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Number 9

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LETTERS

CINEMAGIC, P.O. BOX 125, PERRY HALL, MD. 21128

Kurt Fillmore
Merced, California

I have noticed that CINEMAGIC is concerned mostly with special effects, make-up, and animation. As far as I'm concerned special effects are great, but if the other things don't come first then special effects won't improve your films any. These other things include a good story, lighting, music, and cinematography. Let's see some articles on the basics.

Editorial Comment: You can buy magazines like Filmmakers Newsletter, American Cinematographer, Super 8 Filmaker, Moviemaker, *and* Today's Filmmaker *and get the basics issue after issue after issue.* CINEMAGIC *IS about special effects, and not basic filmmaking; and yet, many of our articles discuss techniques which, if mastered, can only help you to discipline yourself in such "basic" areas as lighting, story structure, and composition.*

Ernie Farino
Irving, Texas

Dougal Dixon's article on glass paintings was quite interesting and informative, but I was surprised to learn that he works with poster paints. Most painting work of this nature is done in oil to allow for greater blending and detailing of pigments (I have heard that acrylics are sometimes used, but that they are not as easy to blend and work with as oils).

The proper way to paint on glass goes something like this: the sheet of plate glass is first coated with tempura or white "gesso" medium in the areas to be occupied by the artwork. The medium (I personally use "gesso") is applied in layers, and each layer is sanded smooth before the next is applied. Usually three layers are sufficient, applied in alternating directions (first layer horizontal brush strokes, second layer vertical brush strokes, and so on). Any gesso in the desired "clear" area of the glass for the final scene can be easily scraped off with a razor or X-acto knife.

David Gene Smith
2015 Laura Rd., NW
Roanoke, Virginia 24017

I'd like to know how Dick Taylor did the bullet blast effects which were mentioned briefly in the article on *The Thing In The Basement.* Did he use "bullet hits" explosive devices (also known as miniature plastic detonators)? I'd like to hear from any readers who can suggest further ways of doing explosions, or know where I can buy such materials.

Editorial Comment: As intriguing as bullet-hit effects are, we are totally against the idea of explaining the process in CINEMAGIC. *It's downright dangerous, and shouldn't be attempted by anyone who doesn't know precisely about the mechanics and nature of explosives.*

Ralph Miller
Elmhurst, Illinois

I'm writing because I want to know about music copyrights for amateur films. This is surely of interest to your other readers. It is my understanding that a film using music for which the rights have not been secured cannot be publicly exhibited. If this is the case, I'm wondering if it would be kosher to enter a film with a musical score (recorded from copyrighted records) in an amateur film festival, such as those reported on in past issues of CINEMAGIC.

Editorial Comment: Fact is, it's illegal to use copyrighted music in any film — amateur or otherwise — without permission. If you're really worried about it, there are several music libraries from which you can purchase the right to use musical selections for your films. But from everything we know, 95% of all amateur films being entered in contests around the country sport some type of music obtained without permission. We're not encouraging unauthorized use of protected music, but there's usually no hassle about it— and you can always write for permission if you're in doubt.

Gunnar Syren
Johanneshov, Sweden

I would like to see more articles in CINEMAGIC on optical effects, such as *Creating A Beam-Down Effect.* Too much of your content has been animation oriented. Nothing wrong with animation, but there is certainly much *more* to special effects. I would also like to question your policy of concentrating on amateur productions only. I would like CINEMAGIC to be a magazine *for* the amateur filmmaker and not necessarily *about* amateur filmmaking. I'm sure there is a lot to learn from professional effects makers that can be modified to suit amateur productions.

Editorial Comment: We've got several articles on various optical effects coming in future issues, including a process of doing homemade "slit scan." We've been through the "amateur versus professional" routine before. The hard fact of life is that most pro effects people are tight-lipped and uncooperative. Today's amateur and independent filmmakers are of a different breed who, as proven by the existence of this magazine, are more than willing to share techniques and "secrets" with their peers.

MOVING? LET US KNOW!

We get an increasing amount of copies of CINEMAGIC returned to us and marked "addressee moved—not forwardable." If you are moving, please don't forget to let us know your new address right away so that we can change our records!

Dennis and Robert Skotak

TIMESPACE

Dennis and Robert Skotak, born and reared in and around the Detroit, Michigan area, are probably two of the original pioneers of amateur science fiction and fantasy films. They began producing 8mm epics in 1959, under the company name of "Cinema-Vista," along with a friend named Bob Schrader. Many of their earlier films, such as *Slapstick Sick* (1960) and *Z-Squad* (1960), were comedy shorts and TV spoofs, filmed on weekends and in spare time.

In 1964 the Skotak brothers made an historical film—an 8mm version of the classic H. G. Wells story, *The Time Machine* (profiled in CINEMAGIC #4). This was not merely another "10-minute take-off" of a classic film; it was a feature-length version filmed in full Cinemascope, and has been acknowledged by the International Wide Screen Association as the first 8mm epic film shot in the Cinemascope screen ratio.

The Time Machine, as well as other Skotak films, displays a remarkable attention to detail and special effects. Bob and Dennis have never been lazy in these areas—even *Attack From Outer Space*, a 1966 satirical farce, exhibits fine production values, with camera work and editing which show a flare for professionalism.

In recent years the Skotak's energies have been devoted to totally professional and controlled feature film work. They developed many special effects, miniatures, and models for a Lovecraftian-style film, *The Cry Of Cthulhu*, and filmed an epic futuristic science fiction feature, *Timespace*. In 1974 Bob and Dennis were hired as special effects and sound men, respectively, for the feature film, *The Demon Lover*. Bob handled all of the effects for this feature (currently in release around the country), including the vicious demon make-up and various explosions, gunblasts, and make-up lacerations and wounds. Both Bob and Dennis doubled their efforts on *The Demon Lover*, and worked shifts with producer Donald Jackson in editing the film.

Nowadays the Skotaks, who are both in their late twenties, are continuing to pursue their professional film careers. Dennis is again doing sound for Donald Jackson—this time on Jackson's new feature, *Ringside In Hell*. Bob, who recently moved to Los Angeles and is an editor for a local paper there, is working with Robert Clarke (*The Hideous Sun Demon, Man From Planet X*) on a new project as well as negotiating with famed director/producer Roger Corman.

For this profile we have decided to feature *Timespace*, because it best exemplifies the incredible range of talents of Bob and Dennis and their ability for special effects, detailed miniatures, and overall professional values.

Above (left): Bob Skotak attaches an explosive "squibb" to actor David Hurd, who has the lead role in TIMESPACE. Right: The police force of Null pursue and attack Hurd in this starkly composed scene.

Synopsis

On the futuristic, mythical planet called "Null," a super-technology is beginning to over-run the planet's surface and dominate the lives of its inhabitants.

A woman tells a small child the story of a man named John. John is a rather eccentric individual—an outsider in his world. He is troubled by voices and fearful premonitions about his future.

John works in one of the vast laboratory complexes of the globe-encompassing World Linkage Corporation. His job consists of nothing more than watching a meter for hours on end—making sure that it does nothing. John finds out that it *never* does anything.

He daydreams one day about how he received notice to report for his job assignment, his interview with the corporate boss, Mr. Mountessor, and his first day on the job. He remembers his first meeting with a girl named Larna, who, in spite of her impatience with him and totally different interests, became a friend.

All the while, John is becoming aware of a peculiar and disturbing "industrial neurosis" which affects many—if not all—of the people around him. The people he comes in contact with all seem to exhibit a streak of cruelty and coldness; an insensitivity to others. Many of them are apparently affected mentally by the electronically charged atmosphere of the World Linkage complex and exhibit bizarre habits.

John walks out on his job after a series of frightening dreams and hallucinations which all deal with the idea of some strange destiny—a path he must follow that will end in death. He realizes that he must act somehow on these premonitions but is afraid.

One day John befriends a stray dog. The next day he finds it clubbed to death in an act of pure, unprovoked cruelty—the work of one of the Linkage workers. Enraged by the senseless killing, John strikes the man responsible. Larna, for the first time in her life, feels compassion for the unfortunate, innocent dog.

John is pursued by police armed with ray-guns and bombs. He is captured and thrown into a horrible, dank dungeon where he is confronted by Mr. Mountessor.

John learns that he has a Linkage device imbedded in his mind and that the device is capable of delivering to its host a multitude of mental powers—if the host learns to control and use it. John is a freak in that although everybody has these devices surgically placed in their brains at birth, few, such as John, are ever even aware of them; much less know how to use them. The device was responsible for his feelings of dread and death. With this awareness, the device begins to inter-react with John's brain, and he begins a wild battle between his fears and weaknesses and his ultimate potentials. He eventually passes out after enduring a severe mental war within his mind.

Upon wakening, John finds himself fastened to an operating table. Mr. Mountessor enters, and in a cruel ritual, personally executes John. But in death, the Linkage device is used by John as an escape. His spirit is encapsulated in a blue sphere of energy which heads off into space to another, perhaps better world . . . and, this spirit-energy shines down sun-like over Null to briefly illuminate Larna . . . perhaps the next "outsider."

Making The Film

Timespace was filmed using many of the money-saving techniques we'd developed in our earlier works. The various visuals, props, miniatures, and so on were created for a tiny fraction of normal costs.

Most of the miniatures in the film represent portions of the vast "World Linkage Complex." These included a model of a huge tunnel filled with machinery through which a monorailed vehicle travels (via animation), a triangular walled "re-orientation level," several city skylines, a giant wall miniature representing "level 503," a power unit machine that crackles with electricity, and a miniature duplicate of the full-size dungeon. Several of these models

Above: One of the full size sets created for TIMESPACE, this dungeon is where Hurd is kept captive until he is killed by Mr. Mountessor. Below: A skeleton Hurd discovers in the dungeon. Even in full scale, the Skotak detail is evident, as is the dramatic lighting.

employed small, rear-view screens upon which tiny images of the actors could be projected.

Many portions of the World Linkage miniatures were constructed from sheets of poster board and several plastic model kits. We were careful in painting the model parts so that we could show as much detail as possible. We even painted the nuts and bolts on the plastic pieces and added many of our own touches with the aim of disguising the origins of the parts. The curved framework of the miniature's ceiling is merely pieces of poster board, cut into long strips and glued into place.

The miniature representing the City of "Null" was built with some help from friends Christopher Jordan, Jim Morris and Mark Hardin. There are several hundred pieces in the entire model, including power antennas, loudspeaker towers, futuristic ground crawlers (tractor vehicles), large domes, a solar energy complex, rocket jets, and raised highways. The entire model, fully assembled, covers an area approximately 10 x 10 feet.

The two miniatures comprising "level 503" were constructed and shot at very little cost, yet we never fail to get good comments about these scenes. It would seem that *how* the miniature is filmed is just as important as the quality of workmanship of the miniature itself. One thing

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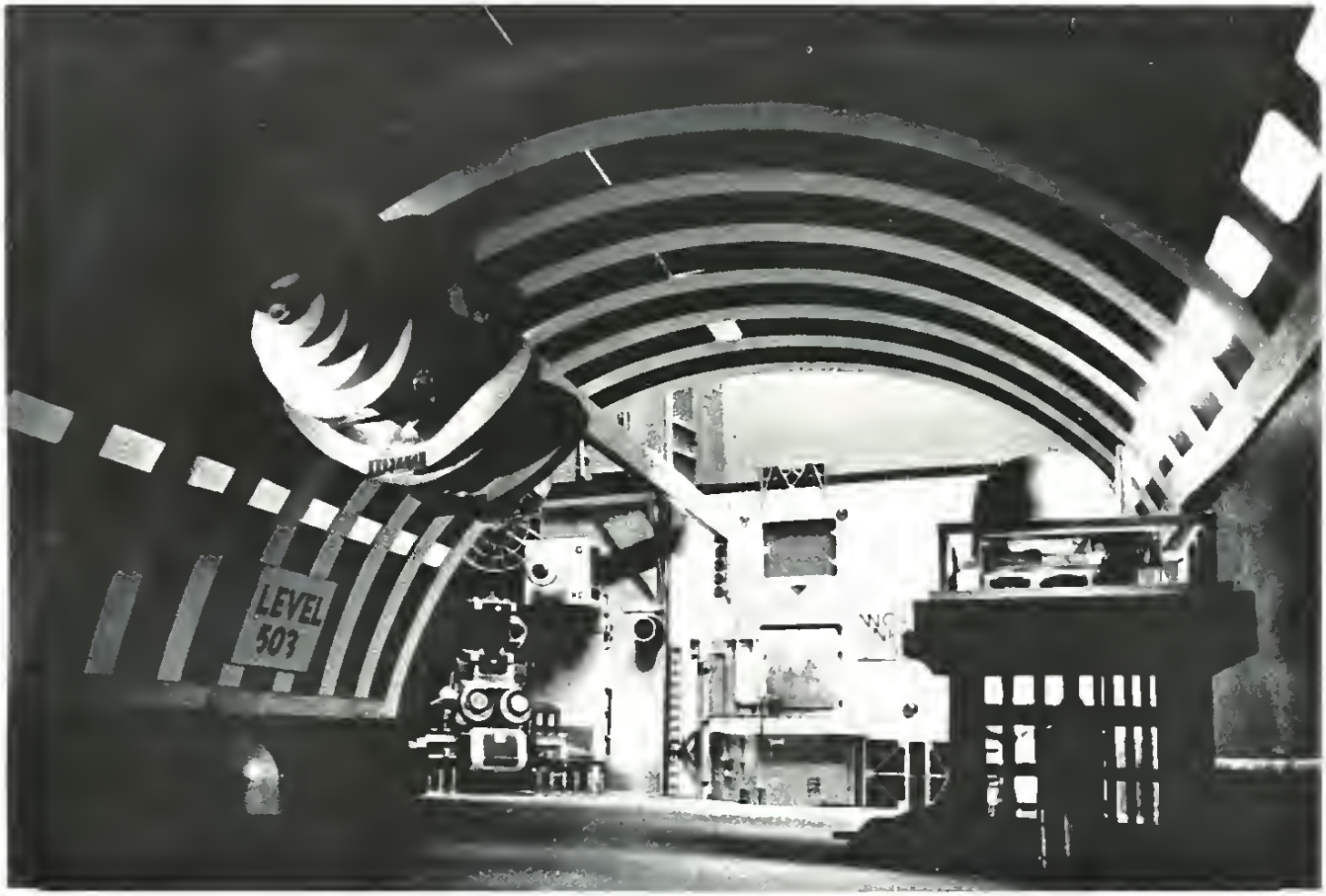
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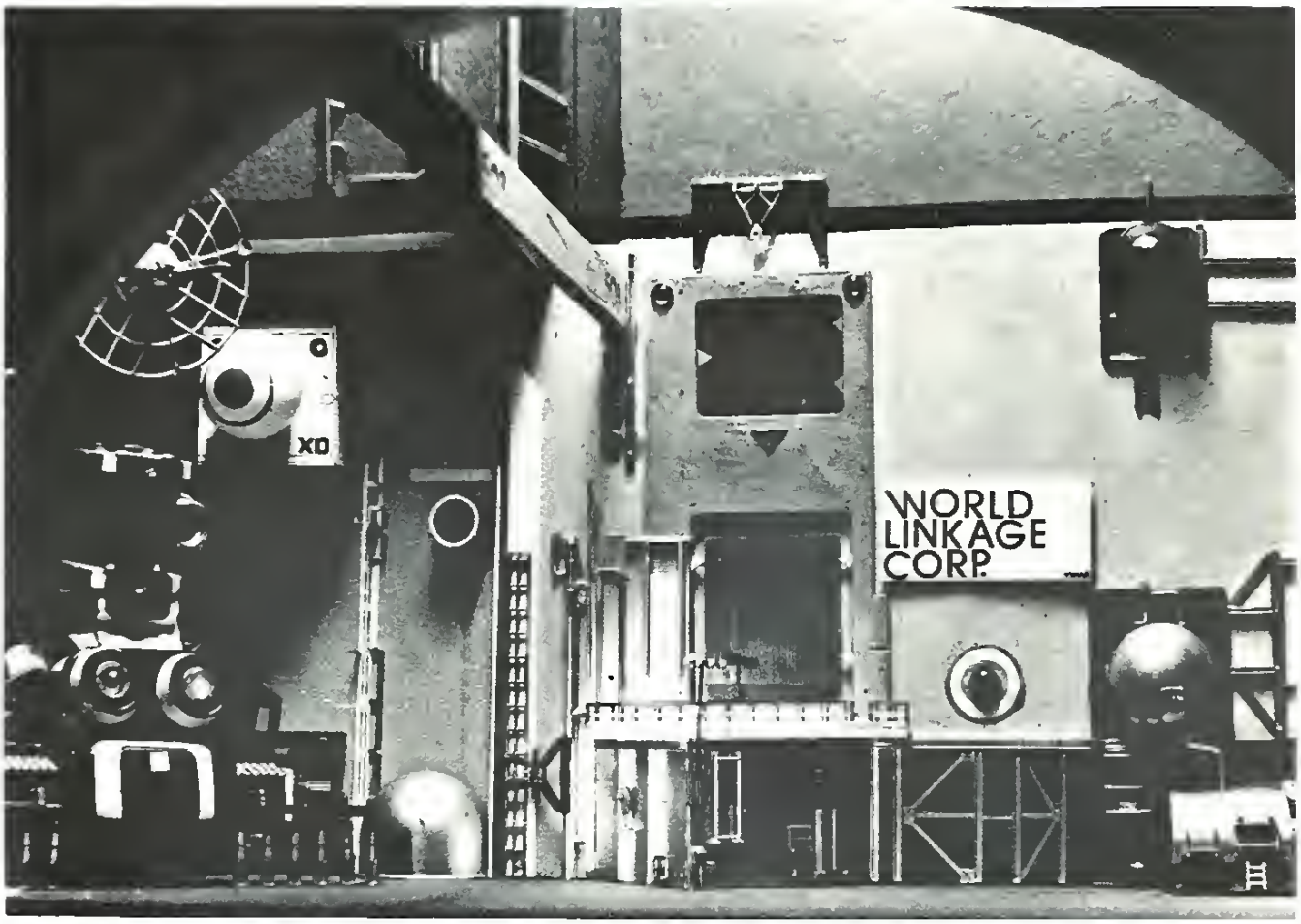
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we learned in this regard was *never* to photograph a miniature from any other than what would be considered eye-level in real life, if this is at all possible. Very few miniatures can stand up to the scrutiny that a violation of normal eye-level observation generates.

We also avoided shooting with anything but a wide angle lens closed down as far as possible. This allows for the greatest depth of field conceivable in miniatures. Of course, the pre-requisite of small lens openings is the use of far more light than would normally be necessary. With little depth of field, though, a portion of the miniature will always be out of focus, which conclusively reveals its true size. Overall sharpness, therefore, was one of our prime goals in the effects work in *Timespace;* and we succeeded for the most part. We also used a number of smaller, *focused* beams of light in the miniatures to create many sharp-lined shadows. This type of lighting is indigenous to real life structures and must be adhered to in miniature work.

Except for several optically printed zooms, all of the effects in the film were either physically built or produced totally in-camera. Multiple exposures, such as the ones we made, depend to a great extent on the stability of the camera's registration of images. Minor shifting in the "layers" of exposures give away the nature of the effect. The camera we used for our effects was a Bolex R-16, which produced a nearly rock-steady registration.

In one scene we used multiple exposures to show the two main characters sitting in front of a vast electrical complex at night. The effect was achieved by sandwich-superimpositioning of four separate shots. We made an 8 x 10 incb color transparency of a view of the miniature and poked "stars" into it with a straight pin. We placed this on a light table (a table lit from beneatb) and photographed it. By darkening two corners of the transparency we

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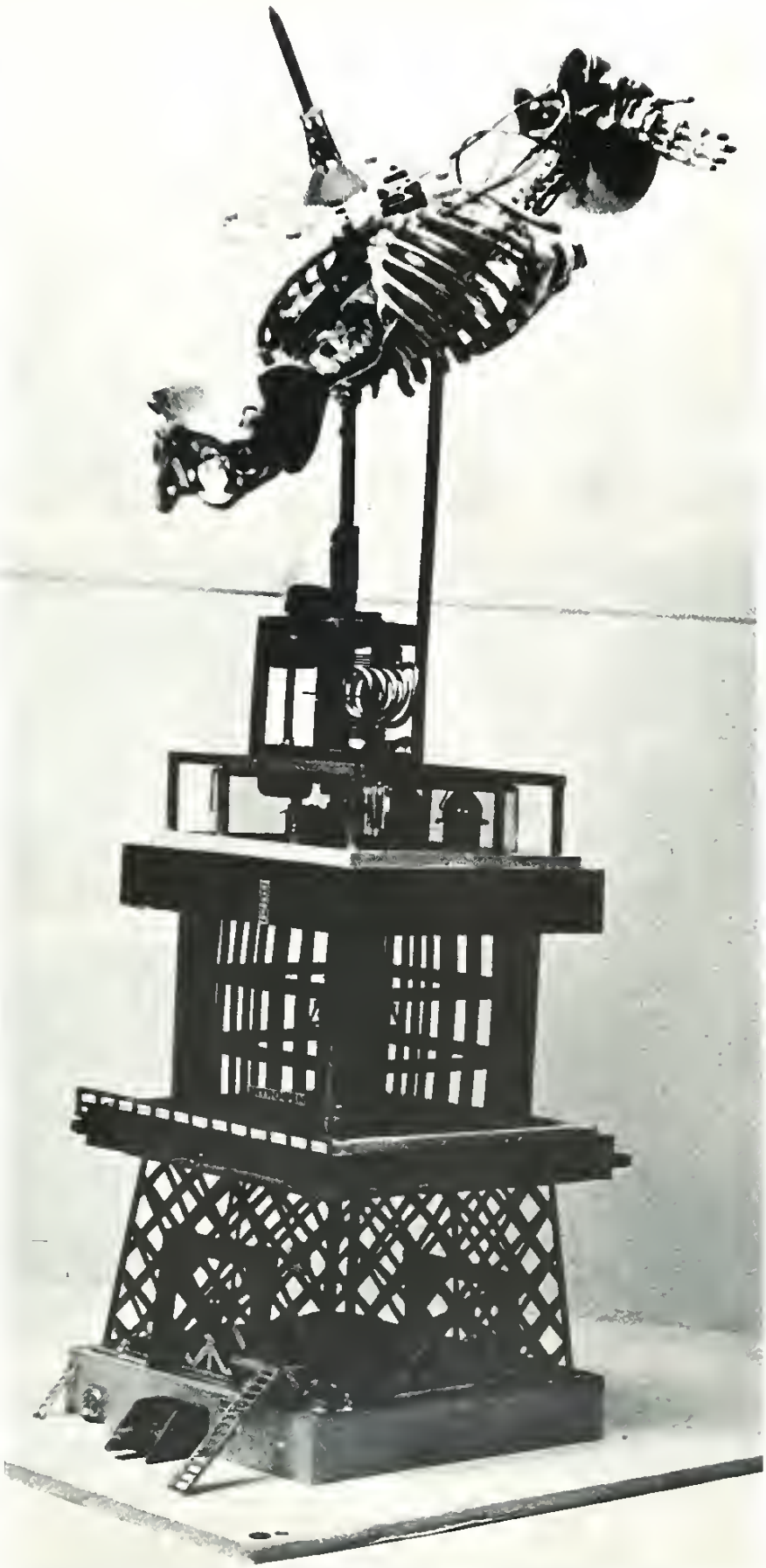
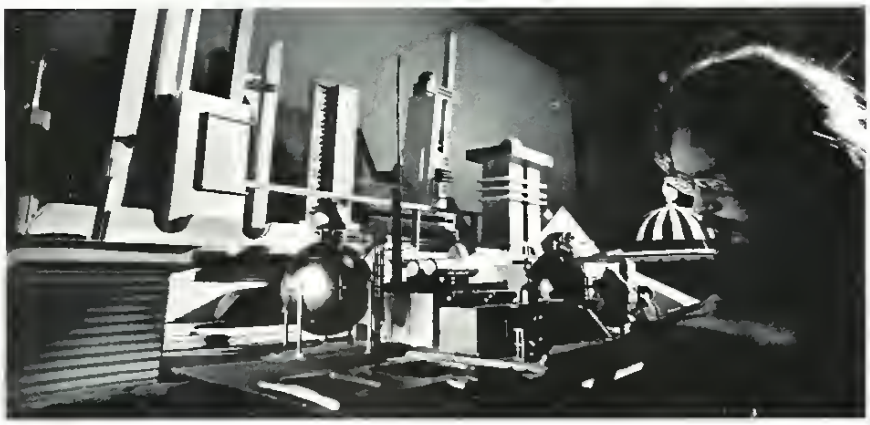


Left: Two views of the fantastic miniature "Level 503" created by Dennis and Robert. Note the intricate detail in the close view at bottom. Right: Yet another detailed miniature, this is the skeleton tower referred to in the article. Attention to detail like this is what makes the Skotaks' films stand out.



Above: One of the optical effects used in TIMESPACE. Middle: Bob Skotak works on one of the realistic miniature cities seen in the film. Bottom: Another optical effect, as the protagonist is encircled with a "blue" ray. All such effects were done by the Skotaks in-camera, using their ingenuity and imagination.

were able to next expose a full-sized mock-up of a fence, some bushes, and the two actors and match them into one of the darkened areas. We used a matte box with a glass matte to outline and align the various elements before each exposure. In the other dark area we superimposed a collection of futuristic "background" structures, including a glass bubble that was placed in a position to overlap the previously exposed actors. By this method the actors were firmly established as being right in the middle of the miniature scene. The final exposure was of an "artificial sun in the night sky," as described in the script. In reality, this sun was a hole in a section of black paper, lit from behind and photographed with a star effect filter over the lens.

We used multiple exposure techniques like this throughout the film, sometimes in combination with small, rear projection screens to produce scenes of actors walking by "huge" machines spewing electrical bolts. We found that by adjusting the camera to run about three or four frames faster than the projected images on the miniature screens, there were no synchronization problems.

Meteor-like flashes of light streaming out from space were actually thirteen exposures of pen light flashlights being dropped along a string from the ceiling downward past the camera, which was mounted on the floor and pointing upward.

Timespace was filmed in and around Detroit and Ann Arbor, Michigan. In all it was shot on 12 exterior locations and 8 interior ones. In addition, 5 life size sets had to be constructed, the largest being the surrealistic dungeon in which the main character is imprisoned. Assembled for this set were a collection of strange items: gnarled plants, ancient, rusted piping, crumbling walls dripping with fungus, a skeleton half buried in one of the walls, and an assortment of equally unusual props.

The cast, consisting of 35 people (including extras), were culled from local theatrical and film groups. One small part was played by Craig Collicott, an actor who has the lead role in a theatrical feature entitled *Wheels Of Death.*

Timespace was filmed in 16mm color (Commercial Ektachrome) ■

SUPER-8 VS. SINGLE-8

A Comparison Of The Two Formats In Regard To Versatility, Availability, And Special Effects Capacities

Article by Britt McDonough

Many of you will be familiar with the basic similarities between Super 8 and Single-8: they make identically sized images, they have identical perforations, and any Super 8 projector will project Single-8, and vice versa. The main difference is the design of the cartridges. The Single-8 cartridge will not fit into a Super 8 camera, and again vice versa. Single-8 film is much thinner than Super 8 because it is manufactured on a polyester base (Super 8's *acetate* base is about a third thicker). As a result the Single-8 cartridge is long and thin; the Super 8 cartridge is fat and stubby. Because of the Single-8 cartridge design, in which the film goes top to bottom rather than side to side (as in Super 8), there are things you can do which are literally impossible in ordinary Super 8, and herein lies the biggest difference between the formats.

Single-8 film and systems are manufactured by the Fuji Photo Film Company of Japan. Many companies make and market Super 8 film and equipment, but the Eastman Kodak Company in Rochester, New York pioneered the format and still reigns supreme in the quality and variety categories of film stocks. Both Fujichrome Single-8 and Kodachrome Super 8 are sharp and fine-grained. Fujichrome is a tad more contrasty and is a warmer film, which is to say its reds are more deeply saturated and its yellows are slightly orange (except for Fujichrome 200, which leans toward blues). Fujichrome will give you a more natural skin tone, while Kodachrome excels in rendering beautiful greens.

The key advantage of Single-8, especially to effects-oriented filmmakers, is the ability of its cameras to backwind the entire 50 feet of film, if desired. This permits unlimited multiple exposures of the film—imperative for split-screens, mattes, dissolves, and similar tricks. For instance, a dissolve can be made with a Single-8 camera by fading out a scene, backwinding the film in the camera while the variable shutter is closed (keeping your hand over the viewfinder to eliminate unwanted light from straying in), and then fading in the next scene. This fading out and fading in is easily accomplished in a Single-8 camera utilizing its variable shutter—a small knob that, when turned, changes the shutter angle until light hitting the film is completely cut off. When making in-camera dissolves you must carefully note where your last scene begins and ends (that is, at what point during the scene you want the fade-out to begin and end) in order to coordinate the double exposure properly. Double exposing two different scenes requires the same kind of careful synchronization; you must figure out want images you want overlapped at what point. Straight double exposure is done in Single-8 in a manner very similar to dissolving, except that no fading in or fading out is necessary.

An interesting possibility of Single-8 backwinding is "flashing" the Fujichrome stock. This is a standard laboratory technique in 16mm to increase film speed and lower contrast. Experimentation is necessary, though. The procedure is to re-expose previously exposed footage which has been backwound entirely. The way to achieve this re-exposure to light is to aim the camera at a neutral gray card, shooting it out of focus, and underexposing it two or three stops (how many stops can be determined by tests). For faithful color rendition, the light of the flashing exposure must match in color temperature the light the film is designed for. In other words, if you're shooting Fujichrome 25 (daylight), flash your gray card outside (in the shade); if you're shooting Fujichrome 200 (a fast tungsten film) flash the film using a tungsten balanced photoflood, which can be either a bulb made for photographic enlargers such as PH/212 low-watt bulb, or any 3200 K photo bulb. An interesting variation of this technique would be to filter the flashing exposure for special effect. Say you accidentally shot tungsten film outside without the #85 compensating filter. The film is now too blue. If you flash the film using a gray card lit by a normal household bulb (which is already very "warm" in temperature) and put the #85 filter on the lens, you will get the effect of lowering the contrast *and* color-correcting the film to a certain extent. If you exposed daylight film outside and flashed it as described, you should get a very warm, romantic amber color effect. You could also flash normally exposed scenes through a deep red filter for a "Mars" effect, and so on.

It seems reasonable to think that you could shoot split-screen and effects shots for your Super 8 film

with a Single-8 camera borrowed from a friend, and cut the two stocks together. The problem with this is that when the two stocks are intercut, the focus on each will vary as it is run through the projector. This is due to the difference in thicknesses of the two films. One possible way around this is to shoot the main part of the film with 3M Super 8 color film, which is also a polyester base like the Single-8, but comes in a Super 8 cartridge. It should intercut with the Single-8, but the color rendering of the 3M film might be different, so you would have to pay particular attention to color-matching your shots. An alternative to this would be to borrow a Single-8 camera, shoot your special effects, and then have a dupe of the special effects sequences printed on Ektachrome stock. You'd be a generation away, and will gain contrast, but you'd be able to cut in the effects with film shot in regular Super 8.

One part of the Single-8 system that I think is a clear winner over Super 8 is the Fujica splicer (which will also splice Super 8, by the way). It uses pre-punched, super-thin, clear polyester splicing tape and makes a very accurate, virtually invisible splice. The cut is made right on the frame line, and the tape covers only *two* frames of the film. The Guillotine Super 8 splicer is very similar, but the tape is not pre-punched; the sprocket holes are cut out of the tape via a special head on the splicer which also cuts the tape

Below: A view inside the Fuji Single-8 cartridge shows the top-to-bottom film path, a design which allows full backwind capacity.

Above: The Fujica Z-800, one of the more expensive Single-8 cameras.

at the same time. This head is prone to going out of alignment, and also getting "clogged up" with the tape which is cut out of the sprocket holes. In addition, the Fuji splicer is a rugged, all-metal one; the Guillotine is a hunk of plastic. They both cost the same money.

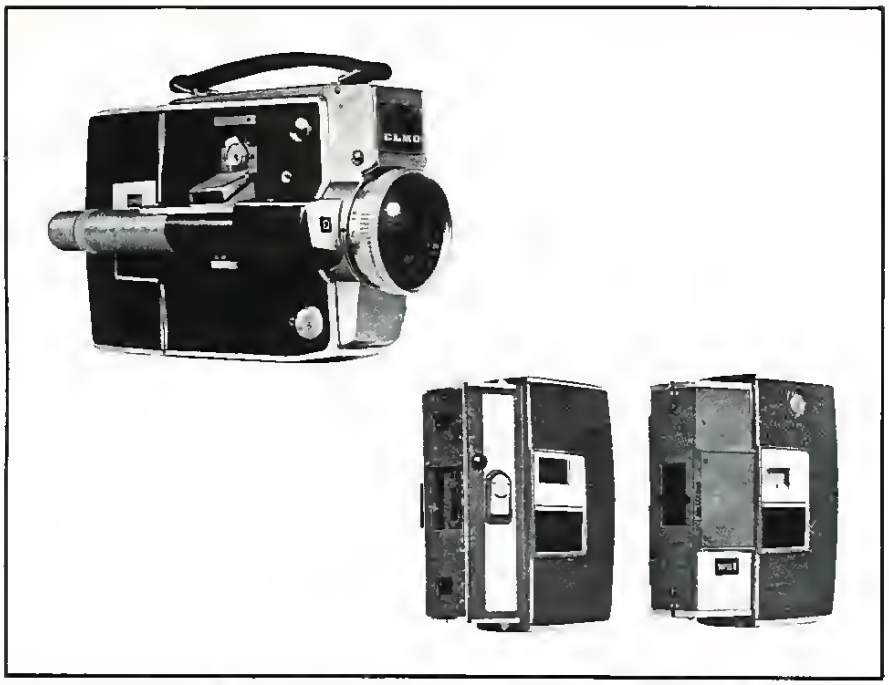
A major disadvantage to the Single-8 system is its lack of available film types. A few years ago they made a normal speed tungsten film (ASA 50) which had beautiful color and resolution. They also had a normal speed black and white (ASA 50) and a high-speed black and white (ASA 200), as well as a normal speed daylight film (ASA 25). The latter is still available, but both black and white stocks have been discontinued, and the wonderful ASA 50 tungsten has been replaced by a generally miserable ASA 200 tungsten. All this, obviously, to keep in competition with the growing popularity of available light movies using high speed film. When I inquired as to why the black and white stocks were discontinued, Fujica's American office said it was because the sales of the films were minimal, and there "wasn't a steady enough demand for black and white films." That's a pretty flimsy excuse for a system which gears itself toward the creative filmmaker.

So owners of Single-8 cameras are stuck with an indoor film with a 200 ASA rating, and they must be content with the very visible grain pattern of the film. It also leans heavily (too heavily) toward the bluish side —even when it is used outdoors with a daylight filter (which automatically cuts the ASA about in half).

Is Single-8 really any better than Super 8? Except for the full backwind capacity of Single-8, I'd say they're about even. There *are* Super 8 cameras that will backwind, but because of the over-and-under-and-through-and-around film path of the Super 8 cartridge, and some stubborn plastic film tensioning rollers, you can only backwind a limited length of film (about 90 frames), and then only with the more expensive cameras with such a "backwind" capability. These cameras are generally good only for lap-dissolves (which are sometimes done automatically), or very short and sweet double exposures. There are certain Super 8 cameras, such as Canon DS-8 (which lists for over a thousand dollars) that accept a "double-100 foot" roll of Super 8 film. These rolls are 100 feet in length, but 16mm in width and, like old regular 8, must be flipper over halfway through. The result is 200 feet of film after it is processed and slit. The advantage to such a camera is the same full backwind capacity as the Single-8 system. But for the money you'd put into a double -Super 8 camera, you might as well get into a good quality, reasonably - priced 16mm camera (like a Bolex Rex-5 or SBM) and enjoy the greater precision, professional capabilities and superior resolution of the 16mm gauge.

So which system do you buy? The Super 8 filmmaker has at his disposal a much greater range of film stocks: Kodachrome 40, Low and High

Below: The Bell & Howell 1237/XL, a Super 8 camera with sound-on-film recording.



Above: The Elmo Dual Filmatic, a camera which took inter-changeable magazine backs—one to shoot Super 8 and one to shoot Single-8—solved the dilemma of which format to choose. However, this camera was discontinued a few years ago.

Speed Ektachrome, hlack and white stocks like Plus-X, Tri-X and 4X, and a bost of films made hy GAF, Dupont, 3M and others. Super 8 film is available literally everywhere, while Single-8 film is an elusive animal. You can have Super 8 processed almost anywhere, including one-day service by Kodak Labs in many big cities, but you *must* mail Fujichrome Single-8 to the closest official Fujica Lab (there are only a few on hoth coasts).

Because of the competition generated from store-to-store in the Super 8 market, the film is much cheaper to huy and have processed. For example, I've seen Kodachrome 40 in K-Mart (a discount store chain) for $2.10 per cartridge. Processing costs about $1.50 per cartridge, or $3.60 per 50 feet. The same 50 feet of Fujichrome Single-8 lists for ahout $6.00 (with processing automatically included in the purchase price).

Both Super 8 and Single-8 cameras are available with the usual gadgetry: power zooms, single frame advance for animation, automatic metering, and even built-in crystal sync. Both systems now bave magnetic sound-on-film cameras for convenient, instant sync-sound movies.

Most Fujica Single-8 cameras are of extremely higb workmanship, and ditto for tbe higher-priced Super 8 models. A typical Single-8 camera is the Fujica Z-450, wbicb has backwind, an f-1.8 lens, 8.5 to 34mm power zoom, focusing to three feet, filming speeds of 18, 24, and 36 FPS, plus single frame, a variable shutter, and a reflex viewfinder with split-image focusing, and automatic through-the-lens metering. This camera lists for $279.50 but can probahly be bougbt at a discount for ahout $225.00. There are only five Single-8 models currently available (compared to ahout 112 models of Super 8), but tbe Z-450 has just about anything you'd need.

A Super 8 outfit at a competitive price and offering quality features comparable (but not identical) to the Fujica Z-450 is the Chinon XL-555 Macro. The Chinon lists for $289.50, but I have seen it discounted in the Sears catalog for $219.50. Prices from the big New York City camera outlets migbt be much lower. This camera has through-the-lens metering, reflex viewing, a five-to-one power zoom (with two zooming speeds), a remarkably fast f-1.2 lens capable of focusing 2 inches from the subject, filming speeds of 9, 18, and 36 FPS, plus single frame. It also has a built-in time lapse capacity of 4 FPS to 1 FPS and microprism focusing, which many people prefer to range-finder focusing. The Chinon, however, has no variable shutter or hackwind capacity and unfortunately, will not shoot at 24 FPS, which is the standard sound speed.

If you *do* want limited backwind and a full range of filming speeds (including 24 FPS), the following Super 8 cameras, although much higher priced than the Chinon, will fill the bill: the Bauer C Royal 10E ($829.95); tbe Bauer A512 ($1,200); and all of the French Beaulieu cameras (except the 5008S), which all list for over $1,000.00.

Finally, if you intend to shoot silently with the intention of later adding a soundstripe and post-synching your films, consider that there are several good labs capable of putting a quality stripe on your acetate base Super 8 films. There is only *one* place authorized (or equipped) to stripe the polysester base Single-8 film. The place is Aerco Striping Service in Pennsauken, New Jersey ,and they have a reputation for unreliability (in quality control) that stretcbes from the Atlantic to the Pacific. There was a time, not too long ago, that Dynacolor Labs handled the striping of Single-8 film, and handled it superbly. Why Fujica gave them up—as they gave up on their good tungsten color film and black and white stocks—is still a mystery to many an irate Single-8 camera owner. ■

THE MANUFACTURERS

SUPER 8:
Eastman Kodak Company
343 State Street
Rochester, N.Y. 14650

SINGLE-8:
Fuji Photo Film U.S.A.
350 Fifth Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10001

RECOMMENDED ADDITIONAL READING

PENTHOUSE PHOTO WORLD (#4, Oct/Nov 1976; #5, Dec 1976)—909 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10022. These issues survey 112 different brands of Super 8 cameras.

SUPER 8 FILMAKER MAGAZINE—3161 Fillmore St.,. San Francisco, CA 94123.
The bi-monthly magazine all about Super 8 filmmaking. Extensive coverage each issue on new equipment, including field tests, reviews, and evaluations.

THE SUPER 8 BOOK (Lenny Lipton)—Straight-Arrow Books, 625 Third St., San Francisco, CA 94107. $6.95.
A decisive study of all aspects of Super 8, with chapters on cameras, film stocks, etc.

CREATING GUNFLASHES ON FILM

Article/Photos by TED RAE

Many amateur films feature some sort of firearm, whether it be pistol, rifle, or machine gun. However, since not many filmmakers can afford Hollywood prop guns which spit a nice blue flame, it seems to me that an amateur method for creating these flashes is called for.

For those of you who are tired of the simple jerking of the gun, I have a relatively simple and inexpensive method you might try. This method uses household bleach, a very finely bristled brush, and a dissecting-scope, or a microscope, or a strong magnifying glass (the latter depending on the film gauge you are working with).

"Roman Cleanser" works best for the bleach. Camel or sable hair brushes are recommended because they hold and release moisture much more readily than synthetic brushes do. If you are lucky enough to be working in 16mm, a strong magnifying glass might work; if not, then a dissecting-scope (I used the school biology lab's) or a microscope is necessary. A dissecting-scope is preferable over a microscope because it enlarges the picture enough without giving too much detail.

When you film the scene needing a gunblast, you should keep a few things in mind. First the jerk, which signifies the weapon's recoil, should be slightly exaggerated for reasons explained later. Second, the scene should be filmed a few extra times, if possible, to allow for later mistakes. Third, the actor must not make the sound of the gun being fired with his mouth, for even once the flash is successfully added, the scene can still be ruined by this. Fourth, a cut to a close-up of the gun barrel can also help later.

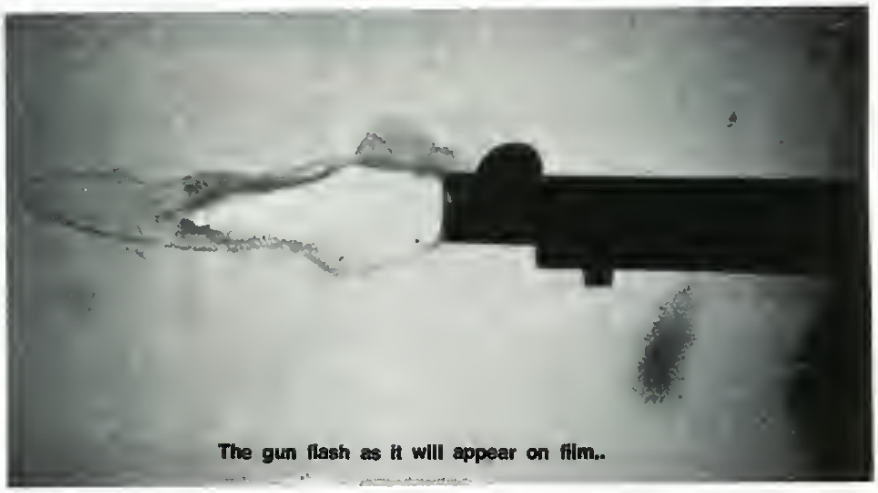
After you get the film developed, run it through your editor until you come to the footage where the gun is fired. Take the film, emulsion (dull) side up, off the editor; then, frame by frame, through the dissecting-scope, or whatever, look at it until you find the frame where the gun first jerks. This is where the exaggeration and close-up can help. Now tape the film down so you don't lose that frame.

A capful of bleach is all you will need unless you're doing an epic war film. Dip a brush in the bleach so you have a small droplet hanging on the end. The droplet, mind you, cannot be too big, lest you bleach out the whole scene.

Very carefully now, looking through the dissecting-scope, put the brush down at the end of the barrel and move it outward away from the gun. After about 10 seconds, take a tissue and dab up the bleach. You should now have a nice white flash, like those drawn in comic books, at the end of the barrel. Also by repeating this procedure, you can get quite a realistic machine gun effect. Don't worry if it doesn't come out the first time. It is best to practice on a piece of scrap film first, so as not to ruin your actual footage. This is where filming the scene twice or more can help.

There you have it: a method for creating amateur gun flashes. Although not exactly Hollywood, it can add a touch of excitement and realism to your film.

This by no means is the only possibility for this technique. With variations and some practice you could make lightning, ray beams, explosions of buildings, aircraft, spaceships, or even planets. The possibilities are limited only by your imagination, patience, and skill. ■



The gun flash as it will appear on film..

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.

The Borrier Production Compony of Merced, California, is in preparation for its new film, *The Applegote Murders*. The film will he a modern day horror story ahout an occult scientist who, while investigating several murders in Applegate Park, discovers the cause to be the "familiar" of a local witch (a "familiar" is given to a witch to help her do her evil tasks). The familiar—a giant hat—will he animated into live action scenes using a technique similar to Ray Harryhausen's *Dynamation*. Other effects consist of optical firehalls and magical appearances and disappearances of the witch.

Special effects will play a major role in the Boston, Massachusetts-hased production of *The Solid Gold Show*, the hrainchild of thirty-year-old filmmaker Howard H. Smith. Envisioning the film as a "time machine ride hack to the early days of television," Howard (who has heen making films since he was 13) singlehandedly coaxed some early TV pioneers into appearing in the limited-hudget film. His higgest coup was talking his childhood idol Buffalo Boh Smith of *Howdy Doody* fame into starring in the film. Other notahles involved are comedian Dick Shawn and veteran show husiness press agent Guy Livingston, who will promote the film nationally.

Special effects for *The Solid Gold Show* will include a spaceship hurling past time harriers and Mr. Magoo animation comhined with live action. Completion is expected hy this spring.

Rick Harrison of Clinton, Kentucky, is currently at work on *Children Of The Dork*, his first film. The movie is to he a trilogy consisting of segments entitled *Moon Child, Night Child,* and *Mon Child,* dealing with a werewolf, vampire, and golem respectively. Rick is developing foam latex make-up hased on techniques presented in earlier issues of CINEMAGIC.

Bart and Brett Mixon of South Houston, Texas are putting the finishing touches on their latest film, *The Fother-Thing*. Based on a short story hy Philip K. Dick, the film has heen in production for over a year and features puppet animation, foreground miniatures, and special make-up (heing handled hy Bart). *The Fother-Thing* is a super 8, color production.

Fontasy Films of Rancho Cordova, California is shooting *The City Of Gold And Lead,* hased on a book hy John Christopher. The film is heing made in super 8, color, using a Bell & Howell/Nikon R8 camera. The story is set in the 21st century when the earth has heen taken over hy creatures from another world. Special effects in the film call for seven animation models and a domed city set.

Peter Ikrath and Joe Weeks and their *Monolith Productions* of Long Branch, New Jersey have hegun work on two films: one is a sword & sorcery adventure and the other is a version of Berni Wrightson's short story, *A Case Of Conscience*. *Monolith* recently completed several films, including *Pay The Devil, Timesteps,* and *The Great Condy Bor Caper* (a Monty Python-style comedy). Effects in the films include animation, split-screens, and miniatures shot in slow motion. All of these productions, shot in super 8, are going to he entered in film contests around the country.

The Impotsible Dreom is a super 8, color film currently in production hy award-winning ceramic potter and filmmaker, Roger H. Rodgers, of Miami, Florida. The film is ahout a potter's studio and two male and female "people" pots which come to life and fall in love. Roger's film *Trees* recently received a Cine Eagle Certificate and is to represent the United States in foreign film competition.

Francesco Lucente of Alherta, Canada is in the midst of production on *Billy And His Dinosour,* an elahorate

"Polluto" is a concoction of "mankind's worst leftovers"—made by Jon Beardsley of Orlando, Florida for an E.P.A. TV spot for the state of Illinois.

Wes Corliss of Batavia, New York sculpted this clay tyrannosaurus for his film SONG OF KONG'S REVENGE. This model, as well as others in the film, will be cast in foam latex over ball-and-socket armatures.

puppet animation film with a budget of $3,600.00. The story involves the adventures of two boys and a dopey Brontosaurus who has the ability of speech. Twenty-five animation models will be used in the film, which has been in production for nearly a year and won't be completed for several more months. Running time will be about 30 minutes, and Francesco hopes to have the film distributed.

JSM Films of Euclid, Ohio is currently producing *Abbott And Costello Meet The Exorcist.* It's being filmed in super 8 and includes stop-motion animation and a life-size model of one of the stars.

World-famous wrestling star The Shiek will star in the feature-length theatrical film, *Ringside In Hell.* The film, being produced by Bob Finnigan and Donald G. Jackson, will feature some sequences shot by Garrett Brown, inventor of the Steadi-Cam device used to shoot the motion picture, *Rocky.* Wrestling scenes for *Ringside In Hell* are being filmed in various cities around the country, with Detroit, Michigan as the primary location. *Savage Cinema, Ltd.* will distribute the film theatrically later this year.

Reader Exchange

I am interested in starting an exchange club for films and videotapes: regular 8, super 8, 16mm, half-inch, three-quarter-inch and one-inch reel and Betamax, in black and white and color, with or without sound. I have facilities for all formats and would like to form a cooperative exchange. Let's get together and see if we can profit from our work. If there's enough interest I'll send out a newsletter and a list of available programs. Anyone interested write to: *Stanley N. Lozowski, 503 Beech Street, New Hyde Park, NY 11040.*

I would like very much to hear from other CINEMAGIC readers who have built ball-and-socket stop-motion models. I'm very interested in this technique and would like to hear from as many people as possible: *Howie McCain, 26 Hard Wood Hill Road, Pittsford, NY 14534.*

Noteworthy Fantasy & Film Publications

The following publications, devoted to the fantasy, horror, and science fiction film genre, should be of interest to you. In most cases you can write to each publisher for a descriptive flyer about his respective publication:

Children Of The Night—published irregularly; 60 pages; 8½ x 11; slick paper; black & white covers. Another new entry into coverage of professional fantasy, horror, and sf films. Issue #2 is very impressive, not only in quantity of material, but *quality* of same, and an editor (Derek Jensen) who is trying hard to please—and does. There are so many different and unusual features that one doesn't know where to begin in listing them—but two that stand out are: "So you want to be a pressbook collector," by Gary Dorst, in which the entire pressbook for the film *Zardoz* is reproduced; and "Bruce," by Art Depina, which is the inside story (complete with blueprints and cutaway views) of the mechanical sharks used in *Jaws. Children Of The Night* #2 even contains a foldout fantasy art poster! Price is $2.50 per copy from: *COTN Publishing Company, Box 8178, Prairie Village, Kansas 66208.*

The Old Dark House—published irregularly; 44 pages; 8½ x 11; offset; black & white covers. Although there are some rough spots in this first issue, it contains an interesting article on the films of Brian De Palma (including several stills from *Carrie*) and a brief feature on *Stop Frame Productions* of Dallas, Texas. Price is $2.00 per copy from: *George LaVoo, 1719 9th Street, Bay City, Michigan 48706.*

Savage Reports—irregular; 16 pages; 5 x 7. A new film media magazine from Don Jackson, producer of the independent film, *The Demon Lover.* The first issue (which will be out soon) will feature an in-depth article in which Jackson reveals the inside secrets of successful independent filmmaking. Price for issue #1 is only 25¢ per copy from: *Savage Cinema, Ltd., P.O. Box 717, Adrian, Michigan 49221.*

That thing clawing at the door is a "Mantichora," an imaginative stop-motion model created by Ralph Miller of Los Angeles, California for his film, THINGS THAT GO BUMP.

The scene at right is from INUIT, an animated puppet film created by Ali and Milo Kubik, and distributed by Animette Canada. There is a whole line of such animated films—aimed primarily at young children—available in 16mm color and sound. Although this sort of stop-motion work is a far cry from a Harryhausen or Danforth, it's refreshing to know that it's being used for educational purposes. You can get an illustrated brochure of these films from: Animette Canada, 210 Romfield Circuit, Thornhil, Ontario, Canada.

FILM FESTIVALS

The Piedmont Super 8 Contest

The first annual *Piedmont Super 8 Contest* was held in September at the Arts Center in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Twenty-five films were entered from eighteen filmmakers representing twelve states. The competition director, Frank Toms, and his two associate judges, Linda Taylor and Alvin Quinn, selected five winning films and three honorable mentions. These films were screened to a public audience at the Arts Center on September 27, 1976.

THE WINNERS

1. *The Sorceress*—Keith Bowsza, Westminster, CA.
2. *Music Box*—Phil Preston, Trenton, MI.
3. *Word Power*—Roger Rodgers, Miami, FL.
4. *The Cure*—Phil Preston, Trenton, MI.
5. *24-20*—Carl Christensen, Los Lumas, N.M.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

1. *Voices In The Wind*—Phil Preston, Trenton, MI.
2. *Night Ride*—Keith Bowsza, Westminster, CA.
3. *Masque*—Keith Bowsza, Westminster, CA.

If you are interested in receiving details about this year's *Piedmont Super 8 Contest*, please write to: *Frank Toms, Director, 1634 Fernwood–Glendale Rd., Spartanburg, S.C. 29302.*

The Amateur-8 Contest

The fifth annual *Amateur-8 Contest*, the granddaddy of all 8mm contests, was held in Trenton, Michigan on November 10, 1976. A total of forty-two films were received from sixteen states; thirty-five were in super 8 and seven were in regular-8. Ten winners (all equally sharing the honors) were selected by Phil Preston and his judging staff.

THE WINNERS

1. *The Sorceress*—Keith Bowsza, Westminster, CA.
2. *The End*—Jim Caldwell, Dunedin, FL.
3. *Word Power*—Roger Rodgers, Miami, FL.
4. *The King And Id*—Paul Ziller, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.
5. *Willie Whitewall*—B. Hansen, Midland, TX.
6. *Revenue Activity*—Walt Morehead, Englew'd, N.J.
7. *Arebell*—Don Venturini, Eldridge, CA.
8. *Trees*—Roger Rodgers, Miami, FL.
9. *The Lonely Man*—Terry Podnar, Clinton, OH.
10. *A Pig Is A Pig*—Rose Dabbs, Bronx, N.Y.

We're sorry to report that this fine contest is being temporarily discontinued. However, Phil Preston informs us that it will resume in the fall of 1978. Revival of the *Amateur-8 Contest* will be announced in CINEMAGIC.

Upcoming Festivals

The Poetry Film Festival—The second annual *Poetry Film Festival* will be held at the McKenna Theatre on the campus of the San Francisco University on May 12 and 13, 1977. This program of films integrating word and image in a variety of treatments will be co-sponsored by the University Poetry Center and the San Francisco State University Cinematheque. Two afternoon seminars will review techniques and aesthetics associated with the poetry film, its scope and potential.

Filmmakers and poets are advised to enter their work before May 1, 1977. For applications and details write to: *Poetry Film Festival, #2 Casa Way, San Francisco, CA. 94123.*

Athens International Film Festival—The 1977 *Athens International Film Festival* will take place at the Athena Cinema and Ohio University auditoriums from April 15th through the 30th. Now in its fourth year, the Festival has been expanded to sixteen days of film and video screenings, animation workshops, guest appearances, film tributes, seminars, and equipment exhibits.

Over three hundred competition films and tapes representing many countries will be screened during Festival '77 in the categories of Feature, Short Story, Documentary, Experimental, Animation, and Super 8.

Festival tickets are available at Ticketron outlets. For further information write: *Athens International Film Festival, Box 388, Athens, Ohio 45701;* or call *(614) 594-6888.*

CINEMAGIC BOOK REVIEWS
by Dave Ellis

The Making Of Space: 1999
Tim Heald; Ballantine Books #25265; $1.95

A puff piece from the word go. A lengthy introduction informs us that the author knew little about science fiction or *Space: 1999* until he took the job of writing this book. I believe him.

We spend 50 pages learning what wonderful people the cast and crew are. There is one small chapter on special effects wherein the author visits the second unit set several miles from the main studios and watches the crew fake a volcanic landscape. It is then pointed out that the British have always worked with relatively low budgets (doesn't everyone?) and have had to be especially clever to create decent special effects.

The majority of the book bas the author marvelling at the basics of filmmaking, *i.e.,* someone actually has to *write* the script; someone really *designs* the sets; someone *scores* the music; and so on ad nauseum. . . .

By the time you finish reading this opus you will wonder if anyone involved in *Space: 1999* ever made a mistake in their lives. For *1999* fans only.

The Amateur Filmmakers Handbook Of Sound Sync & Scoring
W. H. Collins; Tab Books #736; $5.95

This is a very thorough survey of the 8mm and super 8 sound systems on the market. After covering basic recording and editing techniques, the author demonstrates how to modify existing equipment for sync sound work (how to add a sync pulse head to any tape recorder; bow to modify a projector to work with a sycnhronizer and recorder for douhle-system sound screenings, etc.).

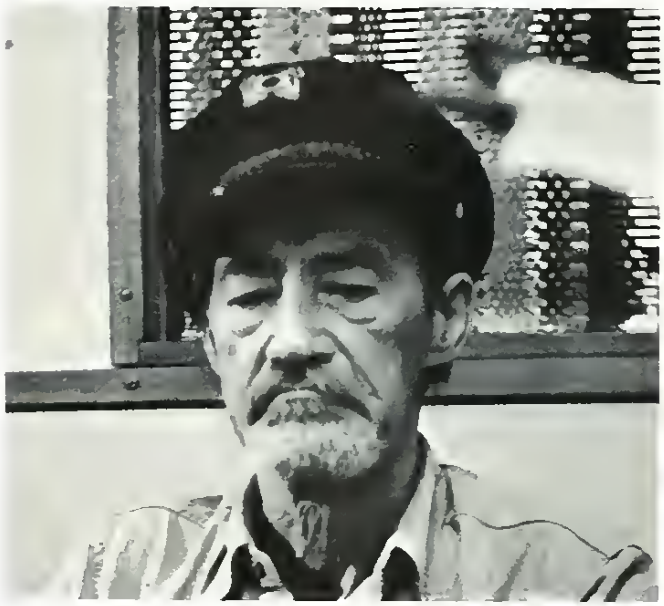
The equipment rundowns on synchronizers, tone generators, mixers, editing consoles, and related accessories are useful even though the models discussed may not be the same ones currently available (the book was first publisbed in 1974).

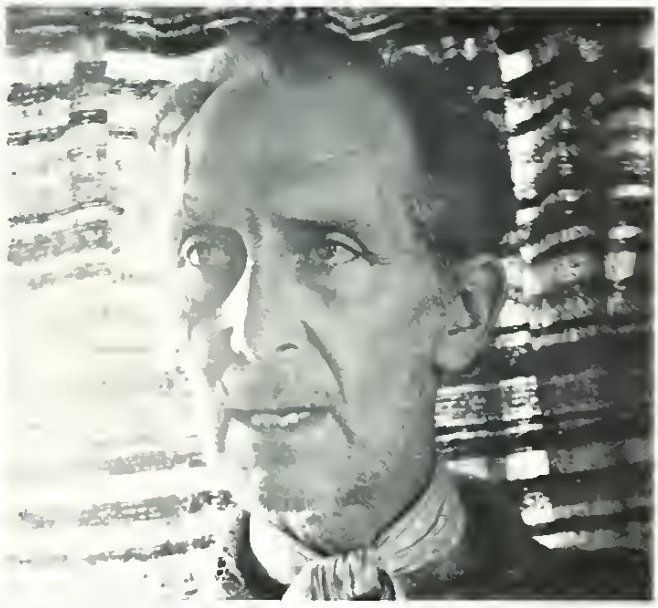
I was disappointed that no low-end 16mm equipment was covered, even thougb amateurs today are apt to he using 16mm as well as 8mm.

Some of the cbarts and lists (music in the public domain, timing and footage correlation, and so on) will be perpetually useful. ■

BEHIND THE SCENES ON

DEATH CORPS





Above: The two stars of DEATH CORPS—(left) John Carradine as Captain Ben Morris, skipper of the Bonaventure, and (right) Peter Cushing as "Scar"—leader of the nazi zombies.

Article and Photos by
Fred Olen Ray

Recently I had the opportunity of working in various capacities on a low-budget horror film, made in Florida, entitled *Death Corps,* starring Peter Cusbing and John Carradine. The film was made for $150,000, and as of this date has not been distributed.

The story concerns the wreck of a cruise boat, the *Bonaventure,* engineered by Captain Ben Morris (John Carradine) and Keith (Luke Halpin, of tbe old *Flipper* TV series), on a deserted Carribean island which is haunted by several Nazi zombies, presided over by "Scar" (Peter Cushing).

Tbe first sign of real terror occurs when tbe crew of the Bonaventure answer a signal bell in the night, only to discover the rotted corpse of a time-lost sailor tied to a piece of ship's mast, floating in the ocean. The corpse serves as a warning of the borror that is to ensue. To create the corpse, make-up artist Alan Ormsby constructed a dummy from a dime-store hobby kit of a buman skull. This was coated with latex and cornflake crumbs, and was quite gruesome looking. A glazed novelty eye completed the effect.

Wben the Bonaventure runs aground on Scar's island, Captain Ben (Carradine) decides to take a look around underwater and he mysteriously disappears. The following day the crew takes a dingby to the island. During this trek they discover Ben's body—trapped beneath a piece of driftwood.

This sequence was shot in the producer's swimming pool! The bottom of the pool was decorated to resemble the ocean floor: a huge piece of canvas was weigbted down and laid on the bottom of the pool, with some sand and rocks added for effect. A large piece of driftwood was tied halfway to the bottom and some overly energetic crabs were placed in the pool for a realistic look. The dinghy was maneuvered from outside the pool via two large ropes. John Carradine, who was in a very frail condition and suffering greatly from arthritus, agreed to be sboved under the driftwood by our two scuba divers. Unfortunately, Carradine's wind was pretty short, and on several occasions be struggled to get to the surface quickly—smacking his bead into the bottom of the dinghy and inhaling huge amounts of water. His persistence in doing the stunt surprised most of us—after all, John is 70 years old!

Carradine is one of the most interesting characters I've ever had the pleasure of working with. He is constantly doing film after film, yet he doesn't remember the titles of most of them. His main concern is getting through one picture and on to the next. I know for a fact that he didn't even read the *Death Corps* script, and he was constantly dozing off between takes. Still, he managed to keep us all alert with his own brand of rude bumor until 4 A.M. some mornings!

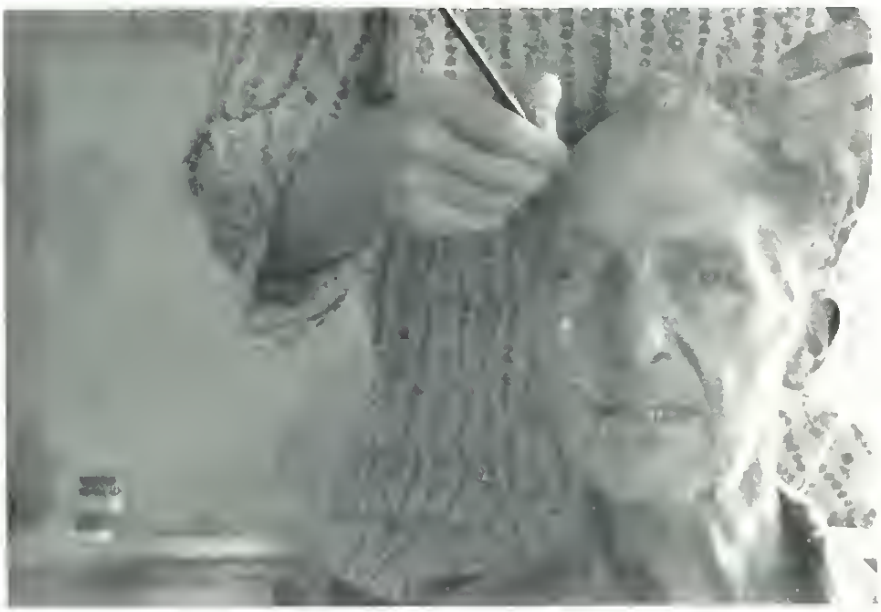
For Peter Cushing's part in the film we packed up and moved ourselves to West Palm Beacb, wbicb is about a two-hour drive north of Miami. We set up sbop in the old abandoned Biltmore Hotel, an enormous eigbt-story resort whicb was deserted in 1968. It made the ideal "headquarters" for Scar, and it took us an entire day to decorate the main drawing room with the appropriate appointments: Nazi flags and wall

ornaments. The set was eerily lit using blue gelatin filters over the quartz lights.

Witb the set completed, production came to a temporary halt. It seems that Mr. Cushing had broken off one of his teeth on a nasty piece of cbicken during bis fligbt to Florida. So for several set-ups I was used as a stand-in for Peter. Once the tooth was repaired and we got rolling again, I discovered that Cushing was unbelievably kind and gentle. He always went out of bis way to help our actresses across the swampy canals, and he even carried his own chair around. One day I got to sit and talk with Cushing at length and I could tell that he was an avid crowd-pleaser (not to mention a marvel to work with). He is extremely modest, and feels that his entire success is due to his fans and not his acting ability. That's not true, of course, but it is true that working with Peter Cushing was one of the most pleasurable experiences I had while filming.

On *Death Corps* our oft used saying was "If anything bad can bappen, it will." While filming in the swampland near Crandon Park in Miami we were attacked by a swarm of blue crabs, who were making their daily migration out with the tide. In yet anotber scene Carradine fires a flare gun to illuminate the sky, and both Producer Rueben Trane and I were burned by the falling debris.

When Luke Halpin and Fred Buck explore the Nazi gbost sbip they are supposed to pass numerous dead fish floating in and around the hull. However, we were faced with the problem of how to get the stubborn fish (purchased at a local market) to float. Even in death tbe darned things refused to do their duty. Finally, we scouted around and came up with a variety of styrofoam and wood scraps to stuff into the fish's mouths to keep them afloat. It worked, but not too many fisb will he seen in the final film. You see, despite our $150,000 production money, our fish budget only amounted to $15.00. . . . ■



Right (top): Captain Ben (John Carradine) is dragged ashore by Keith (Luke Halpin) and Chuck (Fred Buck) after being killed by the zombies. Middle: The corpse make-up, created out of latex and corn meal by Alan Ormsby. Bottom: Peter Cushing sits patiently as his "Scar" make-up is applied.

I AM CURIOUS (CLAY)

Article & Photos by Tom and Tina Coffey

I Am Curious (Clay) is a five minute animated clay comedy. The film presents the adventures of a small, curious piece of clay and its interactions with several other clay creatures.

We worked on the film from June through September, 1974. This was our third animated short together, and we had already developed a working style which fit our teamwork well. By early June we'd written a rough description of the plot and we began to make a storyboard. Every action of each shot was described in detail, along with technical data and a sketch, on index cards. It eliminated guesswork, so that we knew exactly what we were doing when filming began and had a good idea of what the finished film would look like. Once the planning was completed we considered ourselves more than halfway through the work.

Next we designed the clay creatures. With each film we've made, it has become harder to come up with unique and interesting characters. One must often compromise between imagination and practibility. What may look stunning on paper might not stand up under the hot lights.

One of our most successful characters in the film was a red creature which looked like a cross between an ape and a frog. Part of the realistic appearance of his face was achieved by building clay around a small model-kit skull (with a movable jaw). This also gave him teeth. For his hands we used skeletal hands from the same kit. By the way, the average height of our characters was four or five inches.

What we tried to emphasize most in *I Am Curious (Clay)* was the personality of each character. Therefore, we did not want the background scenery to be too cluttered and distract the viewer. We solved the problem by having a stylized landscape. Two poster boards were used—a blue one stationed vertically in the background, and a yellow one used as the ground. The plot required the use of several rocks as props, so each was securely set in place. To create a sense of perspective, large rocks were placed in the foreground and tiny pebbles in the back. We were careful when lighting the set that shadows did not fall on the blue "sky." We wanted the landscape to have a look of houndless space, although we were filming on a space only two by three feet.

The forced perspective helped attain this, and when a character walked off one "set" and onto another, we simply changed the position of the rocks. The two poster boards remained the same throughout the film. Often when a difficult camera position was required, we would only re-position the rocks, character, and change the camera angle.

We finally began filming by the end of June. The time we spent on the film varied from two to twelve hours a day, but we did manage to film almost every day. Our main problem with animation is that it takes a long time to get good at, and if you don't keep in practice, you get rusty. It had been a year and a half since we had animated, and when our first two weeks of work came back from processing, we were disappointed. The animation was jerky, and we had difficulty with the main character, because we had used a clay other than Plasticene to build him with, and it wasn't flexible enough. He kept falling apart, looking terribly stiff and unnatural on the screen.

Well, at this point we had two alternatives: to stop the film completely and try to forget we'd ever learned to animate in the first place, or to scrap the first two scenes and begin again. After a lot of thought, we decided to start the film all over. We really took our time, and before each shot referred to the first version to see what improvements could be made and what faults could be avoided.

What was really time consuming in making the film was not so much the animation as the setting up of each shot. There were over a bundred shots in the film, and in between each shot the characters had to be given "face-lifts" because of the hot lights. Fortunately it wasn't noticeable on screen (for most of the shots are only two or three seconds long), but by the end of each shot the characters were unmanageable. To prevent the clay from melting during long shots, we would place the clay in the freezer for a few minutes. Frozen clay "sweats" as it thaws, so great care was taken to wipe away the moisture before each frame was taken.

Our teamwork went well throughout the summer. This is hard to believe, since animation seems like one-person work. Our single efforts,

however, were never as effective as those we collaborated on. We need each other to discipline one another. Being brother and sister helped, since we're both under the same roof and could work our schedules around each other. We took turns on filmmaking duties. One of us would move the characters while the other checked the viewfinder, clicked the cable-release, and counted the frames. By counting frames we kept a sense of time which is easy to lose in animation work. What took hours to film often ended up as seconds on the screen, so if we weren't aware of exactly how many frames each movement should have taken, chances are that it would happen too fast. We found it helped a lot, in calculating the action per frame, for one of us to act out each shot exactly as we wanted our characters to do it, while the other counted seconds. Beside adding realism to our animation, this also gave comic relief from the tedium.

Several scenes in the film used simple trick shots that saved us a lot of time and clay. In one scene the red ape-creature meets up with a character about ten times his size. The red creature was about six inches long, and we knew it would be impossible to make a five-foot high clay model! Therefore, for the long shots we used a five inch model of the "large" creature, and a tiny version of the red character. Little pebbles which looked similar to the larger rocks were placed identically. Frequent intercutting between a high angle of the actual red character and a low angle of the "large" creature furthered the effect. The end result was quite convincing. Other tricks included a mask to indicate a shot from in between a group of rocks, looking out at one of the characters, and a glass shot of the red character hopping. Since clay doesn't defy gravity too well, we filmed the shot with the camera aimed down at the character, which was lying flat on a plate of glass suspended horizontally over the background.

When the film came back from processing, we were pleased to see that it came very close to our expectations. The animation was a great improvement over the first attempt, and there weren't even any mysterious hands popping in for a frame. Since no mistakes had been made and everything had been filmed in proper sequence exactly as planned, the only splicing required was to put the two rolls of film onto one. In keeping with the overall simplicity of the film, our music was a light piano tune arranged and recorded by our close friend, Ann Grey.

The film was completed just in time to enter into the 1974 Kodak Teenage Movie Awards, where it won a special award for three-dimensional animation. We then entered—and placed—in several other contests. At last count the film has won ten awards. We laugh now when we remember that our original conception of *I Am Curious (Clay)* was as "a little clay comedy we can make in a week or two." Although our family and friends might not agree, we have no regrets as to how we spent our vacation. Animation can be a pain in the neck, but we love it. ■

Tom and Tina Coffey were both born in Detroit, Michigan (Tom in 1955; Tina in 1957). They began making films in 1971 after they were inspired by a friend's clay animation work. They purchased a simple Super 8 camera and tripod and were soon experimenting with live action, animation (stop-motion and cartoon), and various special effects. Although they have worked solo, their favorite films are ones they collaborated on. I AM CURIOUS (CLAY) is their thirteenth film and the best one to date. Tom and Tina are attending college now, and don't have the free time they used to, but they are still managing to work on their eighteenth film, one that they say is "our most ambitious so far."

THE ALIEN FACTOR

SPECIAL SNEAK PREVIEW

Article by Don Dohler

Photos by Britt McDonough, Richard Geiwitz, Charlie Reinitz, & Don Dohler

How many of us started into filmmaking with crude, 8mm "mad scientist" horror epics, churned out on weekends in basements, garages, and living rooms? How many of us later progressed to more sophisticated Super or Single 8 (maybe even 16mm) films with sync-sound, elaborate special effects, and jazzy titles? And finally, how many of us—through these first two stages of normal filmmaking development—yearn for the big times—that crack at doing a real, honest-to-goodness feature film?

The answer to all three questions is *most of us*. And our group certainly wasn't an exception. Ever since the beginning of this magazine—back in 1972—I have become ever-aware of the abundance of true talent hiding itself in the shadow of the words "amateur filmmaker." I think the articles and film profiles presented in CINEMAGIC testify to that fact. And though many of the films and filmmakers presented in these pages are truly amateurs (albeit creative, talented amateurs), a good many have the ability and experience to rub elbows with the best of professional film people.

With this knowledge in mind, and the fact that I've come to personally know so many talented filmmakers through the sheer existence of this magazine, I figured that it was time to pool local (and some not-so-local) talent for the purpose of making a feature-length theatrical film.

The plan was simple enough: gather together a group of technicians and special effects artists, get each individual to chip in an equal share of money, and let everyone "donate" his time and talents. With this concept, and a very rough idea for a story, I called together a varied group of filmmakers from the local Baltimore area. Most of us knew each other pretty well on a social level, but few of us had ever worked together on a creative film project.

That first meeting, back in June of last year, went exceptionally well, and after three or four subsequent gatherings, we had kicked the story concept around and were setting our sights on a July 1 starting date. Our assembled group consisted of Dave Ellis, who would handle the sound recording; Britt McDonough (long familiar to CINEMAGIC readers) as our chief cinematographer; Tony Malanowski as assistant director; John Cosentino on creature designs and special effects; George Stover playing a featured role in the film, as well as pulling in additional local acting talent; and yours truly, as script writer and director. Actually, such "titles" are nice and professional-sounding, but when you get right down to it on just about *any* independent film, *everybody* does a little of *everything*.

As mid-June rolled around and we had spent about two thousand hours in pre-production work (the tiny details are endless), I got a call from our only out-of-state partner, John Cosentino, who was handling the creation of two of our creature designs. "We'll die inside these foam rubber suits in that heat," John persuaded. And I listened, and finally, I agreed. So the July 1 commencement was pushed up until an October commencement. That worked out just as well, because typically, we hadn't realized the tremendous amounts of time necessary to merely get ready for *Day One* of the shoot. October 1st came and went, and it wasn't until October 16th that *Day One* actually happened.

Now it is mid-January, and filming is just about completed. After working for five weekends in October and November, and knocking off for the holidays during December, filming was resumed a few weeks ago. We would be finished filming now, too, except for some terrible sound problems which cannot be ironed out. At the outside location for one of our major sequences we discovered that we were near a small suburban airport. Despite waiting endless hours for small planes to either land or get out of mike range, we still picked up enough of the buzzing airplane engines to be very noticeable. Our choice is to spend tons of money and time in a studio dubbing sound, or to find a new location and re-film that major sequence. We've decided that in the long run, it'll be *much* cheaper to re-film.

The result is that we have only two small sequences which are useable from our October/November shooting. Those sequences represent about 2% of the total film, and our

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...ntino) is about to attack a man (Dave ... own basement in this scene from THE ALIEN ...R.

challenge now is to complete filming within a few weeks. We've already been out for two weeks in the worst winter weather in Baltimore history (average temperatures of about 10 degrees or lower), and we have three more weeks to go. We've got 40% of the film in the can now, and we're confident that we'll have 100% hy February 13th. Of course, by the time you read this it will probably be late March, and filming will have been finished, but I'll let you know how it worked out in the next issue.

The Evolution Of The Story

My original idea was to make a film quickly and cbeaply—a fast-buck vehicle that we could use as a springboard to bigger and better projects. The first title for our film was *Lance Sterling—Monster Killer,* and it was to be a parody of every horror flick we'd ever seen. At first there was so much enthusiasm for this approach that we were coming up with more comedy and sight-gags than plot, and it seemed that the whole thing was turning into a sort of one-act satire. Finally, we came to our senses and said *nix*. From everything we had heard and read, the safest bet for a "first feature" was a straight-approach horror film. We continued on that premise, and I began writing the script.

As the days rolled on, and script page after script page was completed, I started to notice that our ordinary horror film was turning more into a science fiction kind of thing, demanding a lot more special effects and good acting performances than we had previously calculated. A conflict then set in: should I continue writing this rather involved story, or scrap it and go back to a simple "monster-on-the-loose" concept? My decision was to compromise: *three* monsters on the loose with science fiction overtones. Tbus our monsters hecame alien creatures, set loose on earth by an accident. Since we wanted our film to ring nostalgic of sci-fi films of the '50's, I set the whole story within the mythological small town of Perry Hill. If you change "Hill" to "Hall," it should sound like a familiar place—but "Perry Hall" somehow just doesn't cut it as a small town.

So our imaginary small town took on all the characteristics of typical old sci-fi movies. Although there isn't really any scene in the film taking place in tbe town's exterior, we did find a suitable location for a few establishing sbots. Just about all of the action "in town" was written to take place in the sheriff's office, an interior we built on a super-modest budget in part of my basement. Our total office set budget came to about $50.00—and most of that was for lumber. I had several planks of sheetrock, which we used for the walls, and between us we all donated something to embellish the set: an old varnished door and tahle lamp from Dave Ellis, Venetian blinds from Tony Malanowski, a black dialphone from George Stover, and even an old wooden coatrack brought to us by our good friend Bruce Dods, who came down from New Jersey to watcb us film one weekend. Our gunrack was purchased from a second-hand store for $5.00, and the guns placed on it were borrowed from a variety of people. The large bulletin board in tbe set is merely another piece of sheetrock, framed and painted tan; and the local Post Office was eager to donate several old "wanted" posters. For a "call box" we set up a microphone and a wood-encased stereo speaker on top of a small particle board desk. The mike is a genuine tabletop one, picked up hy one of our actors, Chris Gummer, for a dollar at a flea market.

With all the ingredients put together, I've got to say that our sheriff's office has charm, and a definite photogenic quality. Composition was generally easy when we shot on this set, and it's visually enjoyable on the screen.

Top: George Stover (in white coat), Richard Geiwitz, and Tom Griffith listen as Don Dohter explains the next shot. Bottom: Geiwitz and Griffith—deputy and sheriff respectively— in the sheriff's office, a set built for the modest sum of $50.00.

Having the set built early helped me tremendously to visualize camera set-ups while I wrote the script. I knew the limitations of camera angles, and I always knew which direction the characters would have to face for continuity's sake.

The basic story of *The Alien Factor* is fairly typical, but that's the way we wanted it. Three alien creatures are loose in this small town, and they're attacking the townspeople left and right. The sheriff is stumped (he at first attributes the deaths to a large animal), and the mayor is on the sheriff's back to "get out and find the thing before it kills anybody else!" The town doctor (a woman) helps thicken the mystery by discovering strange, impossible symptoms in several of the bodies ("No animal I've heard of could do *that.*"). Meanwhile, there is an overly ambitious girl reporter —the small town girl who's been to the big city to study journalism and has now returned home to become the assistant editor of the town paper. She's pesky, and constantly risking her neck within the film. Finally we have the outsider who comes into town, befriends the mayor, and inevitably becomes the savior.

With these characters it was easy to create emotion and turmoil and hence, conflict. You've got to have conflict to have any sympathy for your characters, and if the audience can't sympathize the story loses credibility (and it's tough enough trying to make horror and science fiction believable). So far, our actors have done a convincing job, and in the daily rushes they seem believable to me, so I'm confident that when all is cut together properly, our story will have believable characters with whom the audience can identify.

I should point out that we did things a bit backwards in our preproduction scheme; that is, we held screen tests and chose our actors before the final script was written. I had roughed out a story, described the characters, and scouted most of

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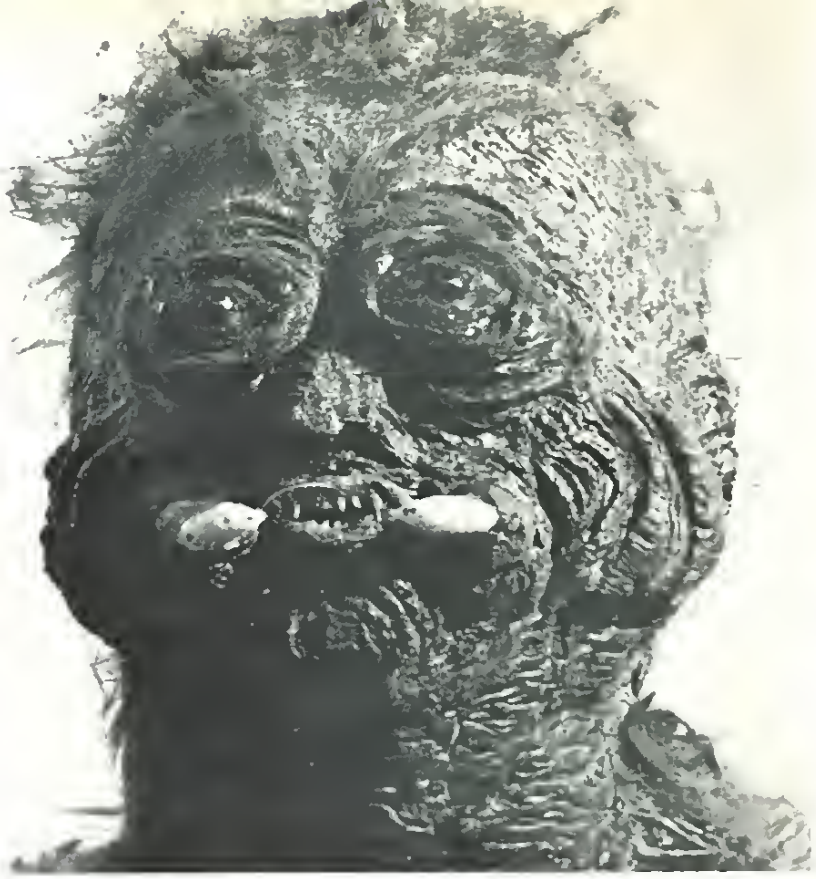
Right (top): Baltimore radio personality Johnny Walker poses between takes with his foe, the Inferbyce (built and worn by Larry Schlechter). Middle: The Leemoid, a stop-motion model built and animated by Britt McDonough. Bottom: Ben Zachary (Don Leifert) communicates telepathically with a wounded alien (Tony Malanowski).



Left: The 7½ foot tall Zagatile (John Cosentino) dwarfs Eleanor Herman and 6 foot tall Chris Gummer in this pose taken between shots. Right: A closer look at "Zaggie's" face.

the exterior locations before we held the screen tests. With our cast selected, I knew precisely what sort of personalities I was dealing with, and although I bad preconceived notions as to the characters in the film, *knowing* what the actors were like really helped. This was my first crack at writing an entire feature-length script, and Baltimore is not Hollywood—so it wasn't a matter of having hundreds of talented actors at our disposal. We bad to take what we could get locally for the most part, but somehow, the people we cast fit beautifully into their respective roles.

The only sort of difficulty we encountered with our performers (who are all working on a deferred payment basis) was in scbeduling. We wormed our way around this by giving available actors scenes which were written for other actors (wbo weren't able to meet scbedules on particular days). Luckily, this sort of character-switching bad no ill effect on the story, and in one case it actually worked out better.

The Special Effects

Although our original concept was to make a quickie, fast-buck monster film, we wanted to at least have the monsters look good. When the script metamorphosed to a more plausible storyline, we at first still decided to let our special effects go at three different "monster" creations. However, as we got further into developing our story, we saw a definite need for additional and more sophisticated effects. The first decision here was to make one of our creatures a stop-motion model, rather than a man-in-suit, like the other two creatures. For this task I convinced our cameraman, Britt McDonough, to build a ball-and-socket, latex build-up model, based on my specs. Britt put the model together in one week, using a new, simplified ball-and-socket construction method recently developed by a young man in Virginia. (This new method does not require drilling or soldering, and uses ready-made parts. We *will* present an article on this in a future issue.)

The only significant difference in our stop-motion sequence is that the model will be superimposed over live action of an actor. The reason is that we want the creature called a *Leemoid* in the film, to be a rather ghostly energy creature who is visible only at nigbt. The sequence involving the Leemoid takes place near the end of the film, and will last about three minutes on the screen.

For our other creatures, we called on Jobn Cosentino and Larry Schlechter. Jobn (who, as I mentioned earlier, is from Michigan) submitted several drawings of various creatures, and two designs were chosen. One of them, a 7½-foot-tall beast with furry legs similar to Harryhausen's *7th Voyage* cyclops, became our Zagatile in *The Alien Factor*. The second design must remain secret for now, for it would reveal too much about our plot. In any case, both creatures were meticulously sculpted in clay, and hugefull-body casts were made in plaster. John decided tbat he would have to wear the Zagatile outfit, so be somehow managed to make his *own* body cast. He used 700 pounds of plaster for the cast, and described it as "Yucchh!" His process was so intriguing, tbough, that I asked him to write an article about it for a later issue of CM (he agreed to do so). The unique thing about the Zagatile is its feet: a foot and a balf of welded steel, with claw-sbaped toes, and ski-boots at the top into which John strapped his own feet. Together with his own six-foot frame, Jobn stood 7½ feet tall when suited up and standing on the steel Zagatile feet.

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Larry Schlechter chose a different approach to creature design. Since his Inferbyce was to be a man-like version of a cockroach, Larry decided that for it to look hard-shelled, it would have to be hard-shelled. He created the suit in hinged sections out of a cardboard base with papier mache build-up. Several coats of liquid latex, paint, and varnish complete the effect of a shiny, slithery cockroach-thing.

With our main three creatures out of the way, we took to the task of additional special effects. Many of these were simply in-camera optical effects, while others were miniatures combined with live action. One of the most convincing on-screen effects so far is a shot of a huge spaceship which is crashed into the earth. Two of our characters walk up to the large craft and inspect it. Here again, we called on the talents of John Cosentino and Britt McDonough. Together they constructed a beautiful miniature of the spaceship and surrounding "earth." The earth was sculpted in Celluclay (a ready-made papier mache substance) and appropriately painted. To pull off the illusion of the live actors looking dwarfed against a giant craft we did a "deceptive perspective" shot. That is, the spacecraft model platform was arranged in such a way as to blend in with the live terrain, and the actors were placed several hundred feet away from the miniature. The camera, sporting a 10mm wide-angle lens, was placed a few inches from the model, and the effect became the illusion of a large spacecraft and tiny men. The important thing in such a shot is how well tbe tiny miniature actually blends in with the live terrain, and having both the close minature and the distant actors in sharp focus. We were fortunate when we shot this sequence because it was an extremely bright day and we were able to close down the lens to f8. To further insure sharpness, we focused mid-way between the miniature and the actors. All-in-all, the effect is totally convincing, and people who have seen it think it's some sort of precisely executed matte shot.

There are several other effects in the film, but I suppose I should reserve myself here and save a few surprises for when you get to see *The Alien Factor*. Suffice it to say that the film has an abundance of

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Top (left): Eleanor Herman (who ptays Mary Jane in the film) takes a minute to frolic in the atternoon sun during shooting which took place in warm October. Top (right): The hands of the crew make final adjustments on Larry's Schlechter's Inferbyce suit prior to an action sequence. Left: Assistant director Tony Malanowski makes an adjustment on the Zagatile suit as John Cosentino takes a breather between takes. Below: The CINEMAGIC VISUAL EFFECTS trademark, designed and painted by Canadian artist, Tim Hammell. This trademark will be used on atl subsequent C.V.E. films.

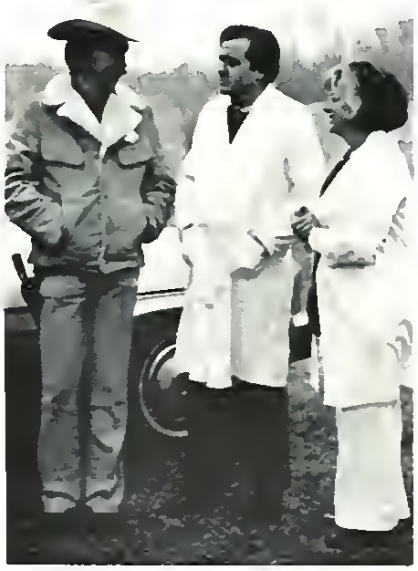
special effects—the three main alien creatures, two other original make-up designs, several intriguing optical effects, the miniature spaceship perspective shot, and a matte explosion.

Summary

Looking ahead to the completion of *The Alien Factor* is, of course, an exciting proposition for all of us. With what we've already got in the can, and filming yet to come, we anticipate having an adventuresome, exciting motion picture, and one with few compromises because of our budget limitations. We're definitely into a PG rating, which is what we want, because most of our violence is limited in its graphic depiction. Sure, there's *some* blood (*has* to be in this sort of film), but the extent and nature of it is slight on the screen. The story is really just a mystery/build-up, with a few "shock" scenes and several interesting special effects to give it a science fiction/horror quality. The thing we are happiest about so far is that we have maintained good continuity and a logical storyline, with few—if any—loose ends dangling before our eyes. And we've managed to keep the flow of the story at an interesting pace—there are no lulls of any degree to allow audience boredom.

In summing up, I can't honestly say at this point that we've created a new cult "classic," because we did not set out to do that, but because of the donations and creativity of so many talented people, I believe *The Alien Factor* will have the look of a much higher budgeted film than it really is. In the final analogy our film should prove a good point, familiar to so many of you who are reading this: that imagination, creativity, and ambition easily outweigh a bigh budget. ■

Below (left): Dick Dyszel, a Washington, D.C. television personality, plays the conniving Mayor Wicker in THE ALIEN FACTOR. Right: Tom Griffith, George Stover, and Anne Frith (who plays the town's doctor) discuss the strange deaths. Bottom: Keeping warm between takes in the ten-degree winter weather—the Inferbyce, as leading lady Mary Mertens looks on amused (but nevertheless cold!).



MAIN CAST

Ben Zachary ..... Don Leifert
Sheriff Cinder ..... Tom Griffith
Mayor Wicker ..... Dick Dyszel
Edie Martin ..... Mary Mertens
Pete Evans ..... Richard Geiwitz
Ruth Sherman ..... Anne Frith
Steven Price ..... George Stover
Mary Jane ..... Eleanor Herman
Clay ..... Chris Gummer
And Johnny Walker as Rex

PRODUCTION CREW

Screenplay/Direction ..... Don Dohler
Cinematography ..... Britt McDonough
Assistant Director ..... Tony Malanowski
Sound Recording ..... Dave Ellis
Music/Sound Effects .. Kenneth Walker
Special Effects ..... John Cosentino
Larry Schlechter
Britt McDonough
Title/Trademark ..... Tim Hammell
Production Assistants .. Chris Gummer
Dan White
Ed Litzinger
Color by ..... Du Art Film Labs, Inc.
Technical Advisor ..... David Geatty

OWN A PIECE OF THE ALIEN FACTOR

As pointed out in the preceding article, THE ALIEN FACTOR is being made on a minimal budget. Although we have put up the money needed to completely film the movie, we still need post-production budget. This would be for 35mm release prints, promotions, and initial advertising.

To raise this money, we are offering percentages of the net profits at $500.00 per one-half percent, or $1,000.00 per one percent. We are limited to the sale of ten percent of our film.

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2. STRANGE VOYAGE—Tricked by Sokurah, Sinbad loses his men and is forced to racruit a crew of cut-throats.

3. EVIL MAGICIAN—Sinbad battles the giant, two-headed Roc to rescue his beloved Princess Parisa.

4. DRAGON'S LAIR—The fight between the cyclops and the incredible fire-breathing dragon.

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2. TRITON: LORD OF THE DEEP—Jason and his men fight the fearsome flying harpies, then face the perils of the "clashing rocks" before they are saved by Triton.

3. HYDRA OF HADES—Jason fights the deadly seven-haaded Hydra in order to get the Golden Fleece.

4. THE GOLDEN FLEECE—Jason, escaping with the Fleece, must battle "the children of the Hydra's teeth"—an army of skeletons, in the most amazing stop-motion sequence ever put on film!

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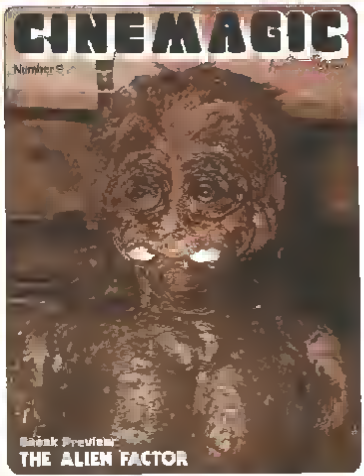
The hideous demon from the feature film, THE DEMON LOVER. This make-up was designed by Dennis & Robert Skotak. For more about the Skotaks see page 5 inside.



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