CINEMAGIC

Number 5

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Tiny plastic leaves, a miniature tree carved from plaster, a misty background, and big Grog all add up to an atmosphere of pure fantasy. From *The Abduction Of Grog* (see page 16).

CINEMAGIC

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CONTENTS

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LETTERS

NOTE ON LETTERS: Send all correspondence to *Letters, c/o CINEMAGIC, P.O. Box 125, Perry Holl, Moryland 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, both favorable and critical. Your *full* address will be published by request only.

John Thonen, Jr.
Kansas City, Missouri

CINEMAGIC #4 pretty well filled my hopes for your rebirth — simple, straight-forward articles by and for people who care.

I very much like the expanded *Press Notices* section, and I'd like to see it and your magazine expand this personal contact with your readers, and hopefully, between them. Possibly you could run a column where amateur filmmakers could find out about others in their respective areas, thus increasing an interweaving of ideas and a sharing of experiences between one another.

On a critical note I would like to see a bit more editorial action on the articles. They frequently delve into matters of little importance and miss larger ones. I would like to know how Craig Reardon handled the animation of falling debris when his Kong smashed the building. I have tried this sort of thing myself, but the aerial brace technique involved seemed too much for me. Craig's article showed a picture of the action, but didn't tell how it was done.

EDITORS' NOTE: As far as the personal contact between readers, see the editorial in this issue for an announcement concerning a new department of that very nature which will begin in our sixth issue. On the aerial brace techniques in The Evils Of Alcohol, *we queried Craig Reardon, who provides the following: "When I did the* Evils *film I planned a very ambitious destruction of the school building, but eventually had to settle on one gratuitous punched-out wall. I wanted to avoid aerial-bracing, so I figured out a way to suspend the pieces of wall from within. After completely constructing the miniature building (out of cardboard), I decided on the area I wanted punched out, and cut out the sections with an X-Acto knife. I inserted strands of thin aluminum wire, which is easy to bend and has no recoil, into the cut out wall sections, and then into the wall itself. This took patience, but I finally assembled it, and painted it to disguise the seams. It was easy to push this section apart during animation — a little bit per frame — giving the ultimate illusion of the ape socking it to pieces."*

Tom Brierton
Rushville, Illinois

I am a serious student of the Harryhausen genre. I feel that he is undeniably the greatest visual effects creator there is, and his films are his evidence. Man's imagination is boundless, and Ray Harryhausen's imagination is endless.

It's true, perhaps, that Harryhausen's type of film presents stories from a child's point of view, but the fantasy film is an art which must never be lost.

Fantasy films seemed to have been going fairly well (ever since *King Kong*); then, a film is introduced into the theatre and has the catchy title of *Flesh Gordon*. I feel that this film is a slap in the face to the fantasy fan. I personally have never seen *Flesh Gordon*, but reading about its contents is more than I can bear. Of course, I'm sure the effects were handled by a few good men, like Jim Danforth, and this is impressive. What really frightens me is the fact that *Flesh Gordon* is doing quite well at the box office. It is evident where the public's taste is. Three cheers for Ray Harryhausen, the true prince of entertainment.

Mark Brady
Belleville, New Jersey

Upon receiving CINEMAGIC #4, I was glad to see that the magazine had seemed to improve. The contradictory letter from Kenneth Marks interested me, since I can agree somewhat with his points. I believe that CINEMAGIC should consist of an equal share of articles about professionals or semi-professionals, and amateurs. Some readers may be struggling in this specialized work and find that they need some inspiration to continue. It seems to me that such articles as *The Evils Of Alcohol* or the letter from Robert Maine concerning his work on *Flesh Gordon* are better sources of inspiration than Britt McDonough's "wire and paper towel" creations.

Scott Seaver
Fort Worth, Texas

I just had to write and tell you how great CINEMAGIC #4 was. I can't wait to see issue #5.

I don't know what I would have done without your magazine. If it weren't for Britt McDonough's articles on making wire and latex animation models, I would still be just *wishing* about making my own dinosaur movies.

Charles Corson
Belair, Maryland

I've heard somewhere that you intend to start running articles about professional film productions in CINEMAGIC. You call the shots, but in my opinion, that would be a big mistake. There are enough magazines about the pro-fantasy films—in fact, these kinds of magazines seem to be coming out of the woodwork lately. It all seems like a rehashing of the same, tired old material. I'm sick to death of retrospectives of old horror and science fiction films. That's why CINEMAGIC is so refreshing; the material is unique and new. Amateurs and semi-professionals are really into some fascinating techniques, and I'd much rather read about *them* than about professional films.

EDITORS' NOTE: The only way we'll get into pro fantasy films is if we can get "how-to-do-it" types of articles from people directly involved in the making of such films.

Digby Rumsey
32 Millington House
Church Street
Stoke Newington, London,
N 16, England

I am looking for an American distributor to tie up with so that my film, *Nature And Time*, a 35mm color short, can cross the great water. The film is a fantasy film with nature and time personified, and should have a lot of appeal to the people in your country.

Interested parties please contact me at the address given above.

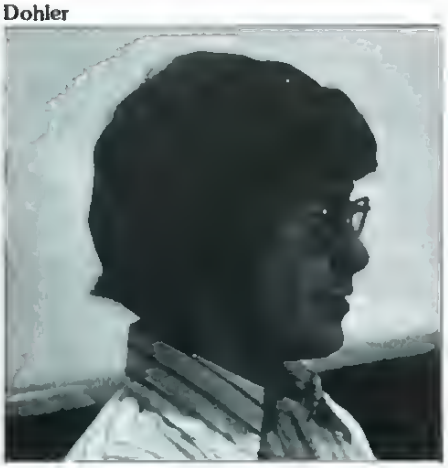
CORRECTION NOTICE

In our fourth issue preview of *this* issue, we stated that the amateur *Star Trek* play, *One Cube, Or Two?*, would be featured herein. Since that time we have assembled a full issue's worth of *ST* plays, films, and film effects that will be presented in our next issue, which will be published in April.

EFFECTS

Editorial

Dohler



Estren

When we first began CINEMAGIC in 1972, there seemed to be a pretty large following for our sort of material. Then, when we went into a limbo period (all of 1974) we said to ourselves, "Gee, maybe the fantasy and film fans aren't as strong as we had anticipated." On a gamble, we revived the magazine early last year, and proclaimed that we would not accept subscriptions, and that we would publish on an irregular basis. Ah, yes; words to live by, or to stick thy foot in thy mouth by. The fact is, we *are* now accepting subscriptions, and we *will* be publishing on a quarterly basis from now on.

The change has come about because the demand has now become stronger than ever for a publication like CINEMAGIC. We've heard talk that public taste in professional motion pictures runs in cycles, and that we are now back into a science fiction/fantasy era. Perhaps so—look at the special effects blockbusters of the past couple of years: *The Exorcist, Towering Inferna, Earthquake, Jaws,* to name a few. Oh sure, there have been plenty of other sf and fantasy films in that same period, but we're talking about those few which have gone over like gangbusters with the entire movie-going public, and not just the usual group of fantasy genre fans. It's the masses who generally determine what sort of film fare we can expect out of Hollywood for the next few years, and it does seem as though pro filmmaking is plunging headfirst into a special effects-oriented era. Currently in production in the "big" town are such extravaganzas as *The Star Wars* and *Lagan's Run.* Both have multi-million dollar budgets. Then there's an alleged 20 million dollar version of *Superman* in the works, as well as the rumored theatrical version of *Star Trek.* And speaking of rumors, what about the *King Kang* fiasco? The last juice through the grapevine that we heard has RKO doing a remake of *Kang,* with make-up artist Rick Baker creating a Kong suit *and* wearing it! If that's not enough, a different grapevine says that Universal will also remake *King Kong* under the title, *The Legend Of Kang,* with Jim Danforth doing stop-motion puppet work. Hold on, though—there's yet another story claiming that Danforth is *out* and Harryhausen is *in* for the Universal version. Oh well...

The point is, special effects films are definitely *in,* and amateurs into this field seen to be rapidly multiplying on a daily basis. As far as we're concerned, that's terrific! Our files are bulging with all sorts of material for future issues, and we certainly want to share it with the biggest audience possible. That audience is growing at a nice clip, and *that* is why we have decided to take subscriptions and publish on a quarterly basis. It's the only way that we'll be able to get much timely news and information into print, as well as the many intriguing features and articles on films, filmmakers, and filming techniques. Subsequently, we are going to create a new design for CINEMAGIC, starting with various specialized departments. To begin, we have launched the new *Capsule Prafiles* in this issue. These are one-page profiles on various filmmakers who don't have the time or resources available to create full-scale articles. Keep it in mind; we'll be needing plenty of *Capsule Prafiles* in future issues, and it might be the best way for you to share your experiences and talents with other filmmakers.

Starting with issue #6, we will inaugurate two more new departments: *Canventian Repart,* which will cover upcoming conventions, as well as reporting on ones that have occurred; and *Reader Exchange,* a page where our readers can put in a personal plug (for free, of course), whether it be to get in touch with other filmmakers, or offering to help do special effects for others, or whatever— as long as no money is involved. So, if you have an item you think would be appropriate for either of these new departments, send it to us at the usual address.

Our next issue is devoted to amateur filmmakers and play producers who have created their own versions of *Star Trek.* Lots of fascinating reading and photos will tell you how to do your own *Star Trek*-type production. See you then...

PHANTOM ISLAND

Article & Photos by Doug Beswick

Since producing *Phantom Islond* I have worked professionally as a stop-motion animator for Clokey Productions, Cascade Pictures, and various other studios. I have also worked on a few feature films from my own shop. Having gained this professional background, I find it difficult to write about *Phantom Island* without pointing out the numerous unprofessional techniques I employed throughout the production. But I'll try.

PLOT SYNOPSIS

A ship is tossed around a violent sea during a stormy night, and is finally wrecked on a remote island. Two survivors begin to explore the island when they run into an impish genie, who befriends the two sailors. Later, the three are attacked by a giant cyclops. As they run into a cave for safety, a prehistoric Pteranodon attacks and kills the cyclops. When the three come out of

ILLUSTRATION BY LARRY SCHLECHTER

the cave, still more trouble arrives: a weird, two-headed sea monster charges them. Using a magical spell, the genie conjures up a giant spider-scorpion creature, who does battle with the sea monster. The scorpion wins, and then metamorphoses back to its original tiny size. The genie's task completed, he disappears, and the sailors are finally rescued.

THE MAKING OF PHANTOM ISLAND

Viewing *Phontom Island*, it's easy to see that I was greatly inspired by Ray Harryhausen's *The Seventh Voyage Of Sinbod*, which to this day remains one of my favorite fantasy films. We even used (copied) many of the same elements as in *Seventh Voyage*: shipwrecked sailors, a genie, a cyclops, and various other monsters. We also used selections of Bernard Herrmann's music for our cyclops sequence!

The film was made during the summer of 1964. It was my third film in which I actually told a story, and my first attempt at using stop-motion animation intercut with live action. The production, from writing to the first screening, took about three months to produce. The actual shooting of the live action took four weekends— about six days in all. The costumes, props, animation, editing, and the addition of a music track consumed the remainder of the summer.

Phantom Island was written by Martin Margulies, who also doubled as production assistant, grip, etc. Everyone in the cast and crew helped in technical matters.

We filmed most of the production at Vasquez Rocks, an area frequently used by both amateur and professional filmmakers. You will probably recognize the area, which has been used as a location for many westerns.

The entire production, except for a few night scenes of the shipwreck, was filmed on Kodachrome II. The camera was a regular 8mm Beaulieu with an Angenieux zoom lens. Every shot was well rehearsed prior to filming to avoid retakes and to keep the film costs down to a minimum. I guess we averaged about 75% usable footage. I wouldn't even think of trying to make a film with a shooting ratio like that today. I would like to be able to shoot at a ratio of 6:1 or better if the budget will allow. I'd estimate that about a little over half of our total $50.00 budget was for film and processing.

Once the live action was completed I began building the models which were to be used in the film. There were four creatures in all: a cyclops, a two-headed sea monster, a scorpion-spider beast and an unforgivably bad Pteranodon. The cyclops and sea monster were the first models I built. They were constructed over a wire armature using liquid latex and tissue to build up the shape of the characters. This technique turned out to be a disaster for me. Because of the many layers of rubber and tissue the finished model was almost rigid and the wire inside wouldn't hold the character in position. With the deadline of the Kodak Teenage Movie Contest nearing, there just wasn't time to rebuild the models. (Note: we did enter the contest, with disappointing results.) So I made a few cuts around the joints of the cyclops, which helped eliminate the problem to some extent, and went ahead and used it for the finished film. I regretted this later, as it just never could be animated properly. As for the sea monster, the body was impossible to work with, so I salvaged the heads and necks and placed them on a very crude spine-covered body (made with toothpicks).

I tried a different technique on the remaining models. For the scorpion-spider and the Pterandon I glued sheet poly-foam in blocks around the wire armature. After the glue had set thoroughly I shaped each model with a pair of scissors and covered it with liquid latex. I didn't find out about foam latex and the casting of models in molds until I began working for Clokey Productions about a year later. I won't discuss these more advanced techniques, since they don't apply to the making of *Phontom Island*.

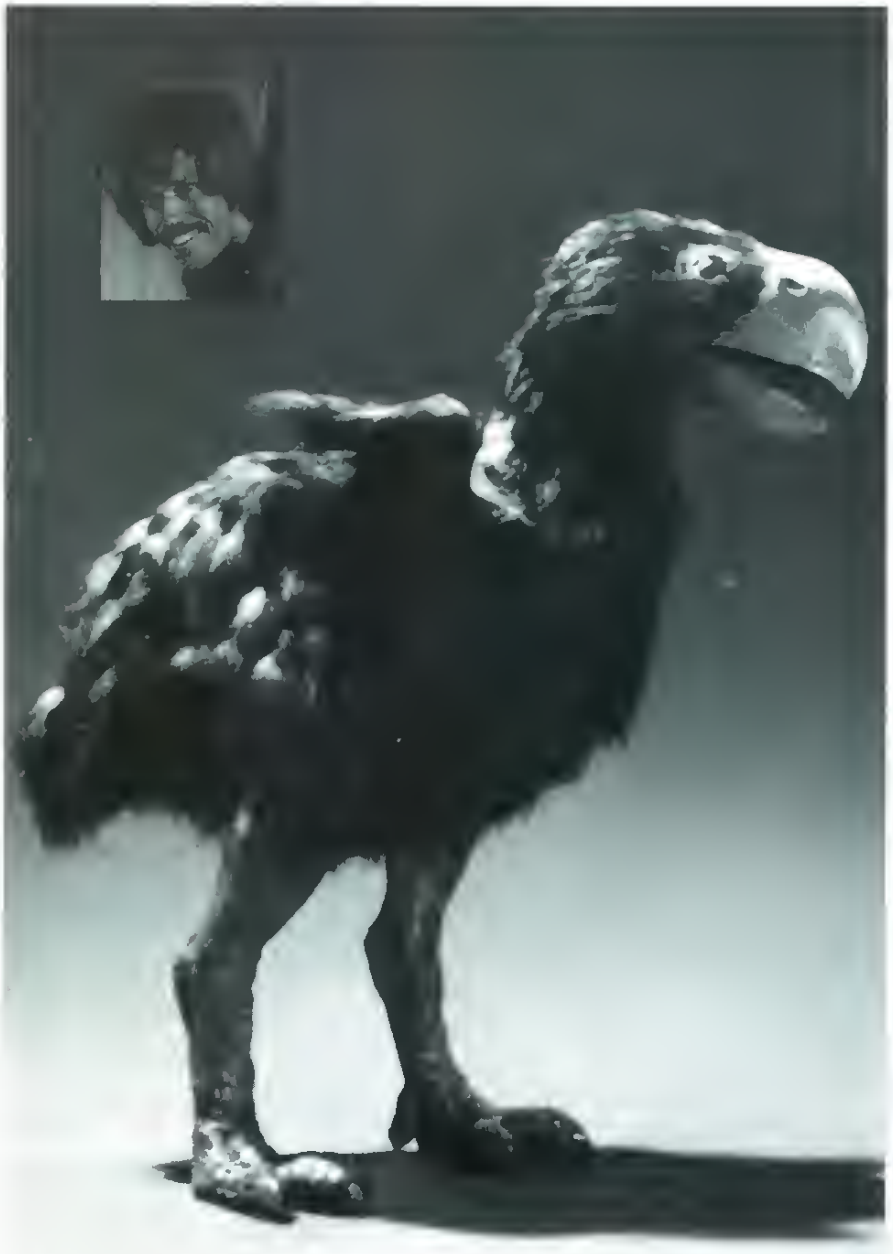
The miniature sets were constructed on a four-by-eight-foot table in my family garage. I used real rocks and boulders mixed with dirt and plaster to form the cliff,. which was made to match the settings we used in filming the live action. This is not a very practical

(Please turn page)

ABOVE: The *Phontom Island* creatures. At top is the spider-scorpion. Next, the cyclops, which was an imitation of Harryhausen's *Seventh Voyage* cyclops. The two headed sea beast has a spine-covered (toothpicks) body. At bottom, the Pteranodon attacks the cyclops.

approach, and the weight almost caused the table to collapse during filming; but the finished product photographed surprisingly well.

The animation I did for the film was crude, to say the least. I shot practically all the animation on twos (two frames of each move), partly because of the difficulty of making small movements of the puppets, and also because I didn't really consider the improved quality of shooting on ones. At the time I was doing the animation for *Phantom Island* I knew absolutely nothing about the use of a surface gauge to help keep the puppet steady when walking a character. Consequently, the animation is extremely jerky in some of the scenes, especially when the cyclops is involved. I look back at the mistakes I made on the film and wonder how I could be so careless! But I learned a lot making *Phantom Island*, and I consider it one of the major steps which helped me find work with professional animation studios.



Doug Beswick (insert) came a long way from *Phantom Island* when he constructed this superb prehistoric bird (a Diatryma) model in 1968. He plans to use the model in a future film.

EDITORS' NOTE: Here is a chronological listing of Doug Beswick's various professional achievements since doing *Phantom Island*.

1966-70 CLOKEY PRODUCTIONS
Animator: (three-dimensional models): *Davey And Goliath* and *The Adventures Of Gumby*.

1970 CASCADE PICTURES
Miniature maker: various TV commercials.

1970 WAH CHANG
Animated three-dimensional dinosaur models: *Dinosaurs, The Terrible Lizards* (an educational short).

1971 HARRIS ENTERPRISES
Animated special inserts: *Son Of The Blob*.

1971 FILMERS GUILD, INC.
Assisted make-up artist Rick Baker with the construction of the "Octaman" (monster suit).

1971 ARISTA PRODUCTIONS
Designed and photographed special visual effects: *The Cremators*.

1973 CUMULUS GROUP
Miniature maker: test for proposed feature.

1973 APJAC INTERNATIONAL
Miniature maker: test for proposed TV series.

1974 WEXLER FILMS
Animated and photographed still photographs: *Expo '74* television commercial.

1974 SID & MARTY KROFFT PRODUCTIONS
Made armatures for various dinosaur animation models: *Land Of The Lost* TV series.

1974 WAH CHANG
Animator: *The Alphabet* (educational short).

1975 CLOKEY PRODUCTIONS
Animator: "To The Rescue" (a *Davey And Goliath* summer special for TV).

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PRESS NOTICES

Have a horror, science fiction, or fantasy film currently in production? Send the details about it (title, names of actors, effects, type of film, etc.) and, if available, a publicity photo 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.

Square Reel Film Productions of Chicago, Illinois is currently producing *Popeye's Seventh Voyage*, a Cinemascope, 3-D film being shot in 35mm. (A short version of the film may later be released in super 8.) Producer Kendall Square is working on a process called "Livamation," which is the combining of cartoon and/or model animation with live actors and backgrounds. Completion of the film is slated for summer of 1976.

Cyclops Productions, based in Piedmont, California, is lensing *Menace On The Moon*. The story concerns Selenus, the dying survivor of an elder race of moon beings, and his efforts to try and stop the exploitation of his home by the countries of earth. To repel the invasion, Selenus has at his disposal two flying discs and a huge underground complex, complete with a subway train. Selenus is an animated model. The sets are being made from Hydrocal, with various scratch-built structures and an H.O. scale train being modified. Shawn Bobbitt and Chris Budge are producing.

John Fasano's *Fasanimation Productions* is in the midst of filming a new fantasy film, the title of which will be either *Young Sinbad* or *The 8th Voyage Of Sinbad*. The super 8 production will feature a thirty-inch beetle man and a giant lobster, both made of rubber and steel. The plot follows Sinbad in his search for the city of Hausen, which he finds on the Isle of Harry...It is estimated that over $200.00 will be spent on the film, with part of that money going to Frank Dietz and Jonathan Guildroy for doing glass painting effects. *Fasanimation Productions* is located in Port Washington, New York.

Centaur Films of Otisville, Michigan, has recently completed the live-action photography for their new film, *The Wages Of Sin*. The visual effects, being handled by Ted Rae, are expected to take about two or three months to complete, and include the construction of a "15-S" jointed armature (based on the instructions in CINEMAGIC #4) for a foam latex Harpy-Demon. The cast includes Ron Carson as Satan, and a cameo appearance by Rod Jakubik.

Bill George (see CINEMAGIC #1) has assembled local Baltimore talent for *The Fat Boy* being shot in 16mm, with optical sound. The production crew includes Charlie Roggero (who participated in the filming of John Waters' *Female Trouble*), Nancy Day, and Martin Falck. Tony Malanowski portrays the title character, with support by The Great Dantini as a magician who tries to deprive the fat boy of a few extra pounds—via a chemical formula which causes skin to literally peel off. Patty Weber provides love interest in the film. Ed Litzinger does the usual fine job with expert make-up, this time requiring subtlety in the symbolic and physical deterioration of Malanowski. An Eclair and a Beaulieu were used for sound sequences, and a Bolex was used for cut-aways and special effects. Bill has also employed the aid of Neil Curtain, of Towson State College. *The Fat Boy* is due to be completed this winter.

B. Hynd Productions of North Madison, Ohio, is filming *Waterless World*, a fantasy film concerning a plot to evaporate all of the water from the earth. Many stop-motion models will be used, including a cyclops-servant and a skeleton-android. Dave Moore is producing, in regular 8 color.

Dave Berry's *D.B. Productions* of Venice, California, is presently at work on *Attack Of The Giant Pigeons*. The twenty-five minute, color/sound production will have many special effects: split-screen mattes, travelling mattes (hand drawn), abstract color effects, and a few short stop-motion sequences. Adam Beckett, a well known west coast animator, will be doing abstract animation sequences for the film. Eric Boles stars in the film, which is scheduled for completion in May of 1976.

Tony Malanowski (in sweatshirt), Charlie Roggero, and Bill George (all of Baltimore, Maryland) get ready for a scene in Bill's newest film, *The Fat Boy*.

The talented Glenn Sherrard, of Louisville, Kentucky, as he will appear in a new feature length film, *The Crimson Testoment*, which is being made for theatrical release by Glenn's *666 Productions*.

The Land Where Time Stood Still is being filmed in super 8 black and white by Tom Woodruff, Jr., of Montoursville, Pennsylvania. The film concerns a party of people whose plane has been grounded on a barren mountain top, where a gang of dinosaurs have found a way to survive. The cast includes Mike Hutchison, Bob Craig, and Dave Steinbacher.

Mark Troy and his *Paranoid Productions*, of Wilmington, Delaware, are filming *Trash Gordon On The Unconquerable Planet*. The film requires three animation models: a cyclops, a tyrannosaurus, and a plesiosaur. The models are being made of cotton and latex over wire skeletons. Such effects as matte shots and rear-projection are being used in the super 8 production.

The Kinetic Image Film Group of Dunedin, Florida, is preparing to film a science fiction movie (as yet untitled) about a man who warns an unsympathetic foreign government about its chemical warfare experiments. The experiments are having an unusual side effect on insects. The screenplay is being written by John Fulton, with James Caldwell directing. The story calls for some special effects and a few animated creatures. Caldwell is also planning a satire based on Universal's Wolfman.

Peter Michael Craigie and his *Moon Studios*, of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, are putting the finishing touches on several 16mm films of a surrealist/fantasy nature: *New Face Pills* is the whimsical story of a bored housewife who seeks to alter her appearance with the aid of a mysterious little pill. The film will be shot in black and white, and will employ animation techniques. *Cosmic Smile* will be done almost entirely with special effects techniques. The film is about the movement of the universe and man's insignificance in comparison to it. To be shot in color. *The World Of Robots*, another color film from *Moon Studios*, is an animated allegory about a society of machines and their attempts to create a "perfect being."

Capech Films of Orlando, Florida is preparing scripts and pre-production sketches for *Dracula Goes To College*, a feature-length film with a very complex plot. Basically, it involves Dracula using a college campus as a stomping ground for bloodsucking and other nasty pastimes. The cast includes Paul Erickson, Bill Chessman, Jamie (yeah!) Lovelace, Vici Anderson, Temple Pearson, and Scott Campbell. The super 8 color/sound production is scheduled for a June, 1976 completion date.

Bobby Weinstein of Montreal, Canada, is currently at work on *I'm A Stranger Here*. The plot concerns a strange, mystical force that gives life to a statue. The statue breaks into a house and kidnaps a woman, and the townspeople give pursuit—with a twist ending.

David Budda and his *O.C.E. Films* of Drifton, Pennsylvania, are currently into the final stages of their second *Budda Boys Cowy Express and One Socorsco*, a comedy with the zaniness of *Monty Python's Flying Circus*. The first *Cowy Express* (a half-hour super 8 color/sound feature) was made in the spring of 1975. *O.C.E. Films* is also in the final stages of recording a soundtrack for *A Tribute To Star Trek: A Trekker's Dream*, a film about a boy who daydreams that he and his friends save the Enterprise and her crew from a mad computer that has already destroyed a Klingon war vessel.

Roc is being filmed by Rob Jewell of Sterling, Virginia. The film is about a man who journeys to the castle of an evil sorcerer who has plagued the land of "Blu." Along the way, the man runs into all sorts of hazards, including a man-eating cyclops. *Roc* is being shot in super 8 black and white, and includes such effects as miniature sets, background paintings, and model animation.

Daughter of hangtooth: Charlotte Merenda, of Baltimore, Maryland, as she looked last Halloween. This is a foam rubber appliance (real color: green) created with the help of CM people Don Dohler and Larry Schlechter.

Photo by - John Davis

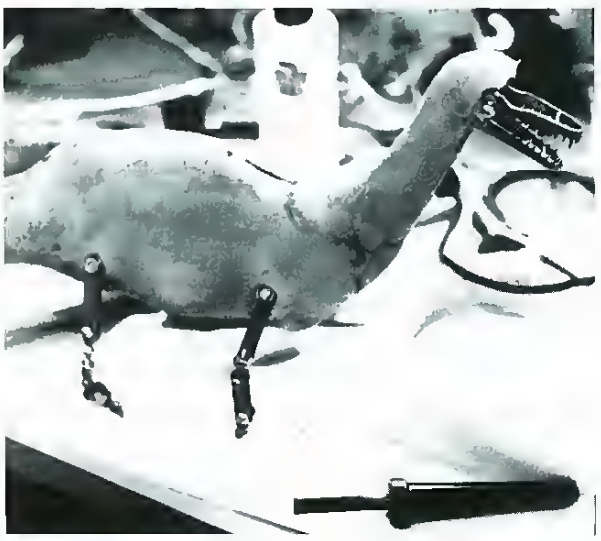
John Friedel and his *JCJ Film Productions* are currently at work on *The Magical Ring*, a half hour super 8 color/sound animation feature. The story is about an undersized horse named Pedro who wanders into a strange forest that is ruled by a giant ape. The ape terrorizes and kills anyone entering his domain, so the animals of the forest ask Pedro to help them get rid of the ape. Pedro accepts, but must go to the harpy's cave on top of a mountain to find the secret of defeating the ape. There are three main characters in the film: the horse, the ape, and the harpy. The horse and harpy have been constructed of wire armatures and foam latex. The ape has a fully machined ball and socket armature with a foam latex body. Concetta Friedel and Jennie Friedel are assisting in camerawork, set construction, and design. *The Magical Ring* was begun in September of 1974 and is slated for completion in late spring of 1976. *JCJ Films* is located in East Meadow, New York.

Kevin Danzey of Coraopolis, Pennsylvania recently completed his thirteenth film, *Low Tide*. The story is about an alien who is stealing the earth's oceans. Many special effects are included in the super 8 color/sound production.

Chris Gummer and Richard Gelwitz of Baltimore, Maryland are heavily into production on an elaborate sf/fantasy film being shot in super 8 color. The plot concerns the rescue of an earth space pilot who has crashed on a distant planet. The rescue team is confronted by an assortment of alien entities, including some weird, female vampires. Effects in the film (which is not titled yet) include a full-scale spaceship interior, a miniature moonbase set, and several animated effects. The cast includes the two producers, plus Tom Kapp, Larry Schlechter, and Clyde Brown; with Lee Allen and Joyce Ditmar as the two female vampires.

The Brothers Three film group of Trenton, Michigan is near completion of its 87th film, entitled *The Music Box*. The film is a dramatical scenario, with some surrealistic touches. Rob and John Preston star in the fantasy production, with Phil Preston handling the direction and cinematography. *The Music Box* is being shot in Single-8, sound, with a running time of ten minutes.

Gary Jacobson of Arizona is currently constructing the model below out of foam latex and ball/socket joints.



BSFS ANNOUNCES BALTICON 10 ATTRACTION

The Baltimore Science Fiction Society (BSFS) has put together a fantastic program of films for this year's *Balticon 10* convention (see *Press Notices*, CINEMAGIC 4 for details on last year's *Balticon*). Although it's still early, and many of the guests and attractions are not yet confirmed, Chairperson Charlie Ellis and the *Balticon 10* committee (including the CINEMAGIC gang) have already lined up the following goodies:

THE PRO FILMS – *A '50' SF FILM FEST*

INVADERS FROM MARS (1953) The last film William Cameron Menzies *(Things To Come)* directed, originally in 3-D.

IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE (1953) Jack Arnold's first well-known sf film, based on Ray Bradbury's story. Also originally in 3-D.

WAR OF THE WORLDS (1953) Gene Barry versus the Martians and their war machines. Based, of course, on H. G. Wells novel. Directed by Byron Haskin.

THEM! (1954) One of the first creature films—James Whitmore and James Arness against the giant ants, directed by Gordon Douglas.

THIS ISLAND EARTH (1955) With Jeff Morrow and Rex Reason. Good special effects and mood. Directed by Joseph Newman.

FORBIDDEN PLANET (1956) One of the best sf films ever made; puts Kubrick and 2001 to shame, when you consider the difference in time and technology between the two films. Good cast, including Leslie Nielson, Walter Pidgeon, and Marvin Miller as the voice of Robby (the robot).

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1956) A grade Z title for a terrifying, top-notch classic. Directed by Don Siegel.

THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN (1957) Jack Arnold's best film; Richard Matheson wrote the screenplay based on his novel.

KRONOS (1957) A mechanical monster. Directed by Kurt Neumann; starring Jeff Morrow.

THE BLOB (1958) Steve McQueen's first film. Theme song by Bert Bacharach and Hal David. It creeps, and leaps, and glides and slides ....

THE FLY (1958) Stars Al Hedison (later David Hedison of VOYAGE TO THE BOTTOM OF THE SEA). Bugs and folks all mixed up together. Another Kurt Neumann film.

I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE (1958) You can laugh at the title, but the film is superbly directed and acted, with excellent make up and special effects. Directed by Gene Fowler, Jr.

THE 16MM FILMS – *INDEPENDENT*

Although many more will be added to this short list, here are some independently produced 16mm films on tap for *Balticon 10*:

DINOSAURS, THE TERRIBLE LIZARDS (1970) Produced as an educational short by Wah Chang, who built the stop-motion models. Animation by Doug Beswick (featured in this issue of CINEMAGIC).

CLOSED MONDAYS (1974) Academy Award-winning clay animation short. Created by Will Vinton and Bob Gardiner.

SOUP (1973) Funny and fascinating model animation film about cans of noodle soup that devour people. Created by David V. Gregory.

COMICBOOK - A mind-blower, produced by Dick Taylor. A thirty-minute spectacle combining cartoon animation (done by Steve Snyder) with live action, as an anti-comic book college student is chased by the very super heroes he detests.

ROD FLASH CONQUERS INFINITY! (1973) A well-directed, fast-paced action film featuring such effects as streak photography, animation combined with frontal projection, and miniature sets. Produced by Ben Burtt, Jr. and Richard Anderson. (This film was featured in CINEMAGIC #4.)

THE DEMON LOVER (1976) This is a full-length film, produced by two "fans:" Donald Jackson and Jerry Younkins, of Adrian, Michigan. Filming and special effects were handled by Dennis and Robert Skotak. As of this writing, DEMON LOVER is 95% completed, and should be released early this year. Don Jackson has promised us a print of the film for *Balticon*, and possibly he, Younkins, or Bob Skotak will come to the convention to discuss various aspects of the production.

16MM FANTASY FILM CONTEST

In addition to these independently produced 16mm films, *Balticon 10* is eager to announce an open 16mm fantasy/sf film contest this year. This contest is in conjunction with WDCA, Channel 20 in Washington, D.C., who will provide the prize money for the winners. At this point, we know there will be a $100.00 cash prize to the first place film, plus several other cash prizes. The good part, though, is that the winning films (with permission of the filmmakers) will be shown in *prime time* as a "special" on Channel 20 in April. This is a golden opportunity for 16mm filmmakers to get public exposure, as well as prize money. Channel 20 has a strong signal, and is easily viewed in many major cities in Virginia and Maryland (including Baltimore), as well as Washington, D.C. The only requirement is that films are of a fantasy or science fiction nature (including horror and animation) and have a projection speed of 24 FPS. Sound may be optical or magnetic. The entry fee is only $1.00, which will be used for return postage and insurance. For further details and entry forms, write:

Mr. Charlie Ellis
4221 White Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21206

THE AMATEUR FILM CONTEST

Again there will be a *Balticon* amateur fantasy/sf film contest. The films may be Regular 8 or Super 8, sound or silent. Sound may be on magnetic stripe or cassette (no open reel, please). Running time is restricted to twenty minutes or less. There is no limit to how many films an individual enters, but films must be sent in regular fibre mailers, or an extra Jiffey bag enclosed for the return of films. Entry fee is only $1.00, for return postage and insurance. All films must be entered by March 25, 1976. Films will be pre-judged, and the top ten will be held for public showing at *Balticon* (to audiences of about 300). The top ten will be judged by Bruce Dods, Steve Polwort, and Britt McDonough during the convention. Cash prizes: $40.00 first place, $20.00 second place, $15.00 third place, plus several "special award" certificates. (Note: films entered last year are not eligible for this year.) Write for entry forms:

Don Dohler
12 Moray Court
Baltimore, Maryland 21236

THE GUESTS

There are several interesting guests lined up for *Balticon 10*. The guest of honor is Isaac Asimov. Other notable science fiction authors attending include: L. Sprague de Camp and his wife, Catherine Crook de Camp, Leslie F. Stone (writer for the old pulps of the 20's and 30's), Samuel R. Delany (Hugo and Nebula winner), and Ted White (editor of *Amazing Stories* and *Fantastic*). As if these folks weren't enough, you can also meet and chat with such people as Bruce Dods (*Grog* and *Abduction Of Grog*), Steve Polwort (*Gothic Films*), make-up artist Ed Litzinger, exciting newcomer Larry Schlechter (animator and make-up artist), Britt McDonough, George Stover, and many others. These filmmakers and artists will present special effects workshops and will have many props, models, and make-up pieces on hand for your inspection.

No doubt about it! *Balticon 10* will be *the* major film, fantasy, and science fiction event of the year on the east coast. And the good part is that *Balticon* won't rip off anybody—you get to see and enjoy everything mentioned here (plus more) for only $4.00 in advance or $6.00 at the door. Join up now! Mail your check (payable to *Balticon*) to:

Norman Schwarz
7901 Oakwood Rd.
Glen Burnie, Maryland 21061

This creature (an insect from Britt McDonough's production, *Splat!*) is just one of the many animation models you'll be able to inspect at this year's *Balticon* convention.

SUMMARY: 1975 AMATEUR-8 CONTEST

The fourth annual *Amateur-8 Contest* proved to be as successful as previous years, with 47 entries from around the country. Ten films shared the winning spot, with two additional films receiving honorable mention awards. Chairman Phil Preston provides the following analysis of the ten winners:

Dream Sequence (Rocky Schenck, Alhambra, California): Effective use of black and white film. Many weird, unusual camera angles made this film appear eerie. Very fast cutting used. Many of the shots were only a few frames long. Abundance of flashbacks. Lighting was used to effectively focus viewer's attention on main subject.

I Am Curious (Clay) (Tom & Tina Coffey, Birmingham, Michigan): Very smooth animation of clay creatures. Backgrounds were neutral, and viewer's attention stayed focused on subjects. Many effective close-ups (which are often lacking in amateur animation films).

Masque (Keith Bowsza, Memphis, Tennessee): Many extreme camera angles helped create a surrealistic mood connected with an apparent blind man looking for self-identity in a graveyard. Lap dissolves and close-ups were used sparingly and effectively.

Brain Versus Claything (Don Dohler, Baltimore, Maryland): Great close-ups in this animation film helped the viewer identify with the two main characters. Very smooth animation with consistent lighting throughout. Many stark camera angles used for effect.

Meet Me On The Moon (Rose Dabbs, Bronx, New York): Extreme close-ups and an eye for detail helped audience interest. This look at the New York World's Fair was done with a "tongue-in-cheek" standpoint and made a dry subject very interesting. No zooms or pans used. Many people were captured candidly.

Blade, The Man From A.C.E. (Ted Rae and Rod Jakubik, Millington, Michigan): This "spy thriller" used all types of camera techniques: fast zooms, extreme close-ups, lap dissolves, weird camera angles, film-scratching, and so on. What made the film work, though, was the fast pace maintained by brisk editing.

Alive Or Dead (Dan Ordal, Sioux Falls, South Dakota). Terrific special effects in regard to such things as gunshot wounds in this "western." Good use of close-ups, particularly on actors' faces. Slow-motion filming in a final showdown sequence was very effective. Extreme wide-angle shots of a posse silhouetted against the sky was a nice touch.

Harbor (Joe Boyd, Bellingham, Washington): This beautiful, haunting look at a quiet harbor was aided by close-ups on small details. Change-of-focus shots were quite effective. None of the usual trappings of quick cuts, weird camera angles, or fast zooms.

24/20 (Carl Christensen, Los Lunas, New Mexico): A tremendous amount of work here, as the filmmaker created countless "grids" with strings. Many differently colored cels were used and created a meaningful look to the film.

Looney Letters (Phil Guterman, Elmont, New York): Flawless exposure, focus, and framing put this film over. Many letters and sayings were shown—in a humorous way—with animation techniques.

(Note: filmmakers interested in entering this year's Amateur-8 Contest should send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to: *Phil Preston, 2971 Longmeadow Drive, Trenton, Michigan 48183*

FINAL RESULTS—1975 PERRY HALL FILM FESTIVAL

The second annual Perry Hall Film Festival, sponsored by the CINEMAGIC staff, turned out to be as big a success as last year's version. Thirty-six films were entered and judged on September 26th and 27th. The results as follows:

Film and Filmmaker	*Award given*
The Cure The Brothers Three Trenton, Michigan	Trophy and certificate
I Am Curious (Clay) Tom and Tina Coffey Birmingham, Michigan	Certificate of Award
Return Of The Son Of Blob Brian Heckman Elberon, New Jersey	Certificate of Award
(Tie) *Drop Us A Line* Glen Orr, Nancy McCarthy Gresham, Oregon	Certificate of Award
The Derangist Victor Mignatti Jenkintown, Pennsylvania	Certificate of Award
Blood Money Peter Ikrath, Joe Weeks Elberon, New Jersey	Certificate of Award
The Spy The Brothers Three Trenton, Michigan	Honorable Mention
Peek In My Window John & Charlotte Merenda Baltimore, Maryland	Honorable Mention
Burning Buns Brett Bartholomew, Mitchell Allen Grants Pass, Oregon	Honorable Mention
Journey To Planet X Chris Gummer, Rich Geiwitz Baltimore, Maryland	Honorable Mention
(Tie) *Masque* Keith Bowsza Memphis, Tennessee	Honorable Mention
Tryout Keith Bowsza Memphis, Tennessee	Honorable Mention
Special Award: *The Monster From Below* Daniel Karlok Orange, Connecticut	Engraved brass and walnut plaque

Generally speaking, the films showed a lot of talent and technical expertise. Films like *I Am Curious (Clay)*, *Return Of The Son Of Blob*, and *Blood Money* excelled in special effects—particularly model animation. Good camera work and editing were apparent in *The Cure*, *Drop Us A Line* and *The Derangist*. Our six Honorable Mention films showed strong efforts, too: terrific pace and location filming in *The Spy*; a fine sense of mystery and suspense in *Peek In My Window*; an hysterical punchline ending in *Burning Buns*; a good feel for pace and action in *Journey To Planet X*; and great compositional work in *Masque* and *Tryout*.

THE ABDUCTION OF GROG

Article, Photos, and Illustrations by JOHN DODS

The Abduction Of Grog is a sequel to *Grog*, which was profiled in CINEMAGIC #2. At that time its creator, John Dods, was known to CM readers as "Bruce Dods," and has built up a fair following under the latter name. It's not a question of changing his name, actually. You see, "John" is his first name (and the name under which he'd like to be known professionally), while "Bruce" is his middle name—and somewhat of a nickname.

In the following article, John explains some of the story and techniques used so far in *The Abduction Of Grog*, which is currently in production. So although this is not a two part article we will, in a future issue, present an extension of this profile.

Meanwhile, John has recently turned his full time attention to the finishing of *Abduction* in his Metuchen, New Jersey home-studio. If things go well, John hopes to get distribution for the film, but if nothing else, the film will be available later this year for various conventions and film festivals.

This is about a film in the making. When my first production, *Grog*, was finally completed in 1972 (after more than three years of my trying to learn what I was doing) I thought that since I knew something about making an animated film, the next one would be easy. *The Abduction Of Grog* will soon be in its fourth year of production and if any of it has been easy, I've forgotten *what*. Every film has its own special problems and often the solutions take time.

The Abduction Of Grog—like its predecessor—will be a "puppet" film, with all movement being created through stop-motion animation. It will be a 16mm featurette in color, with original music. The film will tell the story of the Grogs—quiet forest creatures—and their sudden adventure one morning in the glen where they live. The plot is about the abduction of a baby Grog by an evil creature who comes out of the deep forest; and of the danger that follows and how a rescue occurs.

The film is being shot entirely in a studio situation using miniature sets and rear projections for scenic effects. The Grog models are made of foam latex rubber cast from molds, and jointed metal armatures.

The film is divided into two parts. The first part, now in production, is a build up to the appearance of the evil creature, which occurs in the second part of the film. This first part looks like it will be one of the best segments in the film, both artistically and technically, and seems to be a good example to illustrate the sort of production that *Abduction* will be.

Part One: The Build Up

It is morning. The camera moves leisurely forward through a bright but somewhat hazy forest. The sound of many birds chirping grows louder as the camera moves up into the tree tops. The camera stops by a large branch which holds a nest of eggs, and a bird whose singing rises above that of the others. The bird begins to move in time to a musical beat on the soundtrack and whistles a silly tune. The tune is repeatedly answered by a chorus of chirps coming from the unhatched eggs, which bounce up and down in the nest as they join in the song. The music continues for a while as the bird dances back and forth along the tree branch. Everything seems very pleasant.

Suddenly, the bird senses some-

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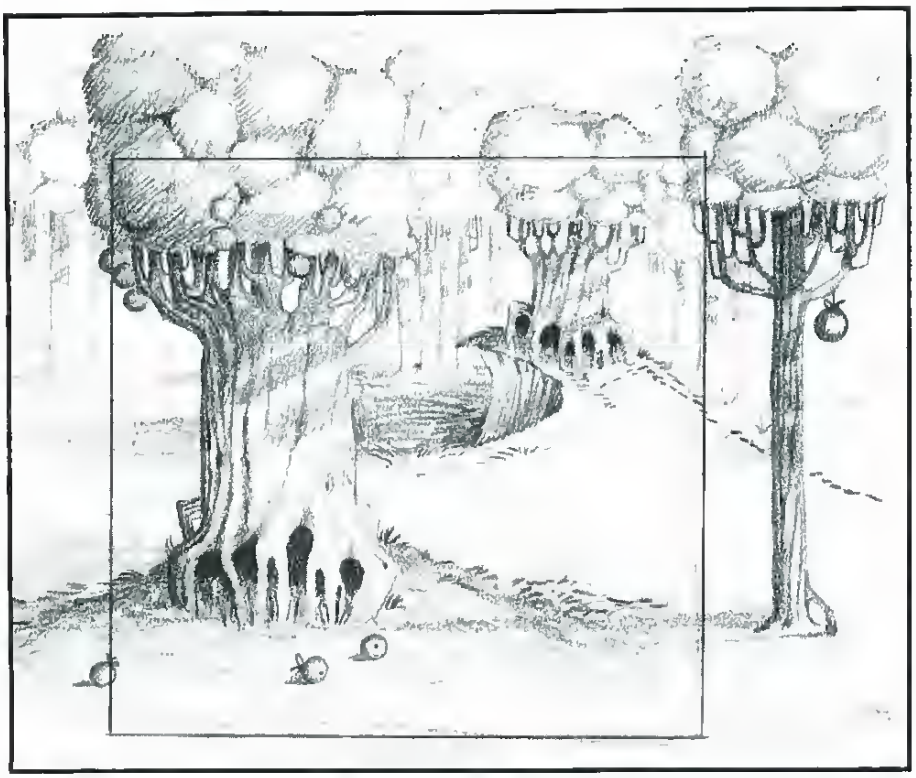

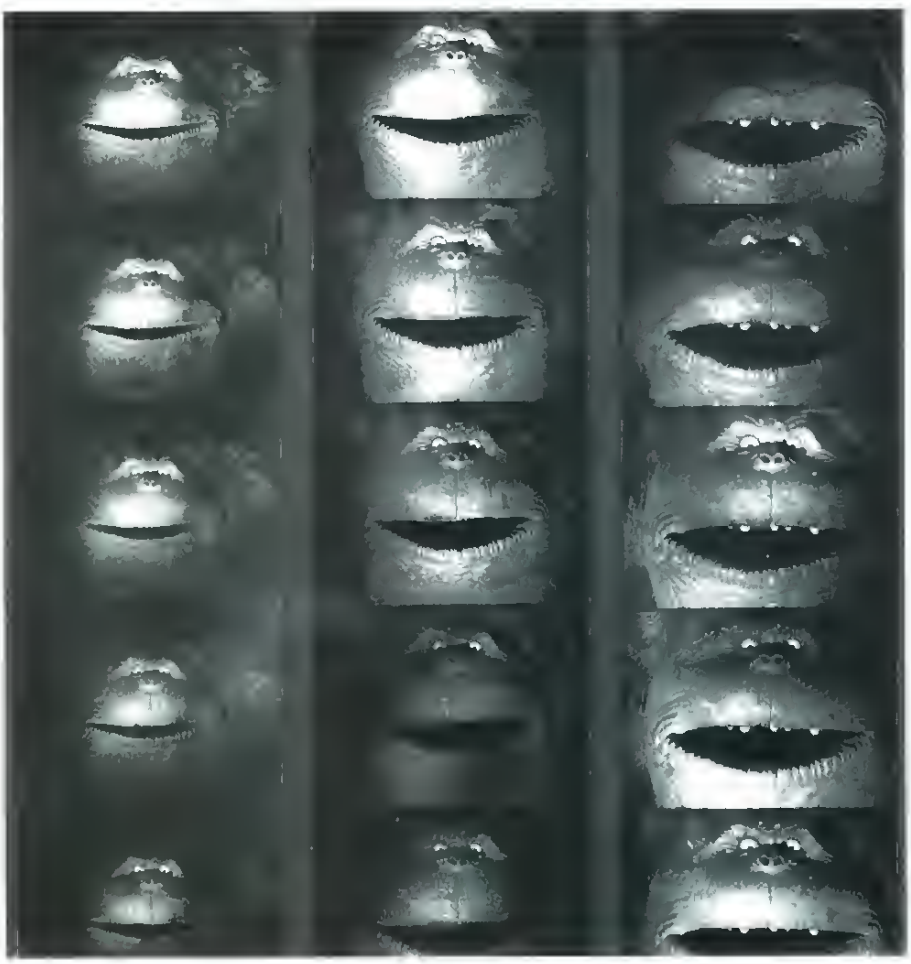

Top: A pre-production sketch of the main forest setting. Bottom: A series of frame blow-ups showing the animation sequence of the evil creature, as the camera tracks in, and firelight flickers off the creature's face.

thing and stops singing. The light dims and the chatter of the other birds in the background becomes loud and alarmed. The bird looks rapidly in all directions but sees nothing. It grows still darker. There is a rumble of thunder and then a slow, heavy breathing sound that steadily grows louder. The eggs in the nest chirp noisily. The bird cocks its head, listening for a moment, and then goes to the nest and covers the eggs with a wing. As the breathing increases, the bird looks around frantically, but it does not leave the nest. Suddenly, a huge spreading shadow blots out the remaining light. For a moment nothing can be seen. Out of the darkness: the screech of a bird. A flash of lightning reveals an empty branch; the bird and the nest are gone. The breathing sound fades, and the scene begins to lighten. At the base of the tree we see an empty nest, scattered feathers, and a passing shadow. High in the trees dozens of motionless birds, perched throughout the branches, are looking downwards. The forest is silent. *Fadeout.*

Part Two: The Evil Creature

Fadein. The camera tracks forward through a forest that is dim and grey. Along the forest floor there are animal bones and an occasional strange footprint. A cave becomes visible in the distance and echoing from within the cave is a steady low breathing. The sound grows louder as the camera approaches the entrance and passes through it. On the ground there are skulls and bones. A dark form sits silhouetted in front of a large fire. From inside of the fireplace the evil creature is revealed. Everything is red and yellow. Flames rise and fall to alternately obscure and reveal the monster—its features rippling from the heat distortion of the flames. The creature is chewing something. The flames cause rapid light changes across its face. A closer shot provides a better look. The eyes squint and open; sometimes they blink. The mouth finishes chewing and as the camera tracks slowly closer the creature's expression begins to change—at first inperceptably, and then obviously—it is smiling insidiously. The camera tracks away from the creature and down toward an object on the floor of the cave—a bird's feather. On a close-up of this, the scene fades out.

Building The Evil Creature

The creature model was cast in rubber seven different times before a satisfactory result was produced. Some of

the castings were necessary to correct technical flaws; others, because the design of the character had been changed and a new sculpture and plaster cast had been made. Numerous changes in the skeletal construction became necessary as experimental joints were rejected in favor of more conventional (and reliable) ball and socket units. Small changes and refinements will continue to be made right up to final shooting. For example, just recently I decided to remove the eyebrows from the creature. You can tell the older photographs of the model by the presence of a set of large eyebrows.

Due to the requirements of the storyboard—which called for many extreme close-ups of the creature's face—great care had to be taken when the face was sculpted to insure that it was detailed enough to withstand the camera's close scrutiny. Many of the finer lines cannot be seen *except* in tight shots. These were sculpted with a straight pin and smoothed with a "00" paint brush (an artist's brush available at art stores). In order not to obscure a single fine detail, no paint of any kind was used to color the creature's face. Instead, dark theatrical powder—tried as an experiment—turned out to be very satisfactory. After the model was powdered, the skin tone was powdered and then modulated by rubbing certain areas until the tone lightened to the desired shade. A very sparse application of spray varnish fixed the powder in place and replaced the matte finish of the powder with a more realistic "oily" luster.

The appearance of the model's eyes was given a lot of attention. When the eyes blink—by means of clay inserts—the effect is realistic, due largely to an exact color match between the clay lids and the surrounding rubber. Some

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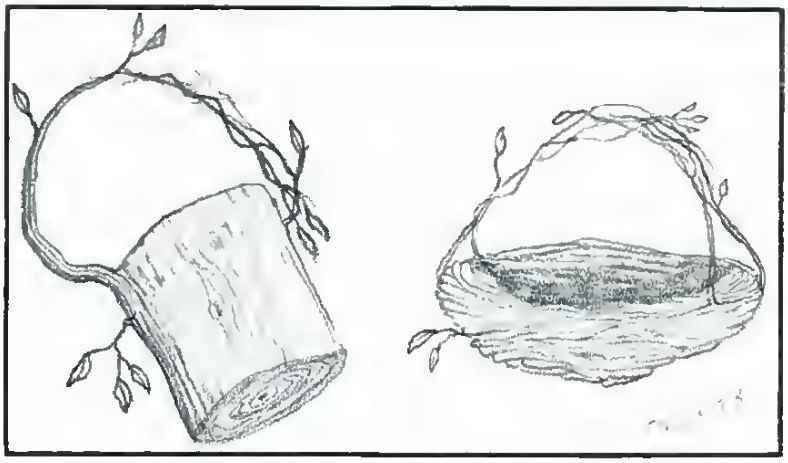

Right—top and middle: These two shots, taken years apart, show the drastic changes made in the appearance of the evil creature. Dods' original models for *Abduction* were too stylized, and didn't come off well in filmed tests. Right, bottom: Sketches of Grog's basket. The second (bird's nest) version was used in the film.

of the theatrical powder used on the model's face was kneaded into flesh-colored plastiline clay until the two mixed thoroughly. Ultraviolet lighting will be used to create a glow in the creature's eyes at several points in the film. For these shots a special set of eyeballs, painted with da-glow tempra, is inserted into the model's eye sockets. A UV bulb is attached to a rheostat in order to allow control over the intensity of the glow. (Another device—used in a different sequence, but achieving a similar result—is a series of eight eyeballs, ranging from white to black, with each set being slightly darker than the next. By changing the eyeballs after each frame exposure, various fluctuations of the eye tone are accomplished.)

The squinting of the eyes as well as other changes of the facial expression is controlled by a facial control unit. Though still in a crude form, this mechanism seems to overcome the unsatisfactory aspects inherent in other methods of facial control animation. It allows more subtlety than model replacement animation, and more control than the adjustment of bendable wires inside the model's rubber skin. With the control unit, a sewing needle attaches thin nylon lines to parts of the model's face. The lines are run under the mask, around the sides, and out the back, where they are fixed to a series of levers. When the levers are moved back, the lines pull the rubber into a new shape and the expression changes. When the levers are moved forward, the expression returns to normal. The ball and socket levers can be moved in minute increments, and will stay in any position. The expressions are infinitely variable through the addition of new nylon lines or the repositioning of old ones. For the scene in the cave, five nylon lines were run through the creature's anatomy; two lines controlled the squint of the eyes, one controlled the sniffing movements of the nose, and two controlled the mouth expressions

Above: This is the set-up used to manipulate the facial expressions on the evil creature (see our back cover for a demonstration).

The Creature's Cave

The design of the evil creature's cave took place over a period of years, but once the design was finally decided, it took only a few weeks to build. In the original design the cave is made up completely of rock formations and has a jagged, irregular roof. When a revised storyboard indicated that "Big Grog" would have to climb to the cave's roof, lose his balance, and roll down to the ground, it became necessary to prepare a revised roof design. A second design lost distinctiveness. The third and final version combines elements of the first two designs: it retains the interesting appearance of the rocks and easily accomodates the requirements of the plot.

The cave is constructed of clay on a cardboard substructure. First, the cave was sculpted out of cardboard using a knife and masking tape to create the desired shape and formations. Then refinements and details were added with water-base clay. Since water-base clay dries, it tends to crack. This cracking was sought, rather than prevented, because the cracks provided realistic details in the rocks.

Final changes will be made when the background (35mm color transparency to be projected from behind the set onto a large translucent screen) for the set has been selected. Trees and rocks will be added to the set in a way that increases the illusion that the projected background is really a contiuation of the miniature set.

Special Effects

The first view of the creature's face will appear to be shot through flames. Actually, the shot will be a double-exposure, with real flames added to previously shot footage of the creature. To get the flames, rags soaked in alcohol are ignited and photographed against a black background. Multiple exposures of the flames help compensate for the low light level of the relatively cool burning alcohol. The flickering firelight on the creature's face is created by means of flame-shaped

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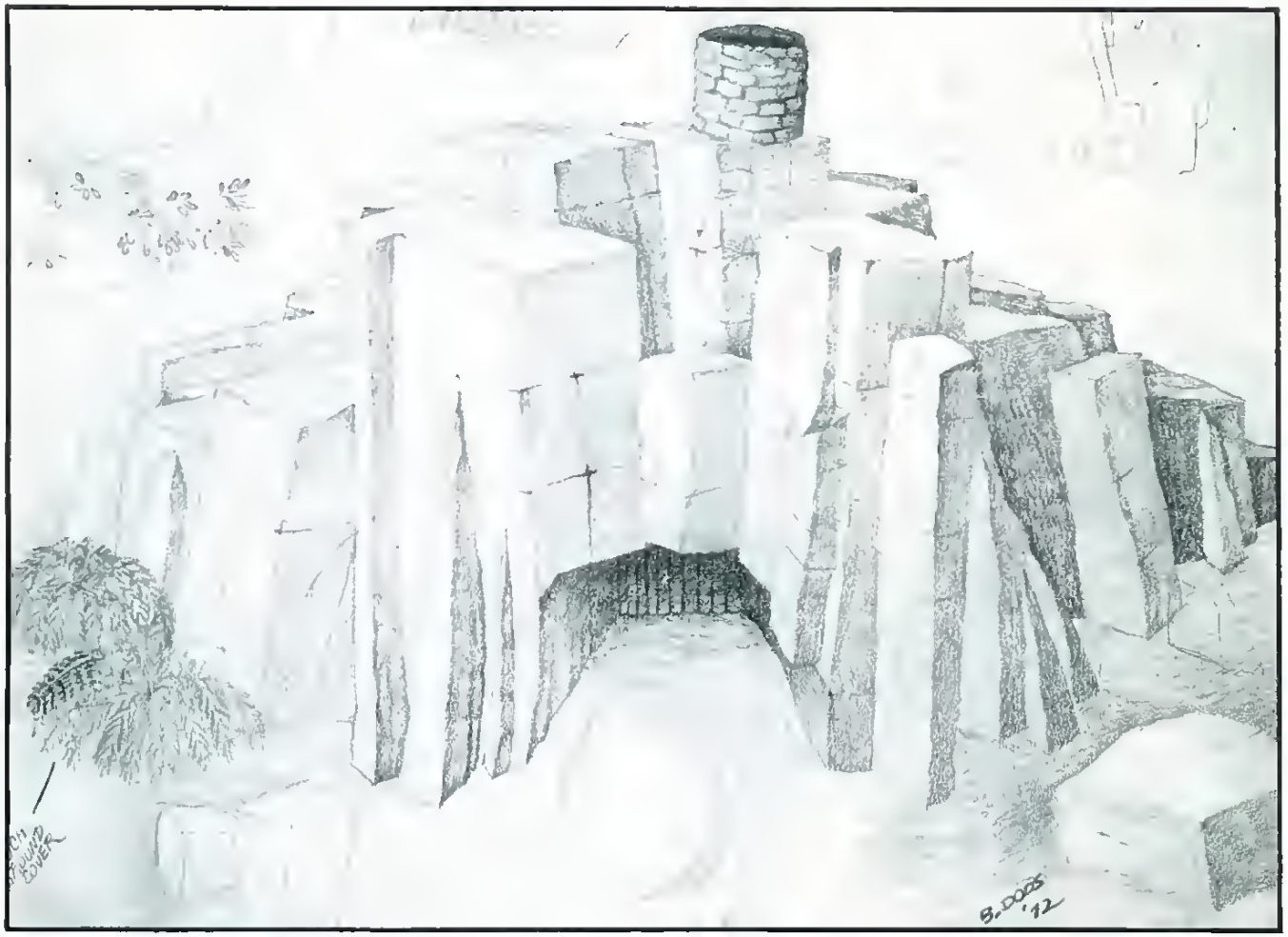


Top: A pre-production sketch of the creature's cave. Bottom: John Dods touches up a tree on the actual miniature of the cave that was created for the film.

holes cut out of a cardboard disc which spins rapidly in front of a studio light. Yet another disc will rotate a few inches in front of the camera lens to simulate the heat distortion of the flames. A piece of plexiglass was heated in an oven until it became soft enough to be bent into a mass of ripples, which causes an appropriate wavy effect in the filmed image.

When the creature is seen silhouetted against the fireplace, a rear projection will provide the flames. Since this must be animated, an old 16mm projector has been converted by disconnecting its motor. The projector's lamp is attached to a rheostat, and a manually operated crank is attached to its film advance gear, thus giving the machine still-projection capacities.

Completing *Abduction*

The future of the production looks good. I am now working on the project full time. Recent developments include the decision to structure the film in such a way that it could be expanded to feature-length, with the film's sales potential in mind.

Meanwhile I have storyboards to improve, sets to build, Grogs to animate, and—somewhere in the process—a film to make.

Right—top: An interesting view of Dods' tabletop set-up for *Abduction*. Note rear-projected forest in background. Bottom: How the various trees and plants were made for the film. 1. Very thin dowels painted brown, with plastic leaves glued on top. 2. A half-inch dowel with string wrapped around it to give bark texture, then painted with thick latex-base paint with latex rubber added. 3. Store bought artificial plants. The stems are twisted together to create bark texture. 4. Large wood dowel coated with plaster and carved (a long process!) and painted, then topped with many store bought plastic leaves. 5. Thin dowel with dried plant leaves (store bought) attached. 6. Clay rocks painted with latex-base paint. 7. Dried moss—store bought. 8. "Air ferns." Bought at store, then painted desired color with latex-base paint.

Dan Noga
Time Is A Circle

CAPSULE PROFILE

Dan Noga is a young East Detroit (Michigan) filmmaker primarily interested in science fiction, owing to Kubrick and *2001*. *Time Is A Circle* is his second production. His first, made for the East Detroit High School, was interfered with by a lot of school "politics," which convinced him to try producing a film on his own. He is currently prepanng a sequel to *Time* called *Aftermath*, which is being filmed in super 8 color.

Time Is A Circle concerns the wayward flight of a spacecraft that enters through a time-warp and lands on primitive earth. Only one of the crew survives, and he doesn't realize he's on a prehistoric earth. He accidentally captures a young girl in a trap he had set for animals. He makes the best of things, and finds a cave home for himself and the girl.

One day he blasts some food (a large bird) with his lazer gun. Later, his girl companion unwittingly imitates his actions and blasts *him* to death with his own weapon.

Two years later, the astronaut's son, born of the girl, learns the secret of intelligent language. Time is a circle...

To make the film, Dan recruited Fran Cracchiola, Joe Lucent, and Barry Domenick from the East Detroit High School Drama department. Their stage experience gave them the self-confidence needed to portray the characters in *Time*. Fran did the make-up for the film, using ordinary drugstore cosmetics. She also helped in the construction of the cave set, which was built in the basement of her home.

The spacecraft in the film was seen from two views: a life-size interior, and a miniature model of it as it zoomed through space. The model was a converted *Fantastic Voyage* plastic kit, and while not as detailed as a Lydecker original, it looked excellent in long shots. The model was supported by a rod placed between it and a painted backdrop made of plywood. For a meteor storm sequence the ship was posed and photographed vertically, and the meteors—made of crumbled aluminum foil—were dropped from above. The effect worked well, and without the use of strings.

The full-size spacecraft interior was over a year in construction. It was made of plywood over cardboard and metal tubing, covered with a rough-textured paint, and then coated again with a metallic silver paint. This large set represented about a third of the ship's interior. Many electronic devices were arranged in a practical way and were fitted with working lights and switches. When a switch was pushed, something happened. The script demonstrated what the devices were for, so that the actors knew why they were pushing a button. It was very authentic.

A rear-projection was used to represent messages being flashed to the astronauts on a viewing screen. Another rear-projection was employed to show the meteor shower through the portal of the spacecraft, but the images appeared washed out, and this shot never made it to the final film.

The lazer gun, a retouched plastic model, appeared to fire by using stop-motion. The gun was pointed, the camera stopped, and a string was tied between the gun and its target. The actual film base was later scratched with a pin to show the initial blast and to hide the stop-motion "jump."

Time Is A Circle is a regular 8, color/sound film, written, directed, and photographed by Dan Noga. Production assistants included Ken Noga, Ron Zettle, and Brent Greer.

Below: Joe Lucent on the spaceship exterior set. Right: Fran Cracchiola in the cave set she helped design.

CARTOON ANIMATION

A GUIDE TO BASIC TECHNIQUES

BY

Andy Mosier

and

Murad Gumen

Scene from Andy Mosier's *Dog Catcher Marvin*

Two talented young cartoon animators offer some helpful hints and advice on getting into cartoon animation without getting in "over your head."

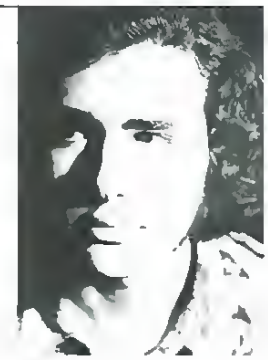
Andy Mosier

Andy Mosier was born in Peoria, Illinois (he now lives in Phoenix, Arizona) in 1960, and began drawing cartoons in the second grade. In the third grade he did his own strip called *Yurtle The Turtle*. By the fifth grade his work had advanced considerably, even to the point of constant requests by classmates for Andy to draw characters for them (Snoopy was a favorite). Soon after this, Andy discovered that flip pads could produce the illusion that his cartoons were "alive." He went on a real streak, often doing three or more flip pads every day.

Later Andy got a simple movie camera, and a tripod, and began producing his own animated cartoons. His best one to date, a five minute color/sound cartoon entitled *Dog Catcher Marvin*, has won several awards around the country.

In the following article, Andy describes a few of the simpler, "get started" techniques of cartoon animation.

Murad Gumen



Born in New York City in 1956, Murad Gumen now attends New York University, where he is taking some technical film courses.

Murad began in films in 1970 when he produced his first fantasy movie, *The Monsteen* (half monster, half teenager). His first animation experience came with *Kill The Klan*, in which he utilized G.I. Joe dolls.

Hold Those Flogs Thot Foll was Murad's first cartoon, made for a high school film class. This cartoon—using cut-out animation—was met with great approval, and even duplicated by the school for future use as a good "example."

Murad's latest film (his 25th) is *The Sorceror's Wrath*, a super 8 film combining live action with stop-motion puppet animation, via the use of rear-projection techniques.

In his end of this two-person article, Murad tells more about ways to make cartoons inexpensively, rather than about actual principles of how to animate.

Andy Mosier

I find that people tend to shy away from hand-drawn animation in favor of three-dimensional animation because they are frightened by what they think is a very complex process and a phenomenal amount of work. You can't compare the two techniques, but cartoon animation is not necessarily any more difficult, and it is a medium that allows you more freedom of expression in your work.

A Basic Start

A good way to get used to the idea of animation is to buy a small note pad (3 x 5 inches, and at least 60 sheets) and make a "flip pad" out of it. To do this, draw something very simple, such as a ball, on the bottom page of the pad, making sure that you stay within the first two inches of the bottom of the paper. Put the next page on top of the first, taking care not to tear it out, and draw the same ball about an eighth of an inch to the right of where the first ball was drawn. To draw the object again you must be able to see the preceding picture. If you cannot see through the sheets of paper well enough, try lifting the sheet once in a while to refresh your memory. Repeat this process several times until you have a whole series of drawings, each slightly different and each representing a certain stage of a movement. After you have completed about twenty or thirty pages, put your thumb under the bottom page of the pad and flip rapidly through to the top page. If you did your drawings right you should see an illusion of movement as you flip the pages one after another. You do this same type of thing in regular full-sized animation (except that you photograph each drawing), and a flip pad serves as good experimentation for animation techniques.

Going Full-Size

Animation done on typewriter paper may sound too simple to be of much technical value, but talent and creativity are far more important than technical razzle-dazzle. If you put together a film with a good story and good quality animation, the "charm" or "atmosphere" of the production can often compensate for the lack of technical polish. Cartoons of this nature often place high in an important film contest, even using the typewriter paper technique. You don't necessarily have to do a fancy color cartoon to get recognition.

Try something similar to a flip pad, but this time draw on typewriter paper. You'll find this larger size much easier to work on. After you complete twenty or thirty drawings, flip through the pages the same way you did with the flip pad, and you can get a good idea of what your animation looks like. You should start out with fairly simple drawings and later go on to more detailed objects. A professional method used in animation is to draw one key pose of the character or object involved, and then to draw the next key pose until the sequence is completed. A key pose refers to a drawing of one of the important major stages of the action involved. This may represent only one drawing out of every three of four, depending on the pace and type of action. After these major drawings are done, drawings called "inbetweens" are made to fill in the gaps between the key poses. To do this on typewriter paper you have to have a light box, which enables you to see through several sheets of paper at one time, or you must flip the sheets of paper up and down so you get glimpses of the extreme drawing that is several sheets down. If you were ever to get an animation job for a cartoon studio, this inbetweening method is the one you would most likely use. But for the inexperienced amateur, I would recommend the simpler

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"straight-through" method—that is, drawing each pose in proper sequence.

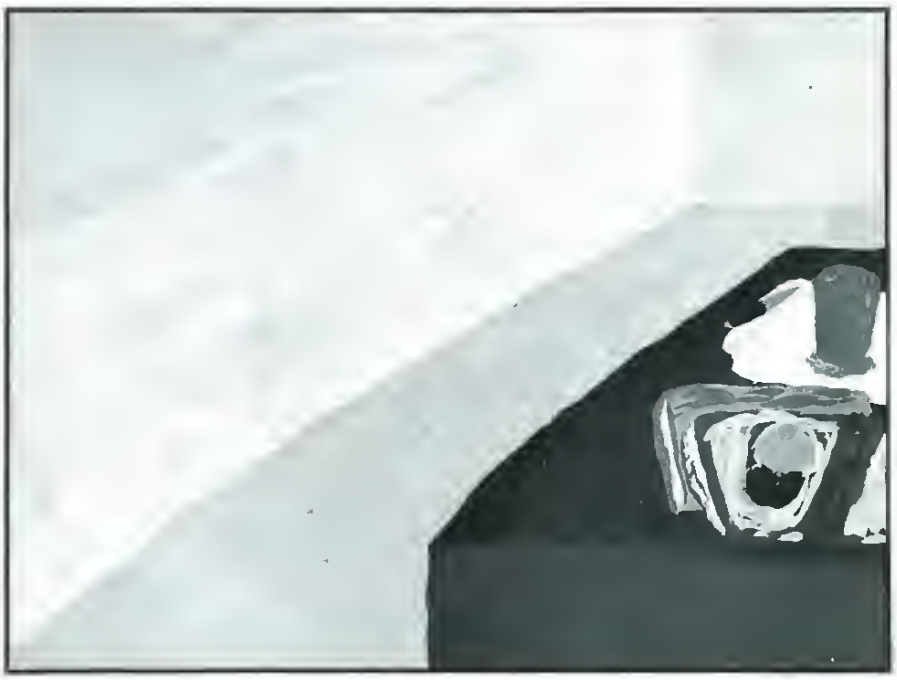
An Alternative To Acetate Cels

Professional acetate cels measure 10¼ x 12½ inches and usually have holes punched at the top for alignment in a peg system. These cels are of higher quality than just about anything, but they are extremely expensive. There is an alternative that I have been using with good success: ordinary clear-plastic sheet protectors, which costs between four and six cents apiece, depending on where you buy them and in what quantity. Sheet protectors can be found almost anywhere: variety stores, department stores, art stores, and drugstores. They usually cost about $1.00 for ten protectors, but these are folded in half, so if you cut them, you get a yield of twenty 8½ x 11 inch sheet protectors. You must then punch alignment holes into the protectors, if you use them with a peg system (which can be devised by making your own pegs out of very thin wooden dowels).

Most sheet protectors are made of thin vinyl, and the quality might not be up to par, but they may be adequate for most purposes. If you'd like an upgraded quality mylar sheet protector, they are available in a minimum quantity of 200 sheets (at 14¢ apiece) from:

Fidelity Products Co.
705 Pennsylvania Avenue, S.
Minneapolis, Minnesota, 55426

This company also stocks the lower-grade vinyl protectors at a cost of 12¢ each for a minimum of 200. Write to them for a free catalogue, since these prices are based on their 1975 catalogue.



Right: The basic components of cel animation are shown in these three pictures (using an actual cel from Andy Mosier's *Marvin's Gos Station*.) Top: The character drawn on an acetate cel. Middle: The background painting (not necessarily done on a cel). Bottom: The composite of the two elements when the character cel is placed on top of the background painting.

Murad Gumen

In this article, I will concentrate on techniques which will help the cartoonist save money, rather than on animation principles.

Professional cartoon animators have a set up similar to an assembly line, in which they effectively tackle the production of animated cartoons. The systems vary, but here's a simple idea of how one works. The artists of a studio create the cartoon characters which fit the story. These drawings are handed to the chief animator who draws the "extreme" positions of the characters in a scene on animation paper (which is punched like loose-leaf paper for registration and is more translucent than ordinary white paper). Here's an example of an extreme: imagine that a character has to kick a football in a scene. The two extreme positions could be the contact of the foot with the ball, and the leg high in the air after the kicking action is completed. All of the positions between these two extreme positions (i.e., the leg traveling up in the air) are drawn on animation paper by another artist called the "inbetweener." Next, these drawings are handed to the "inker" who transfers the figures on the animation papers by tracing them with ink onto acetate cels. Acetate cels are transparent and permit the background to show through once the cel (with the animated figure) is placed on top of the background sheet (see Figure 1). Finally, the inker hands the cels to the "colorist" who colors in the figures with opaque paints (opaque so the background will not show through the characters—otherwise, the characters would look like ghosts). The studio might also have a separate department which handles the backgrounds.

The finished cels with the characters and backgrounds are handed to the filming department—the last stage in the idealized making of a cartoon. The cartoon industry is so depressed at present that this system would be a financial impossibility for most studios. When some studios do get work—such as a TV commercial assignment—they might actually hire only one person to handle *all* the aspects in the making of the cartoon. In this respect, the pros are really not so different from the amateurs.

Lets look at the three forms of animated cartooning:
1. The cut-out. 2. The paper cel. 3. The acetate cel.

The Cut-Out

The cut-out is the least expensive and least complicated of the three. After figures are drawn, they are merely cut out, with movable parts to be animated over a background (Figure 2). The cut-out can never be "full" animation; it is a very limited type, where only some parts move. The effect, very different from cel animation, is not necessarily bad; how it looks depends on the kind of effect desired. Usually, though, the cut-out form is best only when one has limited time and money.

Figures (characters) for cut-out animation can be drawn on any type of paper, but the heavier the paper, the better. On thinner paper, the figures will "curl" when cut out. The figures *must* look as if they are flat against the background, or else the shadows caused from curling would ruin the effect. Unfortunately, no matter how heavy the paper, curling is hard to avoid. To alleviate this trouble shadows could be controlled with lighting (a light directly on top of the cut-out should do it, if the cut-out is uncomplicated) or with a type of adhesive (in stick or spray form, available at art stores) that allows repositioning of the figure once the glue has been applied.

Inking can be done with a felt-tip black pen or with pen and ink. An outline around the figure is very important! Unless the background is entirely black, a black outline around the figure permits a separation of the figure from the background. When the figures are cut out, they should be cut as closely to this black line as possible. (Figure 3) Coloring materials can include water color or acrylic paints, felt markers (great, but expensive in the long run), or crayons (although crayons *look* like crayons on the screen). I prefer water colors, since they spread easily, are inexpensive, and have a fairly good effect. However, water colors can dull the black-inked features on the figures if they are applied too heavily.

The biggest problem with cut-outs is that they lack precision. For example, if a character is putting his hand out for a handshake, once the first cut-out limb is removed, it is difficult to know exactly where the second limb is to be

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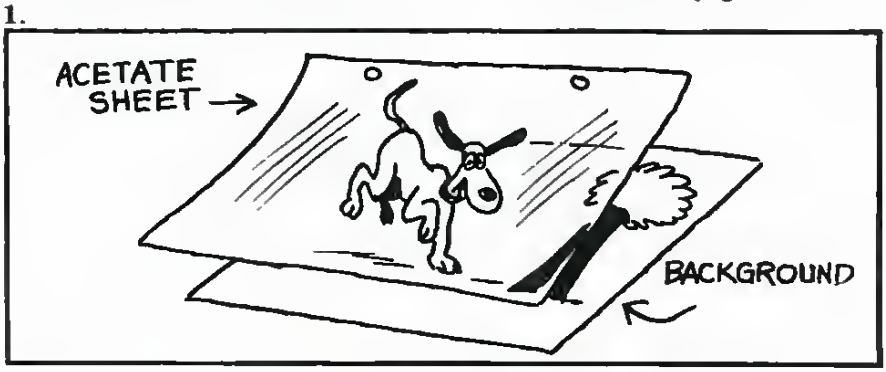

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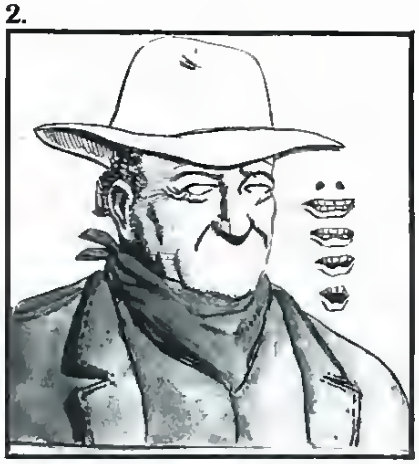

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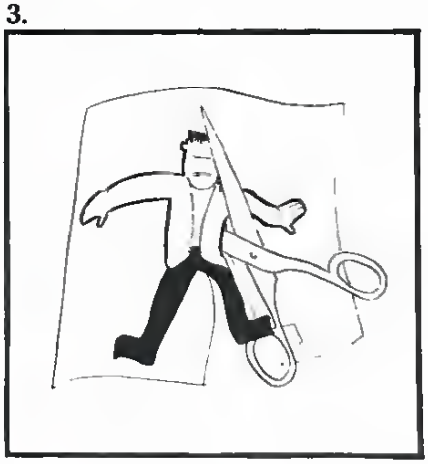

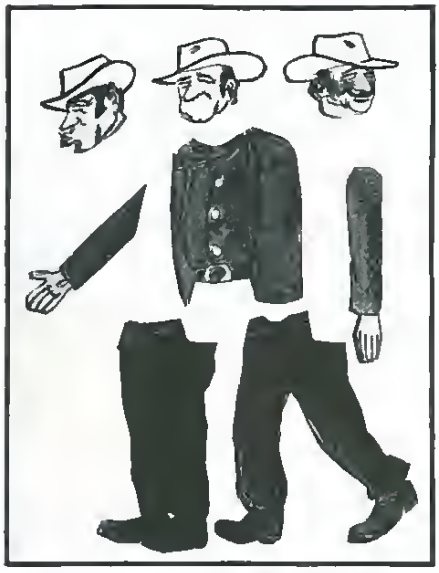

Above—left: This is the effect on screen you get when the cut out (see Figure 2) is combined with a background. Right: The parts needed for a typical cut out character.

placed. Tiny "guidelines" might be drawn on the figure, but your patience would have to be remarkable to do this with every shot.

Using the stick or spray adhesive mentioned earlier is important so the cut-out parts don't accidentally move. Without the adhesive, the animation would look jumpy on the screen, with body parts moving every which way. The spray adhesive is easier to apply than the stick type, because with the stick the figure must be set on a flat surface and burnished down flat. If the paper used for the cut-out is too thin, there is a danger of it tearing. Spray the figures lightly with the spray adhesive (your best bet, really), and *gently* press them down. The edge of a razor blade or an X-Acto knife will help you peel the figure off. The adhesive serves another useful purpose: it gives you the choice of working on a wall, eliminating the backaches caused by working on the floor.

Finally, time should be spent on creating the backgrounds. The animated cut-out is only part of the effect; good backgrounds give a polished and professional look to your overall work.

The Paper Cel (Sheet)

The paper cel is just the thing for the animator who can take a financial step above the cut-out. Instead of transferring the "extremes" and the "inbetweens" to acetate cels, you do the inking *and* coloring right on the paper cels. Ordinary white paper (preferably 8½ x 11 inches) can be used with satisfactory results, instead of genuine "animation paper" (which is expensive). For the paper cel, a light box is essential (Figure 4). Several cels or sheets of paper must be seen through, so that the animator can have an idea of how the action is progressing. Also, a light box will take the place of an "animation stand" during filming. (An animation stand is the actual structure in which cartoons are shot. Professional stands have multi-level panes of glass which are adjustable to give a 3-dimensional look.)

If you cannot afford the time to build a light box, or the cost of buying something that performs the same function, a cheap substitute can be set up: a sheet of clear plate glass supported between two pieces of furniture or boxes (or, if the glass is large and heavy enough, supported on a table with an end of the glass sticking out), with a light source under the glass.

When it is time to film, *white* plate glass will be necessary, since it is translucent, rather than transparent, and allows light to filter evenly throughout its surface. Clear plate glass creates a "hot spot." Although some people might prefer clear glass to draw on, there's really no reason why white plate glass can't handle both the drawing and filming purposes. (Figure 5 shows a sufficient do-it-yourself light box set-up.)

The problem now is registration. One method is to create taped slots (Figure 6) which allow the paper cels to be slipped in, keeping the registration of each cel uniform. The best method involves registration "pegs," but there is one main problem: the punch holes on the paper and the peg may differ, since there are many variable types and sizes of pegs. The peg must fit the hole perfectly, or else the registration will be fallible. A method to insure accuracy is: 1. Get punched paper or carefully punch holes yourself. 2. Find pegs (such as smooth

Below—right: How to make a light box top. A. Cut hole the size of glass in middle of board. B. Nail wood strips (to hold glass) beneath holes. C. Put in glass (which should be as thick as the board).

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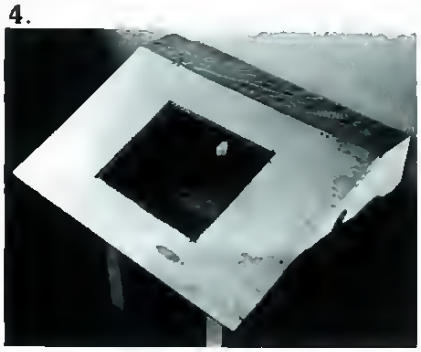

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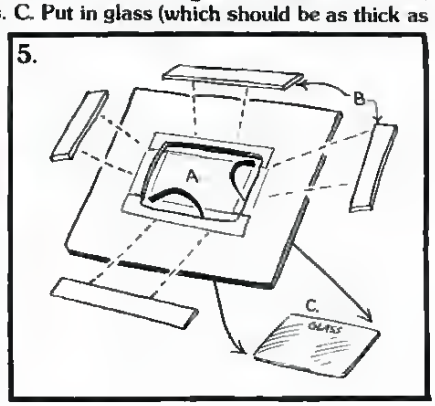

pencil stubs) which fit through the holes precisely, and glue them on a strip of board, heavy paper, or thin wood. 3. Tape the peg strip to the glass. (See Figure 7.) The main difference between the paper cel and the acetate cel is the transparency between the two. Acetate, of course, is perfectly transparent, and allows a background to easily be seen beneath the subject. Paper cels are best suited to cartoons without backgrounds, although there is a way to have a static (non-moving) background when using paper. Simply place a light source (called the "underlight") under the glass and assemble your cels over your one background sheet as you film. The underlight will allow the background to show up through the cels with the moving subject (Figure 8 shows the set-up for this technique.) Here the moving subject cannot pass in front of the background without risking a ghost-like effect. If the subject *is* to pass in front of part of the background, you must color the subject with opaque paint (such as acrylic). The background should then be colored with a more translucent paint, such as watercolor. In this set-up the lighting system is different. There must be an "overlight" in addition to the underlight, so that the colors are brought out sharper (Figure 9 shows the overlight set-up). The overlight should be less intense than the underlight, because the background cel (which lies directly beneath the subject cel) must successfully penetrate the subject cel.

The Acetate Cel

At this point, you probably have the feeling that the best all-around medium for cartoon animation is the acetate cel. So you may ask, "Why fool around with cut-outs or paper cels?" The reason, of course, is money.

Almost all the principles discussed about the paper cel apply to the acetate cel. You get—if you can afford it—a much better looking cartoon with acetate. If you'd like to try this form out, a couple of sources for acetate cels are:

Oxberry Corporation
516 Pimpson Place
Bronx, New York 10455
or:
Robert Heath Productions
1627 Scott Avenue
West Islip, New York 11795

Both places sell the standard size 10¼ x 12½ inch acetate cels. Heath Productions also carry Acme brand cels

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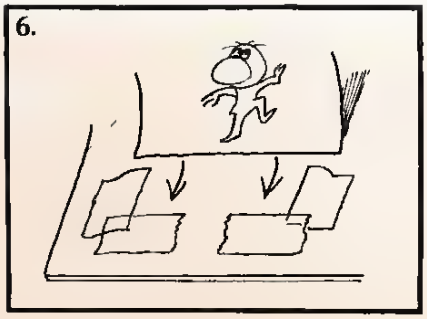

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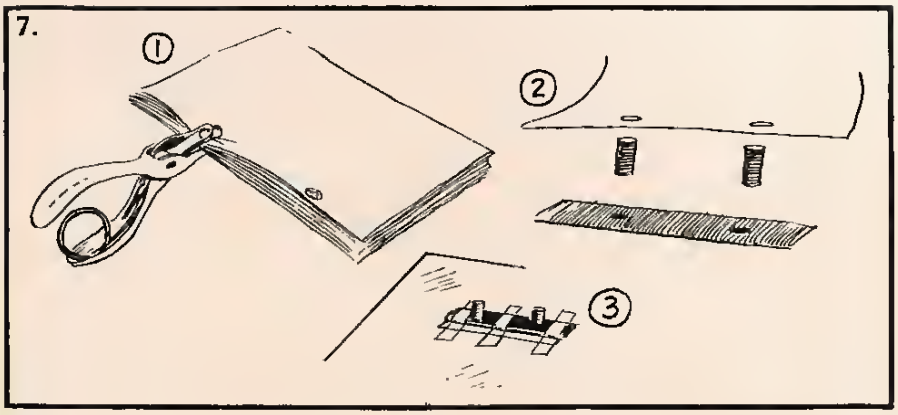

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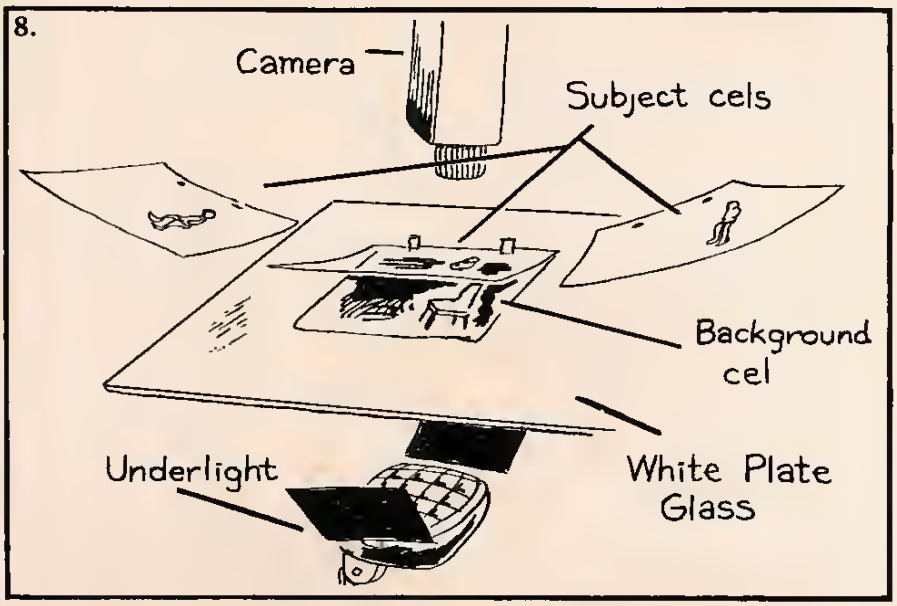

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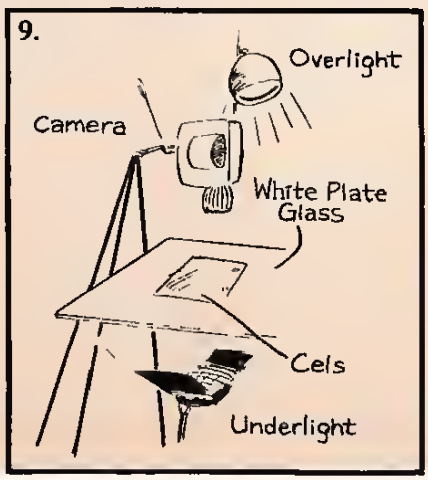

(which are punched differently than the Oxberry brand cel). Prices for cels are about $33.00 for 200 punched sheets, or $29.00 for about 200 unpunched sheets. Write to these companies and request a free catalogue before ordering, just to be sure of current prices.

Acetate sheets will not accept standard pen and ink or ordinary felt-tip pens. Special inks and paints should be used (again, available from the companies listed above), or you can buy a "Sharpie" brand pen (in art stores) for doing outlining on the acetate. When painting the acetate, here's a tip. After inking your character with a black pen, use the acrylic animation paints on the *reverse* side of the cel. This way you can paint freely, without fear of smudging the black lines with your opaque colors.

The three forms of animation—the cut-out, the paper cel, and the acetate cel can be used interchangeably. The forms can be mixed together to your advantage.

With paper cels and acetate cels, if only a limb of a character moves, there is no need to re-draw the rest of the body in every cel, Figure 10 shows a sequence in which Dr. Jekyll is about to drink a liquid. Only his head and arm need to be animated. After he has finished drinking, let's say he puts the drink down on the table, with his right arm remaining still while his face shows expression. Another cel has to be added with the arm and bottle (cel D in Figure 10). Cel F in Figure 10 shows how the final, composite picture would look. The only moving part of the picture would be the face and the head. In this way, a number of acetate cels could be drawn and placed on top of each other to give the illusion of movement.

If you're a beginner at cartoon animation, I think you should start with simple subjects at first, just to get a feel for the animation. The more complex characters should wait until you feel you can handle them. One thing that you should not do is make your characters stiff. If they're running, let them lean forward or back. The characters should be loose and lively as much as possible.

Cycles can be helpful and time-saving in animation. Figure 11 shows a walking cycle. This cycle can be repeated over and over again. Backgrounds which move are usually drawn in cycles. Such moving backgrounds give the scene a "pan" action.

Needless to say, an animated project is usually very time consuming and might not be worth all the trouble and sweat. But there's a certain thrill—a thrill of seeing the work over which you've labored for many days unfold and come to life before you on the screen. Such a thrill can't easily be compared. Two good books to purchase are: Preston Blair's *Animation* (#26 of the Walter Foster *How To Draw* series), available at your art store, or by mail for $2.25 from:

Foster Art Service, Inc.
430 W. 6th Street
Tustin, California 92680

and, if you really want a fully professional "how-to-animate" course in cartooning: *Animation In Twelve Hard Lessons*, a giant-size, profusely illustrated volume, available for $14.95 from:

Robert P. Heath Productions
1627 Scott Avenue
West Islip, New York 11795

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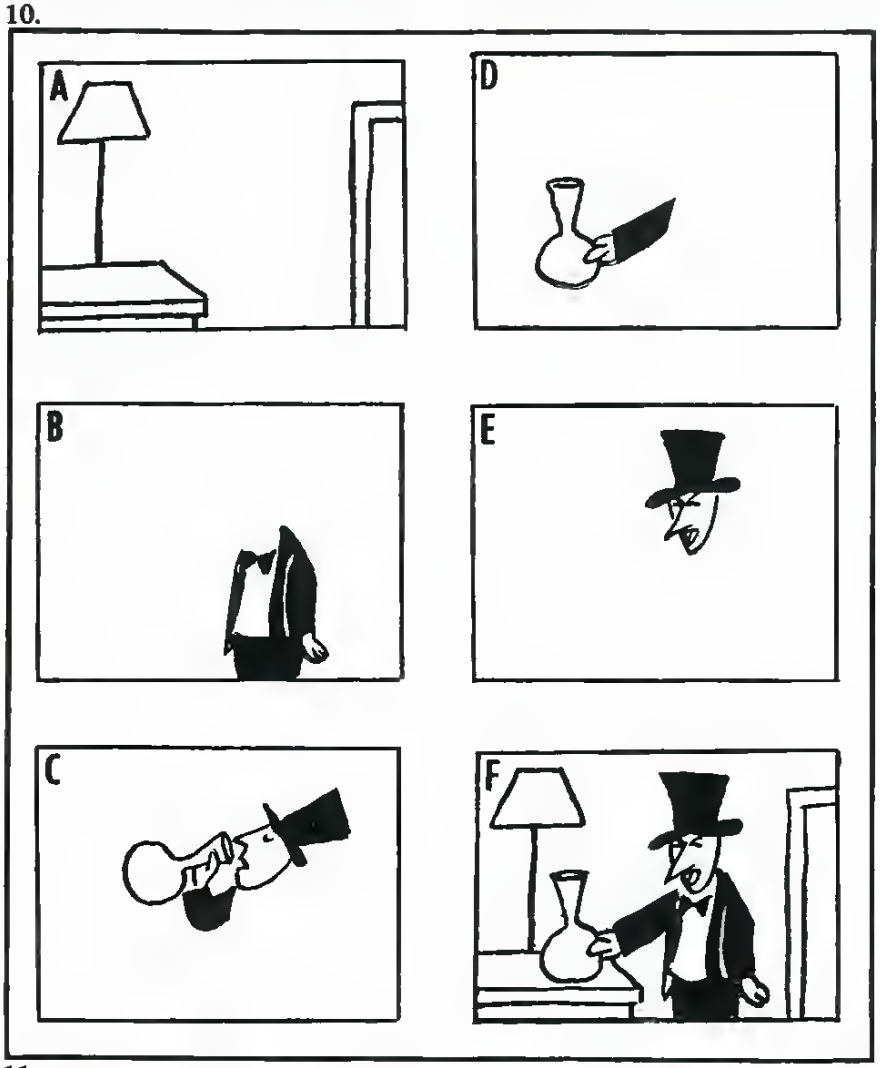

11.

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Taylor films

Photo John Locus

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ISSUE #7 (July/August)

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Paragon's Paragan

This evil creature (from John Dods' *The Abduction Of Grog*) shows a lot of expression! To find out *how*, see page 20 inside.

Cinemagic # v1_5 (1976)

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