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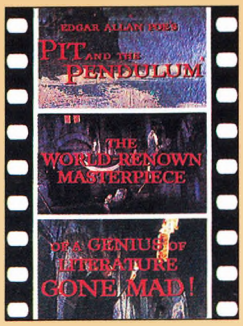
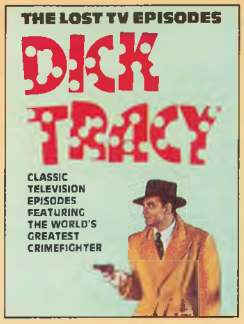


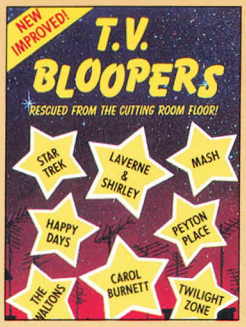

**Trailers**

Each of the following tapes (preview trailers) runs approximately one hour and features thematic groupings from genre films of the past. *Horror/SF I, Horror/SF II, Horror/SF III, Horror/SF IV (Hammer Horror), Horror/SF V (Horrible Honeys), Horror/SF VI (Super Giants), Hitchcock Collection,* and *American International Pictures (AIP).*




**Dick Tracy Tapes**

These quality videos featuring comics hero Dick Tracy come directly from the distributor and are recorded in "Standard Play". *Dick Tracy vs. Cueball; Dick Tracy Meets Gruesome; Dick Tracy Documentary; Dick Tracy Detective; Dick Tracy's Dilemma; Lost TV Episodes Vol. 1; Lost TV Episodes Vol. 2; Lost TV Episodes Vol. 3;* and *Lost TV Episodes Vol. 4.*

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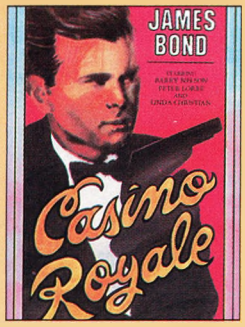
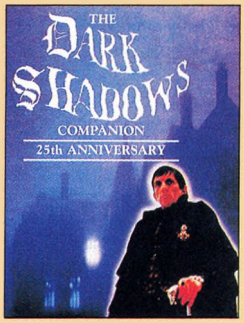
These three tapes offer something a little different for the well-rounded collector! 1) *Batman/Superheroes* features a delightful assortment of TV good guys; 2) *Faces of Tarzan* traces the vine swinger's 70 year history (from the silents on); 3) *TV Bloopers* some of the funniest outtakes ever assembled (including faves like STAR TREK and TWILIGHT ZONE).




**Bond Tapes**

These three videos are fondly devoted to the screen's most-loved secret agent—007. 1) *Bond At The Movies*—a compilation of trailers with Sean Connery and Roger Moore; 2) *Casino Royale* is a classic TV production with Barry Nelson as Bond; and 3) *The Many Faces of Bond* is a tribute featuring all six Bond actors.




**Dark Shadows Companion**

A 25th anniversary collection of photographs and behind-the-scenes stories of DARK SHADOWS. The book is edited by series' star Kathryn Leigh Scott, and includes a forward by Jonathan Frid (vampire Barnabus Collins). Contributors to this 208 page volume include actors, writers, producers, and directors of the original show. Includes rare color and b&w photos, synopsis of all 1,225 original episodes, and an introduction to the new NBC series. Available in hardcover (HC) and softcover (SC). *A few author-autographed bookkplates are available on a first-come, first-served basis.*


**Reel Art**

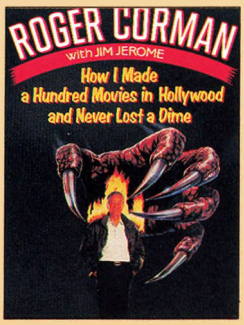
In 1988 Stephen Rebello authored one our most beloved cover stories entitled "Selling Nightmares: The Movie Poster Artists of the Fifties." Now Rebello (along with Richard Allen) follows-up this classic genre article by broadening his coverage to survey the entire field of films made during Hollywood's "golden age." Rebello's handsomely produced volume is clothbound, huge (10¾ x 13¼), 336 pages, with 325 illustrations (250 in full color) and comes with a special bonus for **Cinefantastique** readers—a custom autographed bookplate (available in limited quantities—so order today!).


**Dark Shadows Original Music**

Soundtracks from the old series include: *Volume 1*—A 1990 re-issue of the original 1969 soundtrack featuring vocals by Jonathan Frid and David Selby; *Volume 2*—released in 1986 for the show's 20th Anniversary it features tunes like "I Wanna Dance With You" and "Ode to Angelique"; *Volume 3*—Released in 1987 featuring music from the original soundtrack as well as other rare cues such as "Daphne's Ghost"; *Volume 4*—Released in 1988 featuring seldom-played, never before released pieces like "Magda's Curse." *Vol 1 available on album or CD; all others available on album only.*

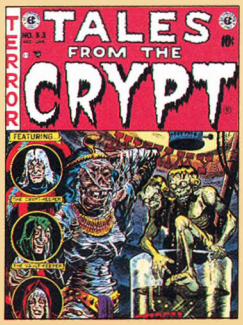

**My Scrapbook Memories of Dark Shadows**

This collectors item is a must for all fans of the popular gothic horror/soap opera of the late '60s-early '70s. Written by actress Kathryn Leigh Scott (who starred as "Maggie Evans" and "Josette Dupres", the doomed bride of the vampire "Baranabas"), this 152 page gem is packed with fascinating behind-the-scenes stories, 80 pages of photos, and a complete listing of every actor who ever appeared on the show—including Kate Jackson, Marsha Mason, and Abe Vigoda. Available in hardcover (HC) and softcover (SC). *A few author-autographed bookkplates are available on a first-come, first-served basis.*



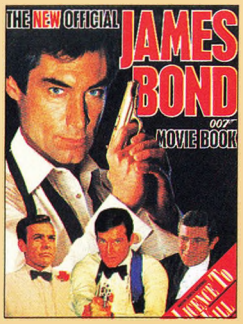

**How I Made A Hundred Movies In Hollywood And Never Lost A Dime**

This autobiography details Roger Corman's rise from 20th Century-Fox messenger to anti-studio maverick and leading producer of low-budget "exploitation" films. Corman's ruthless efficiency, resourcefulness, and sense of humor helped make him a Hollywood legend. Mentor to some of today's hottest directors and founder of New World Pictures, Corman offers tips and anecdotes for all film lovers. Clothbound, 240 pages, 6¼x9½.




**EC Classics**

EC Comics fans will delight in these eight popular magazine-style reprints from the EC vaults, reproduced in their original splendor with glossy full-color covers as well as full-color throughout; each includes eight stories and is equivalent to two comic books. *# 1 (Tales From The Crypt); #2 (Weird Science); #5 (Weird Fantasy); #6 (Vault of Horror); #7 (Weird Science-Fantasy); #9 (The Haunt of Fear); #11 (Tales From The Crypt);* and *#12 (Weird Science).*




**Official James Bond Movie Book**

Here is the world's first and only official James Bond movie book, dedicated to the most successful series in motion picture history! Guaranteed to send the millions of Bond fans to 007 heaven, this updated volume, with more than 135 full-color and 95 black and white photographs, celebrates a quarter of a century of everybody's screen hero, including material on the latest blockbuster, LICENCE TO KILL, with the return of Timothy Dalton as James Bond. 8¼ x 11¾, hardcover, 128 pages.


**EC Box Sets**

Four EC Library box sets of bound volumes the equivalent of 5 to 6 comic books. 1) *The Complete Vault*—5 volumes containing all 29 issues of Vault of Horror; 2) *The Complete Crypt*—5 volumes containing all 30 issues of Crypt of Terror and Tales From The Crypt; 3) *The Complete Haunt*—5 volumes containing all 29 issues of Haunt of Fear; and 4) *Complete Weird Science-Fantasy*—a 2 volume set containing all 7 issues of Weird Science Fantasy and all 4 issues of Incredible Science Fiction.

**SEE PAGE 63 FOR PRICES AND HOW TO ORDER BY MAIL OR BY USING OUR TOLL FREE HOTLINE**

CINEFANTASTIQUE®

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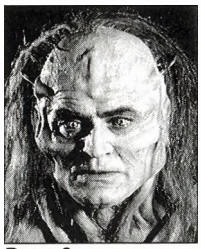
VOLUME 21 NUMBER 4 | The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder." | FEBRUARY, 1991

Welcome to our Christmas issue, wrapped in red—blood red—appropriate to the season and to the subject, horror phenomenon Stephen King. While we listen to the jingling of Salvation Army kettles, Columbia Pictures hopes to hear the same sound at boxoffices across the land, as it unveils MISERY, the seventeenth King film adaptation since CARRIE jolted audiences in 1974.

Looking back on the cover story we devoted to CARRIE at the time—interviews with director Brian DePalma and star Sissy Spacek in which King's name is mentioned only in passing—it seems odd to contemplate an era in which King's towering presence did not dominate the horror field. In little more than fifteen years, King has established himself as a protean engine of horror fiction, proficient at his craft as well as prolific. But while King's name has come to mean something to his avid following on the cover of a book, it doesn't quite have the same cachet when connected to a film project. Yet Hollywood keeps bashing away at King's hard-won reputation, with King seemingly a more than willing participant. With MISERY the climax of a King crescendo this year that saw Hollywood market four projects on the strength of King's name, we felt it was time to explore the quality gap that yawns between King's fiction and the attempts by filmmakers to visualize it.

Writer Gary Wood focuses on MISERY by interviewing King, director Rob Reiner, writer William Goldman, and makeup experts Greg Nicotero and Howard Berger. Now playing in theatres, the verdict is in as to whether Reiner decided to soft-peddle King's blood-and-gore as he promised, or wallow in it as some suggested. In a companion piece by Wood, King looks at his checkered film past, and many of those who adapted him try to put their fingers on what went wrong. Also previewed are King films yet-to-come, including THE STAND, THE DARK HALF, and APT PUPIL, based on his novella from *Different Seasons*. Along the way King comments on Steven Spielberg, working for Dino DeLaurentiis, and the idea of getting back behind the camera himself.

*Frederick S. Clarke*



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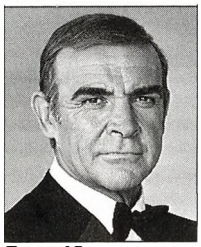

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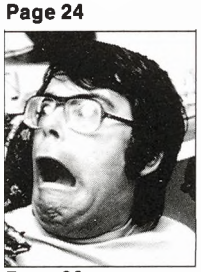

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# MEET THE APPLEGATES

## Director Michael Lehman's jab at the American dream.

*By Steve Biodrowski*

Michael Lehman and Denise Di Novi, the director-producer team who lampooned high school in their black comedy debut, HEATHERS (1989), turn their satiric sights on the suburban family in MEET THE APPLEGATES. The film sat on the shelf at New World Pictures for more than a year before being picked up for release by Triton Pictures, which plans to open it nationwide in January. Di Novi has since gone on to produce Tim Burton's quirky EDWARD SCISSORHANDS (see right) and Lehman is currently directing Tri-Star's big budget HUDSON HAWK in Italy for producer Joel Silver, starring Bruce Willis.

MEET THE APPLEGATES, probably to be titled simply THE APPLEGATES, to avoid confusion with MEET THE HOLLOWHEADS, was shot from a script credited to Lehman and Redbeard Simmons. The film uses a simple science fiction fantasy conceit as a premise for its satire: a family of insects camouflage themselves as humans in order to avenge themselves against humanity for encroaching on their rain forest homeland. Because their knowledge of suburban life is derived almost solely from *Dick and Jane* books used to teach English to the natives, the Applegates start off as a '50s sit-com perfect family; however, once exposed to the reality of family life, they soon fall prey to its dark side: teen pregnancy, drugs, infidelity and debt.

The Applegates, giant bugs in human guise (l to r), Cami Cooper, Ed Begley Jr., Stockard Channing and Bobby Jacoby, pose as a typical American family.


Ed Begley Jr. and Stockard Channing star as the undercover insect parents, and Dabney Coleman is their transvestite leader, Aunt Bea. Kevin Yagher provided transformation effects and full-sized suits for their guise as insects. Since insects can survive nuclear fall-out, the plan is to move into a typical American town near an atomic power plant, where the father takes a job in the hopes of sabotaging the facility to cause an explosion. The film originally ended with the human-sized insect family, played by a mime and three dancers, high-kicking their way through a chorus line rendition of a musical put on by the town, entitled "People Are Neat." That version was dropped in editing and a new one devised in which the nuclear reactor actually explodes and then the human characters, losing their hair from radiation sickness, visit the Applegates back in their Brazilian rain forest.

Although Yagher speculated that the dance number may simply not have worked, another possibility is that the new ending is Lehman's answer to his critics, who complained that he copped out in HEATHERS by not blowing up the high school he had held up to such venomous ridicule. The Triton Pictures publicity rep said Lehman was unavailable for comment.

"The movie is very surrealistic; it isn't meant to be taken seriously," said Bobby Jacoby, who plays the Applegates' insect son. "It was a fun role, because he starts out like a character out of a *Dick and Jane* book; then he ends up being the town drug dealer. Basically, the message is that American society can take anybody and corrupt them."

Yagher said he took a cartoony approach to the insect makeups because the film is intended as a comedy. "I suggested men in suits because they didn't want the expense

A man-sized bug by makeup expert Kevin Yagher in the film's abandoned "People Are Neat" song and dance number, replaced with an apocalyptic finale.

of seven puppeteers pulling cables," said Yagher. "One was a mime, and the others were dancers. I think the dancers worked out better because of their stamina—they're used to working up a sweat under hot conditions."

Yagher's designs are a hybrid of several insect species, including praying mantis head and mandibles, a cockroach paint scheme, and grasshopper hind legs. The transformation effects were kept to a minimum, mostly a matter of gluing a limb or an antennae onto one of the principal cast members. "They didn't want to spend a whole lot of time on that. There's one I really like, which is the Spot [the family dog] transformation. We had a real dog; then a three-quarter dog that sprouts wings and antennaes and wags his tail; then a second transformation stage—half dog, half bug; then a full dragonfly, dog, half bug; then a full dragonfly, sort of dog-shaped. That was really fun.

"We've seen things break out of their skins or out of cocoons, like in GREMLINS, so I thought, 'Why not go back to AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON, where things just sort of shapeshift,' so we ended up doing a lot of stretching and popping," said Yagher. "I was unhappy with the way that was cut together. We storyboarded it all; I thought we had an understanding, but maybe it didn't work in editing—I don't know. The heads were made so you could see them growing. There's a quick cut of that, but you don't really know what's going on, and when you cut back, it's already finished."

Though unhappy that some of his work

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# EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

## Director Tim Burton, the auteur of weird, does something really off-the-wall.

*By Steve Biodrowski*

Director Tim Burton survived the turbulence of teenaged adolescence by seeking solace not in rock-and-roll music but in the horror films of Vincent Price. Burton has continued to explore that fascination in his movies, all produced at Warner Bros, where he is currently preparing BATMAN II. Burton's films have been remarkably consistent for featuring weird male characters wearing makeup: Pee Wee Herman, in PEE WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE (1985), Betelgeuse, in BEETLEJUICE (1988) and the Joker, in BATMAN (1989), which demonstrated the director's evident lack of interest in the title character. Continuing this trend is Burton's latest and most personal effort, EDWARD SCISSORHANDS, which 20th Century Fox opens on a limited run December 14th. This time, however, Burton's emphasis is not on humor, but pathos.

Produced by Burton's partner Denise Di Novi for $20 million at Fox after Warners passed on the project, EDWARD SCISSORHANDS is the first feature which Burton has initiated himself and guided through development. The screenplay is by Caroline Thompson, based on Burton's original idea. Special makeup and effects, including hands for the titular freak, were provided by Oscar-winner Stan Winston. The remainder of the crew includes production designer Bo Welch and many of Burton's collaborators from BEETLEJUICE, such as art director Tom Duffield, set designer Rick Heinrichs, and composer Danny Elfman.

BATMAN director Tim Burton.

Diane Wiest plays Peg Boggs, an Avon lady so desperate to make a sale that she ventures to an abandoned mansion, where she finds Edward, living in isolation. Winona Ryder, the morbid young girl in BEETLEJUICE, plays a variation on that role as Peg's daughter Kim, who goes from loathing to loving Edward when her mother takes pity and brings him home.

Other cast members include Alan Arkin and Anthony Michael Hall as Kim's father and her boyfriend, and veteran genre actor Vincent Price, seen briefly in flashback as Edward's inventor, who dies of a heart attack before completing his creation, leaving him with skeletal, scissor-like hands.

Edward himself is portrayed by Ryder's real-life fiance, Johnny Depp, who, having previously abandoned the macho image of his role on 21 JUMP STREET to star in John Waters' CRY BABY, was unfazed by the character's "lack of virility," which (according to the *L.A. Times*) led Tom Cruise to turn down the role.

Though Fox is wont to compare their film to Steven Spielberg's E.T., EDWARD SCISSORHANDS is much closer to David Lynch's THE ELEPHANT MAN. Set in a small section of suburbia, the story chronicles Edward's attempts as a social misfit to find some niche for himself in society. Having lived alone nearly all his life, he has no grasp of society's norms of behavior, and his physical deformity lends an element of potential danger to even such simple actions as gesturing during a conversation.

Like Lynch's Merrick, who expressed himself by building a model of a church steeple, Edward shows considerable manual dexterity despite his deformity: using his hands as shears, he trims hedges into a menagerie of exotic animals, including a tyrannosaurus, then graduates to grooming dogs, and finally to giving elaborate hair cuts.

It's hard not to see Edward as Burton's metaphor for the creative artist whose work is prized even while the man himself is despised. Burton, with his wild black hair, bears some physical resemblance to his character, and at least part of the critical admiration for his work stems from a perception of him as a strange outsider who does not quite fit into the usual Hollywood mold. Burton resists such pat autobi-

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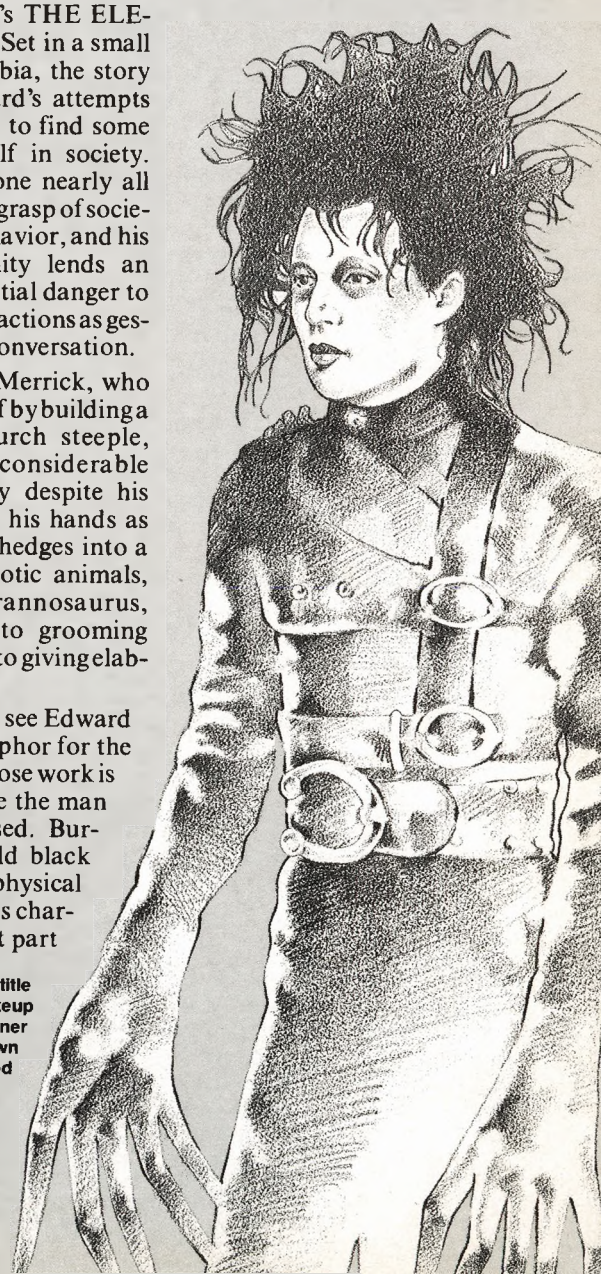


Johnny Depp as the title character in makeup designed by Oscar-winner Stan Winston. The spawn of a mad scientist played by Vincent Price, Depp as Scissorhands bears more than a passing resemblance to the director, his take on being an outsider.

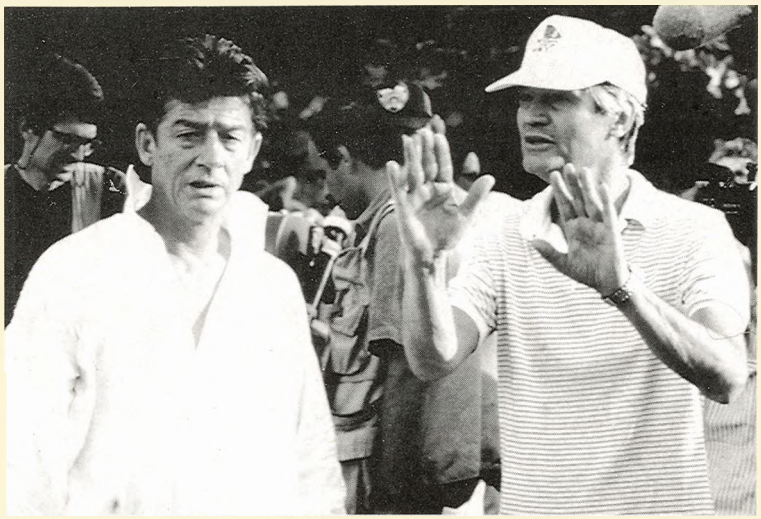
ILLUSTRATION BY JOHN HANLEY

# FRANKENSTEIN BOUND

## 20th Century Fox dumps Roger Corman's magnum opus off the shelf.

*By Steve Biodrowski*

**"Why else should the notion of Frankenstein's monster have affronted the imagination of generations, if it was not their intuition of God that was affronted?"**
**—Brian W. Aldiss**
**"Frankenstein Unbound"**



Corman directs John Hurt as the 21st century scientist who hurtles back in time to confront Frankenstein and his monster. Fox shelved, then dumped Corman's film in November.

20th Century-Fox took Roger Corman's FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND off the shelf in November to give it a token release on its way to home video. Corman's first directing assignment in twenty years, based on the novel by Brian Aldiss, stars John Hurt as a scientist from the future who encounters both Bridget Fonda as Mary Shelley and Raul Julia as Frankenstein, her fictional creation, when a time warp plunges him into a strange Victorian England of some alternate universe. Fox co-financed the $9 million Mount Company production with Warner Bros, but scrapped tentative release dates last April and August. In dumping the film in November, Fox distributed less than fifty prints in fifteen cities, including New York and Los Angeles, but refused to screen the film for critics until Corman insisted.

The credit for getting Corman back in the director's chair goes to producer Thom Mount, who first conceived the idea of remaking FRANKENSTEIN with Corman while head of Universal. He took the project with him when he left to form The Mount Company. "I had worked for Roger, like a million other people in this business, when I first got into town," said Mount, who wanted to repay Corman for giving him a doorway into the industry. "I always enjoyed tremendously Roger's work as a director, particularly the Poe series, which has attained a sort of legendary status, and I thought it would be a good idea to get him back on the floor."

Corman agreed to take up the directorial reins again under the stipulation that he could take an entirely new approach to the Mary Shelley material, such as setting it in the future, but the project languished until he hit upon the idea of basing his treatment on the Aldiss novel. "The most important part of the book was that it made an ethical connection between contemporary science and the work of Dr. Frankenstein—the moral implications of that excited us," said Mount. "There have been so many FRANKENSTEIN movies—by our count, 103 in the short ninety years of the film business, so what we didn't want to do was just make the 104th version."

Corman wrote the film's first draft script adapting the Aldiss book himself, a change from his usual working method. "I started as a writer, but I don't consider myself a good dialogue writer," said Corman. "I haven't written a screenplay for many years. My normal method is to come up with the ideas and tell them to a writer. But writers will always bring something of their own to a project, and very often it veers from the original idea I've had. Since I was going to direct this one, I wanted to make certain that the basic line of the script was the one I'd come up with."

Former film critic, F.X. Feeney was brought in, at the suggestion of Mount, to develop the dialogue and characterizations. "Roger's draft was a good breakdown of the kind of movie he wanted to make, but there were elements missing, like thematic development and characterization, and Roger was the first to admit it," said Feeney. "The thing I tried to do, which Roger encouraged, was make it more of a detective story. In other words, our hero doesn't arrive in 1816 knowing 'This is the year of *Frankenstein*.' Instead, he gets there and slowly puts the pieces together."

As an alternative to the book's first person narration, a talking computer was introduced into the automobile which accompanies Hurt through time—a convenient device to provide exposition regarding Mary Shelley, her cohorts, and her creations. More significant was the transformation of Hurt from Aldiss' diplomant to Corman's scientist, Buchanan. "This enabled me to bring in some thoughts about the meaning of science and the ways in which scientists of all generations look at their work," said Corman. "That to me was the key to giving a different dimension to the film. Part of the theme of the picture is that the differences between Frankenstein and Buchanan are superficial. Underneath, they have the same goals, and they see life and their work in a similar manner."

If this sounds somewhat

Shakespearean actor Nick Brimble as the monster, in makeup by Nick Dudman.

pretentious, Corman is quick to point out that his film is intended first and foremost as an entertainment. In fact, ever since the boxoffice failure of THE INTRUDER (1962), considered by many critics to be Corman's most personal and artistically successful film, the director has been unwilling to expose his sentiments openly in his work. "The picture is part horror, part science fiction, and part fantasy, but behind the entertainment there is a little bit of a theme," said Corman. "I don't want to push it or pound it home or even discuss it at any great length, but there is a slight religious overtone to the picture. If we can create life, then to a certain extent we are challenging God. What I wrote in the first draft, and what remains through the second and third drafts, is that these themes are inherent in the picture but they must be handled with delicacy because they must not overwhelm the film. I'm a believer that you can't say everything in a film, that the audience should contribute. You can imply certain things, and the audience solves the equation. The film becomes more meaningful for the audience if it participates in the process."

In a sense, Feeney said he had to go through a similar process while working with Corman on the script. "He's a hard man to read because he plays everything close to the vest," said the screenwriter. "When I went in for the first meeting, he was extremely friendly in the hall, but when we sat down in his office, his face went hard. Not hostile, not mean, just absolutely emotionless. He was not going to give me reaction one. I was going to have to project the movie as I saw it on a blank screen.

"I remember in one story conference, I won a point by saying, 'Roger, this film is about your belief in God.' I would not want to emphasize that at the expense of the entertainment value, because Roger was adamant about that, but I always knew from his films like MAN WITH THE X-RAY EYES and MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH that there was a moral core there. If you try to draw him out on it, he might get a little shy, but it's there, buried, very strongly."

Some directors work within the confines of a limited budget out of necessity; others, like the late Edgar G. Ulmer, seem temperamentally suited to that style of filmmaking. Corman falls into the latter category. Although he has occasionally worked on productions for major studios (THE ST. VALENTINE'S DAY MASSACRE), stories abound concerning his desire to work fast, whether or not the budget demands it. FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND, his biggest production to date, shot on a seven-week schedule, was no exception.

"Seven weeks is the longest I've ever had [to shoot]," said Corman, "but this is a rather complicated picture, and compared to a major studio picture, it's still a short schedule. For instance, I played a role as the head of the F.B.I. in Jonathan Demme's THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS. Jonathan started in October and didn't finish until Spring—and it's not that big a picture.

"I remember when I played a senator in GODFATHER II for Francis Coppola, who had started with me. Francis said, 'Roger, you will notice that we are moving rather slowly, and there is a lot of waste on this picture. I could save Paramount several million dollars by moving the company faster and more efficiently, but if I do that, it will take away from my work as a director. If they want to waste money, that's their privilege; I'm going to direct the picture.'"

Corman pointed out that his budget on FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND was only "somewhat bigger" than those of his previous films. "It's theoretically $9 million, but more than half of that went to what we call 'above-the-line' costs," he said. "Less than half was available for the actual production." Still, the additional time and money allowed Corman to concentrate more on the film's creative aspects, including the actors' performances—occasionally a weak point in Corman's early quickie efforts:

continued on page 60

Hurt is startled by the time warp appearance of a barbarian warrior, an optical by Illusion Arts of Van Nuys.

Hurt's scientist, propelled into the far future at the climax, walks toward a barren polar city and an uncertain fate, matte painting by Syd Dutton of Illusion Arts.

# Late for Dinner

## Cryogenic Rip Van Winkle fable directed by W. D. Richter.


Brian Wimmer (l) and Peter Berg, awakened strangers in a strange land.

*By Tim Vandehey*

Often times, when you take a long nap, you wake up feeling disoriented, like things are out of whack, not normal. Imagine that feeling if you'd slept for 29 years! That well-worn and well-loved Rip Van Winkle premise is the idea behind LATE FOR DINNER, a humanistic "fish out of water" film directed by W.D. Richter, the director of the cult favorite THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI (1984). Richter's second directorial effort is produced by Dan Lupovitz and Gary Daigler for Castle Rock Entertainment, and debuts nationwide from Columbia Pictures in January.

Richter directs Peter Berg, retarded by a lack of oxygen at birth, who goes to sleep in 1962 and wakes up in 1991.

Based on a debut screenplay by Mark Andrus, Richter focuses on two friends, Willie Husband (Brian Wimmer of TV's CHINA BEACH), an unemployed milkman, and Frank Lovegren (Peter Berg, the lead in Wes Craven's SHOCKER), Willie's brother-in-law who has been left somewhat mentally slowed by lack of oxygen at birth.

Willie and Frank become unknowing subjects in 1962 of a cryonics experiment at the hands of the evil (of course) Dr. Daniel Chilblains (Bo Brundin), who freezes them and leaves them unconscious, only to be awakened unchanged in 1991 after an accident disables his cryonics facility.

"There was a time in the late '50s and early '60s when cryonics was a fad," said producer Lupovitz. "So the idea had some logical basis." The premise is used by Richter to focus on Frank and Willie's encounters in a world that is new, strange, and frightening, as the duo attempts to rebuild their lives and find their families, who have quite naturally gone on without them.

LATE FOR DINNER started from a casual conversation about cryonics, and Richter ran with the idea of a man from the past awakening in the 1990's. He selected Andrus to write the script, originally with the more generic-sounding title of FREEZER. After developing the project, Richter eventually found support from Rob Reiner's Castle Rock Entertainment.

The history passed over by the film's sleepers is very important, according to producer Lupovitz. "It never really occurred to us to do a film where they went into the future," said Lupovitz. "We wanted to look at the world the way it is now, and this was one way to examine it and compare it to a time we already have a perspective on." Lupovitz noted that the film was originally set to begin in 1957, but was moved up to 1962 because that time, in the eyes of the filmmakers, was the beginning of a vital period in American history.

"We moved it up because it occurred to us that the modern era really starts when John Kennedy is assassinated," said Lupovitz. "Up to that time, people thought the U.S. could do no wrong, and then . . . boom! Along came Vietnam. That was an important time as to how our culture formed, and we wanted to take a close look at that."

Despite its science fiction trappings, Richter insists that LATE FOR DINNER is not about hardware, but is a moral fable about people trying to find love and put their lives back together in the face of adversity and time itself. "The science fiction is a real minor theme in the film," said Richter. "It's about being cut off from your roots, cut off from tradition, from the things that mean something to you in life. It's about two friends and how they help each other, and how important it is to get home."

The film, though, does have a genre look, most notably the cryonics lab where Willie and Frank are stored under the watchful eye of slightly skewed technician Leland Shakes. Constructed in a huge warehouse in the industrial town of Vernon, outside Los Angeles, the laboratory set kept the film crew captive (and knee-deep in water) for several days as they shot a tricky scene where the lab floods and knocks out the power to the freezing units, blowing out a door and setting the action in motion.

After Willie and Frank escape from the lab, the real adventure begins, as they stumble through a world which has become faster, bigger, dirtier, and more dangerous. The two men still think it's only been one day since they were put under. But as they encounter more and more

Wimmer and Berg play brothers-in-law, victimized by a cryogenics lab.

of the strangeness of modern Los Angeles, they begin to realize what's going on.

Some comedy, naturally, comes out of this, as the relatively naive Willie and Frank are confronted with such puzzling developments as convenience stores and some rather startling changes in the roles of women. "They don't really understand what's going on," said Steve LaPorte, the film's makeup designer and an Oscar winner for BEETLEJUICE. "They're naive to everything. They've never seen a guy with dreadlocks."

"They don't understand a lot of things anymore," said Richter. "They don't understand the idea of a black doctor, they don't understand the way women talk."

Couched within its stranger-in-a-strange-land action, filmmaker Richter insisted that the film is, in part, a comment on our dehumanizing times, and that idea is reflected by its odd title. "It points to the notion that rituals have been lost," said Richter. "I'm a firm believer in sitting down to dinner at the end of the day and discussing what has gone on. So the title, and the film, work on a lot of levels. These two guys are 29 years late for dinner, but so are a lot of other people in this country." □

# BUCKAROO BANZAI

## *Richter's directing debut became a cult favorite, so where's the sequel?*

*By Tim Vandehey*

When W.D. Richter's first feature film THE ADVENTURES OF BUCKAROO BANZAI: ACROSS THE 8TH DIMENSION, came out in August 1984, audiences were understandably nonplussed. Richter's multi-dimensional, science fiction-romance-adventure-comedy featured a stellar cast of future stars, including Peter Weller, Ellen Barkin, Christopher Lloyd, John Lithgow, and Jeff Goldblum, but was so off-the-wall and so poorly promoted by 20th Century Fox that it did not do well at the boxoffice. Richter had developed the project with screenwriting collaborator Earl Mac Rauch, off and on for a period of ten years.

Since its release, Richter's film has gained a massive cult following, with fans across the globe. The film became a highly successful video release for Vestron, and spawned its own fan club. That following generated interest in sequel-happy Hollywood in doing the follow-up promised at the end of the original film, BUCKAROO BANZAI VS. THE WORLD CRIME LEAGUE. But the project has never gotten off the ground. Richter, on the set of his new film, LATE FOR DINNER, admitted that the chances are slim of a Buckaroo Banzai sequel ever seeing the light of day.

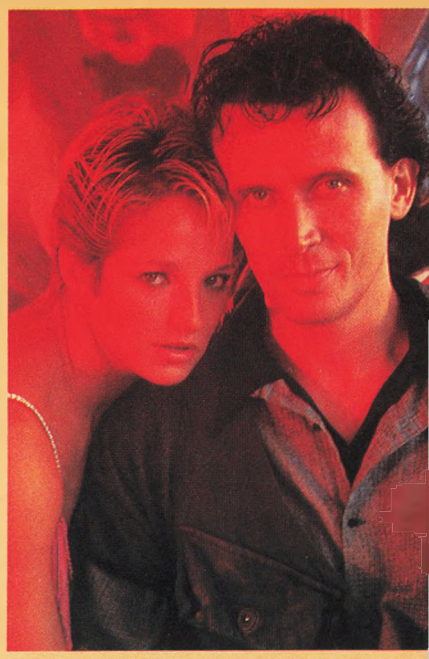
"We've fallen prey to a hostile management situation," said Richter. "The company that made the movie, Sherwood Productions, is now Gladden Entertainment. Both companies are run by David Begelman. He controls the rights, and he doesn't want to do anything else with Buckaroo Banzai."

Richter said he was approached by ABC, which wanted to do a network television series based on the film, and that, like all other offers, was shot down by Begelman. "We've had several financial sources come to us with offers to finance the sequel, and every offer we've had has hit a dead end because Begelman won't release the rights." Richter and Rauch actually developed the concept for a series along the same lines, HEROES IN TROUBLE, but ABC declined to proceed.

Richter feels that with the support that the original film had accrued over the years, a sequel could do well at the boxoffice. "It could if it were made in the right way for the right amount of money," he said. "Especially in today's era of sequel-mania."

So why not make a sequel? "I think it's a personal thing," Richter said of Begelman's reluctance. "I don't think Begelman liked the first film and wished it would go away. Maybe a sequel would bring back unpleasant memories for him." Reportedly, Begelman got needled by the film's fun-loving crew when he visited the set and tried to tone down some of the film's outrageousness. Richter said his production people have all but given up on continuing the adventure in a sequel or a television series. "It's kind of depressing pursuing something you want and always running into brick walls."

Begelman's Gladden Entertainment company now devotes its attention to producing more mainstream films, like THE FABULOUS BAKER BOYS, and Richter expressed reservations about the difficulty of getting the cast of the original back for a sequel. □



Peter Weller as Buckaroo Banzai and Ellen Barkin as the lovely Penny Priddy in Richter's comic book farce.

Weller as the scientist adventurer with his rock group, the Hong Kong Cavaliers. Rights-holder, producer David Begelman, won't give Buckaroo another chance.

# JAMES BOND

## SELLING THE 007 FRANCHISE

### A movie empire spawned by Ian Fleming's famed secret agent goes up for grabs.

*By Mark A. Altman*

In a world of celluloid heroes populated by Bruce Willis' John McClane and Mel Gibson's Martin Riggs, the venerable secret agent James Bond is beginning to look like an amateur. While once nobody did it better, declining boxoffice receipts in the United States have shown that average Americans prefer their action heroes who die harder and carry lethal weapons to Ian Fleming's erudite agent of the realm.

Albert R. "Cubby" Broccoli (r), Bond's movie godfather, with stepson writer/producer Michael Wilson (c) and director John Glen, who helmed the last five films in the series.

In the wake of LICENCE TO KILL, which opened in the summer of 1989 to mixed critical notices and disappointing boxoffice receipts (just $16 million in domestic film rentals), the world of James Bond has been shaken, not stirred, by the announcement that Albert "Cubby" Broccoli, the don of the Bond corporate family, is actively seeking a suitor to buy his Danjaq Bond holdings. Danjaq is the Broccoli corporate entity which owns the film rights to all, but one, of the Bond novels. Broccoli has been responsible for producing sixteen Bond films and is currently in preproduction on a seventeenth untitled Bond adventure to star Timothy Dalton.

"A financial restructuring is the best and simplest way of putting it," said Saul Cooper, a spokesman for Broccoli's Bond production company, Warfield Productions. "Mr. Broccoli is 81 years old, hale and hearty, and still sharp as a tack, but it would be unrealistic not to consider the financial ramifications of [his passing]. You do have a family involved and there are all sorts of estate planning considerations."

Though Dalton is to once again don a tuxedo and Walther PPK to play the suave secret agent, he will be one of the few returning staples of the Bond series. John Glen, who has directed the last five Bond films, will not be working on the new film. Nor will longtime screenwriter Richard Maibaum, who has been involved with the series since its inception, adapting the first feature film screenplay DR. NO, which introduced Sean Connery in the Bond role.

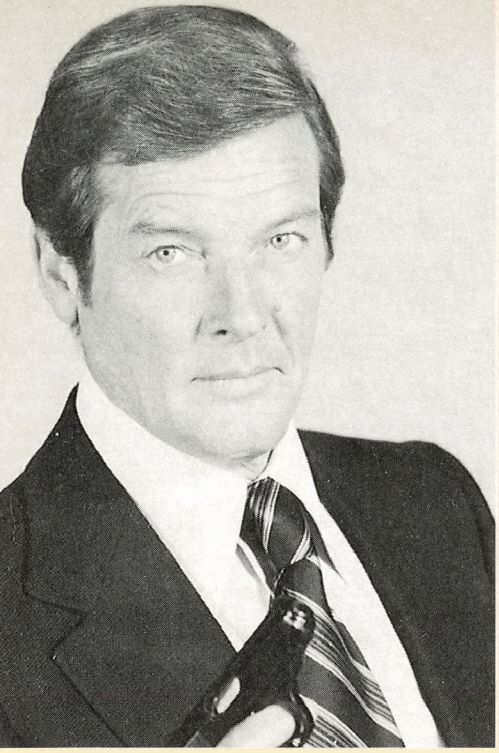
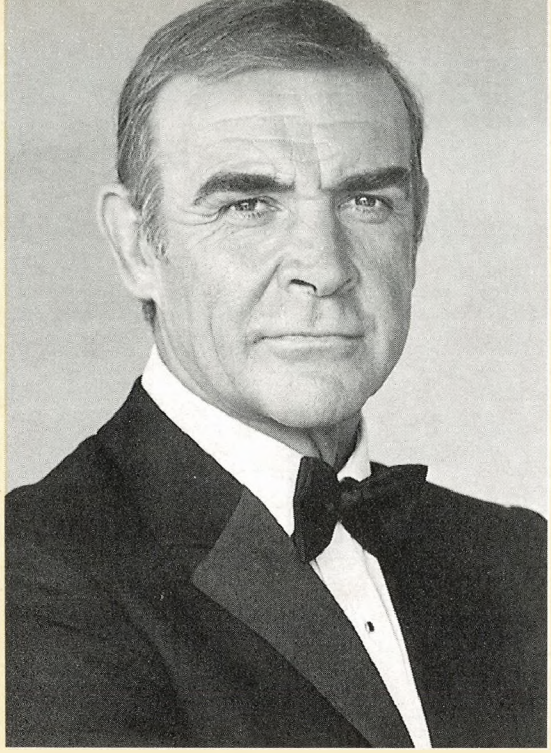
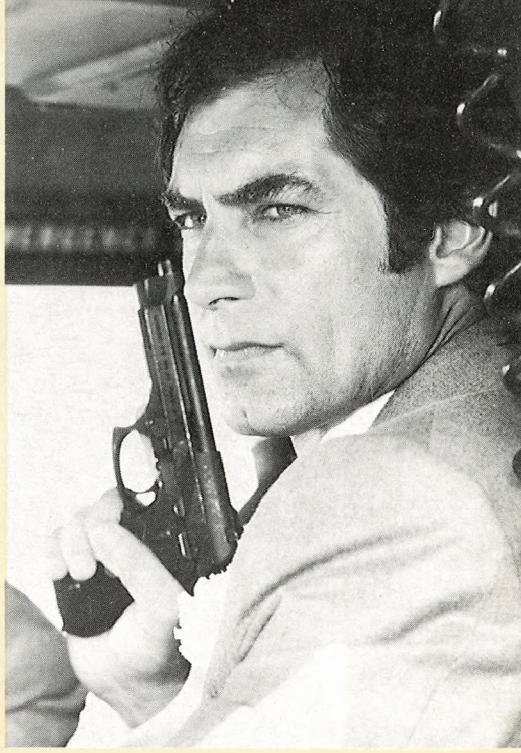
"I'm not upset about it," said Maibaum. "It was by mutual consent. Neither Mr. Glen or myself had any commitment to do anything beyond LICENCE TO KILL and so the company was free to do whatever they wanted. I just wish everybody well on the whole enterprise. I've enjoyed working with them and am proud of the work that I've done. After all, thirteen films, including the first four which I think set the tone for the whole series, is a long time."

The script for Broccoli's new Bond film is by Alfonse Ruggiero Jr., who distinguished himself with work on both MIAMI VICE and WISEGUY. Ruggiero's script is a rewrite of a first draft script written by Michael Wilson, Broccoli's stepson, who has been involved with every Bond screenplay since FOR YOUR EYES ONLY (1981). Despite reports in *Variety* that other writers are being considered for a page one rewrite including John (RAZOR'S EDGE) Byrum and most incomprehensibly Gloria and Willard Huyck (HOWARD THE DUCK), a spokesman for Broccoli denied that a totally new script is in the offing and that at present the Ruggiero draft is under discussion.

"As has happened with every Bond film in history, there will be other writers engaged, but no one has been engaged so far," said Cooper. "It's more a forming of the underlining basis for future development."

Cooper also denied reports that star Timothy Dalton, who flew into Los Angeles in August, has taken an active hand in shaping the new Bond script. "He is in Los Angeles," Cooper said, "but I think people are reading a little too much into it. Everybody values his input. He certainly is not working on the script on any sort of daily collaboration. His input has been solicited since the day he was signed to do THE LIVING DAYLIGHTS."

While in L.A. Dalton is to

**The series has weathered many storms since Sean Connery (c) created the Bond role in 1961, succeeded by Roger Moore (l) and Timothy Dalton (r), the current 007.**

star in Disney's comic book adaptation, THE ROCKETEER, for release next summer. Disney is also rumored to be working on the special effects for the new Bond project. Reportedly, Imagineering, the Disney effects branch which devises mechanical and electronic wonders for the company's theme parks, has been hired by the Bond producers to build the single most sophisticated anthropomorphic robot ever conceived for the movies.

Current candidates said to be under discussion to replace John Glen at the helm of the Bond series are a surprisingly odd lot, including Ted Kotcheff (FIRST BLOOD) and TWILIGHT ZONE director John Landis (COMING TO AMERICA). Although Cooper acknowledged that directors of past Bond outings have been considered, the producers have dismissed the idea of hiring a Bond veteran.

"I think the feeling is to bring in someone new," said Cooper. "I think the whole trick with James Bond—which is obvious—is that we are making the seventeenth Bond film, not counting anyone else's. The series has been kept alive for thirty years by the very astute way it has adapted itself to the times."

Impetus for the sale of the Bond rights by Danjaq could have been spurred in part by MGM/UA, which retains exclusive distribution rights to the series, but is currently in financial difficulty. A spokesman for the company denied that the poor domestic performance of LICENCE TO KILL has influenced the changes behind the Bond series. But after the release of FOR YOUR EYES ONLY in 1981 MGM/UA had sought to gain more control over Bond's exploits as former MGM vice-president Peter Bart chronicled in his new book *Fade Out*, about the declining fortunes of the once successful film studio.

"While the overseas results had continued to be bountiful, the US audience seemed to be tapering off," Bart wrote of the Bond series in his book. "The 1981 Bond had brought in rentals of only $28 million in the United States—the same amount it had cost to make . . . Indeed, when the MGM/UA team blithely suggested its intention of having more input on the next Bond film, the proposal was quickly stonewalled. If MGM/UA wanted another Bond picture, Broccoli declared, the studio would have to play by the customary rules. This meant advancing as much as $6 million before studio execs caught even a glimpse of an outline—forget about seeing a script. That was the way it had been done in the past and that was the way it would continue."

**"The bottom line is the ownership of one of the great cultural icons of the 20th century. The prices being discussed now will someday be seen as extraordinarily modest."**

With an anticipated start date in January and an Autumn 1991 release for the new Bond film, the "For Sale" sign is up on the Bond franchise. But don't expect the Broccoli clan, which over the years has grown to include Wilson and Broccoli's daughter Barbara, to give up control over the continuing destiny of the Bond character. Any potential buyer for the property is bound to be disappointed if they expect to close a deal which would oust the principal players who have kept Bond flying for almost three decades. Wilson has been carping about the escalating budgets of the Bond films for years and he may be using the rights sale as a novel solution. By selling Danjaq, the Broccolis minimize their risk and maximize their returns while still retaining their stake in the series.

"There is no desire to stop producing Bond films," said Cooper. "The thrust of it is to keep the creative management in control and intact. The story which has kind of gotten overdramatized in the press began very quietly earlier this spring when the Broccolis engaged an investment banker to explore the possibilities of a sale. It is still just a possibility and an exploration. The bottom line is ownership of one of the great cultural icons of the 20th century and something whose future is certain and unlimited. There's no telling what will be happening ten, twenty, thirty years from now. I'm quite confident that the prices being discussed now will someday be considered extraordinarily modest." □

**Ousted in the series' restructuring, writer Richard Maibaum, scripter of 13 Bond films, including the last four.**

J. Carrol Naish as Japanese master spy Daka, now stripped of any allusions to our World War II emnity with Japan, whose Sony Corp. now owns Columbia.

# BATMAN REVISITED

## *For its Goodtimes Video release, Columbia toned down the propaganda of its 1943 serial.*

**By Dan Scapperotti**

Good Times Home Video has released the original 1943 BATMAN serial as a two-volume video set. Well, almost. The fifteen chapter serial, produced by Columbia Pictures at the height of World War II, pits the Caped Crusader against the Japanese master spy Dr. Daka. As played by J. Carrol Naish in bizarre oriental makeup, Daka heads a sabotage ring composed of American traitors and men the evil doctor has turned into living zombies.

The video release, however, is not the "original" promised by Good Times. Instead Columbia has changed the narrative which substantially shifts the emphasis from the Japanese enemy of World War Two and in so doing destroys the wilder camp moments the serial is famous for.

One example of Columbia's revisionist game occurs as the camera pans down a deserted street, dropping the film's original narration referring to interned Japanese/Americans as "shifty-eyed Japs" rounded up up by a "wise government." The revised film now refers to the government rounding up "immoral hoods." Later "Daka, the sinister Jap spy" becomes a "vile foreign spy."

The revisions aren't surprising when you consider that Columbia is now owned by Japan's Sony Corporation. It appears that some of Daka's operatives escaped Batman's justice and were rewarded with positions in the new George Orwell Department at Columbia. No doubt we can expect to see David Lean's BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI reissued as the story of a joyous Anglo-Japanese cooperative construction job interrupted by imperialistic American terrorists. □

# SHORT TAKES

**ALIEN III** is scheduled to begin filming in London at the end of 1990 for release by 20th Century Fox in July, 1991, a rough schedule for its novice director, David Fincher. The bum's rush Fox is giving the production is in sharp contrast to the way the studio has let the project languish in development for years. The problem is, where do you go with a concept as dramatically limited as ALIEN. Fox discarded scripts written by cyberpunk author William Gibson and Eric Red (NEAR DARK) for one penned by David Twohy. Along with way Fox development execs were said to have considered such story ideas as having the aliens come to New York and fuse into a giant, Godzilla-like monster that threatens the city, and another in which Ripley (Sigourney Weaver) and the orphan she rescued in ALIENS bump into a wooden 14th century spaceship from earth, crewed by monks. Weaver is back for the sequel, reportedly on the condition she gets to write her own scenes. Also back is Swiss designer H. R. Giger. Fincher, like Ridley Scott who turned the first film into a surprise hit, is a rock video director who has done clips for REO Speedwagon and Paula Abdul. Fincher replaced New Zealand director Vincent Ward (THE NAVIGATOR), who reportedly rocked the boat too much for Fox and contributed a script draft in which everyone died. Contributing to the project's slow pace to the screen, Weaver, and executive producers Walter Hill, David Giler, and Gordon Carroll all sued Fox last August for non-payment of their profit participations on the last sequel . . .

**TERMINATOR 2: JUDGEMENT DAY** began filming last October for Carolco Pictures and Tri-Star release, set for next summer. Linda Hamiltion and Arnold Schwarzenegger recreate their roles from the original 1984 sleeper hit that made a star of director James Cameron, back as writer/producer/director . . .

## WHO KILLED LAURA PALMER?

When David Lynch's two-hour version of TWIN PEAKS was screened last September at the Vancouver Film Festival, Lynch included a fifteen-minute epilogue that revealed that veternarian Bob Lydecker (Frank Silva) was the murderer of Laura Palmer. In the coda, Kyle MacLachlan as FBI agent Dale Cooper, learns Lydecker's last patient was Jacques Renault's myna bird, which helped peck Palmer to death. Lydecker was in a convenient coma during the investigation. Now that Lynch's show has slipped in to a ratings coma of its own, it may soon be time for the big revelation.

**Dennis Fischer**

# BOXOFFICE SURVEY: GENRE TAKE SOARS TO OVER 45% OF TOTAL

An analysis of the Top Grossing Films, as reported in *Variety's* "Weekend Boxoffice Report" reveals that in the first 39 weeks of 1990 revenue from horror, fantasy, and science fiction films captured a 45.4% share of the total boxoffice. The 1990 figure is several points ahead of the genre's boxoffice share at the end of the first three quarters of 1989 (41.1%), keeping 1990 on what looks to be a record-breaking pace. Science fiction films are providing the most boxoffice muscle, raking in over $657 million, while fantasy is running a close second, earning over $636 million. Horror accounted for just over $196 million in revenue.

Genre films made up just 28% of all films released during the first three quarters (31% last year) pulling more than their weight in earnings thanks to the blockbuster fantasy GHOST, destined to be the biggest boxoffice hit of 1990 among all films. Science fiction hits like Paul Verhoeven's summer smash TOTAL RECALL also helped, even though the offspring of Verhoeven's 1987 hit ROBOCOP, failed to live up to boxoffice expectations, failing to make the genre's top five.

Science fiction films accounted for 8.2% of all films and 20.6% of receipts in the first three quarters of 1990; fantasy films accounted for 10.5% of all films and 18.7% of receipts; while horror films acounted for 9.3% of all films and 6.1% of receipts.

Actual grosses for the top genre films in the *Variety* totals are listed at right (through 10/26). For breakdown by genre, titles are indicated as horror (h), fantasy (f), and science fiction (sf), followed by the number of weeks each title made into the weekly listings since January. □

### TOP GENRE FILMS OF '90

| | |
|---|---|
| GHOST (f, 12) | $173,387,657 |
| TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES (sf, 27) | $133,157,830 |
| THE HUNT FOR RED OCTOBER (sf, 28) | $120,595,872 |
| TOTAL RECALL (sf, 20) | $118,302,598 |
| DICK TRACY (f, 11) | $103,550,723 |
| BACK TO THE FUTURE PART III (sf, 21) | $ 85,788,358 |
| FLATLINERS (sf, 11) | $ 58,289,415 |
| ARACHNOPHOBIA (h, 12) | $ 50,762,896 |
| PROBLEM CHILD (sf, 13) | $ 49,911,395 |
| ROBOCOP 2 (sf, 15) | $ 45,404,723 |
| THE JUNGLE BOOK (f, 15) | $ 44,100,743 |
| GREMLINS 2 (f, 16) | $ 41,482,207 |
| JOE VERSUS THE VOLCANO (f, 18) | $ 39,381,963 |
| THE LITTLE MERMAID (f, 19) | $ 34,326,216 |

# Woody Allen's ALICE

## Filming special effects for the director's supernatural comedy.

*By Dan Scapperotti*

One director rarely considered when discussing fantasy films is Woody Allen. But Allen has ventured several times into the genre, notably with SLEEPER (1973), ZELIG (1984) and THE PURPLE ROSE OF CAIRO (1985). Allen's latest feature, ALICE, involves a transparent ghost, a strange invisibility potion and a scene where two of the characters fly around Manhattan. Orion Pictures opens the film in New York and Los Angeles at Christmas and plans to broaden the release early next year.

Mia Farrow plays Alice, a woman married to a successful stockbroker (William Hurt). Alice becomes involved with another man (Joe Mantegna) and must resolve questions at a critical point in her life. Alec Baldwin plays the ghost of a former lover accidently killed ten years before who appears for a single day and counsels Alice about what is happening in her life and the choices she must make.

Allen directs Mia Farrow in the title role, with Alec Baldwin as the ghost of her one-time lover, who returns for a day to counsel her in affairs of the heart.

Allen and director of photography Carlo DiPalma selected New York-based Randall Balsmeyer to supervise the film's complex special effects. Recently Balsmeyer has become more involved with spectres than Topper, having worked on the effects for films such as DEAD RINGERS, HELLO AGAIN and last summer's GHOST.

Allen was emphatic in his desire that the effects of ALICE not overpower the acting or his accustomed production regimen. While having people appear and disappear is hardly new to the screen, Balsmeyer's challenge was to find a technique that would least interfere with Allen's direction of the actors. The usual techniques of using mattes or mirror shots did not suit Allen's directorial style. Allen prefers to shoot a scene with one grand, sweeping camera shot when possible.

Balsmeyer said he ruled out motion-control techniques because of the bulky equipment and noise. "Woody refuses to loop dialogue," said Balsmeyer. "He's a real stickler for using only production sound." Balsmeyer settled on using a lock and pan technique, allowing camera movement in scenes until an effect was introduced.

When Alice visits Yang, a Chinese doctor, and expresses her curiosity about Mantegna's character, Yang tells her that the best way to get to know somebody is to observe without being observed. He gives her a potion of some strange herbs and Alice becomes invisible. In the time-honored tradition of invisibility movies, the effect tends to wear off at the most inopportune times. Balsmeyer said he used soft split screen mattes as in DEAD RINGERS for the film's invisibility effects. "To make people appear and disappear, we used a soft-edged light so they would usually disappear from the feet up," said Balsmeyer. "The last visible part was their head, and then that would fade."

Allen decided that he would like to have Baldwin's ghost transparent all the time he was on screen. But Allen wanted the effect only if it wouldn't interfere with directing the actors. Balsmeyer convinced Allen that the effect could be done easily using soft split screen techniques. "We could always photograph the ghost and whoever else was involved all together, get the matching background shots and put the ghost in as a percentage exposure," said Balsmeyer.

Baldwin's ghost is also capable of flying and taking Alice along for the ride. He suggests that they visit a beach resort where they once had a romantic weekend. Although Alice explains that the place burned to the ground ten years ago, the ghost tells her he will take care of it and they step out on the terrace of Alice's apartment and fly into the night sky, around Manhattan, along the coast to the ghost casino where they have a last dance. Balsmeyer used Preston Cinema Systems' Gyrosphere, a gyro-stabilized camera mount to shoot background plates for the flying effects using a helicopter.

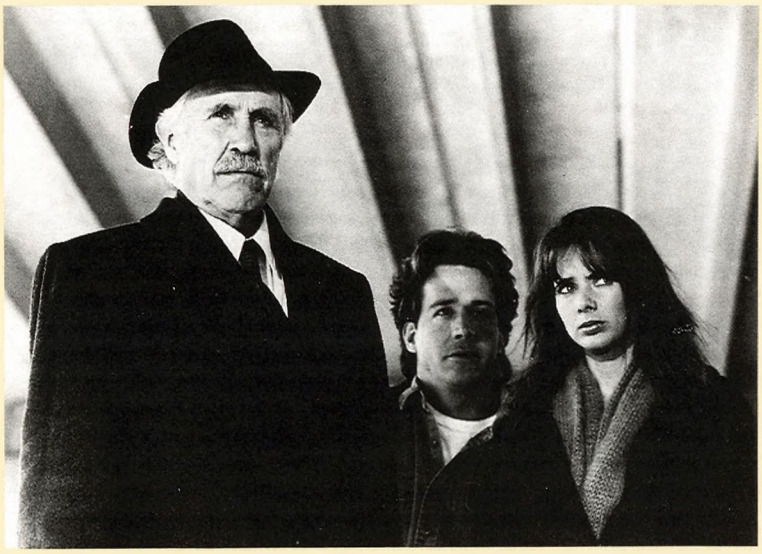
Bob Harman, the flying rig specialist who managed the flying scenes for the SUPERMAN film series was hired to put Farrow and Baldwin through their airborne paces. Harmon suggested the use of blue screen to composite the actors. Balsmeyer erected a blue screen to film the Harmon-rigged scenes at New York's Astoria Studios. "We were able to erect an 80-foot track for the camera to move on, which ultimately turned the sequence into a motion-control shoot," said Balsmeyer. "We built a platform 8 feet high, 8 feet wide and 80 feet long that we laid dolly track on. We set up our motion control rig on that. We suspended the actors on flying rigs about twelve feet off the end of the track so that they could be made to rise and fall and swivel by an operator above them, like marionettes." □

# BLACK RAINBOW

## Why can't "the scariest movie of the year" find a distributor in the United States?

*By Alan Jones*

When BLACK RAINBOW opened in Great Britain last summer, a full page ad in *Variety* trumpeted "... the scariest movie of the year," quoting a review from the *Mail on Sunday*. The film had made its unheralded debut at the 22nd Sitges Fantasy Film Festival in October 1989 and deservedly won the Best Screenplay Award for its director, Mike Hodges, and a Best Actress nod for Rosanna Arquette. The weird psychic thriller marks Hodges' return to the fantasy genre after directing such less than auspicious entries as Michael Crichton's THE TERMINAL MAN (1974), the comic strip spoof FLASH GORDON (1980), and the British lampoon MORONS FROM OUTER SPACE (1985). Though BLACK RAINBOW has received accolades in Britain, producer Goldcrest has yet to strike a U.S. distribution deal.



Reporter Tom Hulce (center) comes to grips with the unknown when he investigates psychic Rosanna Arquette (right) and the mysterious death of her father, Jason Robards (left).

The title refers to the link between this world and the spiritual one, plugged into by roadshow medium Arquette. Jason Robards, her drunken father, thinks she fakes the upbeat messages passed on to bereaved relatives in the Bible Belt community halls. But she really does have the power, proving it by publicly predicting a murder, also revealing she can identify the assassin. As the alarmed hit-man sets out to cover his tracks and kill her, skeptical journalist Tom Hulce investigates her clairvoyant skills with catastrophically eerie results.

BLACK RAINBOW is a subtle, intelligent and thought-provoking probe into the mysteries of the universe, showcasing three fine actors in top form. But where it fits in today's marketplace Hodges isn't certain. "It's a problem picture, no doubt about it," he said. "Audiences seem bewildered when they leave the theatre. But it does affect some people quite strongly, especially if they are open about the subject matter. I'm hoping word of mouth will help and that's the reason I've decided to get off my butt for once and go out promoting it."

On stage at the El Retiro Cinema in Sitges, Hodges introduced the film as the most personal one he's ever directed. "I have deep feelings toward the issues I've addressed," he said. "I feel we've got ourselves, and our world, into the predicaments you read about daily because we've turned our backs on all things mysterious. What we can't explain, we reject out of hand. We live in such materialistic times we've rejected anything to do with elements of the unconscious. Our ancestors looked after the globe with great care. They had that self-preservation built in to their philosophy. But we don't seem to care because we think we understand everything. But we haven't even come close. I believe there is a direct link to the way we treat our environment and the fact we have no time for anything anymore. We literally end up ignoring unexplained phenomena which could be an important key to understanding."

Hodges said he believes in the power of telepathy, the basis from which he started when he decided to write BLACK RAINBOW in 1986. Hodges had co-scripted DAMIEN: OMEN II (1978), but was replaced as director by Don Taylor after two weeks of shooting. "I needed to find a vehicle to carry the ideas I wanted to talk about," he said. "It was a crossroads of many different kinds—one was what we're doing to our planet. Two was my interest in the revival of numerous kinds of religion, evangelism and the new age of spiritualism. Those various strands have ended up in a picture even I can't explain. All I've done is put out a feeler for discussion, saying there are things we don't understand, but at least we should be trying."

To write the script, Hodges did some research about mediums. "Most of the information that seems to come up at these mass public displays put on by mediums is usually trivia," he said. "They seem able to pick up on people's thoughts which

Roadshow medium Rosanna Arquette discovers the body of her father, Jason Robards, while in a bi-location dream trance state.

then get embellished with all the other ideas of what it's like on the other side. Nobody has proved there is an 'over there' yet. And that's as far as I wanted to go with the subject in the script."

Hodges raises a host of mystical questions in the main narrative of BLACK RAINBOW to marvelous and emotional effect. It carries the ring of truth few fantasies ever even aspire to. First offered to Dino DeLaurentiis' DEG company, Hodges' script was finally green-lighted by Goldcrest, under producer John Quested's new management. Hodges shot the film in October 1988 in Charlotte, North Carolina, over six weeks at a cost of $6 million. He had wanted to use the location again after filming the TV movie FLORIDA STRAITS there. Hodges called that film "The worst experience of my life until A PRAYER FOR THE DYING! I did it because I was strapped for money after going through an expensive divorce. But it worked out in retrospect because Charlotte was the perfect place to set BLACK RAINBOW."

Central to the success of the film is Rosanna Arquette's stunning performance as the ethereal Martha Travis. Arquette has never been as good.

**"The whole film was a bizarre dream," said director Mike Hodges. "It was like it had to be made. I was on some preordained quest. It sounds daft, but it's the truth."**

Hodges knows he owes the actress a debt for adding such considerable weight to his supernatural whodunit. "Rosanna was jolly brave to do it," said Hodges. "Many actresses would have turned the role down, and did, as I had a lot of problems getting a star name. Rosanna took it on at very short notice. She had great difficulty with the actual medium act itself and we fought long and hard over it. Basically she got it wrong. She emoted too much. But she did it again under my guidance after a terrible row. I think it was just nerves. She was fine from then on.

"Martha was an articulate part, more than what Americans are used to playing. I'm not being rude," insisted Hodges. "It's a fact. The script had to be literate to be totally believeable. Rosanne played the toughness any entertainer on the road would have: it's her job, the clairvoyant ability, her curse. Although I didn't believe Martha would be spiritual in any real sense, Rosanna was extra wonderful because a little-girl-lost character emerged above my original intentions. Mediums who have these powers are not necessarily highly intelligent. Usually they are emotionally disturbed—the reason why Martha indulges her sexual passions with one night stands, including Tom Hulce."

BLACK RAINBOW is framed as one long flashback spanning a ten-year period. After sleeping with Arquette, Hulce becomes obsessed with finding out the truth behind her father's mysterious death and is irrevocably drawn into an enigmatic web of dreams. "The problem with discussing the ending is you debase it by verbalizing interpretations," said Hodges. "Has Hulce entered her dream world? Has she slipped ahead in time? All I'm saying is you basically end where you started. The Aborigines have the concept of Dream Time—the idea of two lives happening in two different places like a mystic hologram.

"But the essence of BLACK RAINBOW is the kudzu, the weed introduced by the Japanese into Georgia at the turn of the century to keep things like railways from subsiding. Hence, the guy at the beginning of the movie mentioning God and kudzu. The weed gets wildly out of control and you see whole houses covered with the stuff. I was fascinated by 'the Weed' when I first came across it in the early '70s. It's my metaphor for the lifeforce and why Rosanna's solitary shack is

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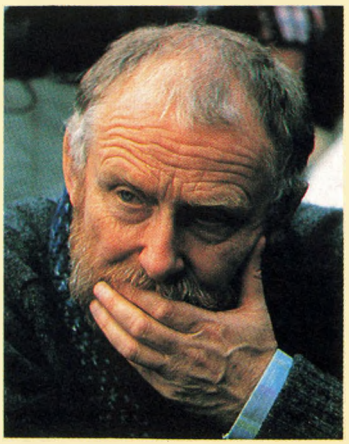
Director Mike Hodges



# MISERY

## To splatter, or not to splatter, Rob Reiner sounds as tortured as Lady Macbeth.

*By Gary Wood*

With the release of MISERY in December, Rob Reiner becomes the first filmmaker to direct two Stephen King adaptations. It may seem odd for the director of such films as WHEN HARRY MET SALLY (1989), THIS IS SPINAL TAP (1984), and King's STAND BY ME (1986) to adapt one of King's darkest, most psychologically horrifying novels, but King said, "I think one of the things that attracted Rob to MISERY is that it isn't strictly [typical] Stephen King." Columbia opens the film nationwide for the holidays by November 30.

Reiner directs James Caan as King's long-suffering Paul Sheldon, a novelist who is tortured at the hands of a psychotic fan, played by Tony-winning stage actress Cathy Bates.

Much like King's story "The Body" which Reiner filmed as STAND BY ME, MISERY is a very personal story for King. It involves a popular romance novelist (an obvious alter ego), Paul Sheldon, who celebrates his departure from the pulp fiction he has been writing by completing his first work of serious fiction. On his return from seclusion, he wrecks his car on the snowy mountain roads of Colorado and is rescued, with two broken legs, by Annie Wilkes, his Number One Fan. Sheldon is played in the film by James Caan, who took the role when Reiner's first choice, Warren Beatty, waffled about doing the film after initially showing interest in the part. Tony Award-winning stage actress Cathy Bates plays Annie, and screen legend Lauren Bacall appears as Sheldon's agent.

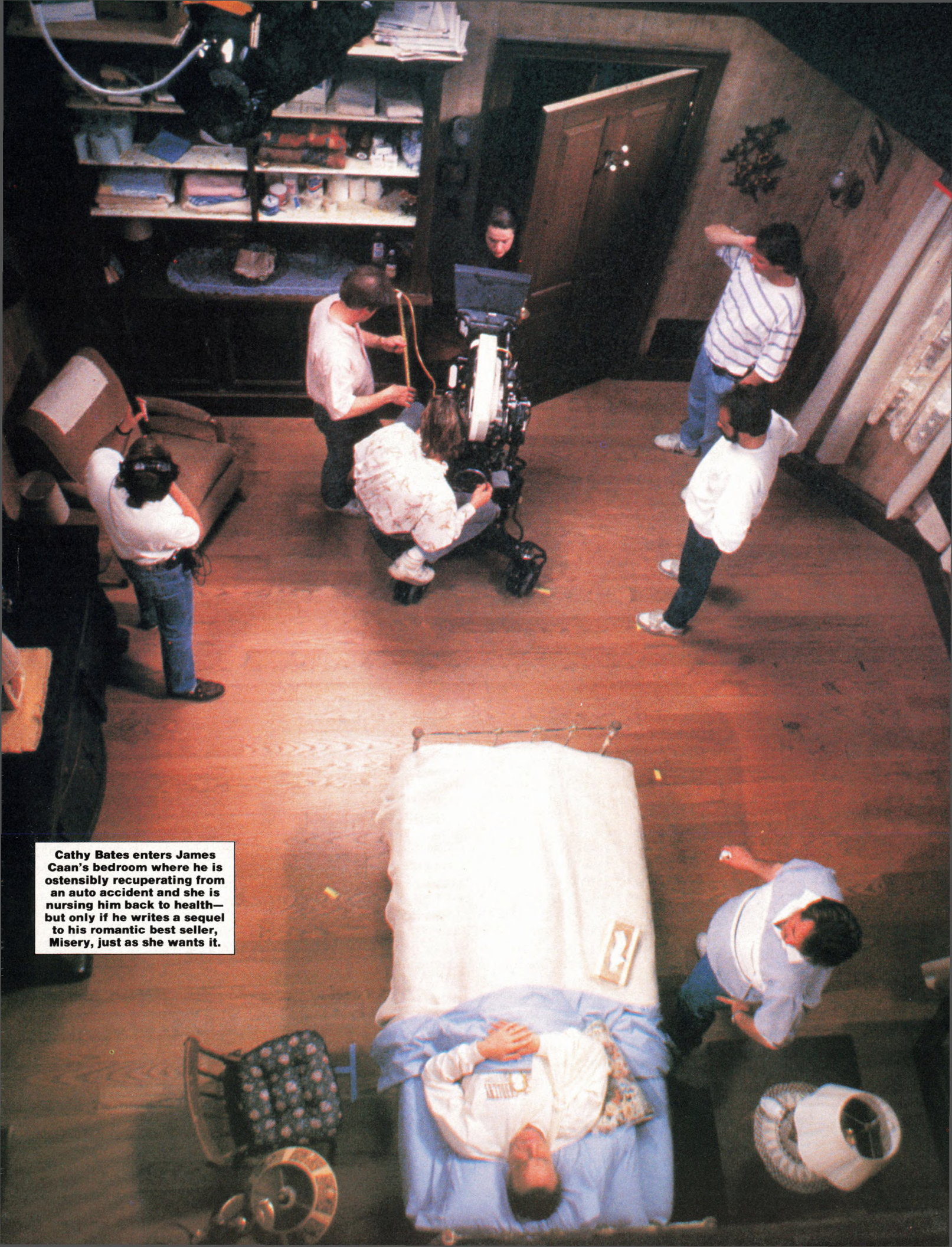
Readers of the book are treated to one of the great fears that must haunt King himself. Annie loves Sheldon's novels and his romantic heroine, Misery Chastain, who was killed-off by Sheldon in his swan song to the genre. Annie holds Sheldon hostage, makes him dependent on painkillers, and even physically abuses him in order to force him to do the one thing that, as a writer, would mean going against all his dreams and beliefs. Sheldon is forced by Annie to resurrect Misery in another romance novel. It's titled *Misery's Return* and it's to be a special edition published exclusively for Sheldon's Number One Fan.

Shortly after completing principal photography on MISERY in Reno, Nevada and Los Angeles, Reiner pondered the book's autobiographical aspects and his reasons for tackling it. "That's exactly why I was drawn to it," said Reiner. "It really is reality-oriented. Everybody knows about obsessive, psychotic fans, and everybody knows what they do: Mark Chapman with John Lennon, and John Hinckley—those kinds of things. We read about them in the paper all the time. So it's not out of the realm of possibility. That's what drew me to it. It's something that could actually happen."

In his introduction to *Misery*, King related an eerie run-in with a fan. A young man asked King to have his picture taken with the novelist, and King agreed. As the Polaroid was developing, the young man asked King to sign the picture and pulled out a "special" pen. In the introduction, King wrote that he knew that the young fan had done this sort of thing before. "It's almost impossible to write on a Polaroid—everything beads up." King took the pen in hand and wrote exactly what the young man requested, "Best Wishes To Mark Chapman from Stephen King." Observed King, "It was the guy who killed John Lennon. And in the course of our discussion, he described himself as *my number one fan.*"

Reiner said he saw King's book, and his upcoming film, as a metaphor for the pains of artistic struggle. "It's about what an artist goes through in order to grow as an artist," said Reiner. "That was what was fascinating to me. King found a wonderful metaphor, this psychotic fan, who feeds [Sheldon] drugs to keep him writing the kind of thing that she wants him to write. I thought, 'Wow! What a wonderful metaphor for what every artist goes through in terms of their relationship with their audience.' Especially when you become successful.

"Somebody like Stephen



Cathy Bates enters James Caan's bedroom where he is ostensibly recuperating from an auto accident and she is nursing him back to health—but only if he writes a sequel to his romantic best seller, Misery, just as she wants it.

# MISERY

# HORROR KING, STEPHEN KING

*The story of the man behind the book, the novelist who has given horror a brand name.*

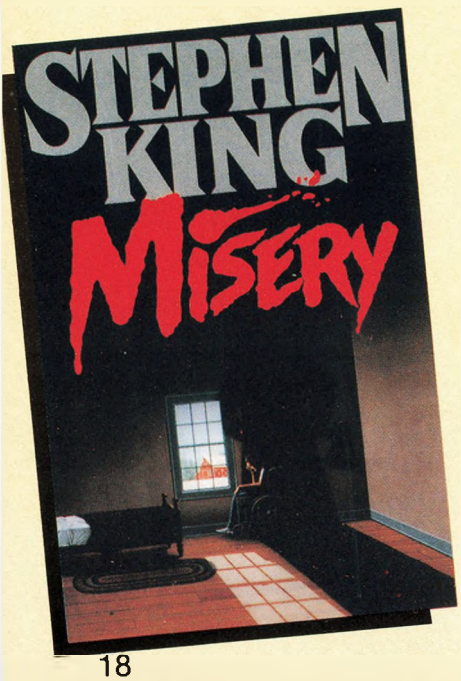
*By Stephen Spignesi*

King's high school yearbook photo, 1966.

Who is Stephen King?

The name evokes a roll call of superlatives: 82 million books in print including 23 novels, four fiction collections, one nonfiction book, and close to 100 short stories. Of the top 25 *Publishers Weekly* fiction bestsellers of the '80s, King had seven titles on the list: *The Dark Half, The Tommyknockers, It, Misery, The Talisman, The Eyes of the Dragon,* and *Skeleton Crew*. King books get routine first printings of one million plus copies, with advances in the eight-figure range.

King resides in Bangor, Maine with his wife, novelist Tabitha King, and their three children, Joe, Owen and Naomi. Naomi is in college, Joe writes novels, and Owen plays Little League ball. Despite his success, King is a down-to-earth Yankee who shows up for publicity photos and interviews wearing jeans and Keds. He's a family man who takes his clan to see the Boston Red Sox, whether they're playing in Boston or Toronto, the kind of guy who welcomed a couple of friends of mine into his office one July afternoon, and when asked for a picture, had my friends pick him up and hold him in the air while the shot was taken. But King is also the workaholic who writes 362 days a year and who has been known to scrap entire novels that didn't meet his standards—even though fans would welcome lesser efforts with open arms.




Noted King's horror colleague Richard Christian Matheson about King's success, "It's like Steve's got some bizarre telescope that he put together up there in fucking Bangor out of beer and snow and rock and roll, and with it he can see the dark side of the moon."

King has also written five produced screenplays, with—as of the fall of 1990—eighteen film adaptations made from his work, including Rob Reiner's forthcoming MISERY. In

College student King in the late '60s, at home in Bangor, Maine with mother Nellie Ruth King, between semesters, attending the University of Maine at Orono.

*Danse Macabre*, King talked about the recurrent dream that led him to write *Misery*. When he's anxious, King dreams he's alone in an upstairs room in a house, and he's writing as fast as he can, and there's a woman with an axe trying to get in. It's the inspiration for the book's cover and some of its most frightening scenes.

Noted Chris Chesley, one of King's boyhood friends. "I remember Steve telling me about that dream when we were younger. That's not something that he made up. That's something that he told me when we were kids."

King was born in Portland, Maine on September 21, 1947. (*Art Imitates Life*: the same date Carrie White would be born about fifteen years or so later.) When King was two, his father, Donald King, went out one night for a pack of cigarettes and was never seen again. King and his then four-year-old brother David were left to be raised by their mother Nellie Ruth King. (*Art Imitates Life*: in *The Stand*, Donald King is an Electrolux salesman from Peru, Indiana.)

After his father left, King and his brother had what could be justifiably called a "nomadic" childhood. Dave King recalled that the family's early childhood movings from 1949 through the fall of 1958 included Scarborough and Croton-On-Hudson, New York; Chicago, Illinois; West De Pere, Wisconsin (*Art Imitates Life*: about 100 miles southwest of the town is a lake called Castle Rock, a geographical name that is to King what Arkham was to Lovecraft); Fort Wayne, Indiana; and Stratford, Connecticut. At the end of 1958, when King was twelve and his brother fourteen, his mother moved from Stratford to Durham, Maine, where the boys spent their remaining childhood years.

One of King's Maine friends, Chris Chesley, shared King's interest in horror and science fiction. They soon became writing companions and in 1960, Chesley and King co-authored an eighteen-page collection of horror stories called *People, Places, and Things*. Recently, Chesley shed some light on how King developed stylistically and thematically as a writer.

"Steve was by no means nurtured as a writer by the heritage

of middle-class America—as the American middle class likes to see itself, that is," said Chesley. "He was influenced by a working class, gritty, little rural town. And in that sense it made him intellectually, and literarily, an outsider. And I think a lot of the push, a lot of the drive, a lot of the narrative force in his writing stems directly from that—his sense of himself as being outside the mainstream, outside the American suburban middle class ethos. And that, in a way, is why I think many people are attracted to his writing—because it has the force, the stamina, and the vitality which American middle class writing doesn't have."

In Maine, King attended Lisbon Falls High School, and from there went on to the University of Maine at Orono. His first published short story, "I was a Teenage Grave Robber," appeared in *Comics Review* when he was eighteen, and in 1967, at the age of twenty, he sold his first short story, "The Glass Floor," to the magazine *Startling Mystery Stories*. In 1974 *Carrie* became King's first published novel.

King's influences are a casserole of eclectic ingredients that play an important part in the "recipe" that has made him the genre's King of Horror. These influences include the work of Richard Matheson, Don Robertson, John D. Macdonald, Robert Bloch and Ray Bradbury, to name a few. King credited Matheson's novel *I Am Legend* with showing him that horror does not have to be set in castles and dungeons: horror can happen in the mall and suburban tract houses. King was also affected by '50s television, B-horror movies, EC Comics, a single-parent upbringing, smalltown living, the '60s and Chesterfields.

King has an enviable talent: the ability to transmute elements from his life into powerfully dramatic moments in his fiction. He is, as horror writer J. N. Williamson described

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*Stephen Spignesi is the author of "The Stephen King Quiz Book" and the forthcoming "The Shape Under the Sheet: The Complete Stephen King Encyclopedia."*

**"If you're a hardcore blood and guts fan, you're not going to like MISERY. We didn't focus on that. It's there, but it's played down."**

*- Director Rob Reiner -*

King, who is as successful as he is, I *know* he is tormented the way Paul Sheldon is tormented. He is wondering, 'Can I write something other than the kinds of things I've been writing? Will I lose my audience?' That's what fascinated me. That's what I focused on."

In the tradition of the misgivings King felt about ever selling PET SEMATARY, King had doubts about giving up the rights to *Misery*. But with Reiner's STAND BY ME being one of King's favorite adaptations (PET SEMATARY and CUJO are the others), King agreed to sell the film rights to Reiner's Castle Rock Entertainment, with one condition. Rob Reiner personally had to either produce or direct the picture. Said King, "It was in the contract."

Though King said he would have been happy to have had Reiner connected with the film as a producer, he truly wanted Reiner directly behind the camera. "That was what I had my fingers crossed for the whole time," said King. "But on the other hand, even if he had only produced I would have been *fairly* comfortable. I think it was interesting to look at a picture like LORD OF THE FLIES, which was released from Castle Rock, Reiner's production company. I could say, 'Yeah. I can see why this attracted Rob. Even if he wasn't there in person.' There is a creative sort of hand overseeing everything. But I'm real glad he decided to direct it."

Martin Shafer, head of Castle Rock's motion picture division and a former 20th Century Fox executive, explained the deal. "Rob had to put his name on the film," said Shafer. "That way Stephen felt that Rob would have involvement. Putting his name on it as producer, he would be involved but obviously not as much as if he were director."

It was screenwriter/novelist William Goldman (MARATHON MAN, MAGIC, Reiner's THE PRINCESS BRIDE) that finally made King's wish come true. Originally Reiner was only interested in having his company produce the film, and he agreed to personally oversee the project. "Then Bill Goldman wrote a great screenplay and I started getting more and more interested," said Reiner. "Eventually I took it on. But ultimately that's because Stephen King himself regarded it as a very personal book, something that he cared about. He didn't want to see it destroyed."

In MISERY, Cathy Bates as maniacal nurse Annie Wilkes, straps Caan to his bed.

The novel is a very static situation that takes place within Annie's home. Goldman's first task was to "open it up" to make it more visual. Goldman's logical solution was to expand the role of the short-lived character of a police officer that shows up at the Wilkes' farm near the end of the novel. The officer is looking for Sheldon and finds Annie. Richard Farnsworth (THE GRAY FOX) plays Buster, the snooping cop, and Frances Sternhagen (OUTLAND) appears as his wife.

Said Goldman, "It suddenly crossed my mind that it wouldn't be a bad notion, since it's not changing anything, to follow him. You see [the officer] in short scenes throughout trying to figure out, 'Where the hell is Paul Sheldon?' He doesn't believe that Sheldon is dead. He gets frustrated. Nothing much happens for him, but if it works, a) it gets you outside of the room, which is important, and b) no one will know he wasn't a character in the book. When you add a character like that, you hope that he doesn't change anything. It'll really work if nobody says, 'This character is obviously thrown in, not from the book.' If it does work, people will just assume he's from the book."

Once Reiner committed to direct the film, he and partner Andrew Scheinman began work with Goldman on revising the screenplay to give it that quality that made STAND BY ME an all-around success: They had to transpose it from strictly a "Stephen King Novel" to a "Rob Reiner Film." Said Reiner, "I think that people are going to see that MISERY is the same [as STAND BY ME]. It's the same in that, if you're a hardcore blood-and-guts fan, you're not going to like MISERY. We really didn't focus in on that. It's certainly there in the story, but it's played down. I've allowed the characters to drive the story and that's hopefully what the audience will find interesting."

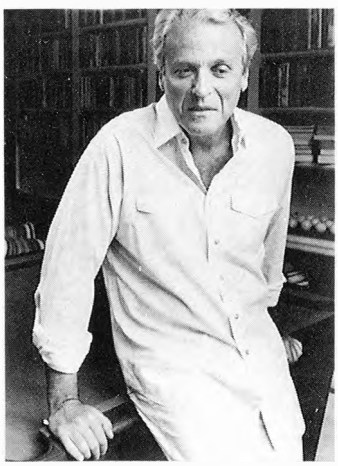
Shafer also stressed that Reiner has soft-peddled King's more graphic set pieces in the

book. "[Rob's MISERY] is very much the same story as Stephen wrote in terms of the writer being held captive by his Number One Fan," said Shafer. "Of course, Rob's going to bring something to every project that's his. From Rob's point of view, he's made it very much a suspense/thriller, but it's perhaps not as graphically violent as it might have been in somebody else's hands, and not as graphic as it is in the book. That's just not Rob's way. I think it's just Rob's 'take' on the material. He will add his own feelings about what a creative person has to go through to keep working. Anybody who adapts a book gives his own interpretation of the material."

Reiner admitted to not being a big fan of the genre in which King specializes. "I'm not a big horror fan," said Reiner. "I don't like those things particularly unless there's some real substance to it like THE EXORCIST. That's what attracted me to "The Body." Because to me it wasn't really a horror piece. It was a character piece about four boys who go through a rite of passage. And that was interesting to me. Whatever horrific aspects there were to that short story, I just basically weeded out to let the characters rise to the surface."

MISERY completed principal photography last July. Reiner began post-production in Los Angeles and looked back on what he termed a pretty pleasant shoot. "It went well," said Reiner. "We had a rough time up in Reno because we had blizzards, snow machines and special effects going. But once we got out of Reno and we were inside, it was pretty smooth."

Screenwriter William Goldman.



**"I don't particularly like these things unless there's some real substance, like THE EXORCIST. I'm not a big horror fan."**

*- Director Rob Reiner -*

Caan as writer Paul Sheldon, struggling to escape after Wilkes has broken both his ankles with a sledgehammer—in the book King has her cut off his foot with a torch.

After production, the marketing gears at Columbia began to turn. Readers of *Rolling Stone* and *Premiere* magazines got an early warning in their August issues. Six months before its release, Columbia bought full page ads promoting the film. On a background of dark, crumpled paper(wrapping paper?), the tag line, in blood-stained, typewritten letters read, "This Christmas There Will Be . . . MISERY. From Columbia Pictures."

As opposed to STAND BY ME, Columbia and Castle Rock do not plan to hide the King connection on MISERY, though this would be a much more difficult task since King's book and its title have the recognizability of a best seller, unlike the more obscure short story source for Reiner's earlier foray into King territory. "We're going to use Stephen's name prominently," said Reiner. "It's still a Stephen King project, and I think his fans will like it. What I hope is that we don't fall into the cracks between people who are going to be hardcore Stephen King fans—horror fans who are going to be disappointed that there aren't enough blood and guts—and people who are expecting me to give them another comedy. There's a lot of humor in this film, and there's some very tense, horrific moments. We've got both."

Columbia and Castle Rock jointly decided to open the film at Christmas against the judgement of those who feel horror films do not make money during the holiday season. Reiner disagreed, citing such dark Christmas successes as THE EXORCIST (1973) and PLATOON (1986). Reiner felt the film would find an audience for several reasons, "I think because—number one—it'll be different than any other horror film that's out there," he said. "Number two—it's not really a horror film. It's a psychological/horror film, and it's a suspense/thriller, but I wouldn't categorize it as what you would typically think of as a horror film. It's certainly something that you could watch and you can bring young people to. It'll probably get an R, but it's not one of *those*, you know, slasher, NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET kind of things. When you mention horror films you think of FRIDAY THE 13TH. You think of Wes Craven. You know what I mean."

Though Reiner was adamant about his desire to mute King's penchant for blood and gore, some sources suggest that quite to the contrary, Reiner attacked the film's graphic requirements with surprising relish. In King's book, as Sheldon gets healthier, he begins to realize that Wilkes is not an ordinary nurse. With the storm over and the snow melting, Sheldon realizes Annie has no intention of taking him to a real hospital. And as Sheldon begins to move around in his wheelchair, Annie senses that he is getting out of hand and may harbor plans of not completing *Misery's Return*. King has Wilkes punish and immobilize Sheldon by removing his foot with a Berns-O-Matic propane torch.

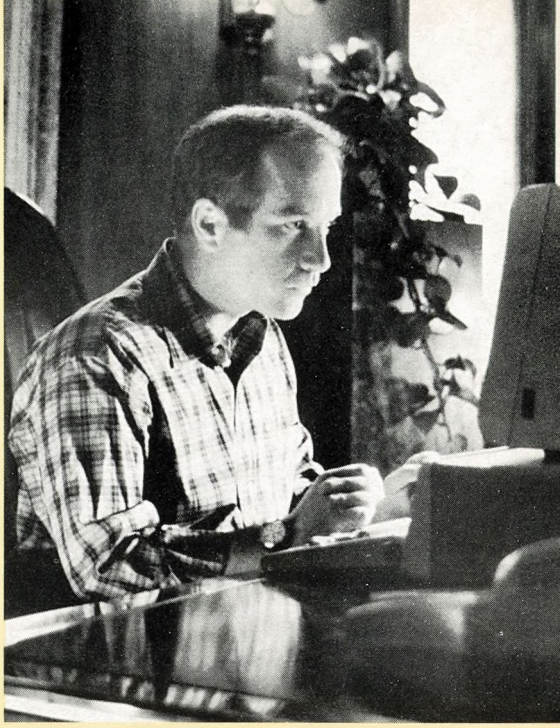
Reiner, working with co-producer Scheinman, and screenwriter Goldman, came up with something that may be less bloody but is perhaps even more visually disturbing. Annie now enters Sheldon's room with a large board. She pulls his helpless, broken legs over the end of the bed and places the board underneath, as a brace. After some words, she brings the sledgehammer down on both ankles, shattering them beyond repair. Unlike the scene in King's book involving the torch, which would most likely be visualized by having the torch move closer to Sheldon's foot, intercut with his expression of pain, the sledgehammer hitting Sheldon's feet could actually be staged more effectively.

Charged with realizing the graphic effect of the broken ankles on set was the KNB EFX Group. "We made gelatin legs that we punched hair into," said Greg Nicotero, who runs KNB with Bob Kurtzman and Howard Berger. "What they did was cut holes in the bed, and put James Caan's legs into the holes. We attached the gelatin legs onto the ends. I remember we took the legs on set and Rob [Reiner] said,

# MISERY

# ROB REINER ON STEPHEN KING

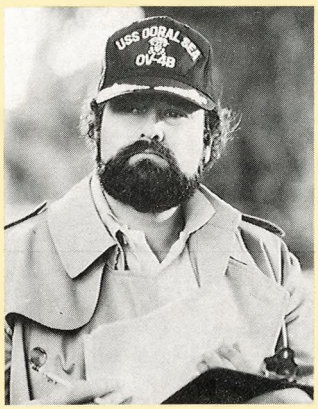
*Putting horror in its place, a lesson learned directing King's STAND BY ME.*



Richard Dreyfuss as "the writer," in STAND BY ME, which Reiner turned into a sleeper hit in 1985 by toning down the horror and its association with King.

*By Gary Wood*

Rob Reiner, whose adaptation of King's MISERY bows at Christmastime, is responsible for directing the King film adaptation to receive the greatest critical acclaim, 1986's STAND BY ME, based on King's novella "The Body" from his *Different Seasons* anthology. Reiner felt the film succeeded where other King adaptations failed by playing down the horror element, an approach he said he planned to take in directing MISERY.



Reiner, filming STAND BY ME.

"Most people say that the reason Stephen King is so successful is because people like horror and gore," said Reiner. "So [adaptors have said] 'Let's just give them that. Let's not bother with anything else that goes on in Stephen King's books.' I think if you really examine his books, there's always a core of something really interesting in terms of the human mind, in terms of how humans relate to their environment and each other. I think those are the things that if you focus in on them, you can make a really interesting film. The fact is, King spins a great yarn. So you've got that going for you already. You know you've got *that*. You don't have to push *that* into the foreground. You can spend time concentrating on the characters."

Martin Shafer was president of production at Embassy Communications when he brought "The Body" to the company. The film was originally to be directed by Adrian Lynne (JACOB'S LADDER), but Lynne eventually dropped out and Reiner, who had already read the script, expressed interest, and decided to direct. Two days before shooting was to begin, Embassy was sold to Coca-Cola, and the new owners cancelled the project. A good friend of Reiner's, Norman Lear, who produced TV's ALL IN THE FAMILY, came to Reiner's rescue with the $8 million needed to make the film.

"We had a real tough time finding a distributor," said Reiner. "When it was finished, we showed it to every major studio in town and nobody wanted to release it except Columbia." And that was a last-minute decision of the departing president of Columbia, which ironically had also been bought by Coca-Cola. "So we were really hanging by a thread there."

King, who was making his own directorial debut at the time on the heavily promoted MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, recalled how Columbia handled the opening of STAND BY ME, which got released opposite his own picture. "Cast your mind back to that time," said King of the summer of '86. "Columbia released it in five cities. They thought they had a dog on their hands. Their advance audience screenings told them they had a dog. And it wasn't marketed as a Stephen King film." Reiner's movie went on to become the most commercially successful King film adaptation since THE SHINING.

The decision to market STAND BY ME without drawing attention to King was a conscious one. "We actually played down King's name because we didn't want people to have the idea that this was a bloody, gory horror movie," said Reiner. "That's why we changed the title to STAND BY ME. THE BODY, with Stephen King, *sounds* like a horror movie. And it certainly wasn't that. We didn't want to mislead the audience."

There's one point about STAND BY ME Reiner would like to set straight—its final scene of Richard Dreyfuss as the writer, shutting off his word processor containing the film's just related story to go outside to play with his kids. An article in the *New York Times* had noted how the scene prompted some audience members to shout "Save it!" at the screen. "I hear that from everybody!" said Reiner. "All the techos. The thing is, why wouldn't he have pushed the save button? The shot showed him seated. The next shot showed him standing up. Why can't you push the save button *before* you turn something off? If you push the save button, it doesn't make any noise. He's not in frame when he stands up. I could've put in a sound effect for him pushing the save button, but there's no sound to the save button. There *is* a sound to flipping it off, though." □

A pre-STAR TREK Wil Wheaton (l), River Phoenix, Jerry O'Connell and Corey Feldman find "The Body" of King's story, in one of the best King film adaptations.

'What's going on? I thought we were going to use the fake legs.' And we said, 'Well, these are the fake legs! He was surprised. '*Really*?' he said. 'Cool!' He was all excited and happy."

KNB's gelatin legs were backed up with rigid foam underneath. When hit with the sledgehammer, the rigid foam cracked like Styrofoam and the ankles bent away. "We also had a wire coming out of the bottom of the feet so we could pull it and it would stay," said Nicotero. "Originally they were talking about a couple of ways they wanted to do it. What they wanted to do was to hit it with the hammer and have the foot bend and stay there. So the morning that we shot that, Howard Berger and I were on the set smashing gelatin legs with a sledgehammer to show Rob [Reiner] what everything would look like. And his reaction was, 'Okay, that's neat, but can we get it to come over a little further?' We'd say, 'Okay.' We'd re-rig it and do it again."

Nicotero said that when KNB was hired for Reiner's film they were warned that the work they did might never be shot. The Castle Rock co-producer who hired them felt that Reiner might decide that extensive makeup effects were not called for, but he wanted the work done just in case. KNB's original deal called for the creation of two fake heads of actress Cathy Bates as Annie, to be used at the film's climax. Reiner's capper is similar to the novel's ending in which Sheldon finally gets the upper hand on his captor by bringing down his typewriter on her head—the ultimate justice for this prisoner of romance novels. The second prop head—for even more poetic justice—was to be used to show Sheldon stuffing the burning pages of *Misery's Return* into Annie's mouth, a scene also in King's book.

**Cathy Bates as nurse Annie Wilkes, revolver and hypodermic in hand, recaptures a bloodied, fleeing Caan.**

Nicotero said that Reiner initially had stressed a low-key approach to the film's more graphic elements. "In our first meeting with him, he was very concerned about our perception of the script," said Nicotero. "He kept saying, 'Look guys, this isn't a blood bath. I don't want to throw a ton of blood on the set.' He really is a strong believer in, 'Let's use the actors and get it right.' He's not a big effects director."

Shooting the demise of Annie Wilkes made it necessary on the set to make up actress Cathy Bates to give the scene the appearance that Sheldon had truly gotten the best of Annie with his typewriter. "That was straight makeup," said Nicotero. "We put a ton of blood on [Cathy Bates'] nose to simulate a broken nose. It was like, BLAM! and there was blood all over. I remember Howard [Berger] coming home from the set one day and saying, 'Well, they didn't want a lot of blood, but there sure is a *lot of blood*.'"

KNB also devised the makeup effect for Sheldon's broken legs, when he is incapacitated in a car crash at the film's beginning. Annie pulls Sheldon from his car and, being a retired nurse, sets his legs using splints. She is, however, limited to her household items. Goldman's script describes the bottom half of Sheldon's legs as wrapped like a mummy. It looks as if Annie has splinted them with aluminum crutches, cut to fit, taped to the legs from toe to knee. The upper portion is not covered by the tape however and shows damage.

Nicotero said Reiner was anything but laid-back in his use of the legs for shock value. "We did a lot of stuff on Jimmy's [James Caan] legs," said Nicotero. We did the first glimpse when [Annie] says, 'Well, I'm awfully proud of the work I did on those legs.' When she pulls the sheet back, we see these broken, swollen, puffy legs with all the bruised and veiny stuff. Rob's attitude was 'This is the first and only time we see these legs so we've got to make them really gross, really swollen, and really puffy.' That was a lot of fun. Bob Kurtzman sculpted all of the leg stuff."

Nicotero said he is most proud of the film's ankle-breaking sequence, the most challenging from an effects point for KNB. He said the end result seemed to please everyone at Castle Rock, if that's the way to put it. Said Nicotero, "In dailies, everyone went 'Ughhhhhhhhh!'"

Their grisly work on MISERY garnered KNB a reputation around the Castle Rock offices, where they were also working on SIBLING RIVALRY, which Reiner's father Carl directed. "We were shooting them both at exactly the same time," said Nicotero. "Howard [Berger] was on set for MISERY and I was on set for SIBLING RIVALRY. We would get people coming over from the MISERY set to SIBLING RIVALRY saying, 'You should see the stuff they're doing on that other set!'"

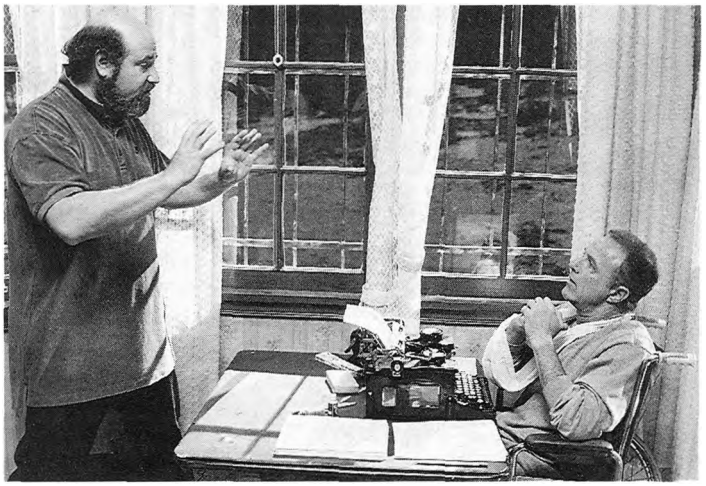
Added Nicotero with pride and a laugh, "It's kind of funny because the attitude of the Castle Rock guys toward us was like, 'You guys are *sick*!' Our feeling was, 'Look, we didn't *write* this stuff.'"

Summed up Reiner, who may just end up cutting back on some of the film's more potent, visceral shocks, "I don't want to disappoint [King's fans]. I hope they like it. It's really a blending of Stephen King and me. It's a marriage of the two of us. It's an odd kind of marriage on the surface, if you think about it. But I think it made for a pretty interesting film."

Those who have their doubts, King fans and horror fans alike, can reflect on King's first take when presented with the idea of Reiner directing. Said King, "It'll make a hell of a movie if they do it right. I think Rob will. If *anybody* can, *he can*." □

**"The attitude of the Castle Rock guys toward us was, 'You guys are sick!' Our feeling was, 'Look, we didn't write this stuff.'"**

*- Makeup artist Greg Nicotero -*



**Rob Reiner directs James Caan for a scene of his forced labor at the typewriter.**

# MISERY

# HARD HITTING MAKEUP EFFECTS

## *How KNB Efx Group helped Rob Reiner take a sledgehammer to James Caan.*

*By Gary Wood*

Director Rob Reiner insists that his adaptation of Stephen King's *Misery* is not a horror film. Reiner said he removed most of the "gory and horrific elements" of King's best-selling novel to focus on the psychological cat and mouse game of the story's captor and captive. But Reiner is worried that fans of "blood and guts" films could be disappointed. According to Greg Nicotero, one of the film's makeup supervisors, Reiner has nothing to worry about.

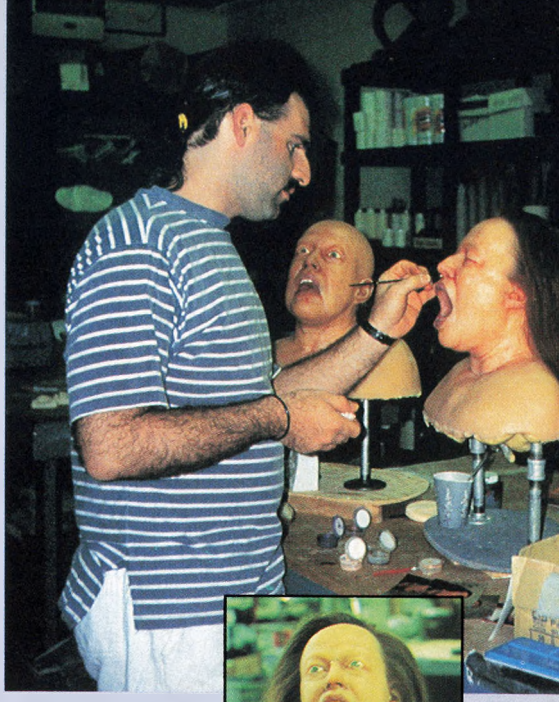
Greg Nicotero (l) and Howard Berger attach false legs to James Caan on the set.

Nicotero is the "N" in KNB Efx Group, the company hired by Reiner's Castle Rock Entertainment to provide the makeup effects for MISERY. Nicotero is partnered with Bob Kurtzman and Howard Berger in KNB, which has done the effects for films like TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE—THE MOVIE, (including King's "Cat from Hell"), NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 5, and King's recent GRAVEYARD SHIFT, for which KNB supplied rats. For MISERY, KNB was hired originally to build effects heads of Cathy Bates as Annie, for her climactic death scene.

"We did two heads," said Nicotero. "Howard [Berger] sculpted one and I sculpted the other. Then we would take photos of them, actually doing all of the hair work, and all the cosmetic work. We would take the pictures down to the set, and Rob [Reiner] would say, 'Can we open the eyes?' We had to explain, 'Well, you can't really open the eyes on these because these are already sculpted.'"

This was Nicotero's baptism into the trial-and-error working methods Reiner employed on MISERY. KNB resculpted the heads, this time with the eyes half open, taking them back to Reiner. "We'd go back and he'd say, 'Those are okay, but I need the eyes open wider. Can we open them wider?' So we ended up doing four heads instead of two. At that point, we didn't even know if they were going to use the heads."

Reiner was initially uncertain how far he wished to take the book's more graphic story points, so KNB was hired to fabricate the effects as insurance, in case Reiner called for them. "The whole end sequence played out as just this brutal fight to the death," said Nicotero of plans to use the Bates effects heads. "We figured if we have these four different expressions, then [Reiner] could use them in any way he needed to. We were trying to give Rob as much freedom as we could."



Greg Nicotero details two of the three prop effects heads of Cathy Bates built for the film's climax. Inset: The finished likeness.

Of the four heads, Reiner ended up using only two. Said Nicotero, "Basically, when we got on the set, Rob's attitude was pretty much, 'Well, I think we can cover it with the actors.' Then after they shot a lot of stuff, he said, 'Well, we really should shoot this head.'" KNB also produced a fake arm for Sheldon, into which Annie's needle could be injected to show close-ups of the administration of an addictive painkiller, as well as prop legs made of gelatin for a wrenchingly graphic ankle-breaking sequence.

Of Reiner's trial-and-error methods, Nicotero said, "It really was a lot of fun. He'd say, 'Well, I want to do it this way.' We'd sit there and work on it for a little while and then we'd tell him, 'Go shoot something, and come back, and we'll show you what we've worked out.' We'd be looking at each other, thinking, 'Well, how we gonna do this?'"

By all accounts, KNB was able to come up with some eye-opening ideas to satisfy Reiner, who perhaps went further with the film's graphic effects than he would have ever imagined.

"In the long run, it turned out that we did end up using a lot of stuff," said Nicotero about the work commissioned on a standby basis. "We are happy that our work is going to show up in the film. We've heard incredible things about it. Not only is it a great Stephen King project, but Rob Reiner directed it. So there's no doubt in anybody's mind that this movie's going to be pretty stupendous." □

Reiner's idea of toning down King: Bates bashes away at the helpless Caan.

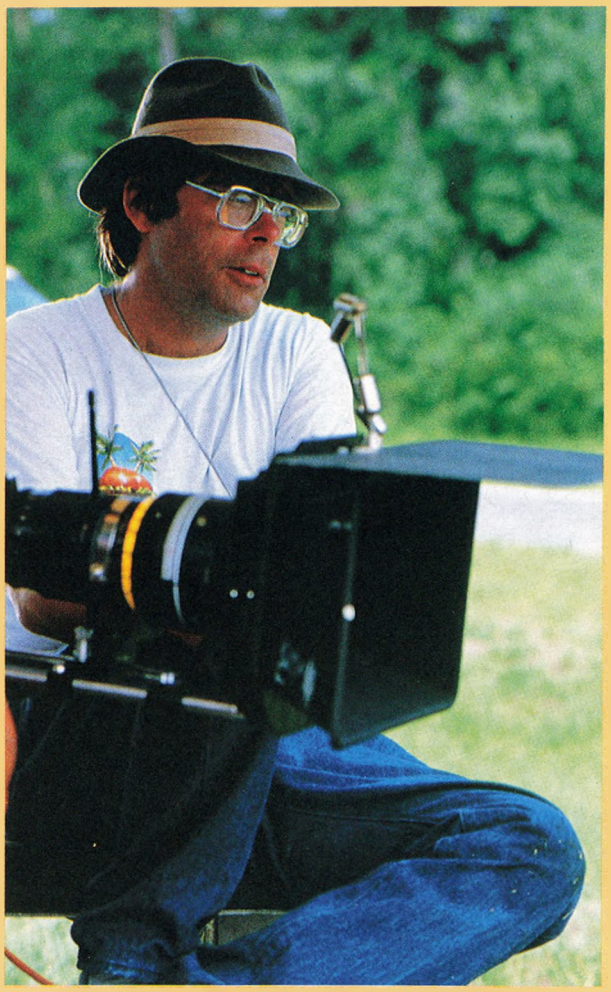
# Stephen King & Hollywood

## King and his adaptors tell what went wrong on the horror assembly line.

*By Gary Wood*

While waiting for Stephen King's next novel, *Needful Things*, due out in 1991, King junkies have been more than able to get a fix from their televisions and local theatres. Paramount released an adaptation of King's GRAVEYARD SHIFT nationwide at Halloween; ABC followed with an airing of King's IT, a four-hour miniseries in November; and looming yet is the big one, director Rob Reiner's adaptation of *Misery*, opening at Christmas. Other King film projects currently in various stages of production and development include THE DARK HALF, THE STAND, THE TALISMAN, THINNER and THE NIGHT FLIER.

Not yet announced is SLEEPWALKERS, King's third original screenplay since CREEPSHOW (1982), written last spring. Said King, the Bangor, Maine-based novelist whose name has become synonymous with horror, "I guess it's going to be bought for this huge amount of money and put into production immediately by these guys who have bankrolled a couple of Steven Seagal's films [ABOVE THE LAW and HARD TO KILL]. It's a pretty good screenplay, a real Spielberg story."



King got behind the camera himself in 1986 to direct his own script for MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, and found filmmaking tougher than it looked.

The current King glut could beat the record set in 1983/1984 when five King adaptations opened in just nine months. But how much King is too much? And will the current boom, like the earlier one, turn bust with misfires like CHRISTINE, CHILDREN OF THE CORN and FIRESTARTER, films that failed to live up to the high expectations raised by King's crowd-pleasing fiction?

"There is no doubt that Steve's name does not carry the same clout in the film world as it does in the literary world," observed producer Richard Kobritz, who made CHRISTINE, as well as the TV miniseries of King's SALEM'S LOT. "The number of readers required to turn a movie into a bestseller is far less than required to turn a movie into a blockbuster. You are comparing apples to oranges when you compare the sales of his books to ticket sales of his movies. In the publishing world, sales of 500,000 hardcovers make a superstar, but 500,000 admissions to a mainstream film is a drop in the bucket."

But what if you take into

THE SHINING (above) is still King's biggest money-maker at the boxoffice, filmed in 1980 by Stanley Kubrick, starring Jack Nicholson as the demented Jack Torrance. CARRIE (below left) was the first King film in 1976, and is still the best. Sissy Spacek, shown exiting the high school prom, got an Oscar nomination for her blood-soaked performance, directed by Brian DePalma. Among the first losers, Reggie Nalder as the vampire of SALEM'S LOT (1979), a nail-biter made limp by television.

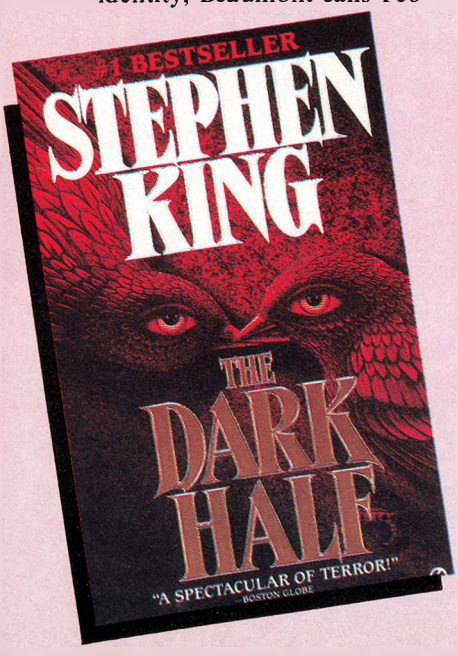

# The Dark Half

*George Romero tries his hand at adapting a King best-seller, now before the cameras in Pittsburgh for Orion Pictures.*

*By Gary Wood*

After missing out on the directing assignments for PET SEMATARY and ABC's IT—George Romero is at last bringing his own feature-length adaptation of a Stephen King novel to the screen. Romero began filming THE DARK HALF in Pittsburgh in October for Orion Pictures, shooting from his own screenplay.

*The Dark Half*, King's last novel, broke records by jumping immediately to number one on the bestseller list when published in November, 1989. Like *Misery*, the book tells the story of another King alter-ego, writer Thad Beaumont, a popular novelist known for his graphic violence who writes under the pen name of George Stark. No longer wishing to write about violence, and because a nosy law student is threatening to expose his true identity, Beaumont calls *People* to give them the story. If this sounds familiar, it is. King also wrote under a pen name, Richard Bachman, and in his preface to *The Dark Half* noted, "I'm indebted to the late Richard Bachman for his help and inspiration. This novel could not have been written without him."




Mutual fans, Romero and King in Pittsburgh for the 1982 filming of CREEPSHOW. King is an admirer of Romero's horror classic, NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD.

Beaumont's pen name and alter ego, George Stark, is also a part of King's past. According to Douglas E. Winter in *Art of Darkness*, at age twelve King began to keep a scrapbook of newspaper clippings on the murder spree of Charles Starkweather. King told Winter that Starkweather was "a young boy's first glimpse of the face of evil. . . . I loved that guy. I thought that he was 'cool as a moose,' as we used to say; but at the same time, he scared me shitless. My mother was ready to have me placed in analysis."

In *The Dark Half*, Starkweather is back to haunt King. In the book, Stark comes back to plague Beaumont. Stark slowly begins killing every person who had a hand in his death, beginning with the nosy law reporter. But for Beaumont and his family, Stark has a darker plan. The novel is set in the now familiar mythical town of King's Castle Rock, Maine.

Starring in the film is Timothy Hutton (ORDINARY PEOPLE) in the dual role of Thad Beaumont/George Stark. Amy Madigan (FIELD OF DREAMS) plays Thad's wife, Liz. Michael Rooker, the titular psychopathic killer of HENRY: PORTRAIT OF A SERIAL KILLER, is cast in the sympathetic role of Alan Pangborn, Thad's cop friend. Julie Harris (THE HAUNTING) appears as Rawlie, a university professor written as a man in King's book.

In writing the script for THE DARK HALF, Romero was faced with the same problem John Carpenter grappled with in directing CHRISTINE. Like the rotting corpse of Roland Le Bay in *Christine*, dropped by Carpenter, *The Dark Half* features Stark slowly decomposing until the story's climax. Carpenter dropped his corpse because he felt it was a cliche, and King fears Romero may do likewise.

"This gets real close to why a lot of the books have worked and a lot of the films haven't," said King. "It's because I'm not afraid to go back and do the same old shit time after time, if I feel like I can texture the story enough to warrant that repetition. At the end of *The Dark Half* George Stark starts to disintegrate. This is something that Dean Koontz has done a lot. The guy who is rotting and going back to his original gooey state is sort of a Koontz staple. It would be easy to say, 'I can't do it that way. Let's find something 'elegant.' But it's better to say, 'Let it happen, this is the classic way for it to happen,' *if* we textured and layered the story enough."

Romero was busy casting his film in New York and Los Angeles at press time and declined to be interviewed. Among those first hired to work on THE DARK HALF, however, were makeup artists John Vulich and Everett Burrell, who realized the walking corpses in Romero's recent NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD remake.

While we wait to see how Romero comes to grips with King's material, King's publishers aren't above having a little fun. On the dust jacket of *The Dark Half*, the author's bio reads, "Stephen King lives in Bangor, Maine. His pseudonym, Richard Bachman, is still at large." □

**KING'S MOVIE ALLURE**

**"Hollywood is always looking for a way to market films, more than they're looking for a good story," said producer Rob Cohen. "They thought, 'We have a trademark!'"**

account paperback sales? Approximately four million people read *Christine* and ten million people read *Pet Sematary*, which went on to become the most profitable King film adaptation ever when released by Paramount last year, in part fueling the current King boom.

"My guess would be that in a lot of cases, the people who read the books and the people who go to the movies are the same people," said King. "And they stay away because they know that whatever they read in the book, they're just not going to see on the screen. It can't be done. You can do stuff in a book that you simply can't do in a film without earning yourself an X rating for your troubles."

Noted screenwriter Bill Phillips, who adapted King's CHRISTINE, "On the other hand, if you can get ten million people to come into the theatre and be disappointed, you've got a hit."

Stanley Kubrick's THE SHINING (1980), with domestic theatrical revenues of just under $31 million, has proven to be King's best box office draw, far from the $100 million figure that typically signifies a movie blockbuster. Kobritz suggested that the sheer number of King's films and books may have saturated the marketplace. "He's been so prolific that critics, and some fans, have accused him of placing quantity over quality," said Kobritz. "It's a tough accusation to dispel when he not only issues calendars under his name, but refers to his writing in terms of 'McDonald's.' He has merchandised himself to the max."

Rob Cohen, who produced Arnold Schwarzenegger's THE RUNNING MAN, based on a book King wrote under his Richard Bachman pseudonym, placed the blame for the bad King films where it belongs—on Hollywood. "Hollywood is always looking for some way to *market* films, more than they're looking for a good story," said Cohen. "They're looking for marketable hooks. If you can create a marketable hook for a movie, you've got a much better chance of getting it sold, even if the script is inferior. You can say, 'I have a *Stephen King* picture!' So [producers] flocked, in the early part of the Stephen King-Hollywood romance, they flocked because they thought, 'My God! We have a trademark!' That didn't work. The trademark alone is not enough to make a successful picture."

Noted director George Romero, who made King's CREEPSHOW (1982) and is currently filming THE DARK HALF for Orion, "I think [King is] hard to adapt in what is thought of by the mainstream industry as a commercial way. It's hard to squeeze Steve's stuff into the kind of formula things that studios want and that, usually, audiences buy."

With some eighteen feature films or television miniseries adapted by Hollywood from King books and stories to date, only an handful have been first rate, including Rob Reiner's STAND BY ME (1986), David Cronenberg's THE DEAD ZONE (1983), Lewis Teague's CUJO (1983) and Stanley Kubrick's THE SHINING. But all, with the exception of Brian DePalma's CARRIE (1976), have disappointed King's legion of fans in one way or another. *Carrie* was King's first published novel, and the phenomenal success of DePalma's movie version virtually launched his career. The paperback movie tie-in featuring Sissy Spacek on the cover



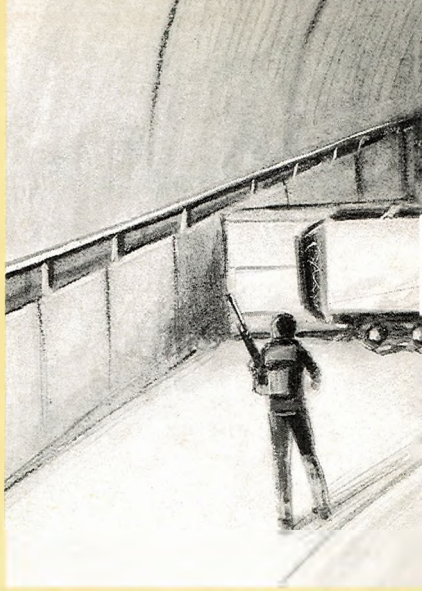
Romero directs King on the set of "The Lonesome Death of Jordy Verrill," the second segment of their CREEPSHOW feature anthology. Inset: Makeup artist Bonnie Priore works on King, a movie fan having a good time.

boosted sales and King's name recognition so much that the author has stated, "The movie made the book, and the book made me!"

Director Rob Reiner, whose forthcoming MISERY is widely expected to make the A list of King film winners, worked closely with screenwriter William Goldman in adapting it and mused on the difficulty faced by King movie versions. "A lot of Stephen King's books are monstrous tomes," said Reiner. They are very big books and those would probably be much harder to adapt than the two that I chose. *Misery* is a relatively small novel. STAND BY ME [King's "The Body"] is a novella. It's only 115 pages. Those kinds of things lend themselves to film a lot more easily than *It* or *The Dark Half*, which is huge, or *The Talisman*. From my standpoint, King's been fairly easy to adapt because I took kind of streamlined material to begin with."

Reiner recalled screening STAND BY ME for King. "I was very nervous because I wanted him to like it," said Reiner, who worked closely on adapting the film with screenwriter Bruce A. Evans and Raymond Gideon. "I didn't actually watch the film with him. I showed up after it was over and ran into him. He was visibly moved. He was really almost crying. He said, 'Listen,

# The Stand



*The filming of King's masterpiece has been a movie deal more than ten years in the making.*

*By Gary Wood*

Richard Rubinstein's Laurel Entertainment is developing King's THE STAND as a major motion picture for Warner Bros, based on a script by Rospo Pallenberg (THE EMERALD FOREST). Rubinstein, who produced King's PET SEMATARY (1989) for Paramount, said the Warners deal was in place before PET SEMATARY went on to become one of the top-grossing King movie adaptations ever. "The economic success of PET SEMATARY revitalized all of King's prospective movie projects," said Rubinstein. "That would include THE STAND."

Laurel has owned the film rights to THE STAND for more than ten years. King said he wrote "about five drafts" of the script before he threw up his hands in disgust and shoved it off his desk. Rubinstein's former Laurel partner George Romero was set to direct until he bowed out of the company six years ago.


Romero, also once set to direct Laurel's PET SEMATARY (ultimately helmed by Mary Lambert), isn't waiting around for the project to gel, and has embarked on his own King adaptation, THE DARK HALF, which he currently has before the cameras in Pittsburgh. But having worked on THE STAND for years at Laurel, Romero knows the obstacles that will make it a long haul to the screen. "It's expensive to make," said Romero. "And it's got to have a long running time, so it has a lot of problems. It doesn't have this sort of obvious kind of Hollywood premise. You can't tell the story in two sentences in the Polo Lounge. So it's a hard sell. Steve wrote, I thought, a great screenplay but it was around 170 pages, and of course, no one wanted to read it."

Romero said he still has hopes of directing the film some day for Laurel. Recalled Romero, "Actually the first time I met Steve he gave me a copy of *The Stand*, the hardback copy, and wrote in it, 'Maybe we'll get to work together someday and maybe on *this*.' Ever since, I've always thought it would be somehow *proper* to go and do that. I'm available. I'd *love* to do it, but it's basically [Rubinstein's] decision."

Rubinstein said the selection of a director for THE STAND rests not only with him, but with King and Warners development executive Bruce Berman, and that no decision has been made. Said King, "Right now we'd just be happy to get a script and talk about directors later."

Rubinstein said he chose Pallenberg, a frequent collaborator of director John Boorman (EXCALIBUR), as the right candidate to tackle THE STAND script because the writer was an "out and out fan of the book." Recalled Rubinstein, "We spoke to more than one screenwriter but Rospo appeared to have the best grasp of the problems of adapting the book. When he walked into our first meeting he was carrying the original paperback edition. I happen to follow these things. So when Rospo said 'I've been a fan of the book for a long time,' he had proof in his hands."

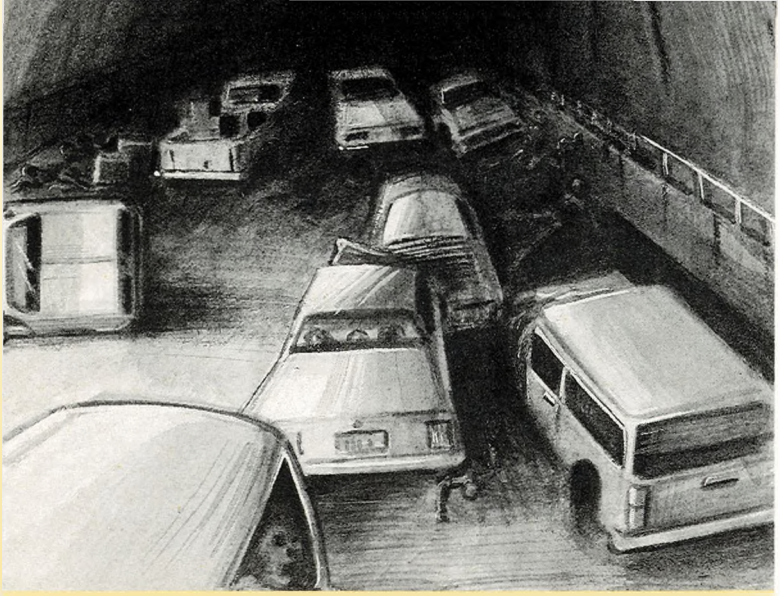
Pallenberg said he'd always felt King's book had movie potential. "I actually mentioned it to Dino DeLaurentiis, when I worked for him," said Pallenberg. "I was a bit surprised to be approached quite a few years later by Warner Bros. They called me in. I've always felt that adapting it would be relatively easy. One had to be bold, that's all."

Pallenberg never looked at King's scripts, starting from scratch. "I didn't exactly condense," said Pallenberg about adapting the sprawling 817-page book. "I collapsed and re-invented. It's a different technique. When things interpenetrate, sparks fly and new things are born. It can be difficult sometimes for the original writer." Pallenberg broke down King's story into three, not totally equal parts, keeping most of the major characters, though some got "slightly short shrift," he admitted. Pallenberg sets up King's plague-ravaged post-holocaust world in the first act, develops the cast of characters in the second, and delivers King's spiritual message in the third.

"Basically after the first third, we're out of the bodies, the decay, and actually just getting the characters right," said Pallenberg. "I did a bit of character synthesizing. My thinking was that the characters that were in the first third of the book would be there in the last third of the book. That's where I took more liberties. My thought was, 'We're flying. We're off the runway. If the audience is going to think about who's missing, sitting in a dark room, then I *really* fucked up!'"

If King fans had to pick one sequence in all of his books as the most horrifying, the majority would undoubtedly choose Larry Underwood's journey through the Lincoln Tunnel in *The Stand*. King takes his reader through total darkness filled with stalled cars and dead bodies, letting the reader receive information only through Larry's touch and what little illumination his lighter can throw from time to time. Pallenberg recognized this sequence, as much a nightmare to adapt as to read, as essential to the screenplay.

"I knew it was a stock piece," said Pallenberg. "King had outdone himself in writing it. But in many ways you didn't *need* it, from the point of view of telling the general story. So I just loaded it with a few other



The script by Rospo Pallenberg includes Larry Underwood's journey through the Lincoln Tunnel, considered to be King's most horrifying sequence, a trip through a graveyard of stalled cars and dead bodies, illuminated only by a pocket lighter.

things so that it could stay, using it to develop the relationship of Rita and Larry. I didn't go for a total pitch blackness. I accelerated the development of the plague so there are some dim lights still in the cars, but they're colored lights and they make things more eerie. Rubinstein and Warners never told me it had to be in. I just knew from showmanship that it had to be in. It carries more weight now. You couldn't cut it out at this point."

Like all King's work, Pallenberg said his script retained King's visceral punch, sure to skirt the boundaries of an X-rating. "I just went with the feeling," he said.

According to Rubinstein, Warner Bros greeted Pallenberg's three-hour first draft with "Bravo!" acclaim. "And Steve [King] wrote the most wonderful letter to me," said Rubinstein. "He said, in essence, that we've cracked the nut. We've gotten ourselves at least within shouting distance. The point is, I think Rospo was successful where Steve wasn't in terms of being able to get some distance on the material and make those decisions that needed to be made, in terms of what stays in the movie and what gets left out." Subsequently, Pallenberg pared the script down to just slightly over two hours.

Due to its huge readership, King expressed relief at being rid of the pressure of writing a script that would satisfy his fans. "I understand what Steve is referring to," said Rubinstein. "*The Stand* is his best-selling back-list book." And Rubinstein numbered himself among King's fans disgruntled by films that missed their potential.

"I was pissed at Stanley Kubrick when he made THE SHINING," said Rubinstein. "He made Jack Nicholson the star of the movie and in the book the kid is the star. It got so Hollywood-*ized*. Basically what I'm looking to do, and I think Rospo has been successful in doing, is not being literal in the translation but reproducing the *feel*."

In reproducing the feeling of *The Stand*, Rubinstein maintained that condensing the book would not be a problem. Rubinstein said he rejected numerous overtures to turn the book into a television miniseries, opting instead to give it the big-budget, feature film treatment. Did Pallenberg feel it might be better served as a miniseries? "Not any more!" he laughed. "It had occurred to me on a *bad day*. It's going to be a total experience, two hours and a bit!" □

STORYBOARDS BY STEVE MCAFFE

**KING ON CELEBRITY**

**"I get this real, kind of dreadful, feeling about celebrity. The media ate Rod Serling alive an inch at a time. You could see him sort of disintegrating as the years went by."**

I've got to compose myself. I'll come back and I'll talk to you.' He came back in about fifteen to twenty minutes, and we sat and talked. He said that this was by far the best film that had ever been made of any of his works. And he said, 'But that's not saying much.'

"And I understood what he said because it's exactly why I'm sure he's frustrated by some of the films that are made out of his books. Because filmmakers don't bother to look past the gore."

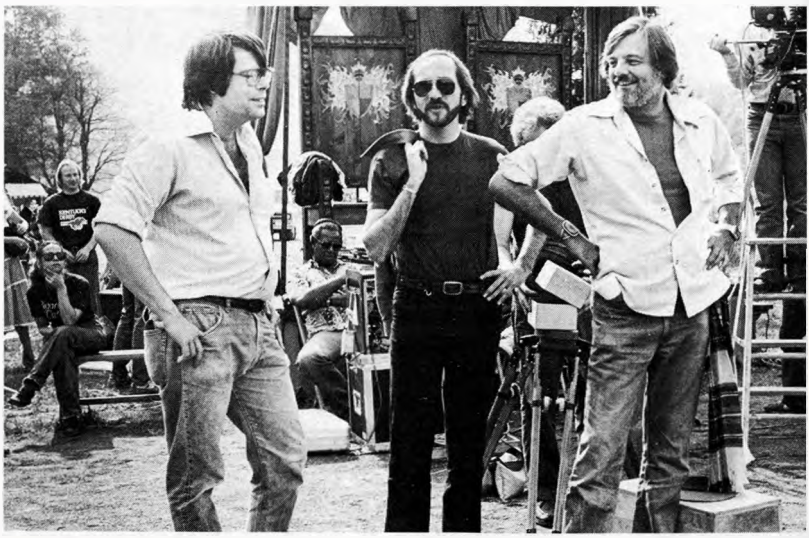
Noted King, when approached with the idea of this cover story on the vicissitudes of being adapted by Hollywood, "The idea of doing a piece, an overview on why these films haven't worked is really interesting to me."

Since the success of CARRIE propelled him into the limelight, King has obviously come to terms with and enjoys his celebrity, but the idea of fame is still a notion that scares him. That's why, over the years, King said he has nixed numerous ideas that would have put him on television as the host of a weekly series. "The things came and went," he said. "Pitches like, 'Wouldn't it be great to do a TV series on the order of THE TWILIGHT ZONE or ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS?' TV thinks that any idea that succeeded once, even in a half-assed way, will succeed again. Since my face is known, I must, therefore, become this generation's Rod Serling, or Alfred Hitchcock, or Boris Karloff, or all of them rolled into one.

"I get this *real* kind of dreadful feeling about *celebrity*," said King. "The media ate Rod Serling alive an inch at a time. You could see him sort of disintegrating as the years went by. I think that cigarettes and booze also had a lot to do with it. They all worked together in the same way. So I feel about TV the way that I felt about the deserted church that I used to pass when I was a kid at night. You know, it seems like a haunted place. I don't want any part of it."

With that *caveat* in mind though, King still sees television as a potentially useful instrument and hasn't ruled it out. "My agent out there [L.A.] from Creative Artists, doesn't want me to do anything for TV," said King. "I'm supposed

THE STAND partnership, King (l), Laurel Entertainment producer Richard Rubinstein and George Romero on the set of Laurel's KNIGHTRIDERS in 1981.




Director Brian DePalma's dream sequence grabber at the finale of CARRIE (1984), as Amy Irving visits Carrie's grave, the only King film adaptation to top the book.

to be too big for TV, but that's bullshit! One of the reasons that I've worked as hard as I have is so that I can do things that I want to do. So if something came along, I would."

HBO's popular TALES FROM THE CRYPT might seem a logical avenue for King to work in television, given his admiration for the comics. You'd think they'd be banging down his door, like the rest of Hollywood, but King said, "I haven't heard anything from them." Maybe his agent at CAA has already put them off, or, perhaps they sense that King would probably decline. "I wouldn't actually," he said. "They'd probably find a story [that would interest me]. I'm not sure, though, that it makes any sense. It would have to be a directorial thing, and I'm not sure I want to do that now. Everything is pretty much closely adapted from the comic book, and I don't know that it would be my cup of tea."

It could be that King's fame actually works against him at the movies, either fostering high expectations among his book fans that can't be met, or warning away those already burned by some of Hollywood's clunkers. Said King, "With CARRIE, none of us had a reputation. Nobody knew DePalma. Nobody knew me. Nobody knew Sissy Spacek. The only *name*, and the person at that time that they talked about when they talked about the movie, was 'Oh isn't it wonderful that Piper Laurie is coming back!'

"You've got another case in PET SEMATARY, that has been a fabulous money-maker, by a director nobody ever heard of, starring people nobody knows. Rob Reiner, at the time he made STAND BY ME, had directed one previous film and that was SPINAL TAP. So nobody really knew who he was. What I'm saying is that it seems to me that the ones that have succeeded, with maybe the exception of PET SEMATARY, succeeded on the basis of *not* having my name attached to them, or having anybody else of particular importance attached to them."

**KING ON SPIELBERG**

**"You have to just kind of nod your head and say, 'Yeah.' There are two ways of doing things. Your way or his way. And if it's not going to be your way, what the fuck are you doing here?"**

CARRIE was filmed by Brian DePalma for United Artists, after 20th Century-Fox had passed on the project, made for a slim $1.8 million. When the film opened at Halloween in 1976, it became a sensation, earning over $15 million in domestic rentals and garnering Oscar nominations for Piper Laurie and Sissy Spacek. King had

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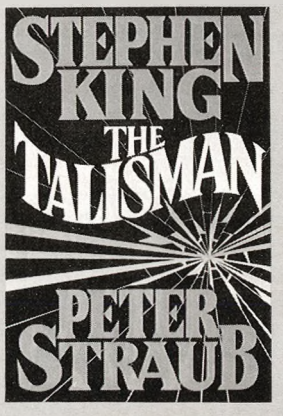
# ON SPIELBERG: A TALE OF TWO STEVES

*The Talisman*, the epic fantasy King co-authored with Peter Straub (GHOST STORY), has spent the last few years being shuffled back and forth between Universal and Steven Spielberg's Amblin Entertainment, for whom Universal purchased the rights. "Peter and I wanted Spielberg's actual involvement," said King. "For a long time the book was not sold to Universal because they [balked] at that. Peter actually wanted him to make a commitment to direct the thing."




After being proposed as both a motion picture and television project, the property is currently in development limbo at Amblin, ostensibly now planned as a feature film. King said he met with Spielberg three times and spoke with him on the phone "a half dozen times" to discuss the project. "He is a tremendously bright guy," said King of Spielberg. "And anybody who thinks [his success] can be a fluke—three, four, or five great big movies in a row—it's not. I've watched Spielberg, and I've watched the *look* that pictures have as they come from the Spielberg studios. So I'd love to see him direct it. I think he'd be good."

King was originally approached by Amblin to write the script for POLTERGEIST (1982). "There was a screw-up in communications at that time," said King about why the assignment never came off. "I was in England and this was after Steven and I had dinner and talked about it. We wrote letters back and forth. We talked on the phone about it. I got ready to *do* it, went to England, and found out that Doubleday, who had been acting on my behalf, had asked this *incredible* amount of money [for me] to do the screenplay. This is for somebody who had never *done* a screenplay that had been produced. I got a letter from Spielberg saying that he was really unhappy that it turned out this way."

Said King about the film, eventually written by Michael Grais and Mark Victor, and directed by Tobe Hooper, "It's pretty good. All that stuff about the Indian burial ground and the corpses in the swimming pool—*ehhhhh*. Maybe we could have done something more interesting."

But King has mixed feelings about the missed opportunity. "Spielberg is somebody who likes to have things his way," said King. "Really, as far as writing, it would have been the experience of working with him and watching him work—I could've used that. But in the end, I would've been hired help. And to a degree, when it's somebody else's idea, you have to just kind of nod your head and say, 'Yeah.' There are two ways to do this: your way or his way. And if it's not going to be your way, what the fuck are you doing *here*?"

**Gary Wood**

Stephen King

# UPCOMING HORRORS, THINNER & OTHERS

*Laurel Entertainment has a raft of King movie and TV projects in development.*

*By Gary Wood*

King's casting choice for THINNER, John Candy. "Maybe it'd save his life!"

Richard P. Rubinstein's Laurel Entertainment, which has King's THE STAND in development at Warner Bros, has a raft of other King projects in various stages of preparation, including a feature film version of THINNER, one of the books written by King under the pseudonym of Richard Bachman, and THE NIGHT FLIER, a two-hour movie for television to be based on King's story published in the anthology *Prime Evil*.

Screenwriter Michael McDowell (BEETLEJUICE), who adapted King's short story "The Word Processor of the Gods" for an episode of Laurel's TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE TV series, has written the script for THINNER, which is also in development at Warner Bros. King's book is the story of Billy Halleck, a successful lawyer who is fifty pounds overweight. One fateful evening, he sideswipes an old gypsy as she is crossing the street. Though exonerated by the courts, the gypsy places a curse on Billy and he begins to lose weight. Though pleased at first, terror quickly sets in when the weight loss doesn't stop. King said he has a casting wish for this one. "I think John Candy would be perfect. He'd have to lose some weight and maybe it'd save his life."

THE NIGHT FLIER centers around a tabloid writer who is trying to solve a series of grisly murders that have taken place at small, out-of-the-way airports on America's east coast. The writer comes to the conclusion that the killer is a private pilot. About this he is right, but what he doesn't count on is the fact that the murderer is no ordinary pilot. "The Night Flier" is a modern vampire who chooses the technological luxury of a plane over the crude exertion of bat wings to get from place to place, airport to airport, victim to victim. He flies in at night and feasts. During the investigations that follow the next day, the Night Flier sleeps safely in the cargo hold of his plane which is lined with soil. As night falls, he creeps from the hold and flies away, leaving only a small pile of dirt on the runway.

The final scene of the story, one of King's bloodiest and possibly most horrifying, has the writer stumbling onto the corpse-strewn airport and coming face-to-face with the killer. The problem is that the story ends just when it is picking up speed. But King's 34-page tale could prove to be one of the most unique teasers in television movie history. King did some work on adapting a script for Laurel but has now abandoned the project to others. "He's now affiliated with [television producer] Aaron Spelling," said King of Rubinstein's Laurel operation, "so I passed on that."

Also in the Laurel hopper is CREEPSHOW 3, another sequel in the comic book horror anthology series King originally developed with George Romero. Likely to be included in the new sequel is "Pinfall," an original story suggested by King that was dropped from CREEPSHOW 2 (1987). Said Romero, who scripted the story, "I wrote it from a couple of pages that Steve had sketched out. It was my *total* favorite."

Michael Gornick, Romero's oft-time director of photography, who made his directing debut on CREEPSHOW 2, described the unused episode. "It's about two competing bowling teams," said Gornick. "One is a blue collar team. The other is white collar. Through some cheating, the white collar team ends up winning a grand tournament. What they do is they sabotage the van of the blue collar team and they plunge into a ravine. The blue collar team comes back as zombies and winds up dismembering the white collar team. It was fabulous!"

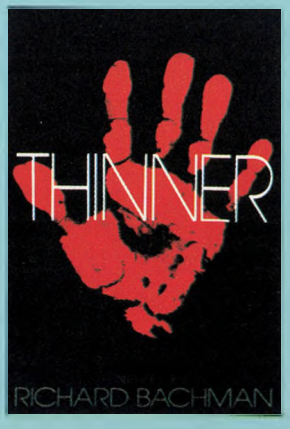
King and Laurel producer Richard Rubinstein confer on the set of Laurel's CREEPSHOW in 1982.

The unused King story hits just the right note for the series' EC comics-inspired format. "It was perfect," said Romero. "It was like the old EC baseball story where they used the guy's body parts for the base bags. It was that kind of grim humor. It was my *fave*! I thought it had the best, funniest characters. And I thought it was the best suited for the comic book premise."

Enthused King, "It was *great*. Especially the idea of the bowling alley at the end. When the pins are set up, they're all arms and legs. In the end we see see them bowling and the pins are all *body parts*. Hopefully, it will be in CREEPSHOW 3."

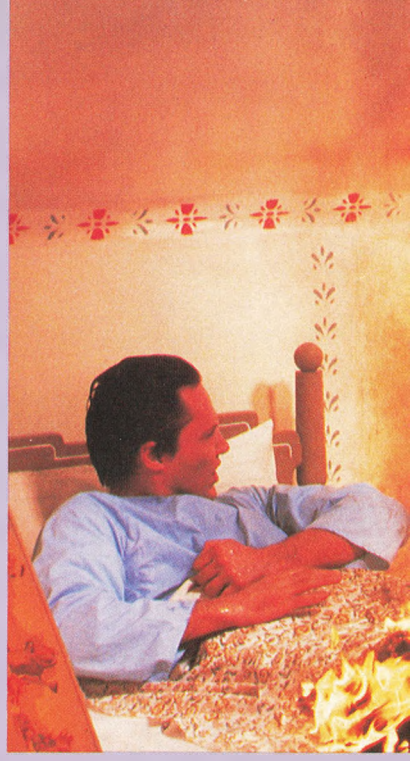
Though Laurel has turned its movie and TV adaptations of King's brand of best-selling horror into a cottage entertainment industry, King doesn't always say "yes" to their overtures. Last August, King turned down Laurel's bid to produce THE STEPHEN KING PLAYHOUSE for CBS. "Rubinstein had an offer to go ahead and produce, sight unseen, sixteen episodes," said King. "I was to introduce the thing, pick the scripts, write them if I wanted to, whatever. But that's more time than I'm willing to take right now. That's *always* been the sticking point." □

Written under King's pen name, the film is being developed at Warner Bros.



# What's Wrong With Stephen King?

## Hollywood at times forgets to put meat on its King-size bun.



Christopher Walken as psychic Johnny Smith in THE DEAD ZONE (1983), among the best of t David Cronenberg. Inset: Cronenberg and Mar

*By Thomas Doherty*

Stephen King is to the contemporary horror film what Vlad the Impaler was to the peasantry of Europe—a guy who staked out so much ground he dominated the landscape through sheer maniacal persistence. One can't walk too far into the video rental shop without tripping over one or another of the Kingly remains. But for all the brand name recognition—how many other authors have their books hawked on cable via toll-free 800 numbers?—King himself can be hard to stake down at the movies.

King clowns with the corpse makeup used in the "Father's Day" segment of CREEPSHOW (1982), the cinematic equivalent of fast food, but still good solid nourishment.

Sorting through the nearly two-score odd feature films written, directed, inspired or otherwise imprinted with the Stephen King logo is like tumbling into a reel from CREEPSHOW. The title letters drip like goo down the screen—"The Mark of King!"—and garishly illustrated panels freeze key scenes from shelves of well-worn videotapes—the post-menstrually pissed-off prom queen zapping the homeroom clique in CARRIE, the radiant child running Dad into the cold, cold snow in THE SHINING, the misfit youngster grossing out his pals with a barf-o-rama tale in STAND BY ME. In the zinger ending, that earwig burrowing into the brain plants a nasty thought: what if it's all in the mind?

That is, what if King's films are not King's films? To put it tactfully, his level of hands-on involvement in the projects that bear his name varies widely. On television he talks about "movie money" for his books as if it's a visitation from Heaven that relieves him of responsibility for what unspools on screen. Purists who grouse over the book-to-movie changes (classic lobby comment after a King flick: "The book was scarier.") might do well to consider that by any disinterested reckoning, Hollywood has treated King *very* kindly, not just in hard cash, but in the currency of reputation. After all, as a writer, King has clipped along from cult status to pulp popularity to mass-cult phenom without ever once stopping at critical respectability. Compared to the screen adaptations accorded a first-class wordsmith like Elmore Leonard, King has lucked out.

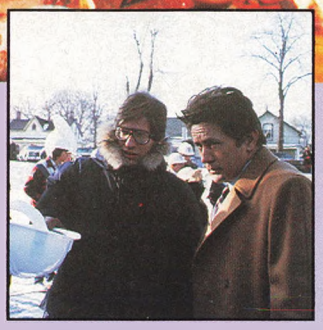
Though King himself has referred to his work as the literary equivalent of a Big Mac ("over four billion scared"), on screen it's inspired enough four-star delicacies to belie the modest aspirations. Besides, as a group, the films share with the books some readily detectible genetic similarities. A consistent theme is the recurrent figure of the gifted child, beset by cruel adults and a fascination with the macabre—telekinetic firestarters, shining children, living dead toddlers, wheelchair-bound werewolf killers.

The supernatural can always be called on when backed against a narrative wall, but King's visitations are as likely to take the form of the mechanical and vehicular (a penchant attributed by the psycho-analytically inclined to a childhood trauma). The dead sibling/friend and the persuing vehicle—the train in STAND BY ME, the steamroller in MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, Christine in CHRISTINE—cruise throughout King country. Also scurrying about is a menagerie of household pets in serious need of domestication: CAT'S EYE, PET SEMATARY, and the slurpy CUJO. Cars and trucks, dogs and cats—the animated stuff of small-town America.

But even if the mark of King is fairly consistent, borrowing King's own appetizing metaphor, the quality of the films with his name on their ad sheets are diverse in quality, fully spanning three menu cards.

• **Gourmet Dining:** Four-star courses like CARRIE, THE SHINING, THE DEAD ZONE, and STAND BY ME. Okay, you might add a dish or subtract one, but several King-inspired films make up any horror maven's selection of choice. The directors—Brian DePalma, Stanley Kubrick, David Cronenberg, and Rob Reiner—are all certifiable aces whose hand, as much as King's, is evident in the end product. One needn't worship at the *auteur* altar to acknowledge

. trapped in a vision of a little girl's burning room he King adaptations thanks to the vision of director tin Sheen as King's political psycho Greg Stillson.



that slick and talented hands would improve the work of Jackie Collins, or that Cronenberg could come up with a multi-layered, unnerving film from four panels of a Bazooka Joe comic. But the combination of the vision of a *sympatico* director with King's compelling narratives makes a potent recipe for superior horror. King provides the essential ingredients—the characters, narrative scaffolding, and dramatic lift-off that today's non-literary (sometimes non-literate) directors so palpably lack. Compare, for example, the straight lines and sure movements of CARRIE with the botched plot and thoughtless contrivances of BODY DOUBLE.

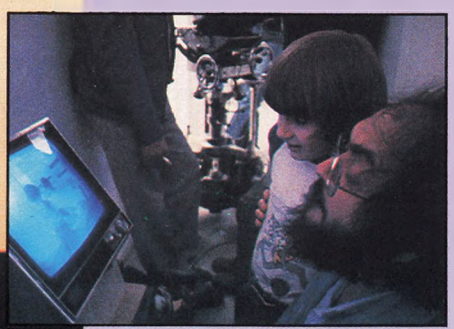
In the four-star King films, it's always an equal trade off. DePalma has CARRIE steaming with a sexual urgency conspicuous by ommission from the rest of the King *oeuvre* Teen shower rooms and dashboard-lit sex don't interest a man whose preferred orgies are ones of violence. In Cronenberg, King's suspicion of sex found a likely match. The tormented coma victim played by Christopher Walken, cursed, not blessed, with second sight, is motivated by none of the childish rage and rejection of the King kids who erupt when they get ticked off. Even against THE FLY, it remains the director's most tragic film.

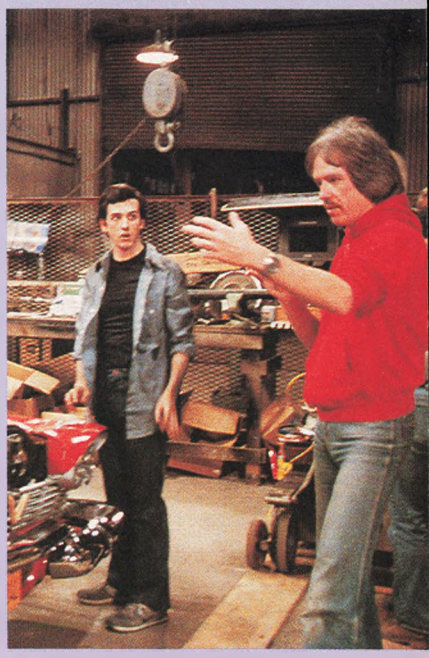
Still the most controversial of all King adaptations, THE SHINING was an icy forum for oedipal warfare and Kubrickian pyrotechnics. It is also the most explicit depiction of a prominent and disturbing element in the modern horror film, the theme of child abuse (a motif all over King's work—a wave he was both riding and pushing). In the soundtrack hum accompanying the Steadicam scooter point-of-view shots through the cavernous Overlook Hotel, Kubrick rendered the child's larger-than-life perspective on a demented parent-world, a place where Dad can come crashing through the door with an ax. THE SHINING also has the single most terrifying rendering of an affliction King never seems to have suffered from: writer's block.

Against expectations, Rob Reiner captured King's spirit as well as anyone, surely better than the seemingly kindred George Romero or John Carpenter. (This bodes well for the upcoming MISERY). Deceptively sentimental and good-natured, STAND BY ME is another journey into King territory with one big difference: the cover of the supernatural is lifted. Gordie (a pre-Wesley Will Wheaton) is the golden child who musters a grim determination for his passage to manhood. (Typically, again, the four boys on the cusp of adolescence are looking for a corpse not a babe.) A misfit who carves out a niche as a storyteller, Gordie, child and man, is the most transparent of all King surrogates—and the most assured and normal.

The one false scene is the vomitorium campfire story. Is there a clause in the King contract demanding a big smear special effects sequence? King talks in *Danse Macabre* about

King's Overlook bartender in Stanley Kubrick's THE SHINING (1980), not a favorite with King fans. Inset: Kubrick with child star Danny Lloyd, editing.





Sometimes the director doesn't make the difference: John Carpenter directs Keith Gordon in CHRISTINE (1983).

his willingness to "gag 'em" when he can't "grab 'em," but this cartoonish interlude detracts from a vision quest that is already quite grabbing. Or maybe the realism was just getting a little too close for comfort. Incidentally, the final scene where author Richard Dreyfuss turns off his computer without "saving" the story is not symbolic of a past put behind him: no one on the set knew how to use a word processor.

•**Meatloaf Again?** This is King in his disingenous "I serve the masses" mode. Though definitely second tier stuff, it's good solid nourishment. Typically assuming the subtle tones and penetrating character insights of his beloved EC Comics, the short story vignettes of CREEPSHOW and CAT'S EYE depict snippets of ideas not worth working out to full length. Tales that are over before you think too hard about them. Generally too good-spirited to be really unnerving, their very triviality is their main appeal—like the James Woods sequence in the anti-smoking clinic from CAT'S EYE or the "day of the cockroach" infestation in CREEPSHOW.

Among the best of the second rank is SILVER BULLET. King embellished the connect-the-dots outline of the were-

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# Firestarter

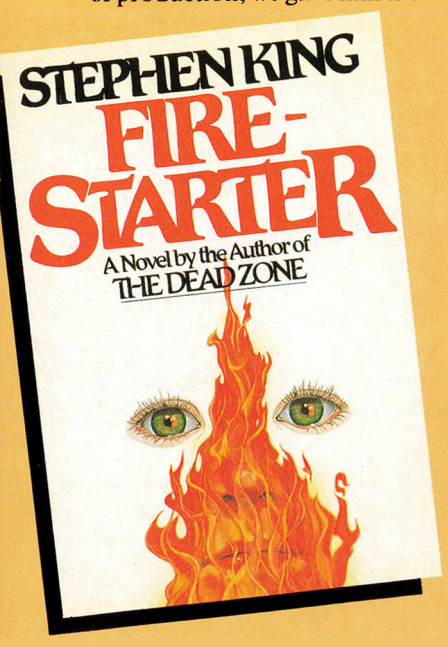
## *Director Mark Lester takes off the gloves to respond to King's knock that this adaptation is "the worst of the bunch."*

*By Gary Wood*

FIRESTARTER director Mark Lester strenuously objected to Stephen King's characterization of his 1988 Universal film as "the worst of the bunch" among King film adaptations. In Lester's opinion, the honor of directing the worst belongs to King himself, for MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE.

"I don't know what his motives are in all of this, really," said Lester of King. "I can't quite put my finger on it, being that he liked the movie. I guess maybe he takes his evilness from his characters, his books, because the truth of the matter is FIRESTARTER got very well reviewed in a lot of places like *The New York Times*—[Vincent] Canby liked it—places like that. Everybody thought it was a terrific movie, including Stephen King.

"Through the whole course of production, we gave him the screenplay. He was participating in making notes and making changes in the script. And when the script was completed, he said, 'This is the best adaptation of any of my books.' And he wrote a letter to Stanley Mann, the screenwriter, saying that this was such a terrific screenplay. He was so pleased because it followed the book so closely.




King on the North Carolina set with Lester, who feels King's criticism is unfair.

"During the course of filming, he visited the set, watched the dailies, and was extremely excited about the movie. We shot the screenplay that he even had *approval* on. [Executive producer Dino] DeLaurentiis kept sending him the script. He came to the set and we talked.

"In fact, in one sequence we had the wind blow the hair of Drew Barrymore, who plays the lead, and in another scene of David Keith (as her father), we have blood coming out of his nose when he does this thing called "the push" in the book. These ideas came from Stephen King when he was on the set. We thought they were terrific. I was shocked later to read an interview with him in which he pointed these things out as ideas that he didn't like. These were *his* very ideas!

"After the movie came out, I was appalled at some of the things he said. I was appalled because he'd screened the final print. He said, 'I love this movie!' He was very excited. He really liked it. So why would he go around and attack people? I didn't believe it at first. I thought the press was misquoting him. This is so unshow-business, so un-professional."

Lester noted how King has been highly critical of films made from his books, including Stanley Kubrick's THE SHINING. "This man," said Lester of King, "so wealthy that we paid $1 million for the rights to his book—you can put that down—why would he then go out and attack these movies when he's certainly willing to take the money from all of these screenplays? I'm just appalled that a man of his wealth would actually stoop to these slanderous comments that he makes about people, attacking these movies.

"When you make a film, you try your best. You hope it succeeds with the public, and I think [FIRESTARTER] did. It's enough in show business that we have critics that write about our pictures, sometimes rightly, sometimes wrongly. But to have a person so intimately involved, who actually approved the script and loved the movie, and collaborated every step of the way in the making of the film, come out and attack the movie, to me is sickening.

"Maybe he wants to give back $1 million to Universal?"

Summed up Lester about King, "He may be a hero to your magazine, but underneath I don't know what's wrong with the man. He's got a sick side, I guess. I've wanted to say this for years because he's attacked me so many times in print. He should call and apologize to me."

Rather than call, King wrote a letter, printed at right. □

King faulted the cast, including Oscar-winning George C. Scott as Rainbird. Lester termed the film's cast "terrific."

suggested DePalma as director, based on his handling of SISTERS (1973), but DePalma had to campaign hard at United Artists to win the assignment from independent producer Paul Monash.

"DePalma was at the peak of his talents with CARRIE," said Lawrence D. Cohen, who wrote the film's near-perfect script. "Brian brought just a wallop of style to it. I think the difference between the King movies that are successful and the movies that are not successful, both commercially and artistically, is that the director adds the other quotient."

Cohen got the CARRIE script assignment, his first, while an assistant to Monash, after an initial draft by another writer hadn't worked. "I think the luck of CARRIE was that its fidelity pleased everyone when all was said and done," noted Cohen, who most recently scripted the miniseries made of King's IT. "What I happen to love about him as a writer is exactly the same thing whether it's CARRIE or STAND BY ME—which is not necessarily the hook of the piece which is its most superficial, genre element—it really tends to be his acute skill as a writer of stories with emotion. The devices that he happens to utilize—telekinesis, a body, or a monster that lives beneath the city—they're basically devices to reveal character. That's *my* interest in the field. I'm interested in the mother-daughter relationship in CARRIE, and the treatment of peer pressure. I think those are legitimate concerns for everybody, which is why I think King is finally such a popular author. Not because he's a horror writer, but because he tends to know and put his finger on everything about life—with just a little bit of a spin."

Doubleday had published *Carrie* in hardcover in 1974 and sold just 13,000 copies—DePalma claimed he had wanted to make a film of it then, only to learn that Monash had already sewn-up the rights. In paperback the book sold just over a million copies when published in April 1975. King's *Salem's Lot* was issued in paperback just ten weeks before CARRIE opened at Halloween, and along with a

# KING ON FIRESTARTER: WHO'S TO BLAME?

I see that Mark Lester has finally revealed my dark secret [see left]; I'm a two-faced son of a bitch, a liar, and an all-around *eeevil* guy. Actually, I'm none of those things, and neither is Mark; he's just another director who ended up with his scalp dangling from a pole outside the lodge of Chief Dino De Laurentiis. Nor is that a knock at Dino—he is what he is, an outrageous, larger-than-life *personage*, cut from the same cloth as Sol Hurok and Mike Todd. Dino's solution to problems of adaptation can been seen in such movies as FIRESTARTER, RAGTIME, and, of course, his remake of KING KONG. He sees the movies as the last bastion of pure *spectacle*, and I believe he's probably right. The reason so many bright and talented filmmakers—Mark Lester among them—have stumbled into Dino's swamp and come out wounded and dirty (if they come out at all) is because Dino believes that spectacle and quality are the same thing.

Mark found this out before FIRESTARTER had finished filming, I think. Although he gives the impression that I was on-set almost constantly, working tirelessly alongside him and Stanley Mann, I only met him (Mark) twice, and very briefly. On one of these occasions, we had dinner. Mark was under the weather and looked deathly tired. He expressed little or no interest in FIRESTARTER; instead he talked almost obsessively about a student film he'd made called TRICIA'S WEDDING, about the Tricia Nixon-David Eisenhower nuptials. I remember thinking that if I had ever seen a man who badly needed three weeks of doing nothing in a warm climate, Mark Lester was that man.

I *did* think Stanley Mann's adaptation was a masterpiece. (Recently) I took it out and re-read it. It stands up, with the exception of Andy's assurances to his daughter, Charlie, that 'Everything is going to be okay,' and 'Sure, honey, you'll be just like the rest of the kids. It doesn't matter that you can light off nuclear flares with your mind.' I mentioned these lines to both Stanley and to Mark. They both agreed that they should be changed, and until I saw the finished film, I thought they *had* been changed. But I'll bet I know at whose behest they stayed; those lines have DDL monogramed all over them.

Drew Barrymore and the "phantom blowdryer."

Concerning two of the effects, Charlie's blowing hair when she gets ready to light fires and Andy's nosebleeds when he uses "the push"—I could see, even in the rough assembly I was shown in North Carolina, that Mark was having a hard time showing the audience how *hard* it was for Andy and Charlie—particularly Andy—to use their wild talents. They were giving a lot of squinty-eyed concentration, and both of them were coming off looking like people with severe constipation problems. My suggestions were that Andy be given "trickle nosebleeds" to indicate the stress his ability put him under, and that Charlie (Drew Barrymore) McGee's eyes might be given an optical tinge—green or orange—in post-production. The nosebleed idea was used in the film. Using opticals for Charlie's eyes, I was told, was an interesting idea but could probably not be done for "technical reasons" (in Dinoland, that phrase usually means it's not in the budget). They settled for the 'phantom blow-dryer' effect instead. I always hated it; it made no logical sense at all. Where in the world did that wind come from?

Mark's assertion that I saw the movie and loved it is erroneous. I saw *part* of an early rough cut. When I saw the final cut, months later (at a premiere in Bangor, Maine), I was extremely depressed. The parts were all there, but the total was somehow much less than the sum of those parts . . . I said looking at CHRISTINE at the Zeigfeld in New York was like trying to check the electricity in a dead circuit, but the reaction to FIRESTARTER—even in my home town—was even worse. There were $3 million worth of special effects and another $3 million worth of Academy Award-winning talent up there on the screen, and none of it was working. Watching that happen was an incredible, unreal, and painful experience.

But I don't blame Mark Lester a whole lot, for the way the movie turned out or for his angry reaction to my remarks. I imagine the whole thing was a painful experience for him—one he'd rather forget—and I'm sure I was part of it. I've enjoyed most of his other films . . . although he never *did* send me a video cassette of TRICIA'S WEDDING, as he promised to do.

**Stephen King**

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO

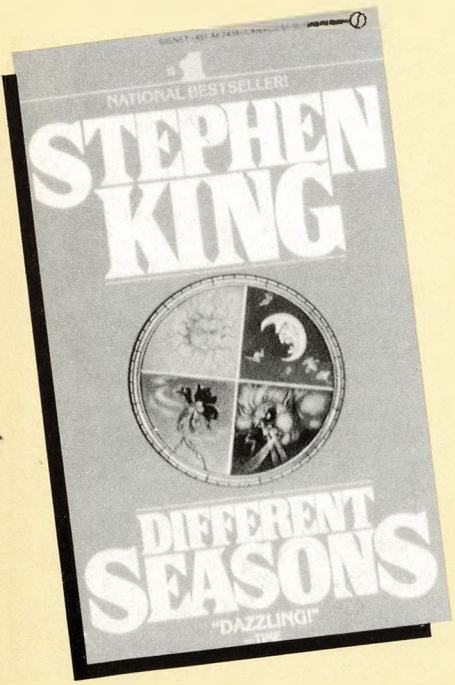
# Apt Pupil

## *The story behind the filming of King's novella from "Different Seasons," never to be seen.*

*By Gary Wood*

Looking back over all the film adaptations that have been made of his work, Stephen King has some regrets, most stemming from films that were *made*. But one of his sadder regrets is for a film that didn't come off, APT PUPIL, an adaptation of the novella in his *Different Seasons* collection, the same book that includes "The Body," which Rob Reiner filmed as STAND BY ME.

APT PUPIL was produced in 1988 by Richard Kobritz who made SALEM'S LOT and CHRISTINE and starred Nicol Williamson and Ricky Schroder. "They shot for about ten weeks," said King. "I got a rough assemblage of about three quarters of the film. Then they ran out of money. And *that* was good! That sucker was *real* good!"

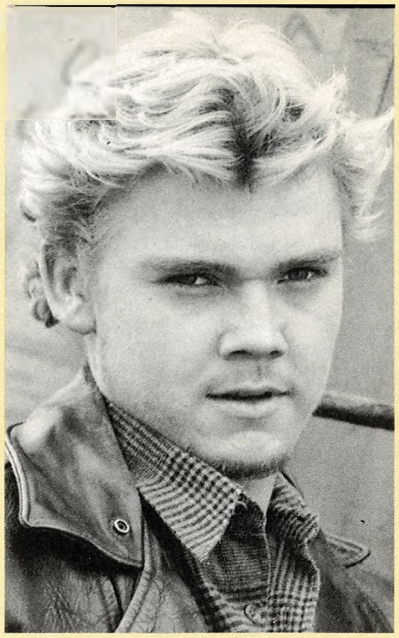



King's novella is about a young boy, Todd, played by Schroder, who has become obsessed with his father's magazines and photos depicting Nazi Germany's death camps. One day, in his Southern California town, Todd recognizes an old man as Nazi S.S. death camp officer Kurt Dussander (Williamson). What follows is a situation much like MISERY in reverse. The boy literally holds Dussander hostage on a daily basis, forcing the old man to tell him gory details, the "gooshy parts" of life in the concentration camps. The situation sets horrifying events into motion, reviving an evil thirst within Dussander and awakening equally disturbing desires within Todd that he never knew he possessed.

Wrote Kobritz in a response to King's praise for the unfinished film, "Sadly, Steve may be right about APT PUPIL. My intention was to create a film which incorporated the heart and characterization of 'The Body,' with the horror of Stephen King at his most real. It may very well have been the definitive translation of Stephen King into film." Kobritz declined to be interviewed about the project, which he co-produced with William Frye, a veteran of the THRILLER TV series, but agreed to respond to questions in writing, without discussing the circumstances of its collapse, reportedly just eleven days shy of completion. Ashley Lawrence (HELLRAISER) worked just two days on the project before it fell apart, reportedly because checks to the cast and crew began bouncing. Richard Masur had also been cast in the role of Todd's teacher.

Kobritz had intended the film as a vehicle for James Mason, with whom he made SALEM'S LOT. Mason was to play the role of Dussander, but passed away just a week before Kobritz said he concluded the rights purchase to make the film. "Alec Guinness and Paul Scofield were talked to," wrote Kobritz about recasting the Nazi role. "Both had no desire to portray realistic villains this late in their careers. John Gielgud had just concluded nine months in Germany with WAR AND REMEMBRANCE and did not want to repeat the Nazi experience. Nicol Williamson (EXCALIBUR) ultimately gave an outstanding performance in the tortured role of Dussander. Young Ricky Schroder was our first and only choice to play the boy."

Kobritz hired British filmmaker Alan Bridges to direct. Bridges had directed Mason and a high-powered cast in 1988's THE SHOOTING PARTY, a meditation on the fading English aristocracy in the years preceding World War I. Bridges said he was a fan of King's books. "I think he's one of the *great* storytellers," said Bridges by phone from his home outside London. "What attracted me to APT PUPIL was that it was such a tense search through an odd relationship. Although it was about two—on the face of it—destructive human beings, it had some hope to it. [Dussander and Todd] had an affinity which made them rather better people once they got to know each other. That opened life up to them. Unfortunately, of course, it was a dead end. I thought it was a marvelous story. When I read the novella, I thought it was an *even better* story. I don't really think the script measured up to the novella, to be honest."



Ricky Schroder played Todd, a boy obsessed with the horrors of Nazism.

Bridges shot the film from a script commissioned by Kobritz from Jim and Ken Wheat (AFTER DARK), written without King's input. Kobritz had abandoned an earlier draft written by B.J. Nelson (LONE WOLF MCQUADE). "I wrote a version that was very faithful to the novella, under [Kobritz'] instructions," said Nelson about his unused draft. "It was a little too shocking to people, *too* disturbing."

Nelson speculated that the film's treatment of Nazism kept it from getting made. "We didn't *condemn* it," said Nelson. "We put it in the pot and let the evil boil. It wasn't *pro*-Nazi, but Jewish people hated it. *Hated* it. It was a hard subject to get past the Jewish establishment in Hollywood because Stephen King was too good at what he was doing."

Bridges didn't remember reading Nelson's original script, but agreed with his assessment of the subject. "It *is* dark," said Bridges. "Let's face it. A young man with that sort of obsession finds that he can further it because he's hit base, really found a reservoir of what he wants. What fascinated me, what is not so obvious, is that between them, they *could* sug-

Nicol Williamson played Dussander, a Nazi war criminal Todd befriends.

gest a better life for each other."

Bridges said he added new dimensions to the film to lighten the overall mood of its dark, dark story. "I introduced things like a puppet show, and I changed all the locations," he said. "The locations were to be little dark corners and alleyways. I changed it all to *open* places, except where [Dussander] lived. I had [Dussander and Todd] go out. They went into a cafe. Even the most dreadful human beings have some sort of communion with other human beings. You could see them laugh together and have fun together."

Bridges said he wanted to suggest in the film that the evil of Todd and Dussander and Nazism was not incarnate. "Certainly Hitler should never have happened if France and Britain hadn't been so punitive after the Treaty of Versailles," he said. "In a way *we* created Hitler. I was trying to say something like that."

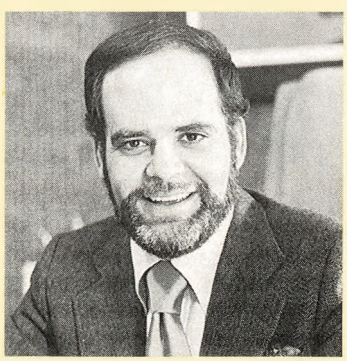
Bridges said the film's ending, as written, retained King's depressing finale. Todd, after Dussander is captured and commits suicide, realizes that the police are close to figuring out that both he and Dussander were delving into their own, separate murder sprees of bums and derelicts. In King's novella, it simply seems that Todd goes off the deep end, takes his rifle to the freeway, and begins picking-off motorists. King's final, cold phrase reads, "It was five hours later and almost dark before they took him down."

Bridges was preparing to shoot that scene, at the end of location filming in Los Angeles, when the bottom fell out of the production. "I would have had to shoot that," said Bridges, who had reservations about the ending. "I wanted to find a way to illuminate it. I could've made it an act of desperation, rather than just another fanatical killing. I wouldn't have had to change a word. Maybe an awful lot of mass murderers—who deserve what they get, I'm not saying that—were pushed to desperation, or to say 'Yes' to people when they should have said 'No.' If I'd shot that ending, I would've made it an act of *despair*, not desperation, the only way out."

Bridges said he was crushed when the film fell apart. "It was awful," said Bridges. "I knew it was going to be *good*. I've made some awful films—don't worry! If they'd folded up after four weeks, I might've actually gone off for a holiday afterwards. But not this one." Bridges said the production came within an inch of being revived twice, in January of 1988 and January of 1989. "I wouldn't mind starting from scratch," he said. "I'd do it for nothing because it's a great story. This story must be told very soon. I think it's wonderful because it gives hope. Even for the horrors of human nature, there's still hope."

But not according to producer Richard Kobritz. "Approximately two-thirds of the photography had been completed before filming was aborted," said Kobritz. "More than two years have elapsed since the backers of the film bellied-up and it cannot be revived. It is a dead letter." □

Producer Richard Kobritz.



**THE LOST "APT PUPIL"**

**"It's a great story which must be told very soon," said director Alan Bridges. "I think it's wonderful because it gives hope. Even for the horrors of human nature, there's still hope."**

newly published movie tie-in edition of *Carrie*, each went on to sell about 3.5 million copies, spurred by the film's success. King's next novel, *The Shining*, became his first hardcover bestseller in 1977. Noted Cohen, "CARRIE started Steve off on the right foot with films and *that* fed his publishing career."

Another boost to King's career from the movies came in October 1978, when Stanley Kubrick announced his intention to make THE SHINING. The movie brought serious attention to King's writing because of Kubrick's great stature, despite the filmmaker's caveat in launching the project, that "The novel is by no means a serious literary work." King had written a script for Warner Bros, from whom Kubrick had acquired the rights, but Kubrick never read it. King's draft focused more on the evil past of the Overlook Hotel.

In addition to *The Shining*, Warner Bros also owned the film rights to King's *Salem's Lot*, which had been optioned in 1975, before CARRIE had reached the screen. Scripts were commissioned from Stirling Silliphant, Larry Cohen, who had directed IT'S ALIVE for the studio in 1974, Robert Getchell (ALICE DOESN'T LIVE HERE ANYMORE) and even King himself, none to Warner's satisfaction.

"If you want to see something that's terrible, you have to look at some of the early scripts," said King of the early drafts of SALEM'S LOT. "You have to look at Silliphant's, which is worse than what he did for THE SWARM." In the wake of CARRIE's box-office success, Warners had reportedly offered the project to every director in Hollywood with a horror credit, including William Friedkin and George Romero, but without a shootable script, the project went nowhere.

Producer Richard Kobritz, then an executive at Warners' TV division, alerted the company to the potential of King's book as a miniseries, and after two years of fruitless development as a feature project, the property got consigned to television. Kobritz brought in CARRIE producer Paul Monash to write a 3½-hour script, the only one King credited with licking the problem of adapting the book. Though a ratings winner, the results proved tepid for King fans when the Tobe Hooper-directed, $4 million production was aired at Halloween by CBS in 1979, six months before Kubrick's THE SHINGING was to make its theatrical debut.

Ultimately, Kubrick's film also proved commercially successful, but even THE SHINING failed to satisfy King's fans, or Kubrick's for that matter. In a 1983 *Playboy* interview, King summed up his disappointment in the film by saying, "It's a film by a man who thinks too much and feels too little . . . It never gets you by the throat and hangs on the way real horror should." Expanding on that today, King pointed to Kubrick's handling of the scene in which Shelley Duvall discovers that husband Jack Nicholson is mad, finding that his book manuscript consists only of the phrase "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy," written over and over.

"We know he's coming," said King about the way Kubrick has Nicholson catch Duvall spying. "Anybody who has seen a horror film knows that he is going to catch her. What we want is for her to turn around and he'll be right there,

Sharing the joys of moviemaking, King with son Joe on the set of CREEPSHOW.

and our hearts will jump into our throats—that sort of thing." Instead, Kubrick cuts away to show Nicholson entering the room. "That confuses it. It's like a guy who doesn't know how to tell a joke, and I don't mean to make that sound vitriolic."

George Romero summed up the reaction of King's fans. "*The Shining* was a book that made my skin crawl," said Romero. "It made me really, really scared. My first take on the film version was that I didn't think it worked at all. Now, in retrospect, after I've had it on the shelf and watched it a few times, I can appreciate a lot of what Kubrick did with it. At first, I just remember being really disappointed because it wasn't Steve. It was something else."

Nonetheless, the film was a success for Warner Bros, and spurred sales of a movie tie-in paperback for King. THE SHINING earned Warner Bros over $30 million in just domestic film rentals, though its reported production cost was an expensive $18 million. Quipped King, "I managed to create *The Shining* for a total cost to me of $4.50."

**KING ON "PET SEMATARY"**

**"People are offended by the picture, and that's exactly the effect the horror movie seeks. It does what horror movies are supposed to do. It's an outlaw picture in an outlaw genre."**

Even before THE SHINING and SALEM'S LOT failed to please, but with his own scripts for each rejected, King decided to try to exert more control over the fate of his work at the movies by forging a creative partnership with director George Romero. The two met when Romero was called-in by Warner Bros to direct SALEM'S LOT, and both were delighted to discover they were mutual fans.

During his first visit to King's Maine home, Romero was offered the film rights to any book on the shelf, if he would direct it from King's own script. Romero chose *The Stand* (see page 28), King's yet-to-be-filmed epic tale of the Apocalypse. When Romero, partnered with Richard Rubinstein in Laurel Entertainment, was unable to elicit the backing of any major studio or raise the big-budget financing required, the trio decided to collaborate on something quick and cheap to establish a track record, a commerical base from which to launch THE STAND. One summer night in 1979, over beer at King's house, the idea for CREEPSHOW was born, an homage to the EC horror comics of the '50s and King's first produced screenplay.

"I had a great time writing the screenplay," said King. "I wrote it in a week and it was practically never rewritten. It went as it was." King also took a role in the film, which Romero and Rubinstein eventually mounted for $8 million as part of their three-picture deal with United Film Distributors, which included the earlier KNIGHTRIDERS (1981).

"The casting in that thing was brilliant!" said King of CREEPSHOW. "E.G. Marshall was great as the white supremacist-Howard Hughes-type locked in his environmental apartment ['They're Creeping Up On You']. George took that to the limit with all the gadgets and everything. Even Viveca Lindfors ['Father's Day'], who is *horrible* to work with, she's a total prima donna, studio-system made, [George] was able to spill enough film to get this *gonzo* performance. We would've been in terrible trouble with her if it had been another kind of movie. Because it was what it was, she couldn't go overboard far enough.

"In a film like CREEPSHOW, these people could *not* overact, no matter how much they tried! I mean, Adrian Barbeau is way over the top as Wilma ['The Crate'], but she's *supposed* to be over the top; because there was never a

# KING'S BOXOFFICE BITE

Few question King's ability to tell a good story in his books and short stories. But by the same token, it seems few will unquestioningly follow him into the darkness of a movie theatre. Most of the fifteen King film adaptations thus far have failed to ignite any boxoffice fires. The most successful is still Stanley Kubrick's THE SHINING (1980), which earned Warner Bros $30,900,000 in domestic rentals, according to *Variety*, far less than the magic $100 million figure that is recognized as the mark of a boxoffice blockbuster.

The chart at right lists the top money-making King films as reported in *Variety*'s annual compilation of films earning at least $4 million.

**TOP KING FILMS**

| | |
|---|---|
| THE SHINING (1980) | $30,900,000 |
| PET SEMATARY (1989) | $26,400,000 |
| STAND BY ME (1986) | $22,437,628 |
| THE RUNNING MAN (1987) | $16,000,000 |
| CARRIE (1976) | $15,207,514 |
| CREEPSHOW (1982) | $10,000,000 |
| CUJO (1983) | $9,800,000 |
| CHRISTINE (1983) | $9,319,801 |
| THE DEAD ZONE (1983) | $8,158,000 |
| FIRESTARTER (1984) | $7,553,418 |
| CHILDREN OF THE CORN (1984) | $6,900,000 |
| SILVER BULLET (1985) | $5,400,000 |
| CREEPSHOW 2 (1987) | $4,900,000 |

The figures listed are domestic film rentals, the amount actually earned by distributors in the U.S. and Canadian theatrical market. Two King adaptations, CAT'S EYE (1985) and MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE (1986), both Dino DeLaurentiis productions, failed to even make the chart.

But most of the King film adaptations have turned out to be money-makers, if not boxoffice champs. Production costs determine profitability, with THE RUNNING MAN a loser despite relatively high earnings of $16 million because it cost an estimated $27 million to make. On the other hand, CHILDREN OF THE CORN, near the bottom of the list with earnings of just under $7 million probably turned a profit on production costs of only $3 million. Observed producer Richard Kobritz, who made CHRISTINE, as well as a TV version of King's SALEM'S LOT, "King is really doing quite well. He's batting .500 at the boxoffice and that's great in any league, even the movies." **Gary Wood**

# Pet Sematary

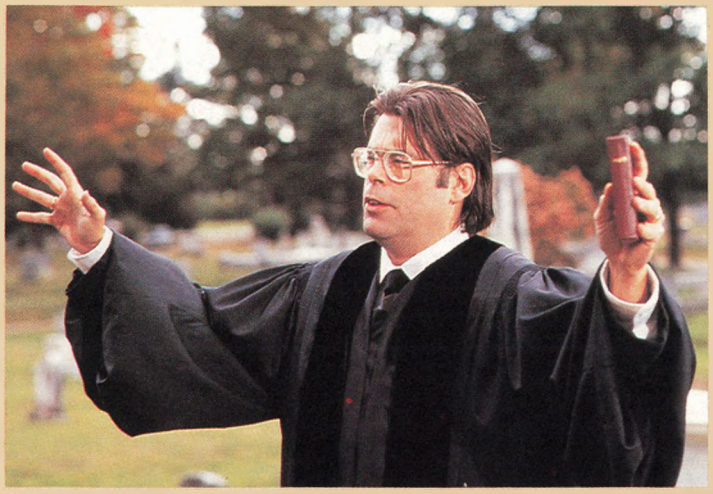
*More creative control over his own screenplay translated into one of the author's biggest success stories at the movies.*

*By Gary Wood*

PET SEMATARY is the most profitable Stephen King film adaptation to date. Shot in Maine for a scant $9 million, the film earned Paramount Pictures over $26 million in domestic theatrical film rentals alone in 1989 and made King a hot property in Hollywood once again.

"Richard is tireless," said King of Laurel Entertainment producer Richard P. Rubinstein, who made the film for Paramount. "He never stopped [plugging] PET SEMATARY, even after he'd been turned down at Universal. United Artists had passed on it. Paramount had passed on it and then they came up and did it as quick and dirty exploitation, but they knew when [director], Mary [Lambert] finally let them see the picture—I was there—they knew that wasn't what they got."

Paramount actually passed on the project twice, according to Rubinstein, but always expressed a liking for King's script. "The first time there was not a distribution slot for it that we could deliver the movie for," said Rubinstein. "The second time, [studio chief] Dawn Steele was seven months pregnant when she read the story and it just sounded so disturbing that she didn't want to be involved. It took four years."



King's PET SEMATARY cameo role, as the preacher at little Gage's funeral.

Rubinstein said he stuck to it because he was encouraged by the book's hardcover sales, at 750,000 copies more than double those of *Christine*, the preceding King bestseller. "That indicated that Steve was reaching a much, much broader audience with this book than he ever had in the past," said Rubinstein. "It was a clue. And I felt that the very nature of the story was fundamentally disturbing. When I went out to pitch this project, I had a very short pitch. I said, 'Do you remember THE EXORCIST?' I felt PET SEMATARY was just as disturbing."

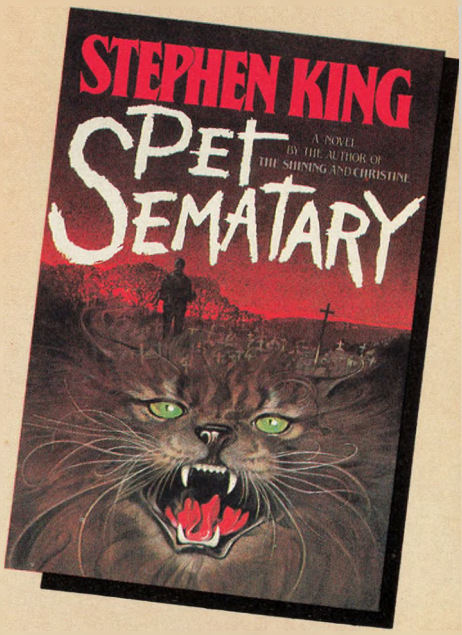
Denise Crosby, who starred as Rachel Creed in the film, pegged its success to King. "I think the fact that he wrote the script made a big difference," she said. "He understands the genre better than anyone else. He can really tell a story. That's his genius."

King credited an improvement in the film ratings climate for letting the horror come through. "There was a period when the R-rated picture, as far as graphic violence went, was very liberal," said King. "Then there was a period where that became X-rated. Period! They've loosened up *a lot*. Consequently, there's a lot of stuff in PET SEMATARY that would've been left on the cutting room floor three years ago. I don't think anybody wants to go to a movie, an adaptation of a horror novel that really scared them, and see a *Reader's Digest Condensed-Books* version that's been sanitized and cleaned up."

Though King has quibbles with the film's casting, he looks on the success of PET SEMATARY with pride. "I think Dale Midkiff is *stiff* in places," said King, who had no input in casting. "I think Denise Crosby comes across cold in places. I don't feel that the couple that's at the center of the story has the kind of warmth that would set them off perfectly against the supernatural element that surrounds them. I like that contrast better. I think it does what horror movies are supposed to do. It's an outlaw genre. It's an outlaw picture. A lot of the reviews, including the one in *Cinefantastique*, have suggested very strongly that people are offended by the picture, and that's exactly the effect that the horror movie seeks."

King praised director Mary Lambert. "She did a good job," he said. "She went in and she didn't flinch. In a way, that's a pretty good compliment to the way that I work. Because I've always wanted to go straight at things and not try to offer a lot of nuance . . . My idea is to go in there and hit as hard as you can. Mary understood that."□

Leads Dale Midkiff and Denise Crosby at fadeout, King's idea of a juicy kiss.



woman that lived on the face of the Earth that could be as much of a bitch as she was in that movie. We had a great time and the best part of it was we got away with it! They released it!"

Warner Bros picked up world distribution rights and gave the film a big push in 1982, but CREEPSHOW, though profitable, didn't set the kind of boxoffice precedent King and Romero were hoping for, earning just $10 million in domestic rentals. King faulted Warner Bros for failing to get behind the film.

"It's so easy for these companies to shove this product out there," said King. "They know about what they've got to get back, given the video market, which wasn't as big then, and the other markets, foreign, and cable, and everything. And when they get it, that's it! I mean, Warners had a chance to push CREEPSHOW through the roof and they chose not to do it. They chose to put it in their pockets and get out."

In addition to Romero, King parceled off some of his movie rights to Taft International, another low-budget independent, as part of his disgust with the big budget, big studio treatment that had been given THE SHINING. King had been impressed with Taft's low-budget horror THE BOOGENS (1981), and sold the

The bogeyman under Barrymore's bed, from an original story King wrote for DeLaurentiis, in CAT'S EYE (1985).

Stephen King

# ON MOVIEMAKING WITH DINO DELAURENTIIS

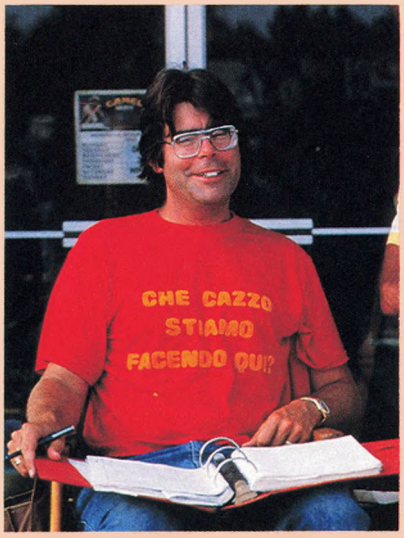
*King looks back on the painful association that cost him his reputation and almost his soul.*

*By Gary Wood*

"Okay," King began. "You want to talk about Dino and you want to talk about why he persisted in making all these pictures. The reason is because he is the cinematic version of Captain Ahab. *I* was the Great White Whale and he was going to bring me in no matter what. One way or another, he was going to bring me in."

When people think of Dino DeLaurentiis, they tend to remember the last ten years or so of financial excess and bad judgment, a period that brought forth five King adaptations. But DeLaurentiis received the Academy Award for Best Foreign Film for producing LA STRADA in 1956 and LE NOTTI DI CABIRIA in 1959. In addition to SERPICO, he was the executive producer of DEATH WISH and THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR, and produced John Wayne's last film, THE SHOOTIST. More recently he was executive producer for the critically acclaimed THE BOUNTY in 1983, and produced MANHUNTER and BLUE VELVET in 1986. He also was the executive producer of what is accepted as one of the more successful films to come from the works of Stephen King.

It was in 1981 that DeLaurentiis first became interested in King, purchasing the rights to make THE DEAD ZONE from Lorimar. Said Debra Hill, the film's producer, "I think Dino has a real respect for Stephen, a real true love of the man, of working with him. He gave Stephen the opportunity not only to sell the rights to his books, but to write screenplays, and direct them as well. He gave him the opportunity to do that out of his respect for him."




King donned this T-shirt for DeLaurentiis, reading "What the fuck are we doing here?" in Italian, while filming MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE.

Said King of THE DEAD ZONE, "Dino did best the first time. [Director David] Cronenberg did one of the great jobs of his life. It's still one of the great directorial turnarounds, away from all this sort of cold polished, high-tech stuff that he'd done before and after. He just opted for this sort of folksy New Hampshire. He got tremendous performances out of people, but the movie was not able to break through [commercially].

"Dino's response to that was the *classic* Dino response: 'Spend more money! Spend more money and spend it *dumb*,'" King said.

At the same time DeLaurentiis was interested in promoting King as a pop film icon, he was also interested in a little actress. Said King, "Drew Barrymore was, to Dino's mind, the Shirley Temple of his generation. I don't mean that in a sarcastic way or in a belittling way. He felt that people were going to go see her in *billions* the way that they went to see Shirley Temple in billions.

"So he did FIRESTARTER, which is the most visual of the movies. He got Stanley Mann, who is this fantastic writer. He got this *incredible*, all-star cast. He got George C. Scott to play the bad guy, which is *brilliant* casting. And you have to remember that no matter who directs Dino's pictures, really *Dino* directs. That's his Achilles Heel. All this money he spent, and he ended up with Mark Lester, who couldn't control anything, including himself, on the course of the picture. The Stanley Mann script is perfectly A to A, B to B between the book and the movie, but it's all lifeless. It doesn't have anything."

King said that after FIRESTARTER's disappointing showing in 1984, "Dino's decision then was, 'Well, Stephen's not doing his own stuff.' So he came to me and he sat down on the sofa, and this was about the time of FIRESTARTER, the premiere that he had up here [in Bangor, Maine]. He said, 'Steefan, I have idea. I want to

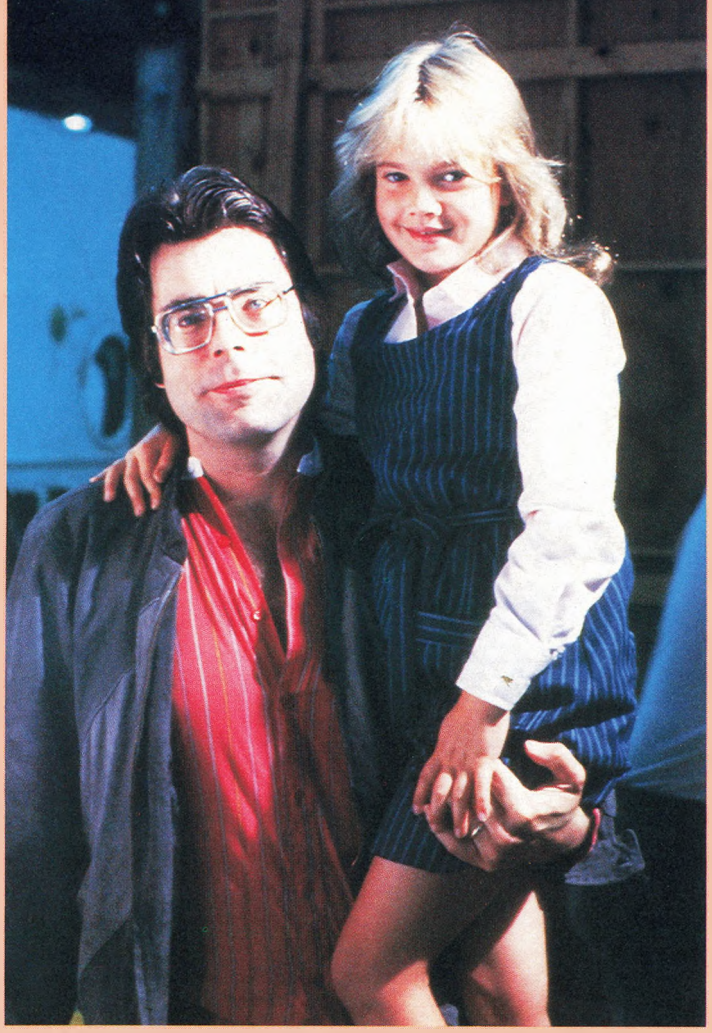
do *storrees*. Movie have many *storrees*. Dey be scary, but Steefan—you not be offended—but dey be *funny*!' You know, he was very concerned that I was going to be offended.

"I said, 'Dino, did you see CREEPSHOW?' He said, 'No. I no see.' So he hadn't seen that we'd already done that. I saw a chance to do it again. He owned some of the stories from *Night Shift*, acquired from British producer Milton Subotsky], and I had this other story that I had been playing around with, that became the story of Drew Barrymore, who Dino was still fascinated with."

The film became CAT'S EYE, which DeLaurentiis made at his newly-constructed studio facility in Wilmington, North Carolina, with Martha Schumacher, the associate producer of FIRESTARTER now serving as producer. Later, the two were married. "CAT'S EYE was the worst, in terms of boxoffice, of the films I did with Dino," said King. "It was the best, overall, in terms of what I got out of it, other than DEAD ZONE. I have to like CAT'S EYE better, though. I wrote the screenplay; it's as simple as that. I felt like I was involved with the picture."

But Dino's business venture in North Carolina and his creative venture with King started off on the wrong foot, as King related. "Dino went to any length possible. He held up production for the first six hours. CAT'S EYE was the first picture in his new studio and he had to get a priest to bless the studio before any footage could be shot. [Director] Lewis [Teague] is on set. He's got three, four cats, he's got Drew Barrymore, he's got Drew's mother, who's going nuts, '*When are we going to get started?!*' And everybody's standing around with their thumbs up their butts waiting for the priest to come and bless the studio. He finally did, and you know how much good it did. The place went right down the toilet."

After the failure of CAT'S EYE, DeLaurentiis made two more King films, SILVER BULLET (1985) and MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE (1986), both written by King, the latter serving as his film directing debut. Both did miserably at the boxoffice. Said Hill, "I think Dino really made his own problems in that he saturated the marketplace with adaptations that maybe shouldn't have been adapted."



King, with Drew Barrymore, on the set of DeLaurentiis' FIRESTARTER (1984).

**"Dino is like James Bond. He's always got a life vest on inside his dinner jacket. Everyone else drowns while he floats serenely away with Martha Schumacher, drinking martinis."**

King noted how the films' poor performances at the boxoffice failed to deter DeLaurentiis. "Dino's response was to chuck a little more money, try some different things, and he just finally ran out of studio," said King. "He would've gone on if it hadn't been for that." When the studio shut down there were plans for yet another King film called TRAINING EXERCISE, but as King said, "Everything went bankrupt in North Carolina; Dino walked away.

"Dino is like James Bond. He's always got a life vest inside his dinner jacket, or something, so that everyone else drowns while Dino floats serenely away with Martha Schumacher, and they're both drinking martinis, shaken-not-stirred . . . Hey! Twenty million dollars! Thirty million dollars! And what happened? Did Dino eat any of that? No. *The bank* ate it. He's still got his big house."

DeLaurentiis now operates Paradise Films in California, with Schumacher as president, and continues to wave the King banner. "I wish him *nothing* but the best," said King. "It got to the point where I said, 'No more. Just absolutely *no more*.' Every now and then he'll send me a screenplay—he's held onto a couple of the stories . . . The one that keeps cropping up in my correspondence off and on from Dino is SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK [from *Night Shift*]."

But King said DeLaurentiis doesn't like to take "No" for an answer. "He tried very hard to get PET SEMATARY away from Richard Rubinstein, Laurel and Paramount," said King. "He wanted to buy it out. His attitude was, 'If I can't make it myself, I'll keep you guys from making it. I'll use my clout at Paramount—'*Steefan, ees for you own goot!*' You know?'"

Perhaps DeLaurentiis anguishes about the one that got away—PET SEMATARY turned out to be the most profitable King film adaptation to date. One suspects, however, that it wouldn't quite have been the same film if DeLaurentiis had made it. But the most interesting question that remains is not why DeLaurentiis persists in a desire to plunder King's *oeuvre* in search of a hit, but why King let him do it for so long?

"Why did *I* go on?" mused King, about the way he continued to work for DeLaurentiis. "The answer is, he's a very persuasive man. He's hypnotic. He's magnetic. He's still one of the most fabulous creatures that I've ever met in my life. He's *seductive*. So I went on."

The answer didn't seem to satisfy King, but as always, he had a metaphor at the ready. "I don't know, this is vulgar," he said, pondering the masochistic side of working for DeLaurentiis. "It's like a girl who gets raped and says, 'Geez, I didn't like that very much. Why don't I turn over and you can stick it up my ass.'" □

DeLaurentiis and producer Martha Schumacher, married after making a succession of King boxoffice flops.

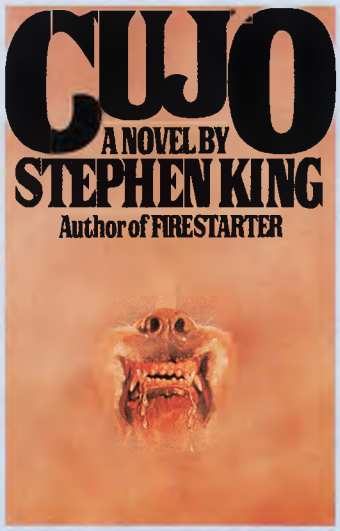
Stephen King

# ANIMAL LOVERS VS. PETS RUN AMUCK

*Filmmakers have tread lightly for fear of offending the cat and dog fanciers.*

*By Gary Wood*

The content of two Stephen King films, CUJO (1983) and CAT'S EYE (1985) were significantly affected by the fear of boycotts from animal lovers. And cat fanciers were also said to be aghast at a sequence in the "Cat From Hell" segment scripted by King for this year's TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE—THE MOVIE, in which a pussy gets extruded from the mouth of William Hickey, a startling makeup effect realized by the KNB Effects Group.




The producers of CUJO debated whether they could even kill the rabid St. Bernard depicted in King's book.

Imagine the emotional impact if Bambi's mother hadn't been shot, or Old Yeller had been allowed to die an agonizing, diseased death, or if King Kong had come out of it with only a mild concussion. Such input from animal lovers actually called into question whether the rabid St. Bernard featured in CUJO could be dispatched on camera after relentlessly menacing Dee Wallace as King's heroine Donna Trenton, in the film's gripping twenty-minute finale. "Dog lovers are a powerful lobby," said Don Carlos Dunaway, who co-wrote the film's screenplay, based on King's best-seller. "There was a lot of talk about whether or not Donna Trenton could even *kill* the dog. I thought it was *insane*!

"I mean, after what this dog has done, you drill the cocksucker between the eyes. *Anybody* would! Yet the producers said, 'If you do that, you're going to lose. You're going to get pickets at the theatres. You're going to lose half your audience because dog lovers will stand up and scream.' I could not believe it!"

King's ending in the novel has Donna continue to beat the dog with a baseball bat long after it is dead, an emotional climax many felt the film lacked. The movie used a standard thriller ending, complete with a freeze-frame as the family comes back together. Said Dunaway, "They finally managed to go as far as they did . . . There was a CARRIE-like ending; the hand-from-the-grave kind of shock. The dead dog leaps up and attacks again—the dog you think is dead. It comes through the window and she *drills* it. There was a very conscious effort to make the dog so fucking monstrous that you could not *not* kill it. Anything like her beating the dog with a baseball bat would've been out of the question."

It was cat fanciers who concerned the producers of CAT'S EYE, scripted by King for producer Dino DeLaurentiis. The initial cut of the film included a prologue which effectively explained the relationship between the titular cat and Drew Barrymore and set the tone for introducing the anthology of three King stories that followed. To the confusion of moviegoers, the sequence was left on the cutting room floor when the film was released.

King's "Cat from Hell," in need of domestication in TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE—THE MOVIE (1990).

King poses with the heroic tabby from CAT'S EYE, whose best scenes were left on the cutting room floor.

The missing footage opens with the funeral of Drew Barrymore, who died mysteriously in her sleep. Returning from the funeral, her mother is certain that it was the family cat that "stole the breath" of her daughter. She grabs a machine gun and moves upstairs to take revenge on the cat, which is seen searching for the real culprit, a little red-eyed gnome featured in the anthology's final segment. The mother opens fire, chasing the cat out of the house, destroying everything but the cat in the process.

According to both King and director Lewis Teague, Frank Yablans, head of MGM at the time, hated the film's prologue. Reportedly, Yablans was not only worried about appearing insensitive to the death of a child, but was also worried that cat lovers would be offended by the cat being shot at. The dropping of the prologue was made without Teague's knowledge. The version released begins in mid-sequence with the cat being chased by a rabid St. Bernard (a CUJO in-joke), nearly run over by a red Plymouth Fury (a nod to CHRISTINE), then hitchhiking a ride to New York in a truck. There the cat sees the ghost of Barrymore who begs her pet to find "it." Audiences naturally were left scratching their heads.

King said only one audience in America saw the complete film at a rough-cut test screening. "Most of them responded to it on the critic cards pretty favorably," he said. "The difference between the critic cards of screenings with and without that section was that the people who saw the prologue said they understood the movie. There was a huge response to the film without the prologue from people who said, 'I don't know what's going on.'" □

**KING ON "SHOTGUNNERS"**

**"Nobody liked it except Peckinpah. I think it's great! It's the kind of thing that ten years from now, finally somebody will produce it and it will be a mega-hit. Peckinpah loved it!"**

company the rights to make CUJO (1983). Directed on a slim $5 million budget by Lewis Teague, starring Dee Wallace, the film remains one of King's favorite movie adaptations of his work. King favors the film despite the fact that Taft abandoned King's own script for one by Don Carlos Dunaway, written from an earlier draft by Barbara Turner (credited as Lauren Currier).

As with CREEPSHOW a year earlier, the distribution rights to CUJO were picked up by Warner Bros, who launched it in the summer of 1983 to profitable but unspectacular results (domestic rentals just under $10 million). Teague felt Warners failed to promote the film. "I don't think they sold it very well," said Teague. "They didn't publicize it. King made himself 100% available and they didn't use him that much, to my knowledge. It was a negative pickup. I don't think they wanted to put a lot of money into the sales budget."

Dee Wallace finally got to drill CUJO (1983), but they had to think about it first.

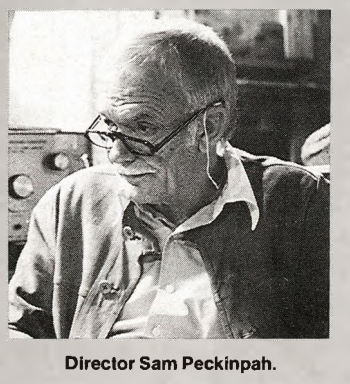
CUJO was the first of three King films released at the close of 1983—none of which found the large audience commensurate with the success of his books. Following CUJO's summer bow, Paramount released THE DEAD ZONE in October and Columbia opened CHRISTINE in December. King, growing more selective, had actually passed on selling the rights to *The Dead Zone* to producer Jon Peters (BATMAN) in 1979, because he didn't like Peters' production of THE EYES OF LAURA MARS (1978). "He makes me nervous," said King of Peters, who now heads Columbia Pictures, the company releasing MISERY. "I don't think he's in movies for anything other than as a thing to do. In other words, you don't sell them just to make money. You try to sell them to somebody who's going to do a good job of it."

King sold the rights to *The Dead Zone* to Lorimar in 1980, where Sydney Pollack was going to produce and Stanley Donen was going to direct. When Lorimar shelved the project, Dino DeLaurentiis bought the rights and hired David Cronenberg to direct on a budget of $10 million, starring Christopher Walken. Cronenberg pegged the budget at only $7 million. "I think Dino told everyone it was more,"

# SHOTGUNNERS: KING & PECKINPAH

When legendary director Sam Peckinpah died in 1984, he was in pre-production on THE SHOTGUNNERS, an original script by King. Kirby McCauley, King's agent at the time, offered the property to Peckinpah because he felt it was in the vein of the director's violent hits like THE WILD BUNCH and STRAW DOGS. "Nobody liked it except Peckinpah," said King. "Peckinpah *loved* it. He had a heart attack and wasn't in really good shape. He said, yeah, he'd read some of my stuff and he'd like to take a look at the screenplay."

King provided this synopsis of his script which opens on a suburban street. "It's Maple Street, of course, from THE TWILIGHT ZONE. It's summertime and the kids are running around. The college professor's drunk and trying to get the barbeque started. Teenage boys are playing grab-ass with a Frisbee and some girls. It's a suburban work-a-daddy, work-a-mommy, late afternoon.



Director Sam Peckinpah.

"And onto this block pull these long, black Cadillacs with smoked-glass windows. They just sort of cruise down the block. Everybody just sort of stops and looks at them. They're *alien*, like spaceships. They go out of sight but they come back. This time the windows go down, and these shotguns poke out and open up on the street, killing about half the people. They blow holes in the houses.

"More of them come and the people are pinned down in their houses. Night starts to fall and some of the people go down to the bottom of the street, but the rest of the world is *gone*! It just ends at the end of the block, both ways. The McGuffin is that it's in the middle of the West and there was a hanging there a century ago, and because of that, it's this vigilante thing. But, mostly it was about these people being pinned down by the unknown."

King met with Peckinpah to discuss the filming. "Peckinpah *flipped* and said he wanted to do it," recalled King. "We sat down, and he knew exactly what to do. He said, 'This is wrong. This is wrong. But if you put this hanging tree at the head of the street, and if you explain point A, B, and C, everything's right.' And I said, 'Jesus, *it is*!' He was a great guy, and he knew it would've been a great movie. But he died and it got nowhere *near* production."

King is still high on his unproduced script. "I think it's great! It's the kind of thing that ten years from now, finally somebody will produce and it will be a mega-hit. I'll look around at all the people who turned it down, the one piece of my work that I have liked the best, that nobody has wanted to have anything to do with. I mean, since the beginning, I have not been able to write a book without somebody in the movies wanting it."

**Gary Wood**

said Cronenberg. "Dino always does that." Despite the film's evident quality, its release earned Paramount only slightly more than $8 million in domestic rentals.

King praised the film, with reservations. "I thought Walken's casting was perfect and Cronenberg is a marvelous director," said King. "I think it's the only time, it's the only picture—and I'm a Cronenberg fan—that I've seen him exhibit the characteristics that we think of as going with warm-blooded mammals. He's really reptilian in a lot of his films. He shows it most clearly with DEAD RINGERS which is really, really cold-blooded."

King wrote a screenplay of *The Dead Zone* that was nixed by Dino DeLaurentiis, who also passed on a draft by Andrei Konchalovsky. Jeffrey Boam wrote the shooting script, which King faulted mostly for dropping the book's background stories of its characters. "That's one of the few *real* novels I've ever written," said King. "Which means it had a lot of incidents, it covered a long period of time, the characters went through a number of changes, and a lot of that necessarily had to be chopped and channeled for the movie so that they kept the main relationships. But I think that a lot of people who went to see it missed the richness.

**King with Emilio Estevez, filming MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, King's directing debut for Dino DeLaurentiis.**

**KING ON "DEAD ZONE"**

**"Cronenberg is a marvelous director. I think it's the only time—and I'm a fan—that I've seen him exhibit the characteristics that we think of as going with warm-blooded mammals."**

**Cronenberg rehearses a scene with Christopher Walken (l) and Herbert Lom (r).**

"I'm going to say something that sounds conceited, but I don't mean it to sound that way. It was a good movie and it was a *rich* movie. It was well acted and it was well directed, but it didn't have the *richness of incident* and the wealth of characters that the book had. So people that had read the book and went to see the movie compared the two, and the movie came off thin compared to the book."

CHRISTINE, the third King film to barrage audiences at the close of 1983, was perhaps the most eagerly awaited. "I thought CHRISTINE would be a hit," said King. "It just seemed a *natural*. And I wasn't the only one, you know. The people at Columbia Pictures obviously felt that way. They paid a lot of money for it. They rushed it into production. It seemed like it just should be there and it just wasn't."

Producer Richard Kobritz, who had made King's SALEM'S LOT for television, picked up the rights to *Christine* for $500,000 when it was still in galley form. Kobritz offered the project to John Carpenter, who had directed the TV movie SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME for Kobritz. At the time, Carpenter's own $20 million production of King's *Firestarter* had collapsed at Universal for being too expensive. Carpenter jumped at the chance to make CHRISTINE for Kobritz at Columbia, on a budget of $10 million, and production actually began four days *before* the book's publication date.

After seven years, King still remembered his first reaction to seeing the film. "I went to see that at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York," said King. "To my mind it's the best place in the world to go see a picture like that because the screen is huge, the theatre is comfortable, and all these daffy street people come in. They yell at the screen, 'Hey , bitch! Don't go up there!' They have these conversations. I *love* that. I went to CHRISTINE with Kirby McCauley, my agent [and executive producer of the film]. People just sat there. Nobody cat-called or laughed at the movie. And nobody was getting into it either. It was like this dead engine. Every now and then it would cough and sputter a little bit."

King singled-out the film's casting as the reason it didn't do better, earning Columbia a little more than $9 million in domestic rentals. "I'm not talking about the guy that played Arnie [Keith Gordon]," said King. "But the two main characters [John Stockwell, Alexandra Paul] were just sort of forgettable. They didn't generate any real magnetism among the three of them. And still there's a lot of Carpenter. There's some of the excitement that he can generate. When the car's going along the road, and it's in flames, and it's chasing these people, that's pretty good. John has had trouble generating some of the raw vitality he had in the early pictures like ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13."

Kobritz, in a written response, countered King's analysis. "CHRISTINE was a story-generated movie, not a star-generated movie," noted Kobritz, who said he was proud of the film's handling of King's material. "The car was the star. The three characters must be subordinate to the horror of the car. When King carps about casting, I am not sure whether he's speaking as a movie-goer who doesn't understand the intricacies of casting, or as a one-shot filmmaker. Perhaps he was only reacting to the fumbled performances contained in his own maiden attempt as a director, MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE."

Screenwriter Bill Phillips, who adapted CHRISTINE, pegged the film's failure to satisfy to a key omission from King's novel, the corpse of Roland LeBay, who had cursed the car originally. "We threw out Arnie slowly turning into the ghost of Roland LeBay, being a rotting skeleton with the flesh coming out of his eyeballs, which is a neat image," said Phillips. "In fact, it's an image that I've since seen used in drinking and driving ads. It's effective and it's entertaining. John and I talked about that, and we felt that doing it that way had been done. Before that was AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON where Griffin Dunne is rotting away as he gets deader and deader. We were trying to do some-

Stephen King

# SHOOTING IT IN MAINE

*Bangor's own best-selling author has been a boon to the state's filmmaking economy.*

*By Gary Wood*

Tommy Lee Wallace, who directed Stephen King's IT for television, shot its Maine-based story in Vancouver. "I'd loved to have had the opportunity to film this in Maine," said Wallace. "I'm sure it would have affected it profoundly."

Residents of Maine would agree. Before Stephen King charged into pop culture, Maine filmmaking was virtually dead until the Maine resident and novelist achieved the power and national status to make it happen. King has sent a message, loud and clear, to Hollywood: if you want to make films from my books, you're going to make a few of them in Maine.

Before King's contractual stipulation forced a segment of CREEPSHOW 2 ("The Hitchhiker") to be filmed in Bangor, Maine, in 1987, you have to go back thirty years to find another Maine-based production, PEYTON PLACE in 1957, and before that, CAPTAINS COURAGEOUS in 1937, both filmed in Camden. Since CREEPSHOW 2, King has brought to Maine the filming of PET SEMATARY in 1988 and GRAVEYARD SHIFT this year.

Besides bringing work to the state, King was also instrumental in forming the Maine Film Commission two years ago to help spur the local economy. "He lobbied down here at the State House," said commission director Lea Girardin from the capitol in Augusta. "He's worked on a lot of different fronts. It's been very helpful for us, sort of being off the beaten track, to have someone like Stephen King to push for us. Film is often thought of as frivolous, and something the state government shouldn't be involved in, but really it's just good economics. For every dollar invested in the Film Commission, we've returned forty to the state. This year, it's going to be a lot more."

Fred Gwynn as Jud outside a facade of the Crandall house built onto an existing structure on the main road of Hancock Point, Maine, a small town near Ellsworth.

According to the press notes for PET SEMATARY, as the production crew set up in Ellsworth, Maine, there was no doubt that "they were in Stephen King territory when they encountered some macabre local color. A block away from one set was a mailbox with the family name 'Coffin' on it. The interior used for the Crandell house was located on Cemetery Road. And behind the Creed home was a fuel tank for the Dead River Company. It was especially obvious to all why the area is so important to King's work when the fog rolled in and foghorns would bellow as lighthouses gave the air an eerie glow."

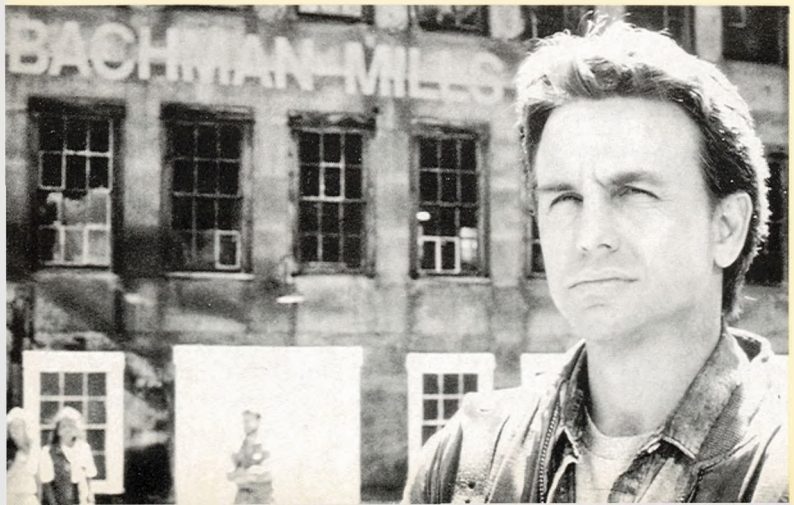
Laurel Entertainment producer Richard P. Rubinstein got the rights to make PET SEMATARY on the condition that it be filmed in Maine. "None of the adaptations had done that even if they were written for Maine," said Rubinstein. "Steve always used to comment that the ocean was on the wrong side of the screen, which indicated that it was shot in California, or Oregon."

All told, PET SEMATARY hired about 350 locals as extras for $40 a day, and more than 300 local vendors supplied materials. An estimated $1.5 million of the film's $9 million budget was left in the local economy.

Besides the obvious economic benefit to Maine, filmmakers and moviegoers also benefit. "It's just *right* here," said producer Bill Dunn, a Maine resident who filmed Paramount's GRAVEYARD SHIFT in the state earlier this year, spending $3 million of the film's $10.5 million budget locally. "Maine is a very beautiful state. If you remember PET SEMATARY, you saw some great exteriors. It's just perfect. And it's King's *country*. You've got to realize he wrote the books *about* Maine, *living* in Maine, so naturally the best place to film them, to get the feeling of what he puts in his books, is here in Maine. You couldn't do this in northern California. This is virgin territory. There's a lot of beautiful scenery around here, including the towns."

Noted GRAVEYARD SHIFT's screenwriter John Esposito, a New York resident, "Now that we've come here, [I see] everything is so *raw* that you just can't get this any place else." Still, most productions prefer to fake it. The new DARK SHADOWS, for example, is set in Maine but filmed in Hollywood. □

Rat fighter David Andrews outside the infested mill in GRAVEYARD SHIFT, actually Bartlettyarns, Inc. of Harmony, Maine, a small town near Ellsworth.



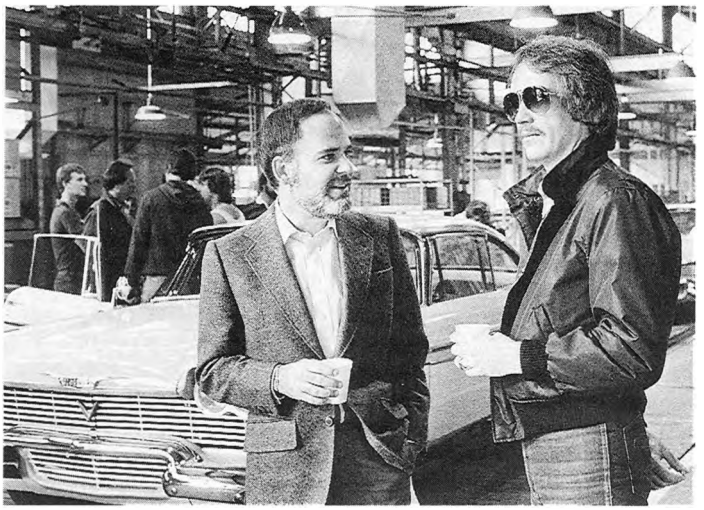
thing original."

In written remarks, Carpenter summed up succinctly the reason CHRISTINE failed to be a crowd-pleaser. "The problem with CHRISTINE was simple," wrote Carpenter. "It wasn't scary. I made a big mistake by taking out Roland LeBay's rotting corpse in the back seat. I guess I was just tired of rotting corpses at the time, and tried to do it all with the car. I failed."

In March 1984, the first film adaptation of a King short story reached the screen, New World Picture's CHILDREN OF THE CORN, based on a tale from King's *Night Shift* collection. Though the low-budget film was a money-maker, earning New World nearly $7 million in domestic rentals on a budget of just $3 million, it is otherwise undistinguished. King dismissed the production, which abandoned his own script, with these few words, "Low budget, uninteresting characters, and no wide appeal."

**CARPENTER ON KING**

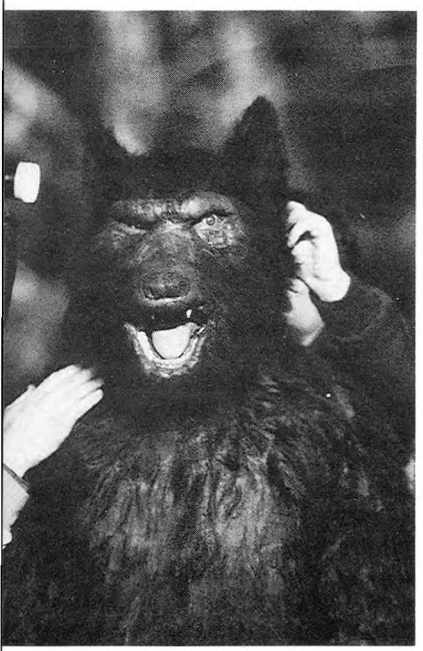
**"The problem with CHRISTINE was simple. It wasn't scary. I made a big mistake by taking out Roland LeBay's rotting corpse in the back seat. I tried to do it all with the car."**



Director John Carpenter (r) with producer Richard Kobritz, filming CHRISTINE.

FIRESTARTER, released by Universal in May 1984, capped the nine-month period begun with CUJO's opening that saw the release of five King feature films. King called it "the worst of the bunch" among his film adaptations, prompting an angry retort from the film's director, Mark Lester (see page 34).

Primping Carlo Rambaldi's werewolf for Stephen King's SILVER BULLET (1985), another DeLaurentiis loser.



Lester questioned King's motives in being so critical of the films made from his books. "He started attacking all the other directors, not just me," said Lester. "There were interviews where he [said], '[Stanley] Kubrick can't direct. This one can't direct,' and he went on and on about all his books. I took it finally that he was just pushing for his own directing job. I turned out to be right. He ended up directing a picture for DeLaurentiis [MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE] which, in fact, *was* the worst. That was *unwatchable*, that movie. Why would he need a directing job that bad to attack all the other directors? He didn't prove himself any great director. That was a piece-of-shit movie. What's his excuse for that? He had *complete* control over that."

King's complaint with FIRESTARTER? "It's this overall thing," said King. "There's not one thing that you can point out, except for the miscasting of David Keith." King also cited the performance of Art Carney. 'He's a good actor, but he just didn't work at all," said King. "George C. Scott, he's a great actor, [but] he's stiff [in FIRESTARTER]."

Lester defended the film's casting, including David Keith. "He was our fifteenth choice," said Lester. "You give a script out to many, many people and you take somebody that you can get, that wants to do the part. People aren't standing in line, actors, to do Stephen King material. I didn't see any big stars in PET SEMATARY. It's very hard to get these stars to play a horror picture. I thought it was a terrific cast for a picture like that, to get people involved in a horror picture. We had four Academy Award-winning actors."

FIRESTARTER was the beginning of a real King depression at the movies—essentially spanning his association with it's producer, Dino DeLaurentiis—that wouldn't bottom-out until King himself got behind the camera as director. DeLaurentiis went to the King trough twice in 1985—both times to disappointing boxoffice and critical response. CAT'S EYE came first, an anthology of *Night Shift* stories, directed from King's own script by Lewis Teague, who had pleased King with CUJO. King still delights in the film's "Quitter's, Inc." episode, his vision of how the Mafia might handle a no-smoking clinic. "That's a classic," he said, "with that marvelous actor [James Woods]."

King speculated on why the film didn't do better, though he liked the concept of playing the horror for laughs. "Drew Barrymore was at that age where she sort of had a terminal case of *cute*," noted King. "It's funny, but it isn't a comedy. And it's horrific, but it isn't a horror movie. It's PG-13. I think a lot of people who are really interested in suspense and horror—if they're like me, they look at the PG-13 rating and think, 'Well, I know what the ceiling is here. This just isn't going to do it for me.' The parents didn't want the kids to see it, and the kids didn't want to go see it anyway. It's neither fish nor fowl. It's just sort of stuck in this interesting twilight zone."

*Variety* began their review of SILVER BULLET, DeLaurentiis' second King outing in 1985, by quipping "[this] is a Stephen King filmette from his scriptette, based on his novelette, which may sell some tickettes, but not without regrettes." The regrets turned out to be King's as well as the audience's. Said King, "I can remember sitting in a room with Dino DeLaurentiis and saying, 'Does America need another werewolf story?'" King responded to himself in a DeLaurentiis-like Italian accent, "'Oh, Stephen! Dey'll love it! Ees fantastick idea!' Well, it wasn't a fantastic idea, and I think that I knew that when I went into it, but I was charged with the idea of casting Gary Busey as the feisty, drunken uncle."

King had scripted both CAT'S EYE and SILVER BULLET and they hadn't gone over with the public. DeLaurentiis thought he knew why—King needed more hands-on control. King was coaxed to step behind the camera. The result was 1986's MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, King's film directing debut. Noted King about the film's rejection by the public, "I said going into the movie that if you make enough money, and you are successful enough in the society that we

Stephen King

# TO DIRECT, OR NOT TO DIRECT

## *Second guessing MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE and thoughts on getting back behind a camera.*

King shows Ellen McElduff how to fry an egg in MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE (1986).

*By Gary Wood*

In a *Playboy* interview in 1983, Stephen King said that he was so disappointed with Kubrick's take on THE SHINING that he'd like to remake it, "maybe even direct it myself if anybody will give me enough rope to hang myself with."

A prophetic statement, considering the outcome of King's first directing job, MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE in 1986. King admitted he was not anxious to contemplate sitting in the director's chair again. "I've been offered jobs since and I just said, 'No.' It just about tore my family life down the middle when I did it, and I'm not prepared to go through that again. It's not worth it, not as long as I can write books." That was then. These days, looking back on his experience with MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, King stated simply, "I will direct again."

King is as hard on himself as any critic when pinpointing why MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE wasn't a success. "I didn't do a very good job of directing it," he said. "I didn't have a lot of production support from the DeLaurentiis organization which, by that time, was beginning to get on extremely thin ice financially. We probably didn't have enough time in post-production. I'll tell you what MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE was for me. It was a crash course in film school. What some guys take six years to learn, I learned in about ten weeks. The result was a picture that was just terrible. But it had some things in it that make me think, 'Well, I can go back and I can do it right the second time. Now I understand.'"

King admitted to scenes he'd like to reshoot, and casting decisions he'd make differently, but he also harbored an admiration for some of his work behind the camera. "There are isolated moments in the film that I think are okay, that I really like to look at," he said. "Here's this little kid riding his bike down this deserted street. He's looking, and whatever happened has already happened. He sees legs sticking out of bushes, he sees a dog with a radio-controlled car in his mouth, a lady who has been strangled by her own hairdryer. That particular sequence is alive for me the way a lot of the movies are just sort of static."

King pegged some of the fault for his directorial misstep to his fondness for the films of Alfred Hitchcock. "To my mind, he's still the person who did this field the best," said King. "And I'm talking about suspense. Because I was new and I'd never done anything like this before, I read a book about Hitchcock, about the way he worked. I read that he had said at some point that actually *making* the movie was the dullest part of the experience. What he really liked to do was plan everything in advance. He said [shooting] was the dullest part, because once he started there were no surprises. That's exactly what I wanted! I wanted no surprises whatsoever so I did it that way. I planned out, shot-for-shot, literally angle-for-angle, everything I wanted in the movie. What never crossed my mind until I began to see rough assemblies of the stuff, when it was really too late to back out, was that this was never the way that I work creatively. My idea is to just get in there and just bash away, take the materials that are available and put them together in a hurry and go on."

Now that King feels prepared to tackle directing again, it probably won't be by taking another crack at what he feels was Kubrick's own misstep. "THE SHINING?" said King. "I don't think so. Not with the way that movie is tied up now. It would be the kind of thing where it would have to be done for Warner Bros, and it would have to be done with Kubrick's permission. And obviously those two things are not going to happen.

"As far as me directing again, you have to remember that when I went in to do MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, I didn't even know about shooting a master and then shooting cutaways. That's how totally ignorant I was about the filmmaking process. I learned *while I was there.*

"I like to win. I don't like the feeling of having come out of that particular line of creative endeavor with shit on my shoes. I'd like to go in again and do it right. I always promised myself that I would hold *Misery* and try to do MISERY myself—and I think if anybody but Rob Reiner had come around for it. . . ." □

King admits to admiring some of his work as a director, particularly this sequence showing the devastation of a small town by machines that have gone berserk.

# It

## *Burbank's Fantasy 2 Effects met the task of enlivening the novel's horrors, including its shape-shifting giant spider.*

*By Gary Wood*

Burbank-based effects supplier Fantasy 2 was called upon by director Tommy Lee Wallace to visualize the horror elements of King's IT, which ABC telecast as a miniseries in November. Fantasy 2 provided the inimical clown makeup on Tim Curry as the title entity, as well as a werewolf, a mummy, a corpse makeup and puppet, a talking severed head and the penultimate spider-like monster of the novel's climax. All the work, including design, fabrication and filming, had to be accomplished in just thirteen weeks.

Fantasy 2, co-owned by Gene Warren and Leslie Huntley, has provided effects for TREMORS, PET SEMATARY and THE TERMINATOR, and received an Emmy for their work on television's THE WINDS OF WAR. Wallace was happy with their work on his earlier FRIGHT NIGHT 2 and sought them out again to achieve IT's ambitious work on a tight budget and schedule.

The shape-shifter as the monster from I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF, pull-on stunt mask and gloves sculpted by Norman Cabrera, hair work by Jack Bricker.

The shape-shifter as the corpse of Annette O'Toole's father, sculpted by Cabrera, applied by Mixon and Smith.

Fantasy 2's greatest challenge was realizing IT as the giant spider envisioned by King in his book. Noted makeup effects supervisor Bart Mixon, "When my brother read the book, he was telling me, 'Oh, *it* can be anything. It's whatever it wants to be.' Then at the end he said, 'Oh, it's just a big spider.' I wanted to make sure that people didn't think that. My main concern was that I wanted to keep it really fleshy."

Fantasy 2 realized the giant spider monster as both a full twelve-foot-long live action prop and as a miniature stop motion effect, supervised by visual effects designer Gene Warren and animated by Pete Kleinow. As designed by Warren, nine stop-motion cuts called for a variety of techniques, including split screens, rear projection and table-top miniature sets.

Norman Cabrera was among Fantasy 2's "core group," and designed the show's werewolf, a look-alike for Michael Landon in I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF (1957), an image used by "it" to scare one of the book's characters who was frightened by the film as a child. Cabrera also worked on the corpse makeup and puppet with James McLoughlin, who helped realize the severed head. Mixon designed Curry's Pennywise clown makeup, and was assisted by Jo-Anne Smith in its application.

The spider monster was designed by Joey Orosco, who worked with Mixon on FRIGHT NIGHT 2 as well as the forthcoming PREDATOR 2, incorporating some earlier design elements by Henry Mayo. "It's not your typical insect or arachnoid configuration," said Mixon. "There's a lot of humanoid anatomy worked into it. It's a really unusual design."

Noted Orosco, "I tried to combine a human man with a black widow. That's how I came up with the look of it. The torso part—the body with the arms, the shoulders, and the back is human—and the abdomen is really crustaceous like a crab." Orosco was assisted in sculpting the design by Aaron Sims, who did the abdomen as well as the miniature stop motion version which was molded over an armature built by Mike Joyce.

Tim Curry as Pennywise, the shape-shifter as menacing clown, designed and applied by Bart J. Mixon, assisted by Jo-Anne Smith, teeth by Jim McLoughlin.

Once constructed, the full-scale prop was shipped to Vancouver, Canada for filming, with Orosco on hand to choreograph its movement, and Joyce to tend to any technical difficulties. Fantasy 2 mold-maker Brent Baker, who also contributed some of the prosthetic makeup work on Curry's clown, crawled inside the spider to make his acting debut. The frame of the spider was chicken wire, surrounding mechanisms built by Dave Kindlon. Baker's head was in the creature's neck where he could view a video monitor of the action. "It got a little stuffy, but they had a place where they could stick in a little hose if I wanted water or some fresh air," said Baker.

Despite three months of training with the suit, things did get a bit hairy for Baker's impromptu stint inside the spider for the creature's climactic roll-over. Gravity made the impinging mechanics uncomfortable when Baker was left for more than an hour lying on his side while the crew set up another angle. Laughed Orosco, "Brent was getting really mad. He was cussing—pretty loud, too. Tommy Lee and everybody heard it. But he did a great job playing the spider."

Baker said he had no regrets, even with the discomfort. "It was fun," he said. "I finally got to play a full-fledged creature. It was good that I was in it. That way the arms were moving. It had some life to it." But despite the glamour of acting with the likes of Annette O'Toole, John Ritter and Harry Anderson, Baker discovered that such character roles can be a thankless job.

Said Baker, "They'd call for a wrap and I'd hear everybody saying, 'Wow! That was great!' Then I'd get out and say, 'Hey! What did ya' think?' But there'd only be the couple of people that pulled me out. Everybody else had gone." □

The shape-shifter itself, envisioned as the giant twelve-foot spider of King's book. Left: Sculptor/designer Joey Orosco (l) and assistant sculptor Aaron Sims, with the full-size mechanical prop, before the attachment of its six fifteen-foot legs. Below: The finished stop-motion model, sculpted and painted by Sims, seen in nine shots.

**KING ON DIRECTING**

**"If you're a success enough in our society, they give you not only enough rope so you can hang yourself, but you can do it in Times Square, before a live, prime-time audience."**

live in, they give you not only enough rope so that you can hang yourself, but you can do it in Times Square before a live, prime-time audience."

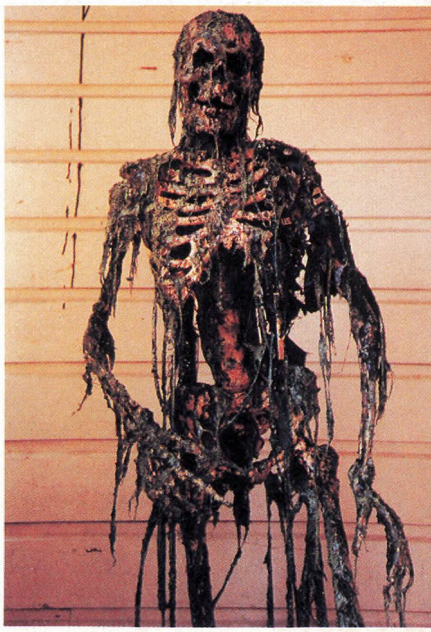
King had chosen his short story "Trucks" for his directorial debut because he had written a screenplay for it which he considered "dynamite." Said King, "I loved the idea of all these machines going bonkers. Several people tried to tell me, as I rolled up my sleeves and prepared to go in, 'You're making an effects picture. This breaks people's hearts.' It didn't break my heart and it didn't break my spirit, but as I say, if I could go back in with another million and half dollars . . . " King's voice trailed-off at the thought, perhaps as he considered how much it sounded like DeLaurentiis himself (for King's take on working with Dino, see page 40).

King said he resisted studio pressure to add more "character" scenes to MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE—what King called, "Oh, John! Oh, Martha!" scenes. "We shot 'em," said King. "We just cut 'em all out in the editing room. Every single one. You could only take so much of these people looking soulfully into each other's eyes and discussing their past history, how they happened to be on the road while all the machines in the world are going crazy around them, before you start looking for Leslie Nielson to walk in out of AIRPLANE. You tread a thin line. The movie itself has got its tongue way back in its cheek. If you start throwing in this stuff that looks like a refugee from an Irwin Allen disaster movie, forget it! Then you're going from the ridiculous to the insane. You're grafting a soap opera onto what's basically a 'trash 'em and bash 'em.'"

And that's all King said he was aiming for with MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE. "I *wanted* to make a chicken-circuit picture," he said. "That's what I like."

As King was fatally assaulting his own filmography, someone else was out to redeem him. While King's MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE sank to box-office oblivion in its nationwide saturation release, Rob Reiner's STAND BY ME, in limited release weeks earlier, blossomed to both commercial and critical acclaim, becoming the number-one hit in the country. Adding insult to injury, the film's success was achieved by *hiding* King's name in the credits. Columbia Pictures didn't want their film associated with the guy who wrote about haunted cars, rabid dogs and trucks gone made. The irony was that Reiner and screenwriters Reynold Gideon and Bruce Evans had practically lifted King's words whole from

King's IT appears to John Ritter as the rotting corpse of his father, a puppet effect built by Jim McLoughlin.

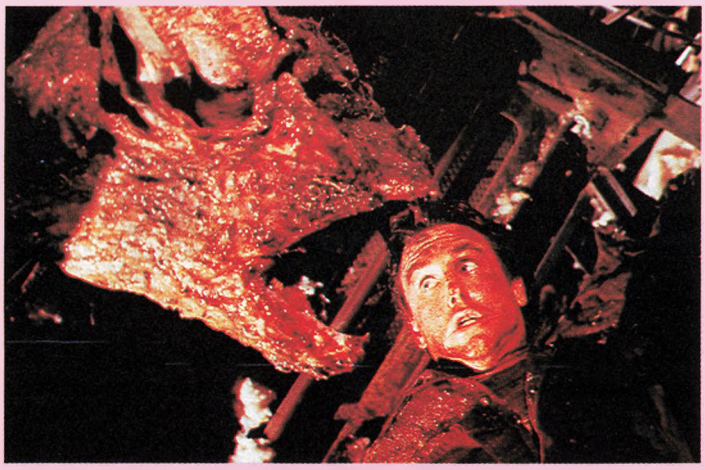


# Graveyard Shift

*With numbing mediocrity, Hollywood makes laborious and incoherent what King implied with a few well chosen words.*

*By Charles Leayman*

Whoever decided to expand Stephen King's seventeen-page short story "Graveyard Shift" into a full-length feature film should be condemned to watch the sorry result continuously until next Halloween. Or at least to take a quick trip through the sharp-fanged fiber shredder that is this mangy movie's chief prop. Hitchcock imitators from Brian DePalma on have absorbed the Master's Big Moments but only fitfully understood the devilishly complex structures buttressing them. In like manner, King's cinematic adaptors (with scant few exceptions like CARRIE, THE SHINING, and CUJO) regularly mislay their source's seductive blending of late capitalism's everyday reality and the irresistible horrors it inexorably exudes.



Facing the horror of capitalist greed made incarnate, David Andrews as Hall.

"Graveyard Shift," a damp divertissement in King's *Night Shift* collection, depicts a handful of textile factory workers assigned to clean out the place's subterrannean cellars during a suffocatingly hot July 4th week. At its center is the class conflict between Hall, a college-bred itinerant, and Warwick, the beefy foreman who singles out the newcomer for bullying. King captures with clammy accuracy the casual humiliations and outright abuse that workers of whatever stripe matter-of-factly endure in order to make a living, and pinpoints the vein of repressed rage simmering just beneath the sullen facade of employee submission. In fitting genre fashion, King literalizes the premise in terms of physical horror as boldly voracious rats who inhabit the factory's nether regions, escalating in size and mutation up to the final nightmare vision of the *magna mater* of them all, a grotesquely overgrown monstrosity "whose progeny might someday develop wings" that picks off the boss for lunch, leaving Hall and his comrades to their own grisly fates. The omnivorous rats may be read either as the workers' unleashed but self-destructive resentments, or as blind capitalism's true face (or, if you wish, simply as an expedient horror ploy). Either way, "Graveyard Shift" is a neat, dismal pessimistic fable about class warfare in which both Boss and Worker fall prey to their mutual antagonism while the "system" lingers on . . .

The rats' winged magna mater, the film's horror centerpiece designed by Canadian effects expert Gord Smith.

On screen, GRAVEYARD SHIFT dutifully retains the skeleton of King's original, while adding nothing but length, in-jokes ("Bachman Mills"), and a predictably whacko appearance by Brad Dourif as "The Exterminator." Director Ralph S. Singleton sketches in the prole ambience of sweatshop and bar with a few quick strokes, and the Maine accents are as thick as congealed molasses. But he can't overcome the numbing mediocrity of a garbled script and is reduced to trafficking ciphers through a sub-ALIEN riff on DON'T LOOK IN THE BASEMENT. Indeed, the screenplay by John Esposito makes both laborious and incoherent what King implied with a few well-chosen words.

The cast gamely grapples with severely anemic parts that define working-class characters almost solely by their grossness. A woman has been added to the story's all-male crew (an appealing if underwritten performance by Kelly Wolf), but she's cruelly and witlessly killed off, the victim of inept writing. Although lead David Andrews plays Hall as a likeably sensitive working stiff, Stephen Macht's brutish foreman is a confused, one-note characterization that finally becomes baffling and ludicrous.

Interestingly, some of the film's imagery gives King's story a decidedly leftist spin. The factory itself rises out of a half-submerged boneyard, the biggest tombstone in a city of the dead. At one point, Warwick the foreman is equated with the ravening rat's rising shadow. And the monster's lair, hidden deep beneath the factory's rotting bulk and piled high with the bones of countless victims, becomes an almost Marxian tableau of the proletariat's consumption by capitalistic greed. Such imagery, however inadvertent, reconnects GRAVEYARD SHIFT with the displaced truth of King's original tale. □

the pages of his story "The Body" in writing their script.

But King wasn't insulted. In fact, STAND BY ME edged-out CUJO at the top of King's list of most satisfying film adaptations. "As far as marketing it as a 'Stephen King story,' it would have been a terrible mistake," said King. "When you say my name people think of monsters, and it isn't a monster story. It's kind of an odd lot for me. I can remember sitting down to work on this thing and having it jump alive from my hand when I never thought that it would. This kind of stuff generally doesn't go for me. A lot of it was drawn from personal experience. I think everybody has just one story like that and I'm glad that mine turned out the way it did."

Though STAND BY ME is high on King's list of adaptations, he still mentioned one minor cavil. "There are things in any picture that I don't like," King admitted. "I don't like the scenes with the parents of Gordon La Chance [Wil Wheaton]. It's like the *Night of the Living Parents*. They are *so* disconnected from reality that it's a bit ludicrous."

The movies gave King his first sequel in 1987 with CREEPSHOW 2. "It gets to the point where you can't blame people," said King about the decision of Laurel Entertainment to make the picture at New World on a low $3.5 million budget after Warner Bros put it in turnaround. "They know there's a certain audience out there."

King was pleased to see part of CREEPSHOW 2 shot in his own Maine backyard, and was happy with the work of director Michael Gornick, who replaced George Romero. "He's good," said King of Gornick. "But there wasn't enough money, there wasn't enough time, and still we came out with one piece that was good, 'The Hitchhiker.' That turned out pretty well. Then you've got the one about the float ['The Raft']. The oil slick monster looked like some dirty old man's raincoat."

King all but dismisses 1987's THE RUNNING MAN, the Arnold Schwarzenegger vehicle, based on King's novel written under the pen name Richard Bachman. In this case, anonymity proved a blessing. "It was totally out of my hands," said King. "I didn't have anything to do with making it. They obviously saw it as a book that could be adapted to fit an existing RAMBO-TERMINATOR-kind of genre, where you're able to give Schwarzenegger the tag lines that he's known for, like 'I'll be back.' The best thing about that was casting Richard Dawson as the game show host. He was great. But the rest of it is this sort of simplified story. It doesn't have much in common with the novel at all, except the title."

The story behind the book's sale to Hollywood kind of illustrates the mania with which the movies have latched on to King's *oeuvre*. The film rights to *The Running Man* were purchased originally by George Linder, the CEO of a wheelchair company, Quadra Medical Corporation, who liked the book and wanted to dabble in filmmaking. Initially Linder was puzzled when he inquired after the rights and encountered stiff terms for an unknown author: the price was $20,000, non-negotiable. Said Linder, after striking the deal and learning the true identity of the book's author, "I felt like I'd found a Rembrandt at K-mart!"

The success of PET SEMATARY in 1989—seventeen months after the release of THE RUNNING MAN, one of King's longest dry spells in Hollywood—was a personal victory for King. He wrote the script and he made the deal that saw that it was done right. In addition to agreeing to shoot the production in Maine, producer Laurel Entertainment agreed to film King's script as written, using only a director he blessed. King rated the result with STAND BY ME and CUJO as among his favorite movie adaptations.

"I thought it was really good," said King. "It's a team effort. It's not like writing books. Those you write by yourself in a little room and nobody can tell you exactly how to do it. They can make suggestions after it's done, and you work, to a degree, in team with an editor. But with movies it's much more of a collaborative effort."

King sees a faithful script adaptation as the key to his movie success. "You get into trouble with the people who read the books when you change things," said King. "I'm talking about dropping things out. Obviously films have to be compressed. An audience for a real good movie would sit there for three hours. The problem is they want to clear the theatre out and show it again. They want to maximize their profits, so you've got an operable time limit of, say, two hours and fifteen minutes.

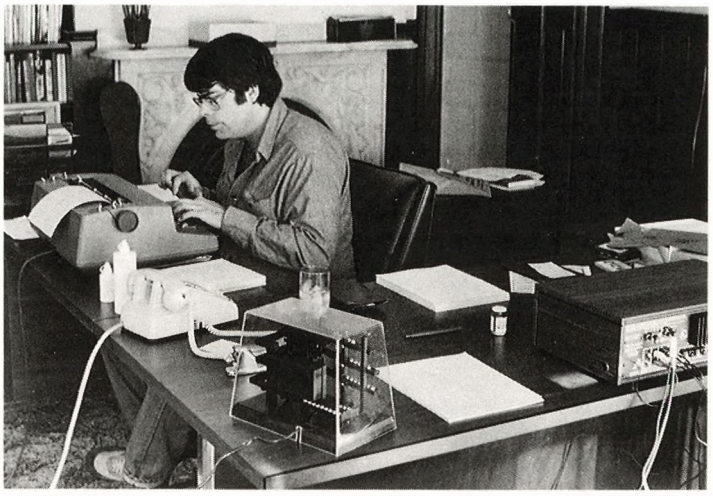
"I suppose that I've labored under a burden that a lot of people whose books have been made into films don't have, and that is that a lot more people have read my books when they go in to see the movie than is ordinarily the case. When people went to, say, CHRISTINE opening night, they were faced with a situation where *four million* people read the book, and for PET SEMATARY, with *ten million* people who read the book. It's a big leap upward. You're facing those people's expectations based on the novel.

"All I know is that to a lot of people in Hollywood, producers and directors, the stuff I've written is extremely visual. It looks like it comes to them, and it *begs* to be made into a movie. And they do it, and it might be that they feel that too much of it's there to start with and they don't have to work on it hard enough. It might be questions of casting. I think what it really is, is that it's tough to break the gap between the warmth in the novel that makes the characters seem worth loving and caring about, set off against the horrors. When they make the movie they concentrate on the moment when the monster comes out and starts waving his claws. I don't think that's what people are interested in."

King has certainly had the opportunity to become wise to the ways of Hollywood since CARRIE made him a star fourteen years ago. But he's still game. "The movies and the books are apples and oranges," summed up King. "The movie doesn't besmirch the book in my view. So welcome to it. Let 'em go ahead. There's a character in my book, *The Dark Half*, that says, 'Why Thad, they'll probably make a movie of this. It ends with a fire. Those Hollywood assholes love fires.'" □

**KING ON HOLLYWOOD**

**"When they make the movie they concentrate on the horror, the movement when the monster comes out and starts waving its claws. I don't think that's what people are interested in."**



King, typing away on his IBM Selectric—he writes 362 days a year—at the office he keeps in his home Bangor, Maine, as far from Hollywood as he can get.

# FILM RATINGS

| ●●●● MUST SEE | ●●● EXCELLENT | ●● GOOD | ● MEDIOCRE | ○ POOR |
|---|---|---|---|---|

| FILM TITLE | SB | VJB | FSC | DG | AJ | BK | DS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ARACHNOPHOBIA**/*Frank Marshall*<br>*Buena Vista, 7/90, 103 mins.* | ● | ●● | ● | ●● | ●●● | ● | ●●● |
| **DARKMAN**/*Sam Raimi*<br>*Universal, 8/90, 95 mins.* | ●● | ●●● | ●●●● | ● | ●● | ●●● | ●● |
| **DEF BY TEMPTATION**/*James Bond 3rd*<br>*Troma, 4/90, 95 mins.* | | ● | ● | | ● | ● | ● |
| **DICK TRACY**/*Warren Beaty*<br>*Buena Vista, 6/90, 103 mins.* | ● | ●●● | ●●● | ● | ○ | ●●● | ●● |
| **DUCK TALES—THE MOVIE**/*Bob Hathcock*<br>*Buena Vista, 8/90, 73 mins.* | | ● | ● | ● | | ● | ● |
| **EXORCIST III**/*William Peter Blatty*<br>*Fox, 8/90, 110 mins.* | ●●● | ●● | ●●●● | ○ | ●● | ●● | ●● |
| **FANTASIA**/*Walt Disney*<br>*Buena Vista, 10/90, 126 mins.* | ●●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●●●● | ●●● |
| **THE FLASH**/*Danny Bilson*<br>*CBS-TV, weekly series premier, 120 mins.* | | ● | | ● | | ● | ●● |
| **FLATLINERS**/*Joel Schumacher*<br>*Columbia, 8/90, 111 mins.* | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ●● |
| **FRANKENHOOKER**/*Frank Hennenlotter*<br>*SGE, 6/90, 82 mins.* | ●● | | | ○ | ●● | ●● | |
| **GHOST**/*Jerry Zucker*<br>*Paramount, 7/90, 127 mins.* | ●●● | ●● | ●● | | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● |
| **GRAVEYARD SHIFT**/*Ralph S. Singleton*<br>*Paramount, 10/90, 90 mins.* | ● | ●● | ○ | ○ | | ● | |
| **GREMLINS 2: THE NEW BATCH**/*Joe Dante*<br>*Warner Bros, 6/90, 105 mins.* | ●● | ●●● | ●● | ●● | ○ | ●●● | ●●● |
| **HARDWARE**/*Richard Stanley*<br>*Miramax, 5/90, 92 mins.* | ● | ●● | ●●●● | ●● | ●● | ●● | ● |
| **I COME IN PEACE**/*Craig Baxley*<br>*Triumph, 8/90, 91 mins.* | ●● | ● | ● | ● | ●● | | |
| **JUNGLE BOOK**/*Walt Disney*<br>*Buena Vista, 7/90 (1967 re-issue), 78 mins.* | ●● | ●● | ●● | ●● | ●● | ● | ●●● |
| **NIGHT ANGEL**/*Dominique Othenin-Girard*<br>*Paragon Arts, 9/90, 95 mins.* | ● | | ○ | ○ | | | |
| **NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD**/*Tom Savini*<br>*Columbia, 10/90, 78 mins.* | ●● | ● | ●●●● | ● | | ●● | ●● |
| **PACIFIC HEIGHTS**/*John Schlesinger*<br>*Fox, 9/90, 107 mins.* | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | ●● | ○ | ● | ●●● |
| **PROBLEM CHILD**/*Dennis Dugan*<br>*Universal, 8/90, 81 mins.* | ○ | ○ | ●● | ○ | | ○ | |
| **ROBOCOP 2**/*Irvin Kershner*<br>*Orion, 6/90, 118 mins.* | ● | ●●● | ●●● | ● | ●● | ●● | ●● |
| **STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION**/<br>*Gene Roddenberry, season premier, 60 mins.* | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | ● | | ●● | |
| **TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE: THE MOVIE**<br>*John Harrison, Paramount, 5/90, 100 mins.* | ● | ●● | ● | ○ | | ● | ●● |
| **TOTAL RECALL**/*Paul Verhoeven*<br>*Tri-Star, 6/90, 109 mins.* | ●●● | ●● | ● | ● | ● | ● | ●●● |
| **WILD AT HEART**/*David Lynch*<br>*Goldwyn, 8/90, 127 mins.* | ● | ●● | ● | ● | ●●● | ●● | |
| **THE WITCHES** /*Nicholas Roeg*<br>*Warner Bros, 2/90, 95 mins.* | ●●● | ●●● | ●●● | ●● | ●●● | ●● | ●●● |

**SB**/Steve Biodrowski **VJB**/Vincent J. Bossone **FSC**/Frederick S. Clarke **DG**/Dann Gire
**AJ**/ Alan Jones **BK**/Bill Kelley **DS**/Dan Scapperotti

## CANNIBAL WOMEN IN THE AVOCADO JUNGLE OF DEATH

**Directed by J. D. Athens. Castlewood, 8/90, 85 mins. With: Shannon Tweed, Adrienne Barbeau, Bill Maher, Karen Mistal.**

In the clever script by writer/director J. D. Athens, the lower third of California is an uncharted jungle where 90% of the world's avocados are grown. Into this dangerous territory is sent feminist college professor Shannon Tweed to meet with the militant Piranha Women who live there. Tweed brings along airhead student Karen Mistal and male chauvinist Bill Maher, who has the only copy of an out-of-print book telling how to survive in the Avocado Jungle. Adrienne Barbeau, all butch in a role she was born to play, turns out to be Empress of the Piranha Women, who eat their men after sex. Although Maher is obnoxious, the script gets in a good many jokes, feminist and otherwise. Tweed and especially Barbeau are great as the rival feminists.

● **Judith Harris**

## DRACULA: THE SERIES

**Produced by David Patterson. Blair Entertainment Series, Syndicated, 9/90, 30 mins. With: Geordie Johnson, Bernard Behrens, Jacob Tierney, Joe Roncetti.**

No, this syndicated half-hour series won't make you forget Bela Lugosi, Christopher Lee, or some of the other actors who have sunk their teeth into the infamous role. Yet the fang-in-cheek project isn't as anemic as it sounds, either. Somewhat in the humor-horror-teen-adventure style of FRIGHT NIGHT, the show gives us a modern but menacing vampire, a crafty vampire-wise uncle figure and three typical teens. Producer David Patterson's Dracula, calling himself Alexander Lucard, is the scariest, sneakiest, smuggest type of predator known to twentieth century man—a Wall Street capitalist. As played by Geordie Johnson, Dracula is the Donald Trump of the vampire world. Clever bits of off-the-wall humor off-set the melodramatic and predictable moments in this mildly amusing, low-budget mix of frights and family fun. ● **Mark Dawidziak**

## DREAMS

**Directed by Akira Kurosawa. Warner Bros, 9/90, 120 mins. In Japanese with subtitles. With: Akira Terao, Martin Scorsese.**

Incredible. Eighty-year-old Akira Kurosawa looks back on life, and presents it as a pageant of individual, yet interconnected, tales. The emphasis here is not on the emotion-driven (il)logic of genuine dreams (and the two tales relying on such imagery—illustrating a nuclear holocaust and its aftermath—are the weakest of the bunch) but, as in the best of Kurosawa's films, on a reality touched by the magic of vision. From the vivid simplicity of the opening children's tales, to the hellish brutality of "The Blizzard" (the film's masterpiece), to the jubilance of the redemptive closer, there is something here to touch every audience member. Kurosawa's take on the guilt of not serving in Japans' military during World War II is a haunting segment worthy of Rod Serling's THE TWILIGHT ZONE. Best seen on a large screen, with good sound. However viewed, it is sure to stick with you.

●●●● **Dan Persons**

## I COME IN PEACE

**Directed by Craig R. Baxley. Triumph, 9/90, 90 mins. With: Dolph Lundgren, Brian Benben, Matthias Hues.**

While the Predator used a raygun and the Alien employed double molars to kill Terrans, it's a mark of Hollywood high-concept stupidity that this film's E.T. pusher throws lethal compact discs and gets defeated by stereo equipment. He wants to turn the earth into an interplanetary crack house, overdosing his victims on heroin and sucking up their intoxicating endorphins. That's the only intriguing idea in this genre pastiche, one that's quickly smothered by rogue-cop Dolph Lundgren's attempts to stop a mob war. As a caustic FBI man (Brian Benben) engages in the buddy-cop ritual of insulting his beefcake partner, the imposing alien (Matthias Hues) endlessly stabs his victims' brains for a quick high, repeating the movie's title *ad nauseum*. Occasionally, an alien cop spots the addict and a lot of things get blown up real good. While A-TEAM director Craig Baxley handles the car chases and blazing effects with style, they're rendered impotent by the convoluted plot. Just say no to this pointless example of anti-drug hysteria, carried to sci-fi extremes.

○ **Daniel Schweiger**

## I'M DANGEROUS TONIGHT

**Directed by Tobe Hooper. MCA/USA Cable, 8/90, 120 mins. With: Madchen Amick, Corey Parker, Anthony Perkins, Dee Wallace Stone.**

Director Tobe Hooper's wild, eccentric style is perfectly suited to this lurid adaptation of a 1938 Cornell Woolrich horror novella, which, incredibly, has never before been filmed. TWIN PEAKS heroine Madchen Amick plays a bookish co-ed who innocently fashions a red party dress from a centuries-old sacrifical robe. The garment passes, TALES OF MANHATTAN-style, from one cast member to another, possessing them all, before Amick herself dons it for the gory climax. USA Network designed this made-for-cable feature to be slightly gorier than network TV (there's a barely-off-camera castration early on), and Hooper responded by making his most enjoyable exploitation film since EATEN ALIVE ('70). Hooper and the two screenwriters improve upon Woolrich's yarn by eliminating its globetrotting format and setting all the action in a seamy college town, which evokes favorable comparisons with Hooper's SALEM'S LOT ('79). Anthony Perkins practically knocks over the camera with his wild-eyed, ten-minute cameo.

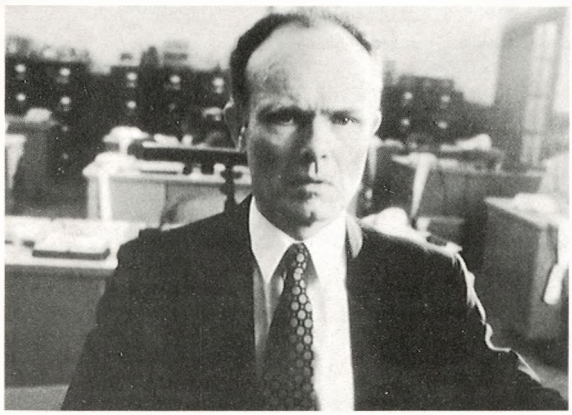
●●● **Bill Kelley**

## JACOB'S LADDER

**Directed by Adrian Lyne. Columbia, 11/90. With: Tim Robbins, Elizabeth Pena, Danny Aiello, Matt Craven.**

Scripter Bruce Joel Rubin's premise is intriguing: death is a frightening experience only so long as one clings to life; when one finally makes peace with the inevitable, then what appeared to be malevolent demons are actually angels

# FILM RATINGS



Kirtwood Smith, trapped in an unending time loop in 12:01 P. M.

guiding one to the other side. Unfortunately, director Adrian Lyne obscures the idea beneath a cloak of pseudo-profundity, the lastest fashion of the emperor's new clothes.

If you're familiar with Robert Enrico's superb visualization of Ambrose Bierce's "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," you already know what Lyne's twist ending will be, as he alternates between the Vietnam flashbacks and demonic visions that trouble veteran Jacob Singer (Tim Robbins). Despite being a doctor of philosophy, Jacob never grapples with the metaphysical implications of what's happening to him, instead depending on the philosophical explanations provided by his chiropractor (Danny Aiello)!

Director Lyne's stimulus-response style (push the obvious button to get the obvious audience reaction) is ill-suited to grappling with metaphysical subtleties but is perfect for showing Jacob punching out government thugs as Rubin drags in a secret military drug experiment and cover-up conspiracy. Instead of coming to terms with his life and death, Lyne has Jacob pursuing one of the script's red herrings.

● **Steve Biodrowski**

## NIGHT ANGEL

**Directed by Dominique Othenin-Girard. Paragon Arts, 9/90, 95 mins. With: Isa Anderson, Karen Black, Linden Ashby.**

Paragon Arts International, after the false promise of WITCHBOARD, continues the decline begun with NIGHT OF THE DEMONS. Thanks to executive producer Walter Josten's condescending attitude toward the horror audience, their latest effort blithely ignores dramatic continuity in favor of buckets of blood, drowning what could have been an intriguing attempt to transfer the legend of Lilith to the screen. Completely wasted is a fine, sensuous performance by Isa Anderson, in the title role, making a bid to be the Barbara Steele of the '90s.

● **Steve Biodrowski**

## NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD

**Directed by Tom Savini. Columbia, 10/90, 89 mins. With: Tony Todd, Pat Tallman, Tom Towles, William Butler, Katie Finneran, Mckee Anderson, Bill Moseley.**

George A. Romero's glossy color remake of his 1968 black-and-white low-budget horror gem proves as genuinely disturbing as the original. Romero, acting as screenwriter and executive producer, succeeds in making his living dead the stuff of nightmares for a whole new generation, while still satisfying the legion of fans who already know his classic tale by heart. Shorn of the '60s political and social milieu that made the original so thought-provoking, Romero invests his myth with a new metaphoric context that makes the imagery of his shuffling, flesh-eating zombies an equally valid mirror for the '90s.

Romero's former makeup protege Tom Savini turns out to be a first-rate director, wringing out the full potential of the tale's unrelenting horror. Savini directs an impeccably selected cast with a sure hand, making their struggle for survival high drama. Especially strong are Tony Todd as the film's hero, and Pat Tallman as the heroine who perhaps learns to defend herself too well. Makeups by Everett Burrell and John Vulich make Romero's walking dead flesh-eaters believably real, aided by the evocative, low-key lighting of photographer Frank Prinzi. Romero's archetypal shocker proves itself worthy of retelling as one of the great horror masterpieces of all time.

● ● ● ● **Frederick S. Clarke**

## PACIFIC HEIGHTS

**Directed by John Schlesinger. 20th Century Fox, 9/90, 107 mins. With: Michael Keaton, Melanie Griffith, Matthew Modine.**

Is this really a horror film, you ask? A couple buys their dreamhouse and rents the downstairs apartment to help pay the hefty mortgage—only the tenant doesn't pay his rent. That's pretty darn scary right there. But it gets worse . . . much worse. The luckless pair's boarder is not only a sociopath but a scam artist as well, intent on driving the couple out of hearth and home and into financial ruin and emotional havoc. When he starts breeding jumbo roaches and wizzing a power drill around, the film eschews its mainstream *frissons* for hardcore thrills. As Bruce Wayne in BATMAN, Michael Keaton gave us a glimpse of the troubled psyche of the Dark Knight. As odious tenant Carter Hayes, he portrays with relish a character of seemingly boundless evil and manages to make him credible. Close scrutiny of the story reveals some untidy plot holes, but John Schlesinger's stylish and assured direction keeps the tension high and events moving at a resolute pace.

● ● ● **Vincent Bossone**

## REVENGE OF THE LIVING ZOMBIES (FLESHEATER)

**Directed by Bill Hinzman. Magnum Entertainment, 3/90, 88 mins. With: Bill Hinzman, John Mowod, Leslie Ann Wick.**

A pitiful reworking of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, produced and directed in Pennsylvania by Bill Hinzman, one of the original cast members. Aside from the addition of color and some gratuitous nudity, there's nothing here that wasn't done—and better—by George Romero in 1968. Hinzman is a satanic zombie accidentally unearthed by a farmer—from here, the film follows its model very closely, right down to the execution by sheriff's posse of two "normal" citizens mistaken for zombies. Boring, filled with unappealing characters, poorly-scripted and badly acted. *No* redeeming features.

○ **David Wilt**

## ROBOT JOX

**Directed by Stuart Gordon. Triumph, 11/90. With: Gary Graham, Anne-Marie Johnson, Paul Koslo.**

David Allen's special effects for the robot battles in director Stuart Gordon's long-awaited science fiction epic are fine, but a weak screenplay by Dennis Paoli and Joe Haldeman fails to make us care about the outcome and fails even worse at maintaining dramatic interest between the clashes, and with the robot effects spaced far apart, this results in some long, dull stretches. One-dimensional characters are glossed over with the names of Greek gods and heroes, as if that will imbue them with a mythic quality sadly lacking in the writing. The use of Russian accents for the sneering villains has been rendered a cliched anachronism by recent world events, making this version of the future seem woefully out of date. Limited sets and locations (which enhanced Gordon's horror outings) makes what is supposed to pass for big-budget science fiction look simply cheap. A major disappointment from one of the genre's brighter talents, who should run, not walk, back to Lovecraft's Miskatonic University. ● **Steve Biodrowski**

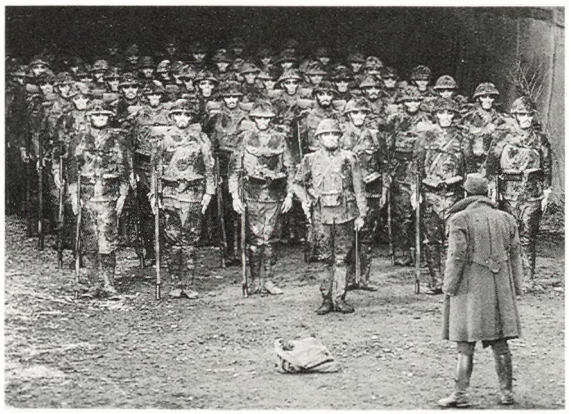
## STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION

**Directed by Cliff Bole. Paramount, 9/90, 50 mins. With: Patrick Stewart, Jonathan Frakes, Elizabeth Dennehy.**

The fourth season premiere, "The Best of Both Worlds, Part II," is a bummer, lacking the power and sheer dramatic impact of last season's sensational cliff-hanger finale, which saw Picard abducted and turned into a member of the Borg, an all-powerful cybernetic super-race. Despite an outstanding teaser, some great character moments, a sensational Ron Jones score and a spectacular battle sequence in which the remnants of the destroyed Federation fleet are vividly brought to the screen by an effects team headed by Rob Legato, Part II is more formulaic and less engaging than its predecessor. Cliff Bole's uninspired direction sinks a script by producer Michael Piller, which suffers from a quick wrap up and some unsatisfying plot contrivances. Though not a disaster, in light of Part I this is a distinct disappointment.

● ● **Mark Altman**

Akira Kurosawa faces his guilt as a wartime survivor in DREAMS.



Madchen Amick knocks 'em dead literally in Tobe Hooper's I'M DANGEROUS TONIGHT.

## 12:01 P.M.

**Directed by Jonathan Heap. Showtime, 8/90, 30 mins. With: Kirtwood Smith.**

A meek man who has let life slip by, gets his come-uppance by becoming stuck in time. Every 12:01 p.m. he finds himself standing in traffic, headed for lunch on a park bench. At the end of the hour, during which time only he is cognizant that the same hour keeps repeating itself, he is yanked back to 12:01. And as he discovers over the course of interminable time, there's no way out.

Based on a Richard Lipoff story published during the early '70s, this would have made a dandy TWILIGHT ZONE episode. Director Jonathan Heap, whose talents ought to at least land him a day job in television, keeps the effects to a minimum and focuses, quite properly, on the horror lurking under a benign summer's day and a pretty girl's heartfelt smile. Good writing, solid acting, a few light touches, and a gut-wrenching denoument make this worth the watch. But for the best time loop story ever written, read Phil Dick's "A Little Something for Us Tempunauts."

● ● ● **Sheldon Teitelbaum**

# REVIEWS

## *Metaphysical hokum provides a comic book gloss on eternity*

### GHOST

**A Paramount Pictures release of a Howard W. Koch production. 8/90, 127 mins. In Dolby and color. Director, Jerry Zucker. Producer, Lisa Weinstein. Executive producer, Steven-Charles Jaffe. Director of photography, Adam Greenberg. Editor, Walter Murch. Production designer, Jane Musky. Art director, Mark Manshridge. Special visual effects, ILM. Special visual effects supervisor, Bruce Nicholson. Good spirits, dark spirits visual effects supervisors, John van Vliet, Katherine Kean. End sequence visual effects supervisor, Richard Edlund. Set designer, Joe D. Mitchell. Costume designer, Ruth Morley. Music, Maurice Jarre. Sound, Jeff Wexler. Screenplay by Bruce Joel Rubin.**

| | |
|---|---|
| Sam Wheat | Patrick Swayze |
| Molly Jensen | Demi Moore |
| Oda Mae Brown | Whoopi Goldberg |
| Carl Brunner | Tony Goldwyn |
| Willie Lopez | Rick Aviles |
| Louise | Gail Boggs |
| Clara | Armelia McQueen |
| Subway ghost | Vincent Schiavelli |

**by Charles D. Leayman**

**Gag man Jerry Zucker gets serious, directing Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore.**

GHOST was one of the surprise hits of the 1990 summer, and its great popularity is surely due to more than just sensitive hunk Patrick Swayze's winsome anguish and blue eyes. Anyone who has lost a loved one or had nightmares about death is primed for this by turns romantic, mournful, humorous, and violent tale of love beyond the grave. Any movie that ends with a beautiful young woman's awestruck vision of her murdered husband as he beatifically enters paradise to await her eventual arrival is bound to leave most eyes dripping. Especially when their mystical reunion soars on the *liebestod* strains of Alex North's "Unchained Melody," a '50s tearjerker revived by The Righteous Brothers in the '60s.

Jerry Zucker (who co-directed AIRPLANE and THE NAKED GUN) can't entirely disguise his origins as a gag man in directing the film: give him fat, black women or smiling nuns and the jokester slides to the surface. This time out he's "serious," but the results are decidedly mixed. Zucker possesses a sure feel for the gentle intensities of people in love, and the performances he elicits from Swayze and Demi Mooreare unforced and sweet (especially considering the characters' relative passivity as written). Whoopi Goldberg, as the phony psychic Swayze's ghost asks for help, blossoms at the opportunity to let her snap comic timing and sly intelligence take over the movie's major star turn. But good performances do not a good movie make, and though the overall conceit effectively works, GHOST leaves an oddly coarse aftertaste, as if Zucker and company had helmed a PTL tour through Disneyworld's Haunted Mansion while listening to classic rock.

**Swayze's ghostly trials, effects by ILM and motion-control camerawork by New York's Balsmeyer & Everett.**

To be sure, the visual effects by the ubiquitous Industrial Light & Magic crew and others (see right) lend their special credence to Swayze's spooky new "life," passing him through doors, subway trains, and other people with startling efficiency. Swayze's ghostly stunts fleetingly recall the imagery of THE 4-D MAN (1959), about a scientist whose ability to walk through walls saps his energy. And memories of THE MONOLITH MONSTERS ('57) briefly emerge when, during Sam's first attempts to pass through wood, a grayish, stone-like pallor overtakes him until he's safely on the other side. Little touches of business like this give GHOST the breath of life.

Rubin's script navigates some potentially lethal waters, especially regarding race. Moore and Swayze play picture-book yuppies out of the *Times* Sunday Magazine section; their victimization by a Third World assailant, the Puerto Rican street thief who kills Swayze, evokes a current climate of explosive racial tensions, most often expressed as open war between the haves and have-nots. I saw GHOST just after the news broke about the New York subway murder of 22-year-old Utah tennis instructor Brian Watkins, stabbed to death while trying to defend his tourist parents from a street gang. The shocking irreversibility of sudden death seemed more appalling than ever.

To counter its unpleasant reality, the film makes Goldberg's phony mystic, all sassy mouth and nerve, its most appealing figure. But she's a mere figure of fun: the Black as joke, the brown sugar that takes away the vinegar taste of non-white urban crime. Rubin, however, cannily traces the plot's ultimate guilt back to Wall Street, to the briefcase brigade which American movies continue to vilify as a bunch of heartless amoral bastards (from Michael Douglas in WALL STREET to WORKING GIRL's Sigourney Weaver). GHOST, in effect, threatens yuppie life with its own hidden face, the dark side of the affluence that keeps it precariously afloat.

But for all the actors' grace notes and its sharp ideological maneuvering, GHOST ends up as hokum, metaphysical kitsch pitched to audiences starved for spiritual assurance. Perhaps the altering moods—the crazy zigzag from love story to horror film to psychic comedy to chase yarn—ultimately trivializes its theme of eternal life. The movie's frequent shifts in tone result from Bruce Joel Rubin's screenplay which juggles the disparate elements in an attempt to be all things to all viewers.

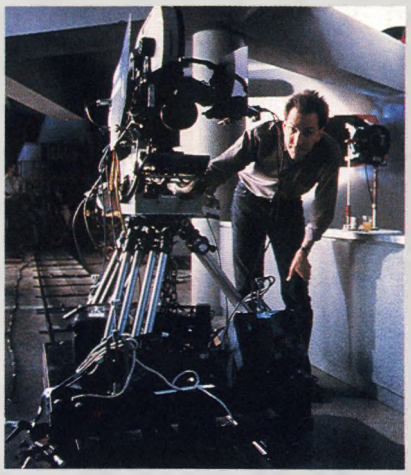
And for all the script's careful avoidance of overt religiosity, "Heaven" remains obstinately upward and light-filled while "Hell" is just as surely the opposite, thus adding a layer of trite (if still powerful) mythic symbolism to an already overcooked brew. GHOST strives for non-sectarian belief in an afterlife where loved ones achieve final consummation, and does so for a secular age whose religious aspirations have either hardened into fundamentalism, dissolved into New Age eclecticism, or simply disappeared. Yet GHOST's spiritual terms are intractably conventional, a mere comic book gloss on eternity.

The age of AIDS and the approaching end of the millenium have called forth a collective fascination with death. Not only do films as varied as BEETLEJUICE, NIGHTBREED, and FLATLINERS try to negotiate an imaginative truce with extinction, but they also propose styles of being that leave the guilty and repressive moralities of the past behind. GHOST is difficult to resist, so potent is its take on undying love, but something overly manipulative and even cynical dogs its bid for audience catharsis. Maybe crying crocodile tears over Patrick Swayze and Demi Moore is just too damn easy. For my part, I prefer Daniel Petrie's lovely and underrated RESURRECTION (1980), wherein a radiant Ellen Burstyn and screenwriter Lewis John Carlino triumph over death in far more complex and ennobling ways. □

# The Special Effects of GHOST by Balsmeyer & Everett

**By Dan Scapperotti**

The success of GHOST, last summer's surprise hit from director Jerry Zucker, was due in part to its intricate special effects. The film's motion-control elements were produced by Balsmeyer and Everett, a small New York-based effects company headed by Randall Balsmeyer and Mimi Everett, alumni of R. Greenberg Associates. The company set up shop in 1986 and has worked on such films as HELLO AGAIN, DEAD RINGERS and A SHOCK TO THE SYSTEM. Most recently, Balsmeyer was visual effects supervisor for Woody Allen's ALICE. Balsmeyer and Everett were hired for GHOST by visual effects supervisor Harrison Ellenshaw and production manager Dirk Petersmann.



**Randall Balsmeyer, with the motion-control camera rig used to film the effects of GHOST.**

"Ellenshaw storyboarded all the effects before he left the project after the Los Angeles section of filming was completed," said Balsmeyer. "He did a great planning job for the whole show. They never really replaced him." Ellenshaw's responsibilities were split between ILM and effects animator John Van Vliet. ILM was responsible for optically compositing Balsmeyer and Everett's motion-control footage of Patrick Swayze as a ghost.

Originally, the film was to have several motion-control shots, but early problems on the set, including an outbreak of hepatitis among the crew, curtailed the plans, turning most of the planned motion-control sequences into shots filmed with a motionless, locked-off camera. Balsmeyer and Everett were responsible for shooting pass-through shots that required camera motion, those scenes in which Swayze's ghost passes through objects or other people as he discovers what it's like to be a spirit.

Balsmeyer explained that "the pass-through effects require shooting separate strips of film for each moving element. An example is the scene in the loft where a burglar comes in and Swazye tries to attack him. Since Patrick's actions were motivating the camera motion, we shot him first, separately, sort of diving and lunging and attacking nobody. We shot Patrick several times until [director] Jerry [Zucker] felt we had a take that worked dramatically.

"Then it was time to shoot the burglar. The burglar is supposed to be just wandering around the loft, unaware that anyone is there. Because we had video on the set with a switcher, we were able to back him into Patrick's motions. We could see the combined action on the video. They could actually tell him, 'Hold up a second. Okay, now go up the stairs.' We were very lucky because the choreography of the shot was very complicated. I sort of expected to stay all day matching the second shot to the first and we got it on the second take."

ILM composited the takes by projecting the original pieces of film onto an animation stand, to create rotoscoped mattes and soft split-screen mattes that followed the action. Said Balsmeyer, "The whole premise of motion control is that the only thing that's different about these separate strips of film is the foreground action. Everything in the background is identical frame to frame. This allows you to have a split screen that can actually move during the take and pass through parts of the background without ever revealing the split."

For the scene where Swayze dives through a closed door, Balsmeyer shot the actor diving through an open doorway. He then put the door in place and shot the same pan with the door, but without Swazye. "We'd always shoot two or three passes," said Balsmeyer. "For instance, in the scene in the loft we shot a pan with just the background so we could see through the character that portion of the set his body blocked."

Most of the filming took place on the Paramount lot in Hollywood, however, one of the shots filmed in New York City made it into the final print; a scene where Swayze tries to attack his best friend (actor Tony Goldwyn) on a Brooklyn street but passes straight through him. "Here is one of the subtle things that nobody ever notices," said Balsmeyer. "In the background an elevated train comes through the shot. We filmed Swayze separately, Goldwyn separately, the empty background, and the subway. A PA up on the tracks cued us over the walkie-talkie to fire up the motion-control camera and get the train moving across the scene. That was matted in as a split screen above the actor's heads." □

**Shooting the motion-control master take of Swayze's ghostly encounter with hoodlum Rick Aviles (below). ILM used rotoscoped mattes to composite takes of both Aviles and Swayze, shot separately (right).**

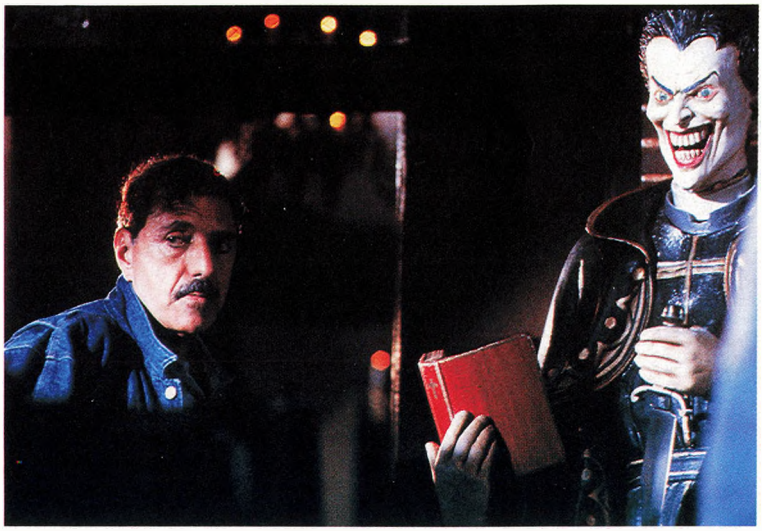
# *The original horror landmark has spawned an authentic heir*

## THE EXORCIST III

**A 20th Century Fox release of a Morgan Creek production. 8/90, 110 mins. In Dolby & color. Director, William Peter Blatty. Producer, Carter DeHaven. Executive producers, James G. Robinson & Joe Roth. Director of photography, Gerry Fisher. Editors, Todd Ramsay & Peter Lee-Thompson. Production design, Leslie Dilley. Art director, Robert Goldstein & Henry Shaffer. Special effects supervisor, Bill Purcell. Music, Barry Devorzon. Sound, Richard Van Dyke. Costume designer, Dana Lyman. Screenplay by Blatty, based on his novel "Legion."**

Kinderman ..... George C. Scott
Father Dyer ..... Ed Flanders
Gemini Killer ..... Brad Dourif
Patient X ..... Jason Miller
Father Morning ..... Nicol Williamson
Dr. Temple ..... Scott Wilson

**by Thomas Doherty**



**Jesuit-educated writer and director William Peter Blatty, exploring the Christian mystery.**

Packed with more Catholic iconography than a Madonna video, EXORCIST III seems bent on proving what the dedication to the original book asserted—that the Jesuits taught writer/director William Peter Blatty to think. Citations from *Macbeth*, Joseph Conrad, the Bible, and Frank Capra waft through the opening reel like incense. Yes, III is better than II and a quite different beast from I. Still, fifteen years later, the original horror landmark *has* spawned an authentic heir.

Blatty eschews the pea soup, rotating heads, and your-mother-sews-socks-in-Hell blasphemy for the deliberate conventions of a police procedural. A series of mysterious and satanically gruesome murders is taking place in Jesuit country, in the misty vacinity of Georgetown University—not just your average urban deaths-by-Uzi, but horrifyingly grim and calculated acts of sadism.

Although the ultimate identity of the killer is a foregone conclusion, the murder mystery genre provides a convenient scaffolding for Blatty to explore the mystery that really interests him, the Christian one. Reconciling a loving God with the existence of evil, cruelty, old age, death—this is Blatty's perennial theme. The conflict between faith and reason are suitably dramatized in the film's two main settings, the Catholic enclaves of Georgetown and the metropolitan hospital that is the seat of evil. The one holds the spooky aromatic musk of medieval Catholic ritual. Cinematographer Gerry Fisher and production designer Leslie Dilley create a style that might be called Papist deco—filtered in darkness—stigmata afflicts statues and rosaries, penitents cackle behind a confessional panel, and light radiates through stained glass. It's enough to give a nun the willies.

**Brad Dourif as the Gemini Killer, a show-stealing electric performance.**

The hospital is even creepier. Though an ostensibly modern shelter, full of brisk efficiency, intercom announcements, and well-lit halls, the place is appallingly soulless. The Church/Hospital juxtaposition is a ready metaphor for the faith/reason conflict that bedevils the theologian. The hospital is presided over by the ironically labeled Dr. Temple (Scott Wilson), the kind of shrink who should have his head examined. The psychiatrist, the definitive representative of the secular priesthood, and the hospital, the rock upon which he builds his church, are to Blatty symbols of a sick culture, or at least a culture that seeks an answer to its spiritual needs in psychobabble and lithium. Blatty has always looked askance at the medical profession: think of that terrific moment in THE EXORCIST when the assembled experts in white coats admit defeat and suggest Ellen Burstyn take little Regan to a witch doctor.

The human vessel for Satan is the mysterious Patient X, a catatonic amnesiac who showed up on the hospital doorstep fifteen years to the night when Father Karras went tumbling down the steps in THE EXORCIST. Ever since, in a virtual coma, he has been locked in the dungeon-like ward for hard head cases. Lately, however, he has been showing spirit. Patient X contains a "legion" of demonic multitudes, most notably Miller as Karras and Brad Dourif as the Gemini Killer. Neither incarnation has any scenes outside of the hospital cell—both are tied and chained to a cot, from where they howl like the beastmaster, provide exposition, and generally scare the bejesus out of Detective Kinderman (George C. Scott in the old Lee J. Cobb role). Kinderman confronts the evil in man and himself in a series of Thomistic arguments that are Blatty's bread and wine. The lighting is not exactly hospital flourescent—chiaroscuro runs wild, especially in the big effects scene that closes the argument.

The Freddy Kreuger crowd will probably find all the talk about sin and unbelief boring and bewildering, but Blatty doesn't need blood and gore to dredge up the horror in life. Playing against expectations, the murders take place off camera—the horror comes in contemplating them afterwards as they are reconstructed in police conversation. The welcome restraint makes the abrupt intrusion of supernatural Satanism pretty startling—there are at least two neat jolts here (although when Scott inquires about a pair of stainless steel, spring-action surgical cutters, you can pretty well expect to see them utilized again). But in an era of effects overkill, EXORCIST III is almost serene in its confidence. When another director would be hell-bent for excessiveness, Blatty is content to stage Felliniesque dream sequences. Besides, the geriatrics who make up so much of the human backdrop in the hospital are reminder enough that man art dust and to dust he shall return.

The acting is uniformly good. George C. Scott cruises on automatic pilot and shouts too much, but he's always fun to watch. He brings a needed weight to a part that is always just inches away from hyperbole. His conversations with Father Dyer (Ed Flanders) have the easy nonchalance of two old friends who know each other's moves—when the pair go to a repertory showing of *It's a Wonderful Life*, Scott flashes his badge to the usher and mutters "Police business." The priest—who is himself given to a taste for scotch and lines like "Jesus loves you—everyone else thinks you're an asshole"—shrugs. Miller breathes huskily and his face truly seems wracked by pain and age, but he registers hardly at all as the tormented Karras. Dourif, however, is electric—he steals the show as the malevolent soul inside Patient X. Grinning demonically, he has in his eyes the calm gleam of the true psycho. Like the remorseless sociopath, this guy really enjoys his work. Taking a professional's joy in his brutality, he delights in explaining the details to the stricken Kinderman. Just as good—or bad—is Nancy Fish as the vaguely sinister Nurse Allerton, a tightly wound and cold-blooded fish.

In striking contrast to genre favorites like Stephen King and Clive Barker, Blatty takes his theology as seriously as his horror. In EXORCIST III, it's a potent and distinctive blend. It's almost as good a Catholic guilt movie as FLATLINERS—though Ignatius Loyola might wonder why one of his most successful students persists in wiping out more Jesuits than the British monarchy. □

# EXORCIST III
## The Post-Production Exorcism Effects

**By Steve Biodrowski**

Dream Quest's ceiling walker and Scott.

To give William Peter Blatty's EXORCIST III a slam-bang ending, 20th Century Fox ponied up an additional $4 million in post-production—to film an effects-laden exorcism sequence featuring Nicol Williamson as Father Morning, a character added just for the new climax. Carter De Haven, who co-produced the film for Fox with Morgan Creek Productions, was delighted with the studio's support. Said De Haven, "Our experience with major studios has been that it's not easy to get them to spend over and above the budget unless it's for something that really enhances the picture. In this case it has."

While Blatty was busy in Georgetown, filming scenes that would introduce the new character, production designer Norman Reynolds was hired to direct the second unit sequence featuring physical effects by Show Motion Design, Inc., makeup by Greg Cannom and optical effects by Dream Quest. Footage left on the cutting room floor from the 25 days of new shooting included a startling makeup transformation suggested by Cannom, turning Miller as Karras into the demon Pazuzu.

The shifting faces of the dropped effect were achieved by filming lap dissolves of a go-motion head. "There was one mechanical head with twenty faces that interlocked on it,"said Cannom. "You would pull one whole face off, put another one on, and make it up. The eyes and mouth would always key up, but we took out the nose so we could really go crazy. I wanted to keep the hair the same, but on set they decided to change it for each face. We also rebuilt the demon head becase the one they gave us was such a joke. We did three stages of it expanding from [Miller's] face to the size of the actual Pazuzu head, so that it locks into the statue as the camera pulls back with a go-motion computer."

Cannom, who worked on the film during principal photography, also devised a skin-peeling makeup on Williamson for post-production effects of the priest stuck to the ceiling of Karras' cell. Cannom left for Argentina to work on HIGHLANDER 2 before the makeup was applied to Williamson and his stunt double for filming. "They weren't going to do much on [Williamson] at first, but they ended up doing a lot," said Cannom. "It was supposed to be a lot simpler. I had devised it just as very thin, pre-scored appliances with a clear glue sprayed on the ceiling and on the skin, so that when it made contact it would stick and rip the whole appliance off, with blood underneath."

Cannom said he was surprised when he was asked for an even more graphic effect. "William Peter Blatty said, 'You can't go too far with this stuff.' So it became a layer of appliances with muscles sculpted in . We would mold foam pieces to fit and blend on top of the first layer, like skin. Then the top piece would be ripped off, leaving the first application. I think we put slime in there so it would string."

Blatty's emphasis on gore in post-production was a noticeable departure from Cannom's experience during principal photography, when he had been prevented from using any blood at all for the decapitated priest. "We tried to sneak the blood in," said Cannom. "But they'd get upset and make us take it all off, even though there'd be blood everywhere if you cut somebody's head off."

Dream Quest had provided two opticals during the original shoot: a split-screen shot of a possessed woman crawling on the ceiling of a hospital room and a matte painting to transform a cement factory in North Carolina into a heavenly hospital-cum-train station. When the company was offered the storyboards for the post-production effects, previous commitments prevented them from being heavily involved. "They wanted us to do all the effects in that sequence, but we just didn't have the available time," said Dream Quest supervisor Matt Beck.

Jason Miller as Patient X in the climactic exorcism with Nicol Williamson as Father Morning, postproduction physical effects by Show Motion Design, Inc.

Blatty turned to Show Motion, a company that provides mechanical effects for theme parks and television commercials, to achieve the sequence with physical instead of optical techniques. Rather than optically superimposing fire onto the padded cell where the exorcism takes place, flame bars emitted three-foot gas jets of fire. This relatively simple solution was complicated by the fact that the set was filled with snakes—cold-blooded creatures highly sensitive to extreme temperatures. "It's just a matter of doing it very carefully and having the flames on for only a short period of time so they don't set off the sprinklers," said Reynolds, adding that the scene went off without incident: "Nothing happened—no injuries to snakes occurred."

To keep the live snakes separated from the actors, Show Motion built a large box with front and back panels made of optically clear glass. "The box had a doorway so the handlers could put the live snakes inside," said Show Motion owner David Hatfield. "All over the floor were fake cobras made out of rubber, which looked pretty good, and they shot through the box, so they had the live ones right in front of the camera."

More complicated were hallucinatory shots of the cell's floor being ripped apart by lightning to reveal tormented souls rising from Hell. Show Motion built a second version of the padded cell, elevated ten feet above the studio floor. The set's floor was pre-scored into 24 plywood pieces, which dropped out pneumatically to leave a gaping hole eight by ten feet wide. "There were CO2 hoses, Roscoe Smoke Sources, a lifting mechanism to raise people through the hole, and a reflective light box underneath," said Mike Landry, who supervised design of the effect for Show Motion. Dream Quest

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Damned souls from Hell taunt Miller, crucified on a pair of rowing oars.

# *Best TV adaptation of an action comic ever lives up to its hype*

John Wesley Shipp as THE FLASH, the Warner Bros TV series on CBS, based on the long-running DC comics.

**THE FLASH**

**A CBS-TV presentation of a Pet Fly Productions' film, in association with Warner Bros, 9/90, 120 mins. Director, Rob Iscove. Producers, Steven Long Mitchell, Craig W. Van Sickle & Gail Morgan Hickman. Executive producers, Danny Bilson & Paul De Meo. Director of photographer, Sany Sissel. Editor, Frank Jiminez. Production designer, Dean Mitzner. Music, Shirley Walker. Sound, Kim LaRue. Screenplay by Bilson & De Meo, based on characters from DC Comics.**

**The Flash/Barry Allen.....John Wesley Shipp**
**Tina McGee..... Amanda Pays**

**by Dan Persons**

In advance publicity, CBS made much of THE FLASH's $6 million budget. Considerable attention was also directed to the program's blood-link to last year's BATMAN, emphasizing its dark mood and the alternate-reality design of its fictional Center City. It seemed like a lot of trouble to go to for what could be considered one of superdom's lesser lights, the kind of hero who, in his print incarnation, gets picked off the newsstand only if all copies of *Action* and *Detective* are sold out. Somewhat surprisingly, the show lived up to its hype. THE FLASH proved to be the best adaptation of an action comic to ever hit the home screen.

After such programs as THE INCREDIBLE HULK, SUPERBOY and the late-'60s BATMAN—all of which veered violently between sheer camp and out-and-out juvenilia—only THE FLASH comes anywhere near providing both the exhilaration of the best action comics, and scripting tight enough to provide guilt-free watching for anyone over the age of twelve. Yes, those $6 million helped, with nearly every dollar making it onto the screen in polished production values and cleverly restrained special effects. Who'd've thought that so much visual capital could be made of a super power that, in real life, would render the hero invisible to the naked eye?) And we do have BATMAN to thank, if only for having established some new rules regarding the way superheroes are translated to the screen.

Both CBS and FLASH developers (and co-scripters) Paul De Meo and Danny Bilson have well heeded those rules. The characters (given good performances by lead John Wesley Shipp and sidekick Amanda Pays) carry a little more emotional weight, the humor is sharper, and more pungent ("I realize how an unhappy childhood led you to all this," says the Flash to one malefactor just before beating the guy to a pulp, "but that's no excuse."). De Meo and Bilson have even added a few well-conceived chinks to the Flash's armor, saddling him with both a ravenous appetite (it's somehow reassuring to know that, after breaking the sound barrier, Flash's alter ego Barry Allen has to sit down and recharge with a stack of TV dinners), and a mega-case of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome that often leaves the superhero vulnerable at the worst possible moments.

Though the pilot ends with the promise that these weaknesses would be cured—no doubt giving the writers of upcoming episodes an easy escape hatch) the producers will forgive me for hoping that they find people skilled enough to appreciate and capitalize on these very humanizing flaws.

Maybe they'll also find people

## Behind-the-Scenes of THE FLASH, filming the Comic Book

**By Mark Dawidziak**

The $6 million price tag on September's two-hour opener of CBS's THE FLASH made it one of the most expensive pilots in TV history. With a weekly budget of $1.5 million per episode, the series represents Warner Bros Television's most ambitious entry in the network's prime-time ratings derby. Encouraged by huge merchandising possibilities and lucrative foreign sales, Warners is pushing the network to give the series every possible chance. Executive producers Danny Bilson and Paul DeMeo are confident THE FLASH will streak to a different time period when anticipated low ratings against NBC's THE COSBY SHOW and Fox's THE SIMPSONS at 8-9 p.m. Thursdays warrants a move.


Bilson and DeMeo—authors of Disney's big-budget, Summer 1991 feature THE ROCKETEER—say their series is closer to the dark spirit of Michael Keaton's BATMAN movie than *The Flash* comic books published by DC, which is celebrating the character's 50th anniversary this year. DC, also the publishers of *Batman*, is owned by Warner Bros. "So it's all family," Bilson said. "I would say that BATMAN being made got us the kind of financial support we've gotten from Warner Bros."

It's no coincidence that THE FLASH tries to duplicate the humor and hard edge of BATMAN. The series has "the same influences as the BATMAN movie," Bilson said, "which are the comic books of probably the last six or seven years: *The Dark Knight* by Frank Miller; *American Flag* by Howard Chaikin, who happens to be our story editor; and *The Watchmen* by Alan Moore . . . where comics have gone much more to an adult format. That's what Paul and I followed. That's where we drew our influence from."

Their star is John Wesley Shipp, a two-time Emmy winner for his work on the daytime soap operas AS THE WORLD TURNS and SANTA BARBARA. The Virginia native plays brilliant forensic scientist Barry Allen, the second and longest running of the three Flash

**Shipp as the Flash poses with costume creator Robert Short. Inset: Molding the suit to Shipp's frame.**

who can work up some new plotlines. For all its advances, the pilot was an almost by-the-numbers reiteration of your standard "origins" episode. It didn't help that the central heavies for the kick-off were an anonymous band of motorcycle toughs, headed-up by a predictably megalomaniacal leader (Michael Nader). If the idea is to put a human face on our superheroes, why not give them something more than cardboard to knock down?

And why not drop the comparisons to BATMAN, while they're at it? Deliberately shoehorning in parallels—such as adding a shot of a shorting transformer whose arcs form the flash symbol over a full moon, or having the hero scream, "You made me!" to his brother's murderer (which, in this case, isn't even an accurate statement)—is as ludicrous as it is obvious. True, the attempt to ape Tim Burton's ground-breaking film leads to some attractively composed night shots, but there's more to *noir* than just wet streets and chromatic lighting (especially when, in the light of day, the locations devolve back into the generic, L.A. street scenes we've seen in countless other cop shows). □

comic book incarnations, published during DC's "silver age" (from the '50s to the mid-'80s). Allen took over for the original Flash, John Fox. The current comic book Flash is Wally West, who was once Kid Flash.

The series' special effects supervisor is David Stipes (NBC's V miniseries). Robert Short, an Oscar winner for the afterlife creatures of BEETLEJUICE, designed the Flash costume and is in charge of special makeup effects. "When we were assigned the show," Short said, "Shipps' biggest concern was that the costume not look like a silly red leotard. But we also wanted to avoid the BATMAN movie, which got away from the skin-tight outfit and replaced it with body armor." Short's answer to this dilemma was to build a suit with foam appliances that would exaggerate Shipp's muscles. "It's essentially John's body," DeMeo said, "only slightly exaggerated so that it looks like it does in a comic."

Short's suit consists of about thirty foam rubber appliances, glued on an underlying cool suit. "An electrostatic process and nylon coating give it durability

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# VIDEOPHILE
**by Bill Kelley**

# *JACK THE RIPPER*
## *British Horror Rediscovered*

For devotees of horror on video, a major event last winter was the TNT satellite channel's scheduling of JACK THE RIPPER, one of the most endearingly notorious late-'50s British exploitation movies. With the film out of TV syndication for nearly twenty years, unavailable on commercial videocassette (indeed, not even the bootleg underground has produced a watchable copy), and growing in stature with every year that it remains unattainable, its announced telecast added another jewel to TNT's crown of rediscovered vintage horror gems.

Like thousands of other viewers across the U.S., I fired up a fresh pot of coffee and settled back to watch (and, with my thumb gently resting on the "pause" button of my VCR's remote, delete the commercials from) TNT's late-night showing. Anticipation led to excitement as the minutes before the showing ticked away. Would TNT, I wondered, show the uncut, theatrical print of this Jimmy Sangster-scripted shocker? Would the trick ending—in which the black-and-white movie turns briefly to Eastman color so the audience can see the slain Ripper's blood seep through an elevator's floorboards—be included? Better still, perhaps TNT had acquired a European print of JACK THE RIPPER; if so, then we were bound to see something never before screened in America, since the film was made by Robert Baker and Monty Berman, British producers who routinely shot racier versions (for lenient foreign markets) of movies that were sometimes mistakenly thought to be Hammer Films.

Two seconds after the "TNT Overnight" logo faded and JACK THE RIPPER began, these became moot questions. *TV Guide*, all newspaper listings and even Ted Turner's own *TNT Program Guide* described the scheduled film as the 1959 British feature starring Lee Patterson and Eddie Byrne. Instead, it turned out to be five spliced-together episodes of the failed Boris Karloff anthology TV series titled THE VEIL, produced by Hal Roach and later issued by Medallion Pictures as JACK THE RIPPER because that was the theme of its most exploitable installment.

**A lost chapter in British horror gets restored with the video release of the seldom-seen 1959 b & w production, now in public domain.**

The following Monday, I called TNT's Atlanta offices with the hope of learning two things: did TNT have a print of the *real* JACK THE RIPPER that eventually would be shown, and, if not, how could a national TV channel announce the broadcast of a movie without knowing if the film was even in its vaults?

The answer came from Lisa Mattas, a spokeswoman for TNT's programming department. No, said Mattas, TNT didn't have the Baker and Berman version of JACK THE RIPPER, even though some *other* Paramount releases from the late '50s (e.g., Hammer's THE MAN WHO COULD CHEAT DEATH) were in TNT's inventory. The movie made it into the TNT listing because, apart from the R-rated Jess Franco/Klaus Kinski version, Paramount's film is the only theatrical feature with the title JACK THE RIPPER. A TNT staffer knew the film they'd acquired was made in the late '50s, and simply assumed it was the Paramount version. (Medallion's patchwork Karloff version apparently isn't listed anywhere, because it's not really a *movie*, strictly speaking.)

Fortunately, JACK THE RIPPER *is* now available on video, but that's getting ahead of the story. The question remains, why should this major-studio release, which wasn't even a box office success, now be so difficult to obtain?

The film was one of several exploitation pictures picked up for U.S. distribution by Joseph E. Levine, back when the founder of Embassy Pictures released his movies through the major studios, usually on a one-film-at-a-time basis. Levine's most extraordinary success was, as everyone knows, Pietro Francisci's HERCULES ('59), a cheap—if colorful and intermittently stylish—sword-and-sandal opus, which Levine pumped hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of promotion into, ultimately earning millions for himself and Warner Bros.

A year later, Levine tried the same approach with JACK THE RIPPER, but the movie flopped. Today, the RCA soundtrack album (actually, a re-scoring of the music by American composer Pete Rugolo, of Boris Karloff's THRILLER) is a choice item if you can find it, pressbooks, posters and stills from the movie are rare, and the film itself, quickly sold to TV syndication by Levine in the early '60s, appears to have vanished.

For once, the explanation is fairly simple . . . and has a happy ending. JACK THE RIPPER was not *owned* by Paramount, but merely distributed by the studio in the U.S., a situation identical to the distribution arrangements for the other Baker and Berman films: BLOOD OF THE VAMPIRE (Universal), MANIA a.k.a. THE FLESH AND THE FIENDS (Valiant), and THE HELLFIRE CLUB (Embassy). After the distribution contracts expired, it appears no one sought the rights to JACK THE RIPPER (which, being in black-and-white *and* a flop, lacked the draw of, say, the early Hammers).

Today, most of the Baker and Berman films—including JACK THE RIPPER—are in the public domain. Greg Luce of Sinister Cinema, which already offers MANIA (containing one of Peter Cushing's best performances), released JACK THE RIPPER on video this fall, and currently is exploring the legal status of THE HELLFIRE CLUB, which Luce would like to offer as well. The Baker and Berman output is fascinating, and represents a unique footnote in genre history. □

## WHAT'S WRONG WITH STEPHEN KING?

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wolf legend by mixing in a wheelchair-bound child and his Bad Role Model uncle. Their relationship, not the canine growling and shredding, is the emotional center. Not the least of the film's charms is that neither the kid's paralysis nor his "overcoming his handicap" is the point of the story. SILVER BULLET—the title refers at once to the kid's souped-up wheelchair, the means of the beast's death, and the kid's emerging potency—hits its mark.

The rest of the second team King films play well on video and most have moments to be savored. A rare venture into the science fiction future, THE RUNNING MAN is graced by Richard Dawson's deliciously sleazy game show MC and wry video-wise direction from Paul Michael Glaser. The Carpenter vehicle CHRISTINE, the story of a boy and his jealous vehicle, captures all the erotic attachment between American boy and internal combustion engine.

• **Rancid Leftovers:** Every so often the King fast food franchise forgets to put meat on the bun, leaving the junk food with only half the formula. The sheer tidal wave quantity of the output—like Erle Stanley Gardner, he assumed a pseudo pen name less as an attempt to conceal his identity than to vary the monotony of his byline on airport paperback racks—makes the occasional clinker inevitable, though never palatable. (Curiously, even the unwieldly bulk gives his *oeuvre* an obsessive, haunted quality perfectly suited to a horror read. All work and no play makes Steve a demented boy.) Of course, turnabout is fair play. If King is sometimes considered superfluous to the success of his four-star films, he probably should not be held accountable for sub-Troma material like FIRESTARTER (is this the movie that drove Drew Barrymore to drink?) or the all-too-well named CHILDREN OF THE CORN (make up your own "stalking" pun).

Unfortunately, there is one crucial, tell-tale exception. As King's sole venture behind the camera, the god-awful MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE is as good an argument for the *auteur* theory as any. In this one-note science fiction scenario with 18-wheeler rumblings from THE ROAD WARRIOR, machines embark on an anti-human rampage. Besides a lack of visual inventiveness and narrative interest, it wallows in the grotesque characterizations that define King at his worst. Obviously, good horror depends on squadrons of disposable humanoids, but King's bystanders and bully boys are always irredeemably Cro-Magnon. Universal Studios depicted Transylvanian peasants with torches as more sophisticated citizens. Happily, King seems to number himself among the grotesques. His own on-screen appearances are as psychologically revealing as anything in his books. In CREEPSHOW, he is the ill-starred backwoods moron dipped in space slime and left to a Hemingway ending. And what other powerhouse screenwriter would put his directorial signature down, as King does, in MAXIMUM OVERDRIVE, by having a bank machine tell him, "You are an asshole?"

Maybe it is that mocking glee, as much as King's capacity to reach down into what he calls the "alligator brain," that endears him to his movie audience. With so loyal a clientele, perhaps the gifted child in Stephen King might even move beyond a menu of burgers and fries. □

## EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

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ographical readings, hoping his film will be open to a wider interpretation.

In the time honored tradition of the torch-wielding villagers in the fondly remembered Universal horror films of Burton's youth, the community turns against Edward and hunts him down as if he were Frankenstein's Monster, instead of the rather benign creature Kim comes to know. Thompson's script strives for, and mostly achieves, a sense of poignant sadness by not opting for an easy happy ending. The most Edward can hope for is to escape with his life; he will never fit in, never consummate his love for Kim. For Burton, creativity is a double-edged sword, on the one hand lifting him above the commonplace, on the other, separating him from any chance of a normal life. Clearly, this time Burton, a director noted for his visual style but often faulted for his story structures, is trying to engage not only our eyes but our hearts and minds as well. □

## MEET THE APPLEGATES

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isn't very clearly seen in the final cut, Yagher was not displeased that the musical number had been dropped. "At the time I read the script, I thought, 'I *think* this will work.' I guess everyone else thought that as well, until they cut it all together, so they redid the ending. I was glad, because the bug suits were right out in the open. We made eight suits on a limited budget. Two were stunt or background suits, four more for the main characters, and two for Aunt Bea and his assistant. We were planning to puppeteer the back legs, but there was no time, so mostly we went with waist-up shots; in the full shots, the hind legs are just dragging."

Despite the problems, Yagher had a good time on the project. "The main job was building these suits in eight weeks. Originally, we had twelve or fourteen weeks, but I had to cast the actors myself, and by the time I was done with that, only eight weeks were left. Actually, I had a lot of fun, but I would never do it again: it was just too hectic trying to be a casting director and to sculpt a bug at the same time." □

## FRANKENSTEIN UNBOUND

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"Having seven weeks on this picture, I was able to work a little more closely with the actors, and I think it shows. I had to compromise a few things. I couldn't really get everything I wanted in seven weeks, but I got most of what I wanted, so if the picture doesn't turn out well, I can't blame the schedule."

But if seven weeks was insufficient to fulfill Corman's vision as a director, the question arises, why hasn't he followed the path to multi-million-dollar studio pictures like many directors who got their start with him? "The thought occurred to me," said Corman. "Frankly I think of myself as more of a sprinter than a long distance runner. I would just as soon go in, work very hard, and finish. After seven or eight weeks, my mind might start to wander, and I might start wondering, 'Why am I still making this film?'" □

## THE EXORCIST III

continued from page 57

added the optical lighting effects timed to Show Motion's pyro-squib charges placed on the set.

The slow pace of filming the complex shot may have been one reason Blatty turned over the work to a second unit. "Getting the level of the smoke right—getting it to match the previous take—all of those things are like pulling teeth, and there's no quick way," said Reynolds. Another factor was the limited time frame of post-production, which didn't allow the director much hands-on involvement. "We never really worked with Bill that much," said Show Motion project manager Sharon Benson. "He looked in on us, but for the most part, he was shooting first unit all the time we were shooting." □

## THE FLASH

continued from page 59

and flexibility," said Short. "It's a seamless costume that can be used over and over again." Short made four suits for the pilot at a cost of $100,000 (including research and development). Short said that eight suits, half for stunt work, will be needed for a full 22-episode season.

Although a $6 million budget may be stunning for a two-hour TV movie, it's peanuts compared to doing THE FLASH as a feature film. But budget limitations are no problem for Bilson and DeMeo, who made their names as a writing/producing team on low-budget science fiction features for Charles Band, such as TRANCERS, ZONE TROOPERS and THE ELIMINATORS. THE FLASH is the team's fourth attempt to take a pilot to series. Failed concepts included KUNG FU: THE NEXT GENERATION, CYBERFORCE (developed with Peter Wagg, creator of MAX HEADROOM) and THE HUMAN TARGET, which ABC might still pick up as a midseason replacement.

There were about 103 effects shots in the two-hour FLASH pilot, which, Bilson said, "is probably five times what we should have if we were sane." Each episode will boast about 25 effects shots, most involving illusions of speed. "There's an image in the comic book of a streak," Bilson said. "That's what we wanted to achieve on film." The effect is accomplished by undercranking the camera on Shipp, filmed against black velvet and composited into the scene.

"The Flash's image is literally streaked in a video paintbox technique," said Bilson. "The computer does that." Sometimes Shipp and a double are filmed simultaneously to increase the illusion, as in the pilot's sequence of Allen cleaning up his apartment.

Most of the show's shooting is done at night, an added expense, because the producers believe "that the suit and the mystique of the character only works at night when we can control the light," Bilson said. "We're not going to put him out in the bright sunlight. It's not effective." □

## STEPHEN KING

continued from page 19

him, a "noticer." King's *Skeleton Crew* short story "Gramma" (dramatized as an episode of THE TWILIGHT ZONE) was drawn from a time when his invalid grandmother lived in his house in Durham when he was a kid; "The Woman in the Room" from *Night Shift* was King's attempt to deal with watching his mother die a protracted, painful death from cancer; "The Mangler" (also from *Night Shift*) came from his ruminations about the menacing laundry equipment he worked with after graduating from the University of Maine when he was unable to find a teaching job; and his "Writer's Trilogy"—*Misery*, *The Dark Half*, and the novella "Secret Window, Secret Garden"—explores writing, fandom, and the shadows that lie between the two.

King wrote his first short story when he was seven, and worked on his first unpublished novel *The Aftermath* in 1965 and 1966, when he was eighteen. Brother David noted that as a kid, "Steve was constantly at the typewriter. When I was home from college, he was always upstairs typing. And we always encouraged him. I remember how excited he was when he got his first check for 'The Glass Floor.' He got lots of rejection slips. If I remember correctly, there was a nail pounded in the wall up in the bedroom, and he'd spear all the rejection slips on it."

King's most recent hardcover book is a masterful collection of four novellas titled *Four Past Midnight*. A new short story called "The Moving Finger" is due out in the December 1990 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction*; and in early 1991, Donald M. Grant will publish the third volume of King's *Dark Tower* series, *The Dark Tower III: The Wastelands*. Also in 1991, King will publish *Needful Things*, the novel that will be the final chapter on his fictional Castle Rock, Maine.

King's writing evidences a meticulous devotion to discovering the workings of people, society and culture. King shares his writer's insights with readers via the characters he creates and the stories he tells. The Stephen King Library (it actually exists, you know—the Book-of-the-Month Club offers all of King's books in specially designed editions) chronicles life as we know it in the twentieth century, and also shows us the dark side—that place where "the window between reality and unreality breaks and the glass begins to fly"—as King put it in an introductory note in *Four Past Midnight*.

The author bio blurb on the jacket of his new book reads "The 1980s saw [King] become America's bestselling writer of fiction. He's glad to be held over into the new decade." And since he says in the book's introduction that he's decided to spend the decade examining and exploring "the human monster," it looks like King fans will be spending an awful lot of time journeying in and out of the darkness.

And we'll all be better off for the trip. □

## BLACK RAINBOW

continued from page 15

covered by it completely at the end."

Is BLACK RAINBOW a cinematic mind game or just a black joke? Hodges just smiled. "Any explanation you have to offer is valid in BLACK RAINBOW," he said. "But the last shot could be a lap dissolve to fool you. I'm not saying." Hodges is vocal about the treatment the film has received in this country. "The American distributors have cut the European print by ten minutes because they thought it was too long," said Hodges. "Have you ever known the Americans to say something else. Their idea of pacing is so different from ours."

Hodges said the filming of BLACK RAINBOW was the best experience he's ever had, singling out the work of his director of photography Gerry Fisher—"he gave the film an incredibly realistic base"—and his production designer Voytek Roman—"a theatre genius, his decor was non-intrusive, with the Edward Hopper feel I wanted, brought out simply."

Summed up Hodges, "The whole film was a bizarre dream, really. I even recorded the opening and closing music while in Charlotte. It was like it had to be made, like I was on some pre-ordained quest. It sounds daft, but it's the truth. It felt right and the cast and crew loved being involved. I set out to create a world, one ideally meant to take the audience by the hand and lead them somewhere they've never been before." □

# LETTERS

## THE FACTS IN THE CASE OF M. POE

Dario Argento may know how to make films, but he does not know Edgar Allan Poe [TWO EVIL EYES, 21:3:37]. While Poe's fame in this country certainly reached its apex with the publication of "The Raven," he was far from unknown previous to it. Through various magazines he made a name for himself as a highly respected and feared literary critic. Unlike, as Argento states, Poe followed up his newly acquired fame as a poet with a series of very successful readings and lectures. And at the age of forty, when he died, it is recorded that while indeed in a confused state, he passed away under a doctor's care in a hospital in Baltimore—not in the street.

As far as Poe's abuse of alcohol is concerned, the majority of scholars agree that he was *not* alcoholic, but suffered from severe allergic reaction to alcohol probably caused by a form of epilepsy, thus causing seizures which to the uninformed populace of the day appeared as drunken fits. Documentation from Poe's contemporaries stating his good character and standing are quite common.

The "facts" of appearing drunk at the White House, and of being used as a ballot-stuffer, have never been proven and lack sufficient documentation. Most people with any background in literature are well aware that most of the stories about Poe that we loved as children are the result of a somewhat embellished biography written after his death by his literary executor, Rufus Griswold. While stories of the mad genius are certainly fun to entertain—that's why I started reading Poe back in the sixth grade—they are just as fictional as his stories.

A genius, yes; a brooding melancholy "poor soul," yes; a mad drunk, no.

Perhaps Mr. Argento was thinking of someone else.

Joseph M. DeStefano
Arcadia, CA 91006

## DIRECTOR DISOWNS PROBLEM ELF

I completely agree with Judith P. Harris' criticisms of the special effects in her review of my film ELVES [21:3:52]. The "rubbery puppet" was abysmal to work with and the lighting did nothing to enhance its appearance. Perhaps she would have been more kind if she had known the entire film was put together in just a few months for a cost under $300,000.

But when Harris disparages the film's "hard-to-swallow subplot" and gives it an overall poor rating, I think she somehow missed what several other reviewers have noted and praised the film for. It's funny. Incest, teen murders, neo-Nazis, elf-erotica . . . It's dark, dry and cynical, but it's supposed to be *funny*.

Oh well, maybe I screwed it up. Maybe I failed. You think I care? You think I'm worried this is going to hurt my career? No way! This is one film I stand behind! This is one film I'm proud of.

Name Withheld By Request
Director of ELVES
Los Angeles, CA 90020

## NOT TO BLAME FOR "KING DONG"

I would like to make one correction about your coverage of my animation work in FLESH GORDON MEETS THE COSMIC CHEERLEADERS [21:3:48]. I did not have anything to do with the King Dong sequence. I objected to the use of this venerable character in such a disrespectful way and I declined to do it. I did build and animate the Green Monster and Dick Head and had a lot of fun with the sequences.

Larry Larson
Warren, MI 48093

## CENSORSHIP HUE AND CRY

As a subscriber and contributor since 1979, I was astonished and disappointed at the glaring attack of modesty exhibited in your coverage of TWO EVIL EYES [21:3:35]. Those strategic band-aids of black actually called more attention to the nudity than had you done nothing. This new-found morality actually gave the displays more of the feel of porno ads—as if you really had something here to be ashamed of. And the most ironic fact of all? For the most part, you were covering up the private parts to a Tom Savini makeup dummy! I just hope this isn't the start of a new editorial policy. It just draws attention away from the wonderful forthrightness your publication has been known for.

Steve Dimeo
Hillsboro, OR 97124

Your coy black spots are utterly ridiculous. Such grotesque displays of censorship are more than my stomach can handle—and the stuff of *real* nightmares.

Steve Jones
New York, NY 10009

Where did your photo editor work last—on a nudist magazine? If the point is to protect inquiring young

eyes, why not shield them from the gore and guts? There's nothing wrong with cleaning up the act; you're just cleaning up the wrong part of it!!

William Ford
Paducah, KY

Are there people working for your magazine who are of the opinion that female nipples and pubic hair are too offensive to appear in a photograph, but that the sight of mutant animals devouring a dead woman's liver and intestines, or a razor slicing a woman's abdomen in half are just fine for the kiddies? And people wonder why the attitudes in this country on sex, violence and women, both on and off the movie screen, are so incredibly warped.

Tom Brosz
Sunnyvale, CA 94088

## RIGHT SHOW WRONG RICK

In our cover story on STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION [21:2], a quote from Melinda Snodgrass, former executive script consultant praised the work of one of her co-producers on the show, erroneously identified as "Rick [Berman]." Snodgrass was actually referring to "Ricky [Manning]," the writer/producer partnered on the show with Hans Beimler. Both writers have since left the series, replaced for the show's fourth season.

**Send your comments to:**
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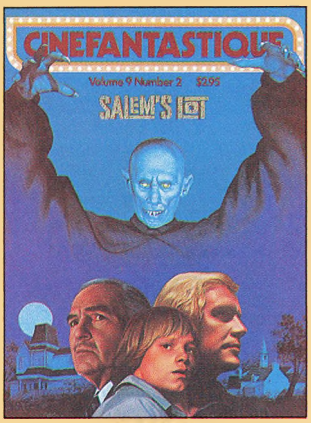


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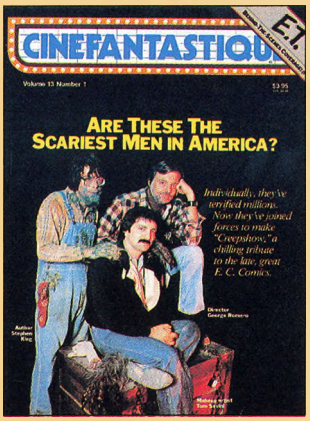


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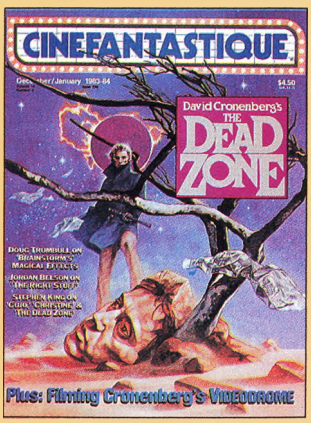


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