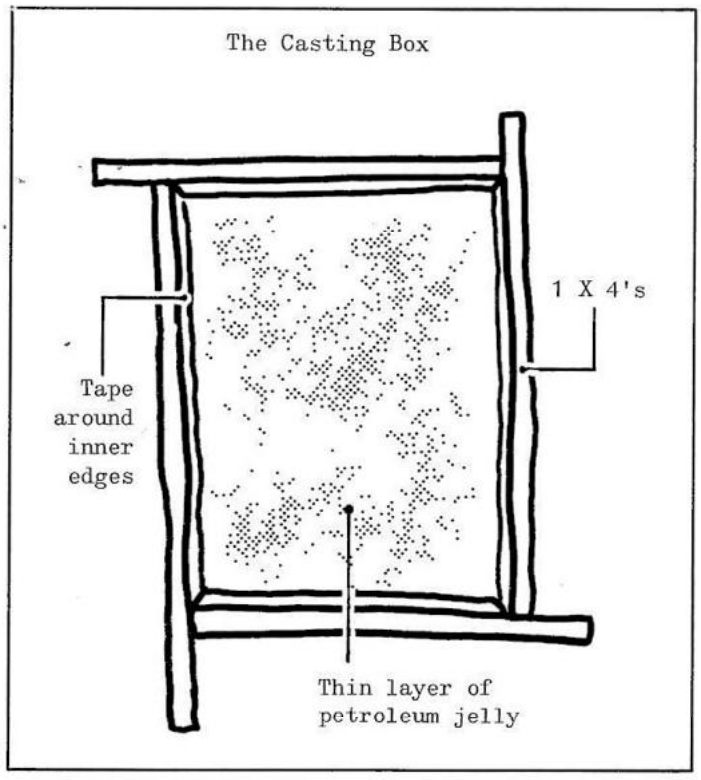
In my last article, I discussed the tremendous advantages to amateurs if they could learn the mechanics of foam latex as make-up material. I went into detail about the fabrication of a stone copy, or life mask, of a person's face. By now, hopefully, you've made one or two of these and are awaiting some method of putting them to use. That is the basis of this article.

PREPARING THE LIFE MASK

First you'll have to take a file and carving knife (or any other good tools that will cut and grind stone) and begin to dispose of the ragged edges around the mask that almost always appear on its back, due to the splattering of stone when the original mold was poured. Always work very carefully; try to avoid excess chipping of the mask. To help cushion the mask as you're working on it, laying it nose down on foam rubber pillows and scraps, or on soft pieces of cloth, helps quite a bit. Gently scrape with the file to smooth the rough edges and always clean the file (by rubbing with a wire brush) after every few strokes. If you don't, the slightly wet stone powder will build up between the grooves in the file, decreasing the scraping efficiency.

THE CASTING BOX

Now that you've prepared the life mask, lay it aside for a while and begin the construction of a casting box. This is simply a group of wood pieces (in this case one-by-fours) put together to form a rectangular box to contain the stone that is poured around the life mask to make a mount. Just butt the pieces together in the dimensions of the finished back-plate that you desire, and using a staple gun, tack the pieces together. To avoid leaks when pouring the stone, the whole operation should be carried out on some smooth, hard surface, such as a linoleum or Formica table top, and the stapled wood form should be securely taped to the table around all the bottom edges. After this, take a good separating medium, such as petroleum jelly, and using a clean, soft brush, spread a very thin, even layer all around the inside of the wood form and on the table top and tape.



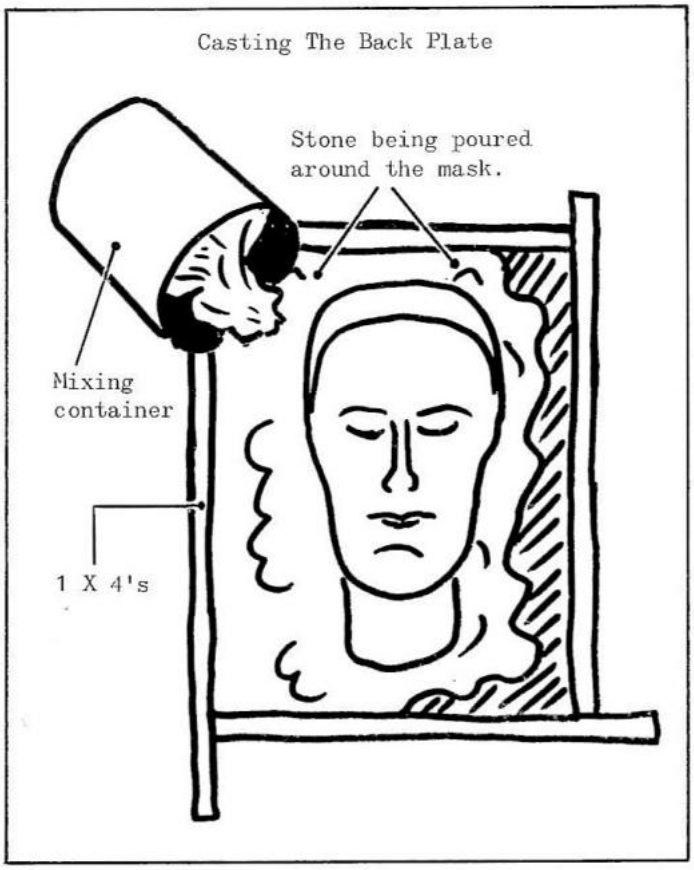
CASTING THE BACK-PLATE

Now take the life mask and center it in the casting box. After you have it positioned, mix up a batch of casting stone and very carefully pour the stone around the mask to seal the base of it into what you have just poured. Work carefully to avoid over-filling the casting box (thereby burying the life mask) and be careful not to splatter, since any stray stone may stick to the mask in the form of small, round lumps. If something like that should happen, *immediately* wipe off the splatter with a damp rag.

Having filled the area around the mask, you must wait for the stone to set, as you did when you made the mask itself. As it does so it will automatically bond itself to the previously hardened stone of the life mask. When this has occurred, and the heat reaction has dwindled somewhat (stone always gets hot due to the chemical setting), slowly pry the staples from the casting box and gently remove the pieces of wood. You will then have a slightly rough back-plate completely surrounding the mask. This can be smoothed a bit, using the technique for finishing the rough edges of the life mask. You now have a solid supporting base on which the life mask is sealed, thus giving it protection; an easy means of handling to avoid damage to the sculpture you're about to do; and a "lip" to put clamps on, to hold the finished mold closed when you begin your rubber processing.

THE SCULPTURE WORK

Taking the arrangement you just made and laying it on a table with sufficient overhead lighting, you are prepared to begin your sculpture. Use a very soft, pliable brand of plastiline clay and begin forming the general contours of the character you're creating. While working bear in mind that a person will be wearing this appliance, so try to sculpt with certain muscles and movements in mind. That way you won't come up with a thick, static piece that affords no movement and could just as well have been done in mortician's wax or putty. The success or failure of the finished appliance depends on the blender edges, these being the areas of the piece near the outermost portions that fade off into the actual skin regions, thus eluding detection. It's true that blender edges are covered with a stippling latex anyway, but remember that the more refined your edge is in the original sculpture, the more work you're saving yourself in blending later on. Carefully run your fingers toward these outermost edges and taper off the clay, until the most extreme outer edge becomes almost tissue thin. Always work from the inside out on these areas to keep from rolling the clay up into a ball, which would destroy the fine edge. It doesn't matter if the edge isn't absolutely straight and crisp. In fact, it's an advantage if it's not: a wavy line along a blender edge doesn't catch the eye right away because it's hard to follow, but a



straight line immediately draws attention to itself, thereby giving away the blended area and exposing the prosthetic feature as false. This is a problem that is faced at times even in extremely expensive surgical prosthetics: a technician may be proficient in his handling of some materials, such as various plastics and rubber, but sadly lacking in the realm of the art and sculpture involved. Actually, although it takes a great deal of practice, many people can cultivate the proper "feel" of the material and come up with a good blender edge, a good sculpting technique, and most important, an instinctive "mind's eye view" of the finished product.

Incidentally, all of you who have the ability to render on paper will find pre-sculpture dimensional and view drawings (various angles of what you envision the finished work to look like) to be of great value in your work.

Still another point to establish is the sculpture of the hood-like area around the head, as shown in photo (below). This is the overflow area, so that when the foam is poured or injected, the excess has some place to spill over, thereby insuring that the appliance area of the mold will be completely filled and will have a minimum of air bubbles. This also allows extra space so the rubber is not squeezed too tight when the life mask is put in (which would destroy some of the pore-structure of the foam).

MOLDING THE POSITIVE SCULPTURE

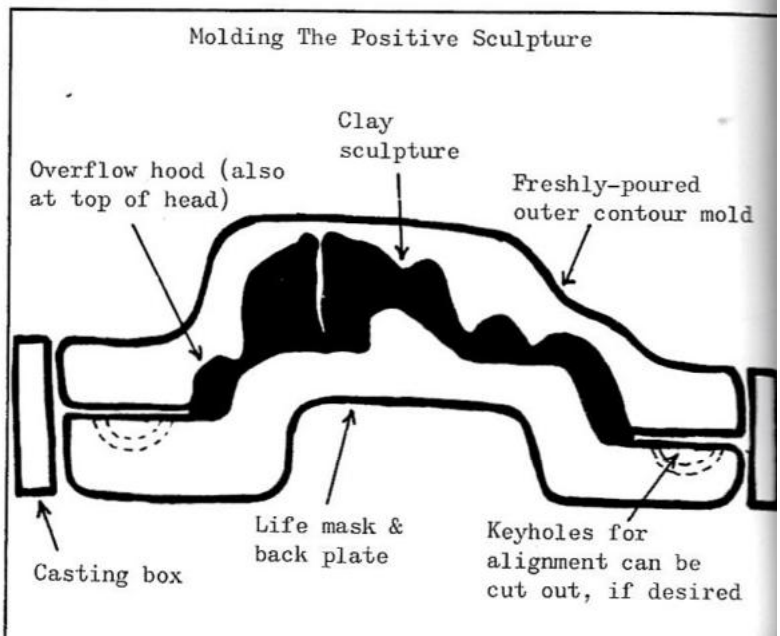
Now you are ready to cast a mold of the sculpture that you have just created. This is done by reconstructing the casting box around the life mask back-plate and then using the same separating medium that you used previously -- only this time you brush it on the exposed areas on the life mask and back-plate. Never use the separating medium on the oil-base clay under any circumstances! Since the clay contains oil already, it becomes self-releasing and needs no separator.

You're almost prepared to make the cast now. If you used the one-by-fours as suggested, you will probably see that the casting box is not high enough to handle the next batch of stone you're preparing to put in. This is as it should be because the square area on the half of the mold that you're going to be doing now is only about two inches thick, to facilitate clamping. The upper portion of the mold, that is to say any area that is above the level of the casting box, *must* be contoured by hand. This is accomplished by developing a skill of handling the material, knowing just how thick to mix it and almost exactly when it's getting ready to set up. You might practice on a small object first to establish a "feel of the stone." Perhaps you're wondering why you must contour the mold in the first place. The reason is simple: rubber must be cured at high temperatures in an oven, and when the mold is subjected to constant heating and cooling, contouring is required to help heat the mold evenly. If the outer contour is sufficiently close to the inner one, then it can be assumed that the stone is just about the same thickness all around and all areas will heat at about the same rate. But if it isn't close enough, thicker areas will heat more slowly than thinner ones, thereby causing cracks in the mold that eventually increase in size, leading to premature mold failure and ending in total separation of the cracked pieces.

Start the cast by flicking some thin (but not too thin) stone on the areas of detail of the sculpture. When the area is completely covered, pour some stone into the casting box up to the top. Very shortly, the stone remaining in the mixing container will start to thicken a bit. At this time (don't wait!) scoop it up in your hands and begin contouring upward above the level of the casting box. (The shape of the contour is shown in pictures of the mold, although this can vary a bit depending on the exact character you're working with.) When you've built up the sides, start building up the top. The only thing you do differently up there is to flatten it somewhat, because when the cast is dry, the whole arrangement is turned over, and what was the top during casting becomes the *bottom* during curing -- so it must have something flat to sit on.

After the stone for this last cast hardens and has cooled a bit, follow the same course of

Molding The Positive Sculpture



procedures as for the separation of the back plate from the casting box. Remove the one-by-fours carefully and you have a rough upper mold connected to the life mask back-plate. Slowly work a thin, wide prying tool (such as a paint scraper) between the two and with gentle pressure try to pry them apart. If they happen to stick a bit, you can remove the tool and try putting it in a different spot and applying pressure once more. When the two halves have become sufficiently loose, remove the mold you just cast and pick the clay out of it and off the life mask. You'll find that the clay hardly ever stays completely on either half of the mold. If you happen to find any stubborn pieces of clay that absolutely will not come off, use some alcohol and a rag to break it down and wipe it off. Now take your file and clean up the rough edges of the mold. Then clean and dust the mold and life mask mount as thoroughly as possible. Next, take a soft brush and paint castor oil into both sides of the mold; then lay it aside to allow the oil to soak in for a while. This will be the separator that allows the molded rubber to strip successfully from the mold. To maintain the best stripping capabilities, the mold should be oiled about once every four or five heat cures. The mold is now ready for use if you're doing pour-in-place molding.

If you prefer injection molding, some modification of the mold is necessary *before* you oil it. First of all, a brief explanation of injection: this is a process by which you fill the mold while it's closed by using a large cylinder with a piston in it that, when pushed in, forces the foam into the mold. The modification is simple: drill an injection hole and vent holes (vents are drilled at any large undercuts) in the back of the life mask mount, or if you prefer, just drill the injection hole and hold the halves of the mold apart with cardboard shims until you inject and see a trail of foam coming out the sides. Then remove the shims and clamp the mold together. Additional information on this process is available in technical bulletins and from customer service facilities of various rubber manufacturers.

MIXING THE RUBBER

The rubber for this process can be obtained from:

The United States Rubber Company
(Uniroyal Chemical)
Elm Street
Naugatuck, Connecticut 06770

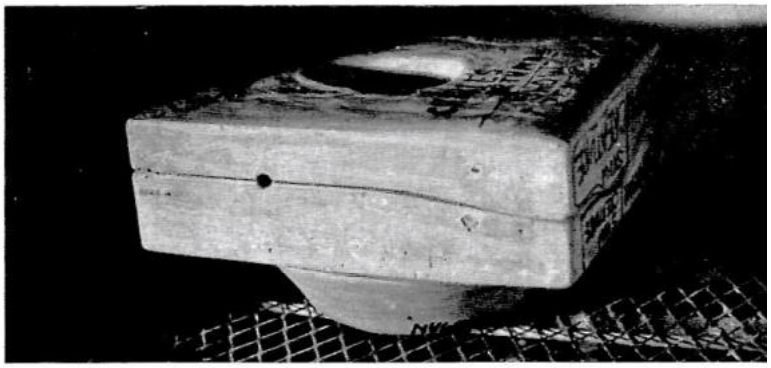
or from:

Uniroyal Chemical
5901 Telegraph Road
Commerce, California 90040.

Be sure you ask them for the additives (the rubber curing chemicals), which come separately, and also the formula. The foam is in four or five parts, depending on the particular formula used:

The latex base (raw, natural rubber
Zinc oxide (a curative)
Sulphur (another curative)
Foaming Agent (sometimes used to help whip the rubber)
Gel (used to solidify the rubber after whipping)

The rubber is measured into a mixing bowl; then the curing agents are added. Next comes the foaming agent, if required. The rubber is then whipped with an electric mixer until it has reached the proper volume. The gel is added and the rubber is mixed further in order to disperse the gel throughout the mixture. The rubber is then *immediately* poured or injected into the mold, where it is allowed to gel. After this the mold is clamped, and is placed in the curing oven (or household oven), where it will remain for the next several hours at 200 degrees.



Experimentation will determine how long the mold should stay in, since the amount of rubber in your particular mold determines the curing time. The usual time is between four and eight hours. After curing, the oven should be opened slowly and towels wrapped around the mold before removal, to try to maintain heat and avoid any excess cracking due to rapid temperature changes. Then the life mask half should be removed and the rubber piece stripped carefully from the mold. The mold should then be closed and placed in the turned-off oven, with the doors closed to allow gradual cooling.

The appliance is now complete and almost ready to wear. All that's needed is trimming and coloring. In CINEMAGIC #3 I'll describe these two processes and also give information on make-up materials and where to get them; and I'll discuss the application of the foam latex appliance.

-- Bill Schwarz

CORRECTION NOTICE: In Bill Schwarz's first make-up article, in CINEMAGIC #1, there was an error on page 16, where we said to be careful removing the alginate, which "usually tears, but you can use it again anyway." This should have read, "but you *can't* use it again anyway." The error was ours, not Bill Schwarz's. We thank those readers who pointed it out, and hope the mistake didn't cause you any problems in making your life masks.

Film Profile

MR. CLAY

text & photos by
Don Dohler

One of the drawbacks of making a film like *Mr. Clay* was that the lead role involved a fair amount of dialogue, lots of different facial expressions and someone who could react to an imaginary adversary -- a clay model, in this case. The search for a friend, an acquaintance, a neighbor -- *anybody* (even an enemy!) to play the protagonist proved fruitless. Sure, most people were willing to do a small part in an amateur film, as long as there wasn't much dialogue. But in this instance, there was *only* one human character -- who, in effect, had to carry the story with appropriate dialogue and expression.

Inevitably, I got stuck doing the part myself; neither out of ego or desire: I hate being in my own films, for it is a proven fact that films of mine in which I've appeared have suffered extensively due to a lack of complete camera control. I'm sure that this holds true for most filmmakers. Nevertheless, in *Mr. Clay* it was *me* or forget the whole idea.

Basically, the plot of *Mr. Clay* involves a toy designer who carves out clay models of toy figures in the secrecy of his own home. However, the designer works for a large toy company and must comply with the whims of corporate heads. This deprives our sculpturing artist of the ingredient most important to his profession: artistic freedom. In the opening sequences of the film I make implications, through sarcastic expressions and under-the-breath grunts, that our "hero" is outwardly upset with his job circumstances and, in a more subtle way, actually ready to throw in the towel. He can't, though, because it's a matter of bread-and-butter or freedom, and it's obvious in a phone conversation with a company executive that our designer will grin and bear it, rather than tell the executive where to go....

So on the phone, the company executive, identified in dialogue as "Bob" (though never seen or heard by the audience), informs the toy designer that the company's president wants a "space monster" design for a meeting the very *next* morning. The toy designer is really disgruntled, as this dialogue from the film will illustrate:

TOY DESIGNER:
"....Oh boy -- what's the old man want now?"

EXECUTIVE on the other end, not seen or heard, is apparently answering.

TOY DESIGNER (upset):
"A space monster? But I'm still working on the new cowboy set--" (Interrupted) *"Yeh, okay -- when does he want it?"*

EXECUTIVE answers.

TOY DESIGNER (shouting):
"Tomorrow morning?! Come on!! You've got to be kidding..."

EXECUTIVE again apparently answering, in no uncertain stern words.

TOY DESIGNER (look of disgust; listening, but not agreeing one bit):
"Okay, okay! Tomorrow morning at nine o'clock it'll be..."

EXECUTIVE asks an apparent question of concern.

TOY DESIGNER (sarcastically):
"Ah, don't worry about it -- we toy designers don't need any sleep, anyway."

This phone conversation serves a good purpose and is very necessary to a film where only one actor is featured. To wit, the last bit of dialogue sets up the basic premise for the plot: that this somewhat disillusioned toy designer must create and mold a creature for which he obviously holds malice to start with.

Subsequently, our man designs the "space monster" (the lap-dissolve was used to span the time between starting and completing the model), though he remains upset with the idea. After completion, the toy designer states, rather indignantly to the inanimate object, "Well, I don't know about you, space monster -- you stupid looking thing -- but *I* am going to bed." He then drops the model down on his work bench and a dissolve makes the transition from a close-up of the clay model to a medium shot of the toy designer thrashing about in a moonlit bed. From here, cuts between the basement workbench and the guy in bed make it clear that something is

Far left: the toy designer holds his "space monster" creation. Left: Mr. Clay prepares to hurl a metal spike at the toy designer.

happening. On the workbench we see objects falling over, as if knocked, and even being pushed onto the floor. We never see what's causing this. The shots of the designer's restless sleep are coupled with muffled sounds of objects being knocked about in the basement.

Eventually, the designer awakens, switches on a light, and proceeds downstairs. Mood is established here with three factors: an eerie underlying musical score; slow and unsure movement of the toy designer; and contrasty lighting to set a sinister, foreboding aura within the confines of what was otherwise an ordinary house. This sequence works well and carries the suspenseful plot quite nicely along.

As the suspicious toy designer gets to his workbench, he flicks on a light and realizes his fears: the bench is in complete disarray and the "space monster" model is missing. Perturbed, the guy yells out, in a knowing way, "All right -- I know somebody is in here!" Then he adds, under his breath, "--though I'll admit that you must be crazy...who in the heck would want to steal a clay model?"

From here the shot switches to another area of the basement, where we see a piece of cord being stretched taut across the walkway. The toy designer hears this, looks up suspiciously, and walks toward the source of the sound. In a quick scene, he trips over the cord, tumbles to the floor and looks up, horrified, at something, then yells, "No!" It's here that we realize what we have imagined all along: the clay model is *alive* and scampers quickly under some furniture. The toy designer, still somewhat disbelieving, pulls himself from the floor and looks around. Suddenly, the clay model appears on a shelf and throws a metal spike at his creator. The spike hits the designer's back, and he reels around to see nothing. Mr. Clay is fast -- superfast, in fact. Although the model itself is rather bulky-looking, something prompted me to give it lightning-quick speed -- almost unreal speed. I can reason now that without such speed, the clay model would be basically defenseless and could be easily captured, thus eliminating the storyline. The speed also gave Mr. Clay a characteristic not unlike that of house roaches: pesky, quick, and very hard to catch.

Subsequent scenes in *Mr. Clay* involve what is actually a cat-and-mouse struggle between the toy designer and his creation. Mixed in are a few psychological overtones, where the designer thinks he's imagining the events, but is reassured in terrifying reality that the model *is* alive. One such scene posed a peculiar problem -- I, the actor and animator of the clay model, and the clay model itself, had to appear in a scene together. It involved Mr. Clay walking toward my leg and stabbing my ankle with a nail. Impossible without a split screen, or special matting, you say? Or perhaps rear-screen projection? Not on an amateur budget with limited equipment! The solution was to use the live actor with the animated clay model. Only for this scene, I wasn't the actor. My brother, who was helping with the filming, and who is my ex-

Right: Mr. Clay is about to zip away after several minutes of taunting his creator. Far right: the toy designer gets his first horrified look at the "living" Mr. Clay.

act size and build, doubled for me in this instance. I'll give him credit, too, because he had to stand on top of a kitchen counter for about forty minutes without moving while I animated the clay model "stabbing" him in the ankle. While this kind of scene would have been impossible if his whole body had been shown, it worked well because only the lower half of his leg was within the frame.

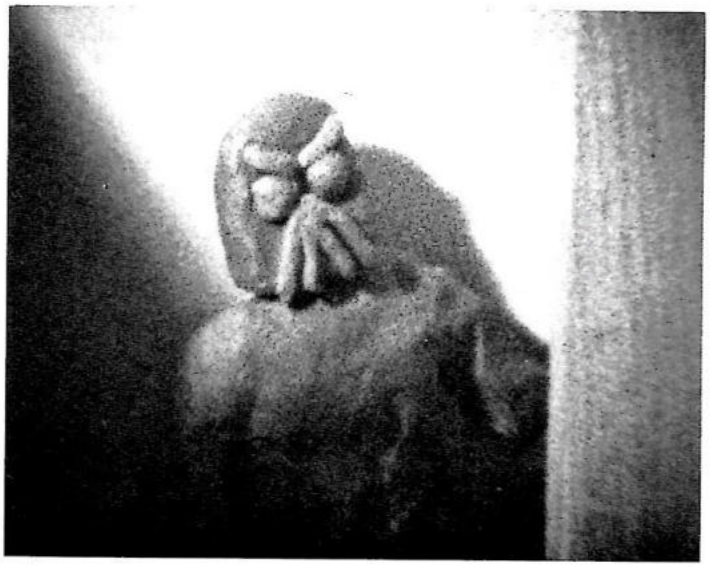
The climax of the film entails the toy designer finally catching Mr. Clay and, in a seizure of forced hostility, throwing his creation on a table and repeatedly stabbing the thing. In exhaustion, the toy designer passes out on the basement floor. A persistent, ringing telephone awakens him the next morning, when he is dismayed at finding himself camped out in the basement. He does get to the phone in time; and again, a conversation establishes his thoughts. We can tell from his dialogue that it's "Bob" from the toy company asking about the space monster model. In a final, unassured way the toy designer replies, "Yeah, I got it done; but I had the *weirdest* dream about that thing last night... the weirdest dream..." Not one to leave my audience hanging, I then dissolved to the table in the basement, with a slow pan to a chopped-up Mr. Clay, a sculpting knife jabbed in his chest.

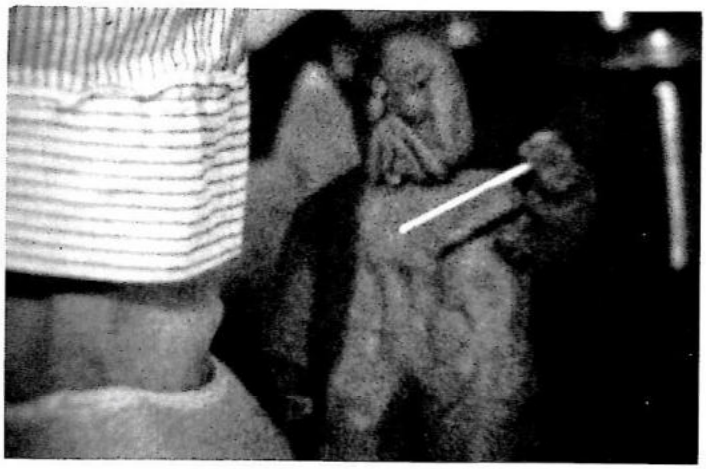
Technically, *Mr. Clay* was not too difficult. The clay model *was* a real clay model, not a wire/latex one designed to look like clay. The shape of the model was sort of wide and bulky so that the thing could stand without support of any kind. The legs were wide at the bottom and tapered upward. Anything more delicate-looking would have necessitated support wires or a brace of some sort. In animating Mr. Clay I used one frame per movement, with very gradual movements each time, except in the basement scenes where the model is supposedly moving extremely fast. Here, I used one frame per movement, but doubled the length of each movement. This worked perfectly in effecting super-quick speed of the model.

For film I used Fujipan R200, a high-speed black and white stock made by Kodak's clever Japanese counterpart, the Fuji Photo Film Company. I used high-speed black and white for a purpose: if I'd shot in color (high-speed color film for Super or Single-8 wasn't available in those days), it would have forced my main lights to be very close to the model during animation sequences. And if you've ever animated clay before, using hot movie lights at a close range you'll know the inherent problem: the clay tends to melt, making it nearly impossible to work with. With the fast black and white stock, I kept my lights at a good distance, got good exposure, and had no clay melting problems. In addition, the film permitted low lighting for certain shots to give a natural, contrasty mood in night scenes.

--Don Dohler

Below: An atmospheric shot of Mr. Clay as he gets ready to push a board over at the unsuspecting toy designer. Right: These two photos show part of the sequence where Mr. Clay stabs the toy designer's ankle. Because only the lower portion of the actor's leg was within frame, the animated model and live actor could be filmed together without any matte or rear-screen processes. (All of the photos for this article are Polaroids taken directly from projected images of the actual movie.)





Film Profile

THE LOGOS MACHINE

TEXT & PHOTOS by
BRITT McDONOUGH

Part II

In CINEMAGIC #1 we presented the first part of *The Logos Machine*, giving a plot synopsis and some insight into the miniature sets and props used in the film. To conclude, we'll explore the film's optical and animation techniques; but first, a fast summary of the plot for those of you who missed the first installment:

An earth scientist and his robot servant land on an alien planet where all life has been annihilated by a bacterial war. While on the planet, the earth ship is attacked by an alien spacecraft, but the alien vessel crashes. The earth scientist explores the wrecked spacecraft and is attacked and pursued by an alien being. Finally, the earthman is left no alternative but to take an offensive stance: he disintegrates the alien by using a laser ray. Shortly afterwards, however, the earthman discovers a growth on his hand, indicating that he has been stricken by the same bacteria which had eliminated all life forms on the planet. In a poignant ending, the earthman dies and is carried back to his spaceship by his robot servant.

FADE OUT

OPTICAL EFFECTS

Special effects shots in the film were facilitated by the use of various optical effects: that is, techniques of image manipulation such as the use of the double exposure to structure complex images, the use of split-screen matting to make image composites, and altering the size of the screen by frame matting.

Split-screen matte shots were used in the film in order to "build" or "assemble" complex individual shots for certain sequences. One of the most dynamic examples of split-screen matting in *Logos* was the following shot, excerpted from the script:

> *6. MEDIUM LONG SHOT: Scientist walks left to right across desolate terrain. In the background a futuristic tank can be seen, which explodes in a flash from a projectile fired off screen.*

The Logos Machine spelled out automatic messages to the earthman. The cut-out letters appeared all at once, then disappeared one at a time (stop motion) with an electronic "clickety" in the soundtrack.

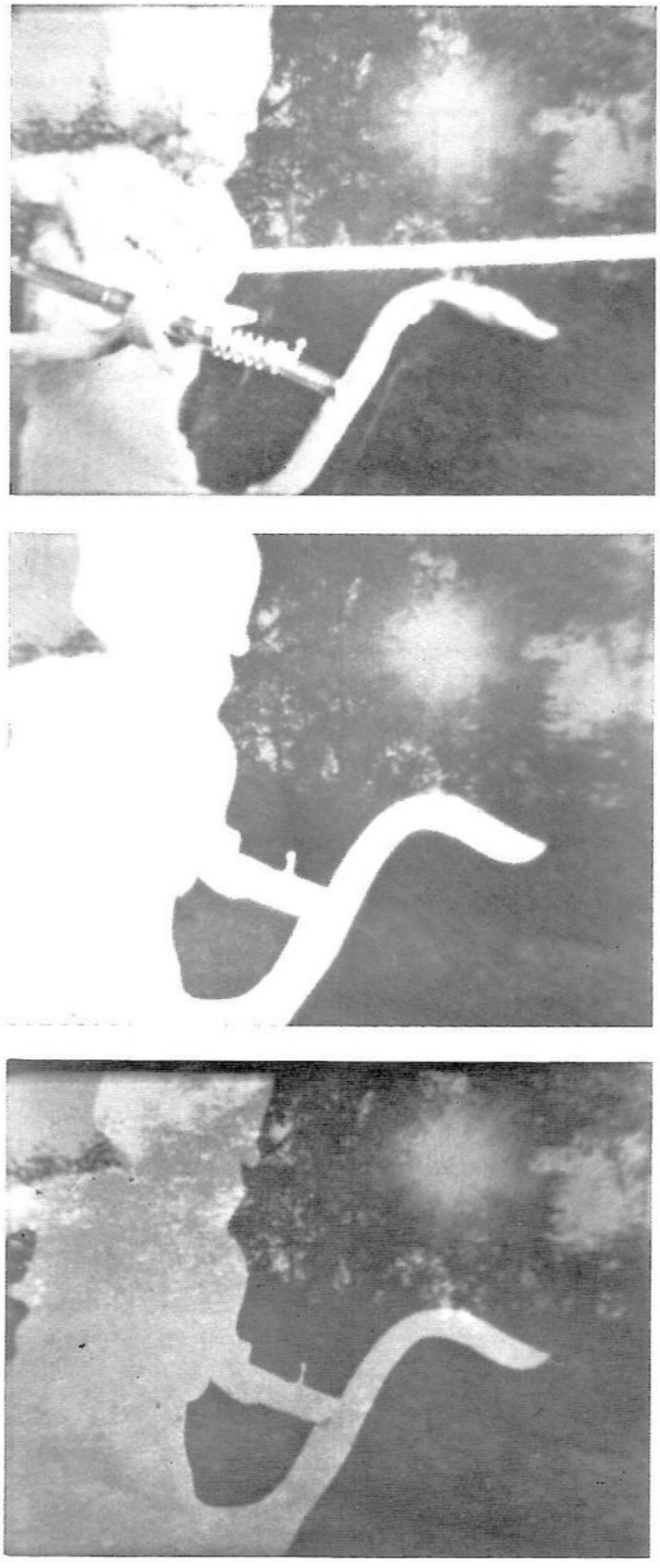
In order to film this shot, three exposures, done at different times, had to be made in the camera on the same strip of film. The first exposure consisted of the live action footage: the scientist walking across the screen was shot. At the time the shot was taken, the top half of the screen was masked out using black matting material. As a result, the film on the top half of the shot stayed unexposed, awaiting a re-exposure later. The film was then wound back in the camera to the beginning of where the live action shot started. This time the bottom half of the screen was masked with black material, thus preserving the already exposed live action footage. The top half of the screen was then filled with a miniature set which matched the terrain of the bottom half of the previous shot. In the second exposure, then, a miniature, stop-motion animated tank moved to the middle of the top-half scene. A third exposure was later added to the top half of the shot, to give the effect of an explosion near the tank.

Another use of mattes in the film was compositional: to alter the film frame or screen size to emphasize the information in the shot. Landscape and set interior shots often had a strongly horizontal quality, and blocking out the top and bottom edges of the frame slightly (horizontal matting) reinforced this effect. In a similar way one shot, of the scientist putting a laser gun in his pocket, was vertically matted to strengthen the vertical nature of the shot, and to eliminate extraneous visual information from the scene.

Many shots in the film incorporated double and/or triple exposure. Double exposure involves the re-exposing of the previously exposed movie film again and again as needed (in the camera) to "build" complex images. For example, the first shot of the film script reads:

> *1. MEDIUM LONG SHOT: A flying saucer zooms through space, and flies out heading directly towards camera right. As soon as the flying saucer moves out of the frame, the film's main title fades-in over space background:* THE LOGOS MACHINE.
> *Fade-out title.*

In order to make this shot, a triple exposure was necessary. First, a zoom-out on a star/space background was shot. (The astronomical-looking photos used for the backgrounds in the film were made by using a high-contrast print paper, sprinkling pepper on it, and printing and processing it as a photogram.) The film was wound back, and a zoom-in shot was made of a photo cut-out of a flying saucer against a dead black background. The result of these first two images combined is that of a flying saucer zooming at the camera with an outer-space background receding behind it.



These three photos show the disintegration of the alien. This effect was achieved by using photo cutouts of the alien and laser ray, combined with a background photo of the terrain. The scene was actually filmed on a multi-plane stand (see article).

The only element left to add to the shot now is the fade-in of the title *The Logos Machine*, and then its fading out. To get this, the film was wound back a third time to the start of the shot, and white stylized letters were shot against a black background. To make them *fade-in*, the shutter of the camera was gradually opened; to make them *fade-out*, after ten seconds or so (the time the title would last on the screen), the shutter was slowly closed again.

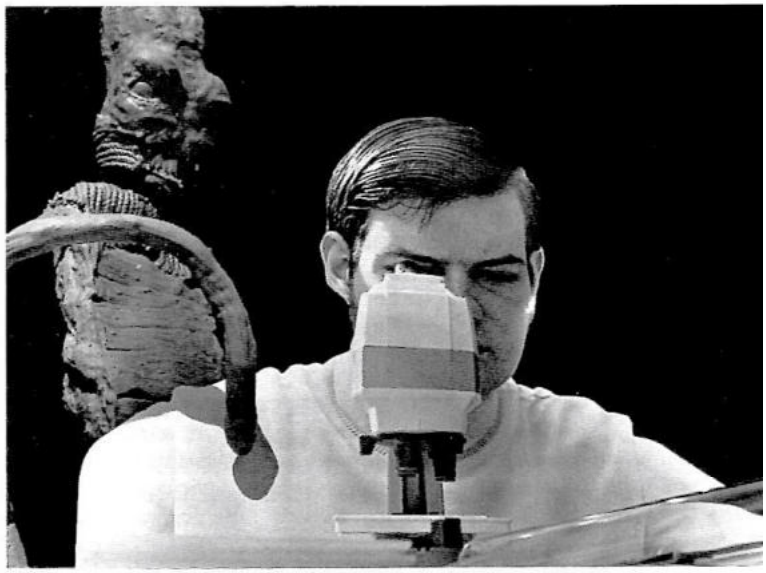
ANIMATION TECHNIQUES

About thirty shots in the film consisted of some sort of stop-motion animation. Most of the animation was either of small photo cut-outs, or of stop-motion miniature models. Two of these models were built for the film: the robot navigator of the ship and the alien creature. The robot navigator was made from balsa wood, plastic ball-bearings, bits of cardboard "frills," and plastic aquarium tubing. The mechanical man was assembled on a wire base (the wire is standard #16 hardware-store type). The alien creature was built on a similar wire skeleton, only much bigger. The alien model stands about nineteen inches in height and is made of foam rubber, artificial pearls painted red (for the eyes), cotton, tissue, all covered with latex rubber (colored green via acrylic paints mixed with the latex).

The robot model mainly appears in the miniature set of the spaceship interior. The alien creature, on the other hand, had to be shown to be running after the scientist against actually existing, live-action terrain. To effect this, it was animated in medium shots against black and white photo-enlargements of the live-action terrain seen in the film. One of the most technically interesting and complex sequences in the film was one in which the alien creature creeps up on the unknowing scientist and startles him. Rather than doing this by cross-cutting (of the animated model creature, and then back to the scientist), it was done in a single shot. The problem was to combine a live actor scientist with a nineteen-inch animated model. But since the scientist would be looking intently into the microscope and sitting still, it became clear that a photo cutout (from an 8" X 10" enlargement) of the scientist looking into the microscope would make the shot. The photo cutout was set up with test tubes in front of it (which, because of perspective, would look very big, being near the camera lens), and the animated model was inched up behind the photo cutout.

Photo cutouts of the various spacecraft used in the film were animated against outer-space and scenic-terrain photographic backgrounds. In several shots, where it was necessary for a photo-cutout airship to pass beneath a photo-cutout mountain, a rig called a multi-plane stand was used. This is essentially an elaborate copy stand. except that its main feature consists of panels of glass suspended one above the other, about four inches apart. My stand has three glass levels and uses standard hardware size glass, 15" X 20". The main titles were also shot on the multi-plane stand, simply because it allows you to get a great distance between white title letters on the top level of glass, and a dead black background four levels below. The distance between the title letters and the black background causes the black background to be completely out of focus, and being a nice distance from the title letter light source, it is *totally* black.

These two photos show one way of combining a "live" actor with an animated model. First, I cut out a large photo of the scientist peering into the microscope, then placed the photo and some foreground props on a table. The alien model was posed behind the set-up, with a dead-black background material behind the model. This permitted frame-by-frame animation of the alien creeping up behind the scientist and grabbing his shoulder. Then the film returns to live *action and a large alien arm prop was placed on the actor's shoulder to simulate the model/photo set-up.*



MISCELLANEOUS NOTES ON TECHNIQUES USED IN THE FILM

It might be interesting to discuss how a few unusual, individual shots were executed in *Logos*:

> *3. CLOSE SHOT: A viewing screen device. The planet is getting closer and closer, until it fills the frame of the viewing screen.*

This required a double exposure. The first exposure was a static shot of the "viewing screen" device. The viewing screen was dull black and was therefore self-matting. On the second exposure, the camera zoomed in on a side-lit planet sphere, completing the effect.

Still another scene called for:

> *5. CLOSE SHOT: View through microscope lens. (Large circular-matted set-up on multi-plane stand.) There is a weird-looking, animated "germ" on the slide viewed -- it is pulsating ominously.*

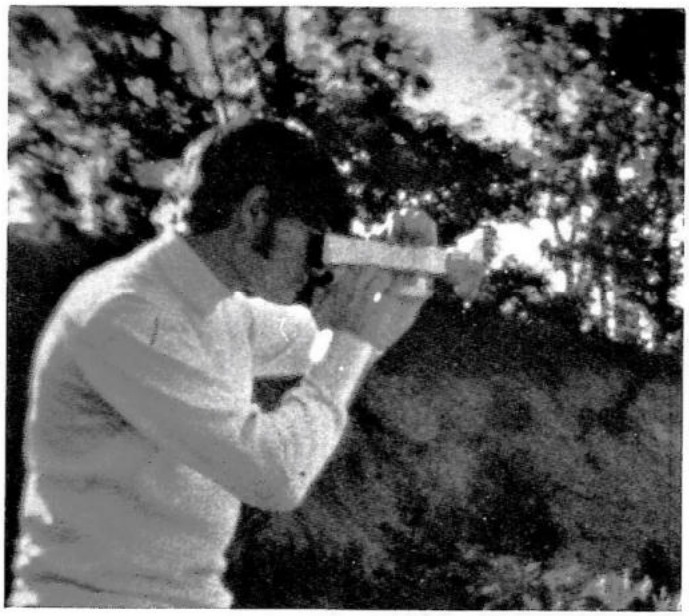
This "view through the microscope" shot was effected principally by taking advantage of a kind of stop-motion/time-lapse technique. A white, translucent tray was lit from below and filled with water about an inch or so deep. Black india ink was put into the water. A large rectangle of black paper with a neat circle was put over the tray containing ink-and-water, and the camera was set up above this. So far so good: through the camera lens one appears to be looking through a microscope. The final touch was to swish the water around and take quick, successive single frames of the ink swirling about. The effect on the screen is like seeing some sort of weird, crawling, organic-looking stuff.

Each of my films gives me a chance to test new techniques and find new ways of realizing a given shot in cinematic terms. In my films I try to translate dreams and fantasies into the illusion of reality. That is what I attempted in *The Logos Machine*, and the process of making it was as rewarding and enjoyable as viewing the completed film.

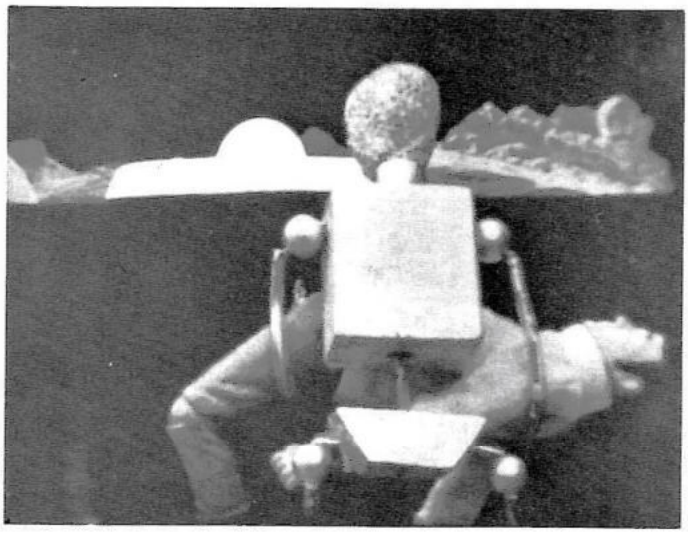
-- Britt McDonough

The alien bacteria, as seen through a microscope by the earthman. To achieve the swirling motion of the "bacteria," time-lapse photography was employed. The swirl is black ink in water.

The earthman takes aim with a laser gun.



The finale of The Logos Machine*: the robot navigator carries the dead scientist back to the saucercraft. A toy doll, dressed to match the attire of the real-life actor, was used to simulate the dead scientist in this scene.*



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A group of interested and dedicated filmmakers have organized the *Amateur 8 Movie Contest* to: (1) Afford the normal filmmaker an opportunity to compete with his peers; (2) Encourage, assist and stimulate amateur movie making.

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There is no entry fee and our deadline is November 10, 1973. Please write for entry blanks and information:

Philip J. Preston, Chairman
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I'm willing to buy any material pertaining to Universal Studios -- particularly in the horror genre. I'm also interested in material pertaining to "Walkabout" and John Barry music. In addition, I'd like to correspond with amateur filmmakers. (When sending price lists of material you have for sale, please enclose a stamped SAE.) *Kevin Shinnick, 30 Hill Street, Bogota, New Jersey 07603.*

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WANTED: Bell & Howell model 70-DR 16mm cameras -- willing to purchase up to six of these if the price is right. Must have three lenses and three viewing elements. May also be interested in a Bolex-Paillard H16 Reflex (not necessarily the model which can be adapted for a 400-foot film magazine). Also need, desperately, a battery-powered 3200K light for use with the above cameras (preferably one made or adapted for direct attachment to the cameras themselves). Send quotes to: *Mark Estren, 2280 Center Terrace, Apartment 5, Grand Island, New York 14072.* NOTE! Bell & Howell cameras must be filter-slotted. Models which require filters to be placed over the lenses themselves are not usable for my purposes -- please do not send quotes on those models!

ATTENTION FANTASY ARTISTS: CINEMAGIC is seeking those of you with talent and interest in the area of drawing realistic pen and ink renditions of scenes from films. Specifically in mind are scenes from the films presented in these pages. If you're interested in contributing, contact me as soon as possible. My address is on the contents page.

-- *Don Dohler*

LETTERS

EDITORS' NOTE ON LETTERS: Send correspondence to Letters Department, CINEMAGIC, P.O. Box 125, Perry Hall, Maryland 21128. All letters become the exclusive property of CINEMAGIC. We reserve the right to edit all letters for grammar, spelling, length, etc. We will make every effort to publish a representative sampling of comments on CINEMAGIC, both favorable and critical.

Rodger Larson
Executive Director,
Young Filmmakers' Foundation
New York, New York

Thank you for the complimentary copy of the premiere issue of CINEMAGIC. We found it to be very well designed and extremely informative.

We extend our congratulations to you and your staff for this very fine publication and we believe it will be of great assistance to young filmmakers.

Greg Shoemaker
Toledo, Ohio

Since AMATEUR PRODUCER'S MAGAZINE and CINEMAGRAM, both fine ama-film magazines in their own right, died an untimely death, I have been praying that someone with integrity and fortitude would begin taking up where they left off -- and you have done just that -- with a magazine you can be proud of. If circulation grows slowly, which by all rights it shouldn't, be patient and hang in there, because there are people in this world who thrive on a publication such as yours and to have it dismembered before it sees fruition and proves its usefulness as *the* magazine for amateurs and semi-pros, would surely hurt the amateur film world -- a dream world -- that I am so wrapped up in, as are so many others. The loss of CINEMAGIC would be a tremendous setback to the unity of us filmmakers with limited experience and renown.

Glenn M. Turner
Cottage City, Maryland

Allow me to be one of the first to congratulate you and your staff on issue number one of CINEMAGIC, one of the finest first efforts it has ever been my pleasure to view.

The field of non-professional special effects has been a barren one, periodically speaking, and it is nice to see the void filled by a slick, intelligently written magazine.

Knowing that Estren and Dohler are at the helm on this project is reassuring to all of us who enjoy material written on an "over twelve" level, and also to those of us who are not overly fond of bad puns.

Craig Reardon
Redondo Beach, California

I think CINEMAGIC is a very handsome magazine, and this is very impressive for a first issue. I like your editorial stance, but I do *not* like the films you featured -- *The Late Show* and *Redneck*, I mean. I hope to see some examples of *good* work in future issues, from filmmakers more gifted with qualities such as imagination and talent. I hate plain old "blood-and-guts" passionately. Certainly primal things like sex and death and violence belong to life, and they've always been in films together or separately, but they must be used responsibly or at least meaningfully. I mean, if you just have a couple fornicating, then you don't have *Camille*; you have a stag film. If you have some hippie making ground round out of a salesman in a gloomy basement, you have a tasty hors d'oeuvre for some sadist. Incidentally, I consider *The Wild Bunch* a feast for the same kind of viewer.

The Logos Machine looks super-amateurish, but that's the name of the magazine. At least this film looks imaginative and required something more of its creator than filming gore on the floor. *Logos* is all I ever want to see the likes of in CINEMAGIC, speaking as one reader. I want to see the work of young men and women who aspire to be artists, allowing for foreseeable differences in talent.

Ernest D. Farino, Jr.
Irving, Texas

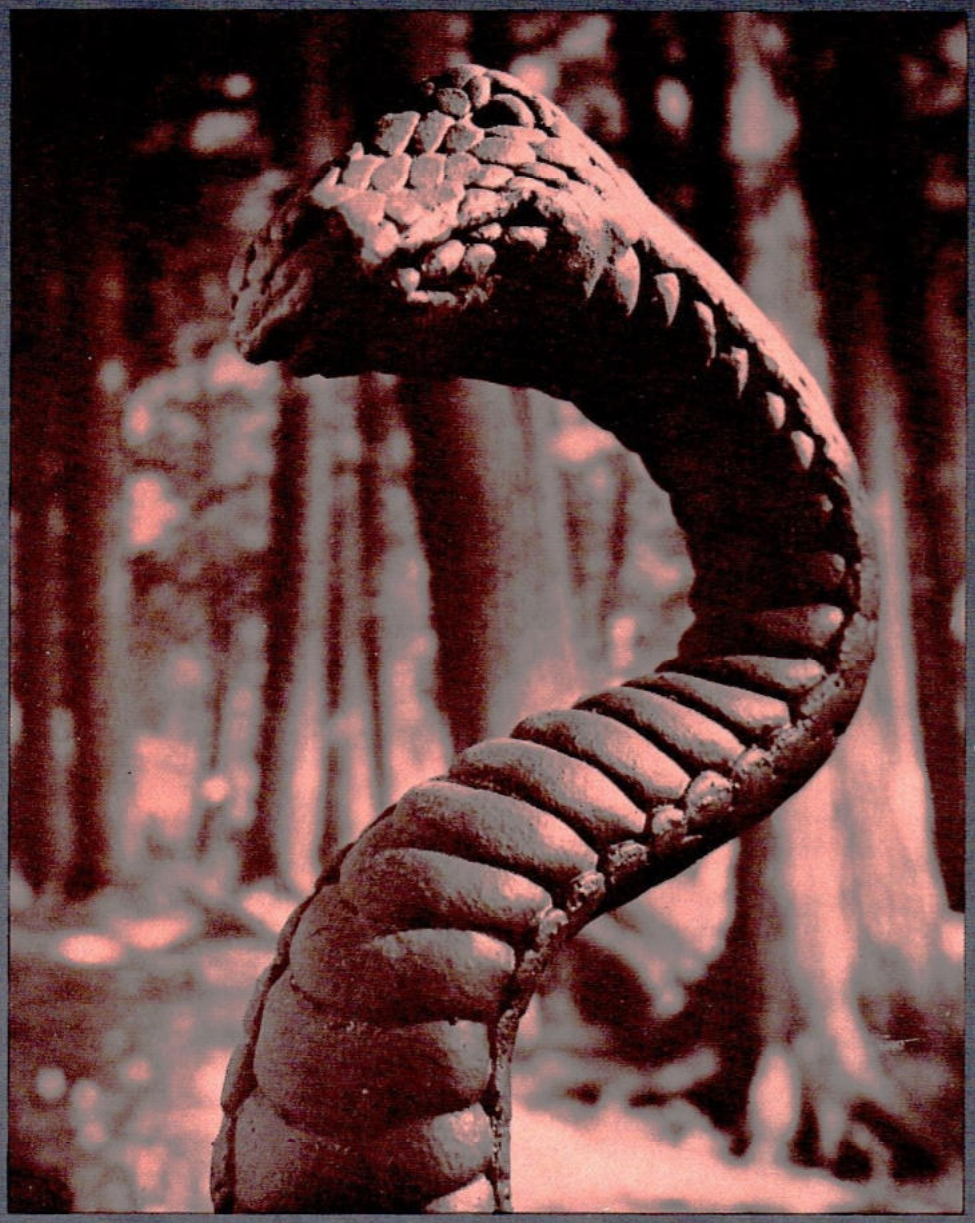
I was very pleased with the results of CINEMAGIC #1! Much more than I had expected, considering that it was a first issue. A really fine job; if you're able to keep adding and improving with each issue, you'll have a slick prozine on your hands before you know it!

I was very pleased with my article, and am confident that such exposure in such a nicely put together magazine will be a favorable boost in my trying to get work along these lines.

Philip B. Moshcovitz
Boston, Massachusetts

Many thanks for sending a copy of CINEMAGIC, a very entertaining and educational publication. If I had some spare time, I'd try a few of the techniques outlined. My only suggestion might be to include an article on one pro make-up or special effects master in each issue. John Chambers might be a good start; he's currently working on *Sssssssssss!* at Universal, in which a man turns into a snake. Chambers has been developing the make-up for this flick for one year.

EDITORS' NOTE: We have been pondering the idea of having articles written by professional effects filmmakers -- what do our readers think of this idea?



THIS AWESOME-LOOKING SNAKE IS ACTUALLY ONLY A BABY, AND IS MADE OF WIRE AND FOAM LATEX. HE IS THE CO-STAR OF THE AMATEUR FILM "GROG" (SEE PAGE 11 INSIDE).