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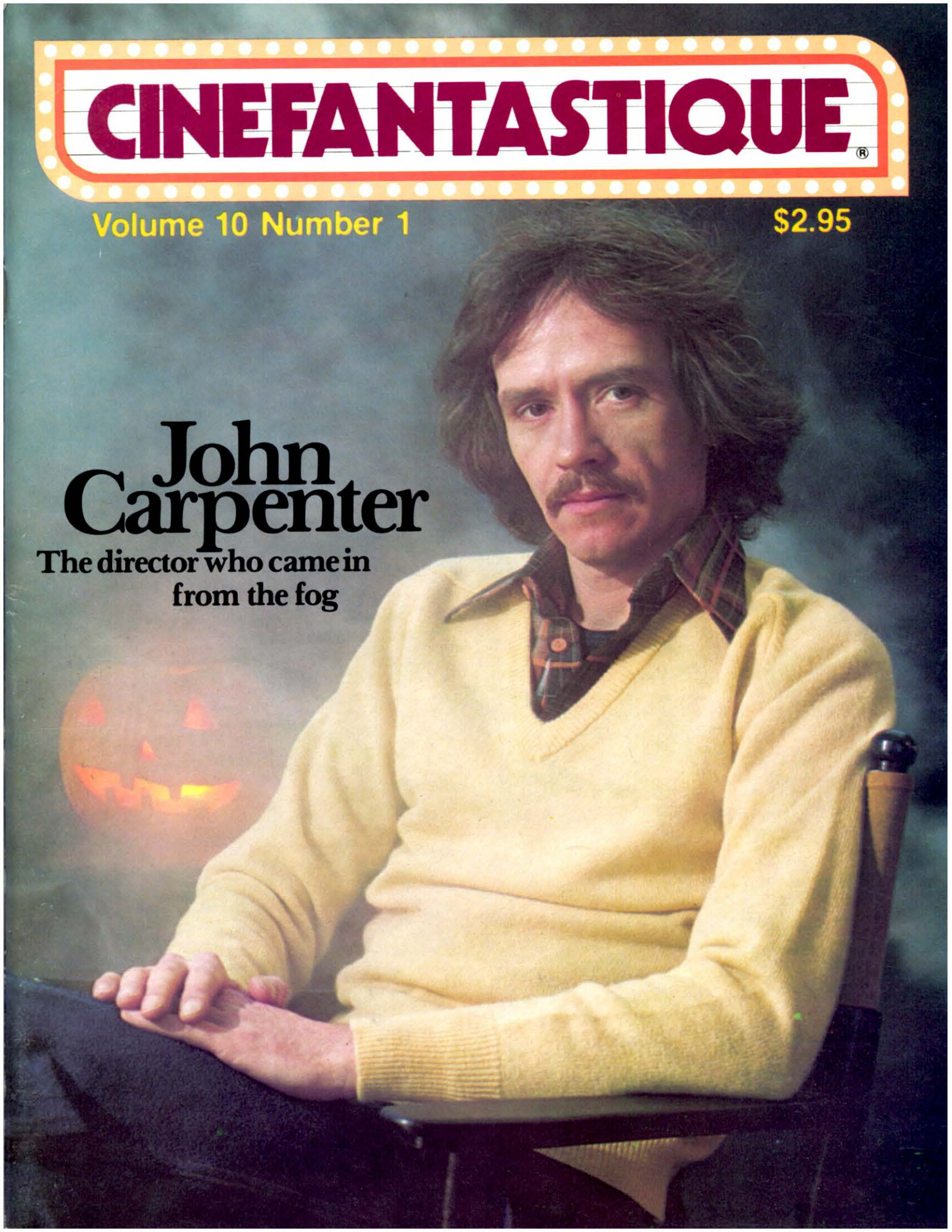

John Carpenter

The director who came in from the fog

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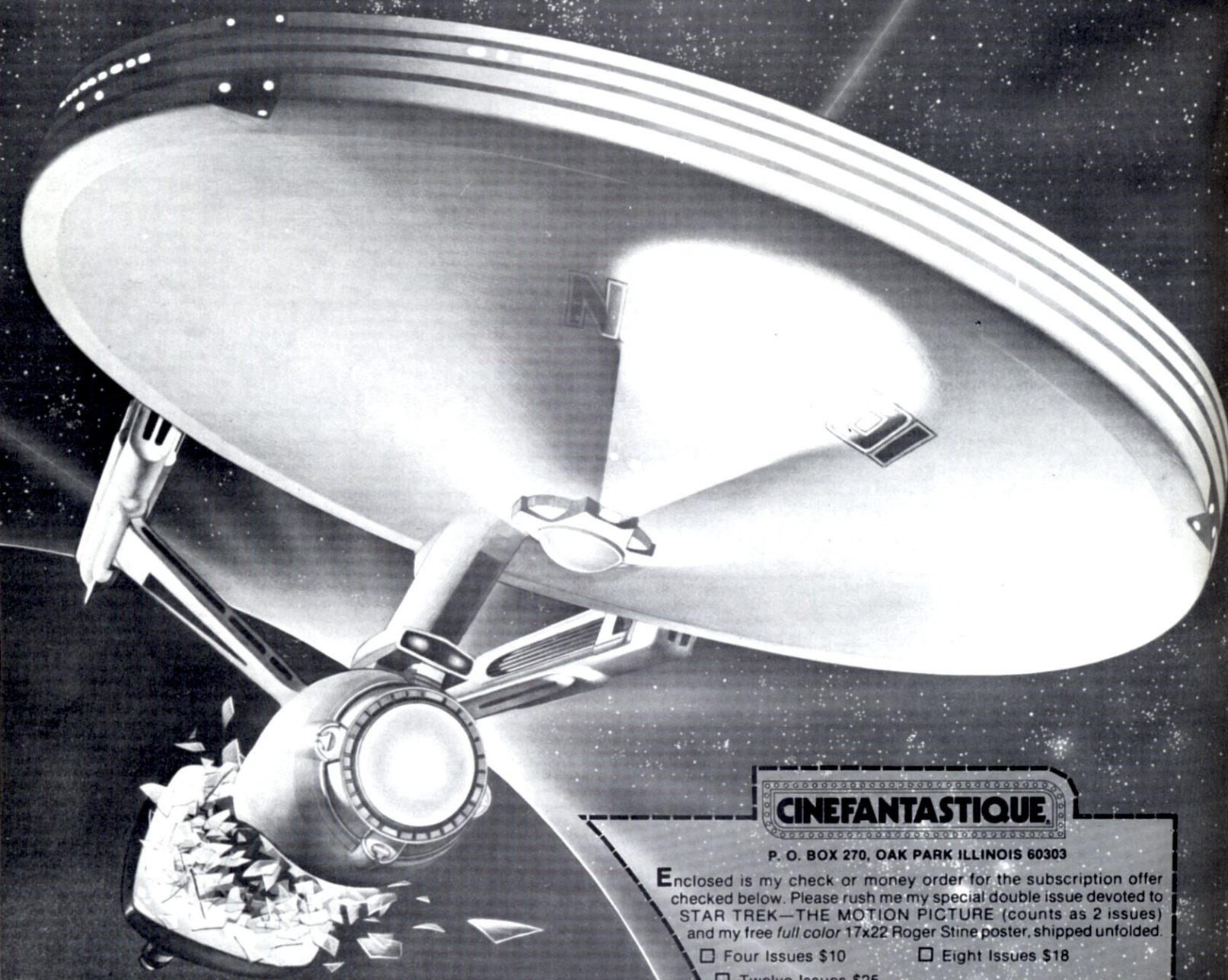

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CINEFANTASTIQUE

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VOLUME 10 NUMBER 1 SUMMER, 1980

It's with a great deal of satisfaction that we devote the cover story of this issue to John Carpenter, the director of THE FOG, HALLOWEEN and DARK STAR. We've had an eye on Carpenter since 1972 when we first published an article on the production of DARK STAR when it was still a student short filming at USC (See Vol 2 No 3). Carpenter's work on that film clearly demonstrated he held great promise as a director who knew and understood the genre. But since Hollywood is a town full of unrealized promise and potential, it's particularly gratifying to see Carpenter's talent surface in a big way. His work on THE FOG again evidences a fine craftsmanship and an intuitive sense of how to entertain an audience, and shows that Carpenter is as adroit in handling fantasy and horror themes as science fiction.

Hollywood correspondent Jordan R. Fox interviewed Carpenter on several occasions during his editing and postproduction work on THE FOG, as well as following its release, and has assembled the most complete, in-depth and far ranging interview that Carpenter has ever granted. Fox also interviewed Carpenter's regular collaborator, co-writer and producer Debra Hill, whose talent for the genre is destined to soon emerge on its own. Rounding out our picture of Carpenter is our exclusive research into his roots as a genre filmmaker, a special profile of Carpenter's heretofore unpublicized career as a teenage publisher of monster film fanzines and a revealing report on his filmography as an amateur film producer and director. What emerges is a picture of Carpenter, the genre film fan, just like you, doing now what he has always dreamed of, and doing it well.

Also in this issue is a pictorial preview of TANYA'S ISLAND, featuring an inside look at Hollywood's new state-of-the-art in making a man in an ape suit look real. That's not to mention the allure of D. D. Winters, nature's new state-of-the-art in female beauty, soon to make all former "10s" obsolete. And rounding things off is Steven Dimeo's critical assessment of why the TV miniseries of Ray Bradbury's THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES was doomed to failure.

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As a teenager, he hand painted the covers of his mimeographed horror film fanzines. As a graduate student at USC, he made DARK STAR (with help from the likes of Dan O'Bannon, Greg Jein and Jim Danforth) and began to develop a cult following. Now, after two horror smashes back to back, John Carpenter has emerged as one of Hollywood's biggest names.

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Take one of the most revered books in the history of science fiction. Add a seasoned screenwriter and cook slowly for nine months. Add $8 million and the stern jaw of Rock Hudson. Simmer. The result? One botched television miniseries.

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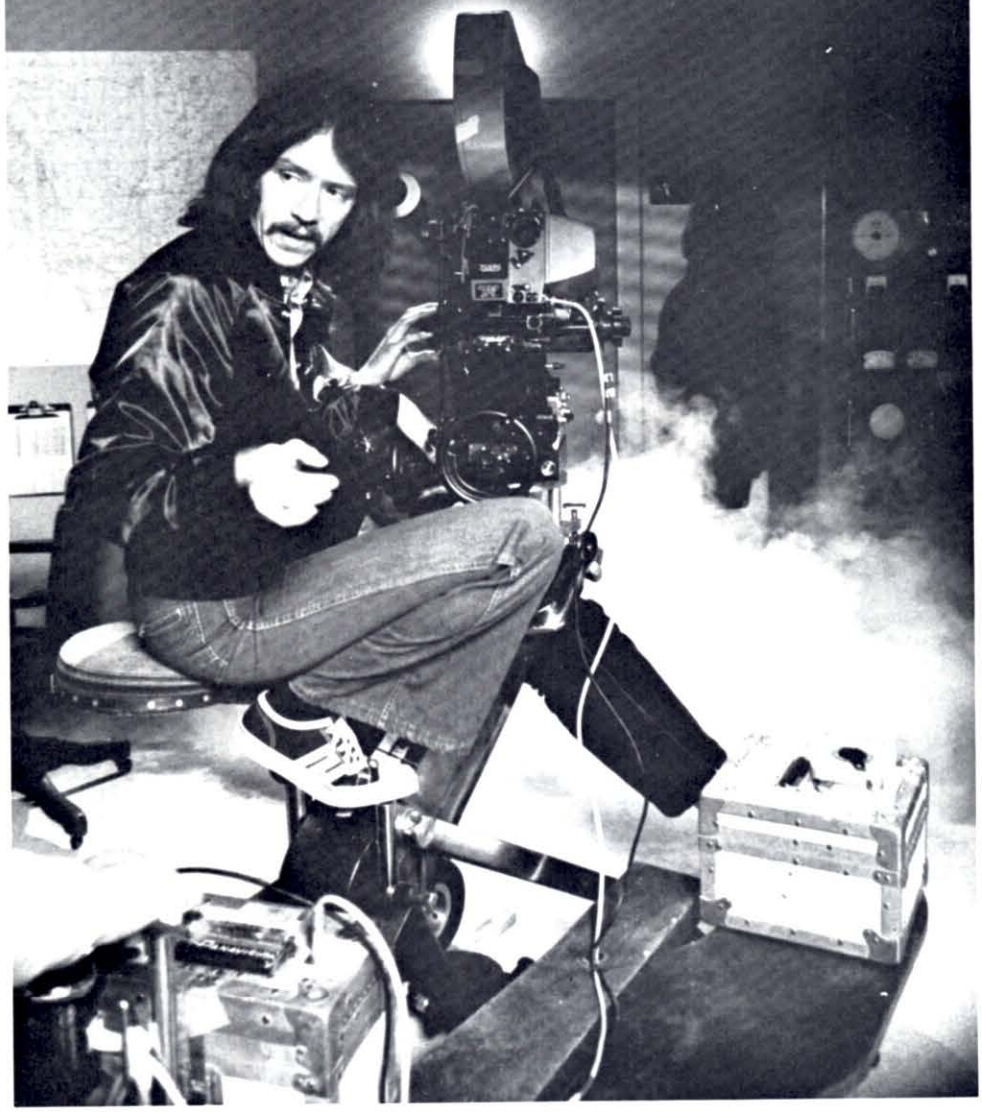
THE FOG

CARPENTER



Left: Filming the ghost ship the Elizabeth Dane for THE FOG. Director John Carpenter used a real ship, anchored down in Long Beach, adding the tattered sails and surrounding it with fog machines on boats and on the dock. Inset: One of the shots added in postproduction to punch up the shocks. Adrienne Barbeau gets trapped on her lighthouse roof by the fog's ghostly inhabitants. Right: Carpenter cues a grip pushing the camera dolly, as he runs through a desired move on the weatherstation set.

A director talks about his films, the genre, the medium in general, trying to hang on in Hollywood over the long haul.

Riding High On Horror

Interview by Jordan R. Fox

Watching the artistic and critical progress of John Carpenter during the last decade has been a gratifying experience. Moving surely from student films to low-budget independent productions to his current status as one of the hottest young directors in town, Carpenter has retained his love for movies and an objective view towards his profession, somewhat uncommon traits among the rarefied heights of today's "superstar" filmmakers.

Carpenter draws freely from the technique of his film idols—Hawks, Ford, Welles and Hitchcock—but he has emerged as a major stylist in his own right, with a strong commitment to *cinefantastique*. His place as one of Hollywood's top directors was ensured soon after the release of HALLOWEEN, which has amassed a world-wide gross in excess of $40 million on a negative cost of $320,000, thereby making it the highest proportional return on a feature investment in film history. The film's distributor, Compass International, recently concluded a second successful rerelease, and plans to reissue the film each year at Halloween. Carpenter's earlier films have also benefitted, landing new distribution deals.

If there is one thing that makes the Hollywood powers-that-be sit up and take notice, it is the jingle of incoming boxoffice receipts and HALLOWEEN opened many important doors for Carpenter and producer/co-author Debra Hill. But industry recognition, critical acclaim and the other markers of success did not come about overnight.

As a graduate film student at the University of Southern California, Carpenter was one of the principals (music, editing, co-writing and some co-direction) behind the short, THE RESURRECTION OF BRONCO BILLY, which won an Academy Award in 1970. Within just a few minutes, BRONCO BILLY cleverly develops the story of a young man, unable or unwilling to deal with the world as it is, who instead finds refuge in his own western fantasy. Thus, the snarl of city traffic can become a cattle drive, and the uncomfortable looking businessman across the street, a rival gunslinger. Life keeps handing Billy ever more embarrassing rebuffs, yet he always bounces back. Suffer-

Photos from THE FOG by Kim Gottlieb

ing his final and most telling rejection, Billy looks away to see himself transformed into the Western hero, riding off into the sunset with the girl, in a lyrical scene that manages the astonishing feat of being both pathetic and uplifting at the same time.

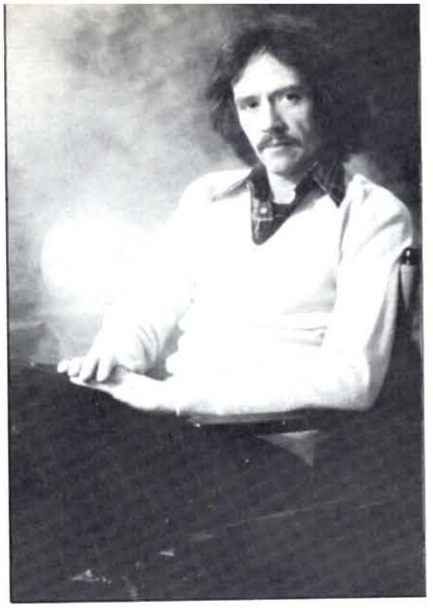
At U.S.C., Carpenter also collaborated with classmate Dan O'Bannon on a student film, DARK STAR, later expanded into a feature. In view of the film's set design and visual effects, its $60,000 price tag seems a bit hard to believe today. DARK STAR was well received at the 1974 Filmex, but soon passed into near-obscurity at the the hands of several different distributors. But even though it hardly made any waves at the boxoffice, it managed to attain bona fide cult status. DARK STAR proved of little benefit to Carpenter, though it may have helped to propel O'Bannon into the aborted DUNE project of Alexandro Jodorowsky [O'Bannon was to supervise the special effects]. The two film school associates had a falling out around this time that has lasted until recently.

Unable to parlay the relase of his first feature into another directing assignment, Carpenter spent this down period turning out screenplays with some success, selling EYES to Columbia, BLOOD RIVER to John Wayne's Batjac Productions and BLACK MOON RISING to producer Harry Gittes. Significantly, of the three, only the genre script, EYES, was ever produced. Carpenter longed to get behind the camera again, and jumped at the opportunity to do an independent low-budget feature, ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13 (his own contemporary urban reworking of Hawks' RIO BRAVO). With its eerie youth gang stalking the night, silent deaths and mysteriously disappearing bodies, the film strongly established a Carpenter style which illustrates that a touch of the fantastic is never too far removed from his work. Probably his best work to date, the film nevertheless failed miserably at the boxoffice, and convinced Carpenter that artistic success in the low-budget field meant nothing. A fast and prolific writer, he turned his attention back to producing screenplays, trying to get a foothold with the major companies. He did ESCAPE for 20th Century Fox, and HIGH RISE and PREY for Warner Bros.

A turning point for Carpenter came at the London Film Festival in December, 1977. ASSAULT, a surprise addition to the festival, ignited a tremendous audience response, and the English crtitics pronounced Carpenter the major "find" of the festival. Producer Irwin Yablans, whose Turtle Releasing had distributed ASSAULT in the U.S., was in attendance at the festival. Yablans was also in the process of setting up a new company, Compass International, and offered Carpenter their first picture, to be based on a concept by Yablans called "The Babysitter Murders." Carpenter felt he could do something with the idea, and accepted. The result was HALLOWEEN. And the rest, as they say, is independent filmmaking history.

We interviewed Carpenter at several points during the editing process of his latest film, THE FOG, as well as after its release. Distributed by Avco-Embassy (one of the so-called "mini-majors"), THE FOG is Carpenter's largest project to date, and marks for him a cautious step closer to the Hollywood mainstream. His next step is as yet undecided. Carpenter recently formed his own production company, Hye Whitebread Productions, with wife Adrienne Barbeau, and is considering a number of directing assignments, among them, a big-budget remake of THE THING at Universal, EL DIABLO, a western scrip of his own, and an "untitled" project for Avco-Embassy that is shrouded in secrecy. The wide-ranging interview which follows, conducted over a period of several months, begins with Carpenter reminiscing about his days as a student at U.S.C. while working on his first feature, DARK STAR.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Jordan R. Fox, a native of Maryland, graduated from American University in Washington, D.C., with a degree in Psychology. Pursuing an interest in film, he moved west in 1975 where he managed to find work in documentaries and commercials before drifting into freelance writing. He was Assistant Producer of THE NIGHT CHILDREN, a look at the failure of the juvenile system, for KABC-TV. Fox became our Hollywood correspondent in 1978.



About the Cover

What you see here—John Carpenter, bearing (perhaps) a resemblance to the young Edgar Allan Poe, in the midst of some appropriate mood and atmosphere—was arrived at only through several large strokes of luck. First, just try to find a pumpkin in Los Angeles in late January. *"Tell me about it,"* said Randy Moore, assistant art director on HALLOWEEN and THE FOG. "For HALLOWEEN, we needed like a dozen, in *March*." He ended up having to send to South America for a first cousin in the gourd family, which had to be painted orange. In our case, thank Roberta at AAA Cinema Costume Rental, who never got around to throwing out some uncarved Halloween pumpkins.

Then there was the fog machine, whose smoky cloud is actually quite noxious, and not so easy to photograph properly under the best conditions. We had to shoot outdoors, with 45-mph winds gusting down from the mountains at times threatening to blow *everything* away. Of course, the wind only gusts when you turn on the fog machine for a shot. To Carpenter, it must have seemed like old times back at Point Reyes. Despite rather marginal photographic conditions, cameraman Bob Villard somehow managed to pull it off. We later learned from Carpenter that Andy Warhol's *Interview* Magazine had spent a lot of money on a controlled, studio photo session with similar results in mind, only to come up empty handed. Avis isn't the only one that tries harder.

Why did it take four years to make DARK STAR? [reviewed 3:4:40]

It was originally my thesis film at U.S.C., shot in 16mm as a 30- to 45-minute film. Dan O'Bannon was to edit, do the effects, and act in it; I produced and directed. That took two years because we had no money, no nothin'. We had the equipment and just did it all ourselves. Then an investor came along, saw footage, and said "Let's turn it into a feature." We said, 'Terrific.' We had some more money and shot some more footage. So add another eight months and it's 2½ years. At the end of that time we met Jack H. Harris, who agreed to put up finishing money. We completed the film in 35mm (blowing up the previous 16mm footage in the process). The money wasn't enough, so it took longer. Again, we had to do it all ourselves—you know, six months over an animation stand putting in starfields. Every shot in the film is an optical of *some* kind. It was four years when we walked away, just before Filmex [the annual Los Angeles Film Exhibition, where the film premiered in 1974].

Which was the student footage?

The beginning and the ending was the student footage—basically the entire bomb set-up. We padded it in the middle with the alien, and the other routines. When you see it getting episodic and starting to fall apart, it's the later footage.

Does the film still exist as a short?

In 1972 it ceased to exist as a short. It was never completed as such, but the short's footage is in the feature.

Besides O'Bannon, you had some other great technical help on the film. . .

(Optical and matte specialist) Bill Taylor, the man who has received least credit for this film, did some amazing things for us. He saved us time and time again. Stories tend to get exaggerated about Dan and myself. There was no way I could do it all myself, or Dan could do it by himself. . .We had to ask a lot of talented people for help. Doug Knapp (the cameraman) created astounding illusions with nothing more than a corner of a room and some lights.

Jim Danforth also worked on it. Did you get to know him very well?

Yes. Jim did a couple of matte paintings for us—one beautiful one of a nebula that we used in the title sequence—but his involvement was limited. He had just gotten burned on FLESH GORDON, and was getting tired of working on other people's movies. We couldn't offer enough money, and he had to make a living.

Do you have any interest in the stop-motion field—to the extent of possibly making an animation film?

I'd love to work with Danforth. I think he's fabulous. But he's a lot like I am. To do his best work, he needs control.

I think the stop motion subject has to lend itself to the technique. No matter what anyone says, the puppets all strobe to beat the band. They have no weight, no inertia. You can have beautiful puppet artistry, but it still won't look real.

If you start with something that has strobing built into it, then you're all set. I think some of Harryhausen's best work was in EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS. Those damn things looked so real because they were jittery anyway.

Left: Carpenter directs Charles Cyphers in THE FOG. Cyphers played weatherstation operator Dan O'Bannon, an in-joke reference to Carpenter's long-time friend and former collaborator. Right: Captain Blake and his ghostly crew invade Father Malone's church. Below: The major fog scene filmed in reverse at Point Reyes.

O'Bannon seems to have gotten most of the effects credit on DARK STAR.

Most of Dan's effects footage was on the animation camera. He shot various lens changes on shots that existed already. The film *was* production design, and Dan did all that. Bill Taylor put all the elements together, did all the optical effects, the color correction, and the blow-up to 35 mm. He deserves a huge effects credit for the film.

That sort of leads us into the question of your relationship with O'Bannon, post-DARK STAR. Some interviewers have lately been coming away from him with the impression that he *directed the film!*

That's a long and involved story, a lot of which I shan't tell you, because it gets into personal aspects of Dan and I. DUNE fell apart, and he came back to the U.S. It was a low time for him. The next thing I knew I had finished ASSAULT, and I invited him to come see it. He hated it so much, and he felt I had somehow done him wrong so he took this as an opportunity to terminate our friendship.

He went through some other experiences, leading up to ALIEN, and during that time so did I. I suppose you might say we both went through growing pains. We wrote some letters back and forth. Finally, he said "Look, I've been acting like an asshole. There's no reason why we shouldn't be friends." We started talking, and now we're on fairly good terms again.

Dan is a pretty unusual guy. There's not a doubt in my mind that he's a genius in certain areas of drama and screenwriting. He is truly one of the best editors I've ever worked with. I will say that his major contribution to DARK STAR, major above all others, was that he single-handedly edited the entire film. But he did not direct one frame. It's insinuated (that he did), and this is part of his anger and his disenchantment with me. To be fair, Dan invested a great deal of his life in that film. . .The movie business is tough; there are a lot of stakes in it. [This is Carpenter's politely cryptic way of saying that in the film industry, one often needs credits to get credits.]

Were there any other scripts you wrote together with O'Bannon?

We started lots of ideas together, but I don't think any of them went to finished scripts. After DARK STAR we were going to do THEY BITE. [The story concept involved the discovery, alive and menacing, of a heretofore unknown species of prehistoric insect which mimicked biologically whatever it ate, and it ate just about everything.] I was going to direct it, and Dan would do the same thing—Production Design. There came a point in our relationship when we decided not to continue working together. So he took over the project; that was what he was going to do next. I had developed the story with him, but he wrote the script. He took it around and got an option on it. The last thing I remember about the project, they sent me a letter, which I had to sign, saying that I had no interest in the script. [O'Bannon later incorporated many of its concepts into ALIEN, especially the idea of a species being a single-minded, omnivorous biological engine of destruction.]

'Horror films are just fabulous escapism. You can really just go in and forget all your problems. These are grim times. People are under a lot of pressure.'

George Lucas made the student version of THX-1138 at U.S.C., and U.S.C. owns it outright—as well as a piece of the feature version. How is it that you managed to avoid this fate on DARK STAR?

I truly feel there is exploitation going on there. We were taken for a ride on THE RESURRECTION OF BRONCO BILLY. They made a great deal of money on that. (On DARK STAR) I went to a lawyer and said, "Hey, what is this? I'm not working for the school." He said, "You're absolutely right. They're using intimidation on you." U.S.C. wants to own and control everything that goes on there, but they don't. Now I love that school. I learned a lot there. They need money: it's a private institution: they're underfinanced. I don't blame them for trying. But it's still unfair.

So I felt I had a legal right to take the film and do what I wanted with it. When I finished the film, they called me up and said "What's going on here?" I said, "Hey fellas —back off. You don't have any rights to this film. I financed the whole thing. So go away." Basically, they did.

A spokesman for U.S.C., who concedes these events concerning DARK STAR took place before he joined the university, gave us the following statement:

"I'm sure they (Carpenter and O'Bannon) can rationalize it any way they want. If you consider raw stock and lab expenses the cost of a movie, then yeah, they financed it. Coming from a student's point of view, that reflects a very naive idea of what it takes to make a film in the real world. Try that on for size at Birns & Sawyer, or any other rental house. It's like using all the facilities at Warner Brothers for free. Since they are way past being students, you'd have to say it (Carpenter's attitude) reflects something else. It was a rip-off, pure and simple. They pulled all kinds of equipment and services they weren't entitled to. Things definitely tightened up after that. And students who came here after them suffered for it."

What's your response to this?

Rip-off of what? It was my picture. Legally, they've got nothing. If they had said to me from the start, "You are a student, and everything you do here will belong to us. Now sign this paper," then I'd be agreeing to certain groundrules. But I signed no contract. [Such contracts later became standard policy, perhaps as a direct result of the flap over DARK STAR. The residue of this controversy apparently hasn't kept U.S.C. from seeking Carpenter's assistance in their fundraising efforts.] If U.S.C. were to own the movie, then they should have hired me, paid me for the script, and distributed it. *I* paid for the sets, paid the actors, and covered the expenses. If they're going to have it one way, they can't have it the other. There has to be a sharing with the filmmakers.

U.S.C. seems to have been a very worthwhile experience for you, yet statistically it has not had any great correlation with getting filmmakers into the Industry after graduation.

It *was* a marvelous experience. I took every production class they had. I learned everything that I could about the camera, about

sound and editing. But it's true. A friend of mine there, *the best* filmmaker I ever met in my life, hasn't made it yet. Talent doesn't necessarily have anything to do with it. Tenacity and perseverance are important, and that depends on the person... I was never any good at the politicking or public relations side. My whole approach was to get something made that would get noticed and make somebody say, "Well, that's pretty good. Let's give him a chance."

How was DARK STAR financed?

I financed it until the summer of 1972, when a man named Jack Murphy, who owned a small Canadian distribution company, came on the picture. We already had 45 minutes [the short]. He put up a substantial amount, so we could expand it into a feature. But it still wasn't finished, because we had to blow it up to 35mm and put in the effects. We took a rough cut to Harris, and he put up the finishing money.

Neither you nor O'Bannon retained any rights to the film. What was the nature of your deal with Harris?

We showed DARK STAR to *every single* distributor in town. No one wanted it. We had no choice but to go with Harris. His deal was that we got X amount of dollars, but he'd own it.

What happened after that? The film has a strange history.

As I understand it, Harris had financial difficulties around the time the film was completed. He sold it to Bryanston, and they released it. When they went bankrupt, everything went into receivership. [According to reports in the trades, bootleg prints of DARK STAR continue to circulate, turning up with some frequency at repertory houses and film festivals. Atlantic Releasing, who recently acquired rights to the film, is putting a stop to this, and plans its own major rerelease.]

For DARK STAR's release, Bryanston seemed able to get playdates. There was the book tie-in from Dell, and the beginnings of a science-fiction boom. Why do you think the film failed?

Harris had the book, but I'd say there were a lot of reasons. Actually, it was before the boom. Had it come out about a year later and been publicized differently...

The film came out January 16, 1975—my birthday—in like 40 or 50 theatres in L.A. Their campaign was geared to the 'counterculture' audience—the same people who went to see ANDY WARHOL'S DRACULA and ANDY WARHOL'S FRANKENSTEIN. They misjudged it, and it just didn't play. I'll never forget, the Friday night it opened Dan and I went to some theatres to check it out. People weren't going. When they did go, they'd laugh and react. But it wasn't pulling them in.

You didn't keep track of the film after Bryanston?

I let it go. Dan stuck with the film for a while, trying to find out who had it. I know it was sold in Europe. They ran it on the B.B.C., and it just closed the last Avoriaz Festival.

At one point Jack H. Harris seemed to be specializing in acquiring student films that could be released theatrically. There's at least one other genre film we know of...

EQUINOX.

Top: With DARK STAR, Carpenter was filming science fiction on a shoestring. Talby's space suit features such items as air conditioning insulation on the arms, a vacuum cleaner hose, a cup-cake tin front and styrofoam packing from a typewriter! Below: Boiler (Carl Kuniholm) looks at a pinup on his command consule. DARK STAR was the first science fiction film to give space technology a lived-in look, now *de rigueur*.

'Stop-motion puppets all strobe to beat the band, no matter what anyone says. They have no weight, no inertia. You can have beautiful artistry, but it still won't look real.'

Right, Danforth and Dennis Muren.

He did a horrible thing to them—put a new director on it. Luckily for myself, he didn't do that on DARK STAR.

He shopped for films he could do something with. Usually what he found was the lowest rung, the 16mm films, almost amateurish in nature, which I admit we sort of qualified for at the time.

What's Harris like?

He's a businessman, a hustler. If you accept him on his own terms, he's a fine guy. But a young filmmaker with his film under his arm...that person has to beware anyway, mostly of his own naivete.

You remain on good terms with him?

Well, you see, Jack was good friends with Jon Peters. That's how EYES got set up. Here you have another project, an $8 million studio film, and it's kind of a culture shock. I had known him only as a distributor of very cheap films.

EYES OF LAURA MARS [reviewed 8:1:20] ended up bearing only a marginal resemblance to your original story. What was the history of that project?

I wrote the script in 1974. It was about a woman who has a psychic experience and links into the eyes of the Skid Row Slasher. She sees through his eyes while he's killing. It's like a seizure; her vision is gone when it happens. At first she thinks she's going crazy. She doesn't want to be thrust into this maniac's mind. At one point she sees this nightmare he's dreaming—horrible things crawling out of places. She goes to seances, anything to try and figure this out. Eventually she realizes she's not going crazy, that this is all really happening. She develops a relationship with a cop, and together they try to find this guy. But she can't see his face—only what he sees—the victims. Eventually, looking at a map with pins showing the killings, she learns that the killings are moving closer and closer to her. The idea being that somewhere in the killer's mind, he knows she's there, and he must get rid of her. At the end of the film, I had this incredible action scene where she must defend herself, seeing only herself through his eyes as he comes at her. There's a long, extended battle, and in the last scene in the film she pushes him out a window, sees the pavement coming up, sees him die, but her vision comes back and she's alright. That was the film. EYES. It was simple. It stuck to one premise.

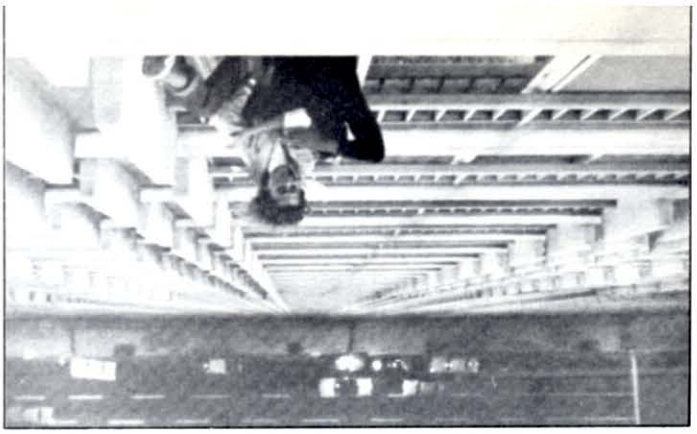
Jack Harris got ahold of the script and gave it to Peters. Originally, Jack wanted to make it independently with me. But Peters read it and wanted it for Barbra Streisand. It's tough when you're unemployed and someone offers you a deal. The idea was that I would write *and* direct, if Streisand agreed to the script. And so began an eight month odyssey of writing for her, with her; for him, with him. The essential change they wanted in the story was that the killer had to be someone she was in love with throughout the whole film. All of a sudden at the end she would turn and say, 'My God, it's Harry!' Which destroyed the fabric of the idea, because then it's all in throwing off the audience onto someone else. That's not the point.

I rewrote my script into what they wanted, and I left the project because she decided it was too violent. They went through eight or nine other writers on it. Finally, David Zelag Goodman came and rewrote everybody's work into what you see on the screen. The emphasis ended up being on the world of fashion photography, which could have been an interesting movie. But it wasn't EYES. They were afraid of the whole psychic area, and that's the story. The essential cinematic idea was completely changed.

What became of PREY?

Warner Brothers purchased the script and hired me as producer. They wouldn't let me direct it. This was back in '77. I worked with (executive producers) Arthur Gardner and Jules Levy, two men I respect very much. So off we went hiring directors. We had quite a number of experiences. I can't go into any detail, but there were several big names fired because they didn't know what they were doing. Finally, we had a good director, Bob Clark, a new start date and were like half a million into set construction when Warners cancelled it.

The story was like DELIVERANCE, but with women. It has interesting villains—real frightening and with lots of action.



Left: Carpenter directs Lauren Hutton in SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME, a Warner Bros TV movie for NBC. Right: Hutton gets pushed from her high rise window in an edge-of-your-seat matte shot. Below: Carpenter visits producer Richard Kobritz (middle) and Tobe Hooper on the set of SALEM'S LOT: By selecting Carpenter to direct his "High Rise" script for TV, Kobritz got him a coveted union card from the Director's Guild.

'I don't like television for several reasons —censorship mostly. In television they want you to be homogenized. They want zero point of view. That's against everything I believe in.'

Some interviews you gave around the time of ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13 suggested that horror was a much stronger interest for you than science fiction.

Not really. I love science fiction most of all. But science fiction is very hard to do right. Horror is much easier for me. I haven't seen a science fiction film I thought was great in 10 years. I'm no great fan of STAR WARS or ALIEN. What these films have mainly accomplished is to perfect the technique of showing ships moving around in outer space.

How would you go about avoiding that pitfall?

That's difficult. It's all become so clichéd—the massive shots of space, the grandeur of space, big ships moving through space. You come down to certain basic kinds of (space) movies: a western, a war film or a horror film in space. 2001 eclipses them all, right up through STAR WARS.

There's one I'd like to do that gets away from all that, a book by Alfred Bester, *The Stars My Destination*. Unfortunately, the cost of it would be enormous.

Any particular reason for your negative reaction to ALIEN? A lot of people seem to regard it as an exercise in style, employing techniques similar to those you use.

I didn't like the characters. The story was pretty boring up to a point. There was no sense of humor anywhere. The ending didn't make any sense. Why was that monster standing there watching her undress, when in the whole course of the movie it would leap on you and tear your guts out?

I didn't think it was all that stylistic. It was more like a big TV commercial. Beautiful visuals, incredible sets. Moody, and yet no personal sense of mood. Real cold. . .They had the greatest monsters ever—up to the end, the man in the suit, which looked dumb.

I know where all this came from. O'Bannon has incredible ability at creating these kinds of disturbing images: the chest burster, the thing on the face. If anything, his stuff was watered down.

The film wasn't frightening enough for you?

No. Disgusting and unsettling at times, but not scary.

Do you think O'Bannon directing might have made it a more powerful film?

I do. Dan made a film at U.S.C. called BLOODBATH [about a guy who crawls into a bathtub to commit suicide. He slits his wrists, lets the blood flow out and begins to fantasize and flashback on his life. The short was the product of U.S.C.'s second level production course, 310, in b&w, 16 mm, sync sound, which O'Bannon shot with a three man crew]. I'm telling you, the audience walked out of there shaken, limp. . .When Dan directs his first feature film, I guarantee it will be something to go see.

I read your ALIEN issue very carefully, by the way. The fellow who did the article on the screenplay [9:1:15] was obviously swayed by [Walter] Hill and [David] Giler. O'Bannon really got fucked over. Journalism is supposed to get at the truth. The whole truth wasn't there, so why drag him (Dan) through the mud like that? I had a letter all written to you guys about it—actually not just to *you guys*—but here's the point. It's a movie business, and if you're writing about movies and entertainment, that's one thing, but there are always internal problems, and always problems with egos. My nature is to avoid that, so I don't know how much I feel that it helps anybody to go into that stuff. On the other hand, to give you credit as journalists, you dug around and tried to find the truth. I suppose if you didn't ask me whether Dan directed DARK STAR, you might not know.

I defend Dan because I think he's had some hard times, and bad press. I think you might have been led astray by Walter Hill and David Giler, but then I'm talking to Dan these days, and I hear his side of it. After reading your article [on the ALIEN script] I have to admit he (O'Bannon) did take a lot from DARK STAR. That was shocking. But what riles me is that the producers tried to take Dan's name off the [ALIEN] script entirely. They had the posters printed. They had the credits on the screen—"Screenplay by Walter Hill and David Giler." Now wait a minute, that movie wouldn't have been anywhere without Dan O'Bannon.

I think, if you reread the article, you'll see that we say as much. What we wanted to point out was that O'Bannon was no more deserving of sole screenplay credit than were Hill and Giler. Mark Patrick Carducci wrote that article after carefully examining the original script by O'Bannon, Hill's first rewrite and the final shooting script by Hill and Giler. The article's entirely factual.

I guess my reaction is an emotional one, because I was there before anybody, and I know that that's a Dan O'Bannon film. I just want him to get the kind of credit he deserves on it. And I don't want him to be portrayed as a bad guy. God, was he taken over the coals in your article. [Carpenter whistles] Ow! And there's no one coming to his defense.

Actually, O'Bannon had numerous interviews published at that time, representing his side of the story. What you don't know is that Dan wouldn't talk to us! He was mad because our early articles on ALIEN [7:2:37, 8:1:24] mentioned its bald similarity to IT! THE TERROR FROM BEYOND SPACE.

Well, maybe I'm just putting my foot in my mouth here, because I don't know the whole story. I've only read your cover issue on ALIEN. I'm just reacting because he's a friend of mine and I care about him. I hate to see him treated with disrespect. He deserves everyone's respect because in essence the power of ALIEN is the power of Dan O'Bannon. I believe that sincerely.

Try looking at it this way: you didn't demand sole screenplay credit on EYES OF LAURA MARS, did you? And David Zelag Goodman totally rewrote your script.

That's absolutely true. I had a different attitude. Right up front they told me what they wanted to change, and I had a decision to make: was I going to do the work or was I going to walk away? I was in a little different situation. But that's true, when it came out, I didn't ask for anything.

You didn't benefit from an arbitration at the Writer's Guild, for instance?

No, nononono. I don't believe in that. I'm

not saying Dan is innocent! I'm not saying that. I'm trying to come to his defense in some way, and I don't seem to have a good way of doing it because I don't know enough of the facts. Look, I worked with the guy for four years. And I know he's an incredible genius. I know he's very difficult to get along with. He alienates people right and left. But all his life people have dumped on him. I'm still a good friend of his. I still love him. We made a film together and it was a real tough experience. And I know that since then he's had tough experiences. And I just hate to see anybody get ripped apart like that, because it's just a movie. If he were a politician or a congressman, maybe, but all we're doing is making movies! He's had bad experiences on ALIEN. If you want to hear stories, you should hear him tell it—good God! My Lord! [Carpenter gasps] I've never had experiences like that. This is apparently pretty crazy stuff.

Listen, I know Walter Hill. I know he's a terrific writer. I'm sure he added (to the ALIEN script) whatever percentage he added. I wouldn't take that away from him at all.

What's your view on the resurgence of the horror film in recent years?

I don't think it's just the horror film. We're going back to escapist entertainment; the 'B' film is coming back. By 'B' I don't mean less expensive, good, or important, but a film whose primary purpose is to entertain. There was a great deal of pretension in film during the '60s and '70s: filmmaking is *art*. The idea was that you are delivering a message of great importance. This goes back to Antonioni and Fellini, the influence of the European film. Now we're going back to the American cinema, filmmakers like Howard Hawks, Hitchcock, and John Ford—entertainment movie-makers. I'm happy, because this is the best kind of film there is.

But I haven't answered your question. It's an interesting thing. For a long time it (the horror film) was considered just fit for programmers—Hammer and *very* cheap American films. It was never taken seriously. Now studios are *looking* to make a horror film. Horror films are just fabulous escapism. The more removed from reality they are, sometimes, the better they are. You can really just go in and forget all your problems. These are grim times; people are under a lot of pressure.

Why this enthusiasm? Certainly 'B' films within the science fiction and fantasy genres, the vast majority, were naive and shallow in concept, and marked by a reliance on cliches and stereotypes. Without the benefit of nostalgia, they simply aren't good films.

Yeah, I'd agree with you. There tends to be nostalgia for a whole genre, the good and the bad. . .I'm using the term 'B' very loosely. What we're really talking about is Movies with a capital "M": audience-oriented films. Let me give you an example. JAWS is a monster movie. A small town. Now here comes the monster. You're following certain genre conventions. It's essentially a 'B' film, only done very well. Even Jack Harris, when it came out, said "It's THE BLOB with fins." You might call that the height of egotism, but he had a point.

Do you subscribe to any theory of suspense?

There's one kind of suspense in ASSAULT, where the menace is clearly known, another in HIGH RISE [telecast as SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME, reviewed 8:2:72], which is totally anonymous, another in HALLOWEEN [reviewed 8:1:72], and yet another in THE FOG [reviewed this issue]. They all have certain things in common, but I take each film individually. I have no overriding theory.

Above: Stevie Wayne (Adrienne Barbeau) has a bad feeling about the fog beginning to creep into her combination lighthouse/radio station in THE FOG. Barbeau is Carpenter's wife; they met when she starred in his TV movie SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME. Below: The fog as seen from Barbeau's lighthouse, an optical effects shot.

'I just couldn't believe IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE, especially in 3-D, when the meteor came out and blew up right in my face. At age 5, that got me sold on films of the fantastic!'

Is there any common thread running through your work?

I don't know. I seem to be attracted to stories in which people are trapped in one way or another. But I don't think about it much.

The moving camera seems to be a mainstay of your work.

In terms of the graphics of cinema, the moving camera displays three-dimensionality. The environment becomes more real. If you move your camera past something, you don't just see it flat but get to see around it. It also has a dramatic impact, an emphasis that says something. 'Look here, not over here.' Directing is expressing point of view of a scene.

You have been described as being an advocate of "pure cinema," which stresses form at least as highly as content, and often more.

I don't believe motion pictures are a medium of messages. Intellectual ideas work better in literature—anywhere but film. Film is a feeling medium. A film invites the audience to project, in the psychological sense. Projection is simply that you invest into the screen your own feelings. The best example of this, in terms of my own work, is a film I don't think is terribly good—ELVIS. The only thing I can figure out, besides Kurt Russell's incredible impersonation, is that audiences are bringing with them all their feelings about Elvis Presley. When the film begins, they put them right on the screen, and the film carries their feelings along, and elicits emotions out of them. The medium forces you to give something of yourself, and that's where film works.

What about implicit messages?

Every great film has a message, or a theme, built right into it. Whether it's ever stated in the film, or whether on reflection afterwards. But it must arise out of the material. That's not the first thing you try to do.

The controversy that surrounds "pure cinema" is over the elevation of technique.

If I'm telling a story, and I have a scene where a murderer is going to stalk someone, what I do is figure out how best to convey that experience to an audience—what technique will elicit the greatest emotional response.

Then you don't feel the technical side gets too much emphasis?

You want a philosophy? Filmmaking is not people sitting and talking. That's recording—like what we're doing here. Movies *move*—M-O-V-E—they move. Cutting, camera movement—that's what they're about.

At the same time, technique is not an end in itself. It is the means through which you reach your audience. I don't want to make a film where the story is subordinated to technique. We're all storytellers here.

That brings up the question of the 'director's hand.' A good example would be Brian De Palma and THE FURY, where you have some very fancy shots that show off his camera virtuosity.

It's called masturbation. Now, to be fair, I must admit that I have been masturbatory in my work also, but I do try not to be too self conscious. A director gets a few tricks under his belt and says "Hey, watch this! See what I can do!" But it's hollow, isn't it? There's no substance underneath. Take a film like VERTIGO. The underlying emotions are so strong, the technique just amplifies them (without calling attention to itself).

How did you come to get the two television projects, SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME and ELVIS?

Two very different ways. I had written a script for the feature division at Warner Bros. called "High Rise." It was (based on) a real story—it happened in Chicago. I couldn't believe it. You know, 'this would make a great movie.' They passed on it, because it was too contained, set in an apartment.

But then they decided to do it as a TV movie. They asked me if I wanted to direct it. This was my first experience with an all union crew, and they were wonderful. And

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Roots of Imagination

Carpenter's boyhood dream was making horror films

"The first movie I ever saw," John Carpenter told us, "was the AFRICAN QUEEN, in 1952. Then, IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE, in 3-D. I just couldn't believe that film, especially when the meteor blew up right in my face. That got me sold on films of the fantastic. I knew then that this was what I had to do." Carpenter was five years old at the time.

Carpenter's father, Howard, owned an 8mm movie camera, and John began to take it over at the age of eight, learning and experimenting, and eventually graduating up to attempts at duplicating the movie effects that so impressed him: explosions, gun shots and some stop-motion work. "Most of my stuff was action, though," he recalled, "I got real involved with action—how to stage it and how to make it work."

An article Carpenter wrote in the mid-'60s for a fanzine devoted to amateur filmmakers fully documents his early career, and his first "unknown" films. Carpenter was still shooting in 8mm, though by this time he had moved up from his father's inexpensive Brownie to his own camera, a Eumig 650. His first film, REVENGE OF THE COLOSSAL BEASTS, was the story of giant aliens who land in spaceships and panic a fleeing populace. In the 40-minute film, Carpenter experimented with perspective tricks to film the giants, as well as trick endings—the last shot reveals that the ship is from Earth, landing on Venus.

Carpenter filmed three other shorts prior to his fourteenth birthday, in what he calls his "learning" period: GORGO VS. GODZILLA, using clay figures which were manipulated live; TERROR FROM SPACE, a science fiction western involving cowboys and Indians with a monster patterned after the one-eyed creature of IT CAME FROM OUTER SPACE; and SORCERER FROM OUTER SPACE, a comedy. By this time he had formed Emerald Productions, and was using all his spare cash to buy film equipment and supplies, including two projectors, still cameras, floodlights and a rear projection screen for stop-motion work.

Carpenter calls WARRIOR AND THE DEMON his "first really promising film," a 40-minute film involving Samson and the Barbarians and their battle against the evil Argyles who have captured Samson's sorcerer ally. The highpoint of the film features the demon of the title—a cross between a crab, spider and insect—destroying the palace of the Argyles. Shots of it crashing through the palace gates and destroying the structure were Carpenter's first attempts at stop motion animation. He continued to focus his attention and efforts on the effects aspect of filmmaking, and regarded his last reported short, GORGON THE SPACE MONSTER, to be his best work. Its story of an alien conquering Earth was merely an excuse for staging effects sequences involving spaceships, an army of robots, powerful rays and crawling hands.

Carpenter's Emerald Productions had hopes to "turn its attention to a full-length film which may be considered for release," but instead, he published the first issue of his film fanzine *Fantastic Films Illustrated* in 1965, and began communicating with other fans and amateur filmmakers around the country. The fanzine lasted for three mimeographed issues, and Carpenter also published two one-shots, *King Kong Journal* and *Phantasm—Terror Thrills of the Films*. "The high point of my career," laughs Carpenter today, "came when Forrest J Ackerman sent for 50 copies. I knew I'd hit the big time then! I was over at his house recently [a press conference for THE FOG was held there] but he didn't remember me."

Carpenter best sums up the influence of his fannish preoccupations, in a letter he wrote to the fanzine *Photon* shortly after the release of DARK STAR: "My young life was filled with the pulp and pablum of NOT OF THIS EARTH, IT CONQUERED THE WORLD and ENEMY FROM SPACE. I was only eight years old when I first saw FORBIDDEN PLANET, but I still haven't gotten over it. The young eyes that watched the invisible Id creature make its huge footprints in the sand of Altair IV and finally saw the thing fully illuminated in the glowing laser beams would never be the same." **—Frederick S. Clarke**

Above: John Carpenter, age 11, as The Mummy in his basement chamber of horrors. Left: Three issues of Carpenter's fantasy film fanzine Fantastic Films Illustrated, published when he was 16. Carpenter drew the covers for the mimeographed issues himself and, showing a fan's devotion, hand painted the covers of the first issue (far left) in water colors! He also did his own comic strip, "The Valiant" for Weirdom, a fanzine known for publishing the early work of Richard Corben. An active amateur filmmaker, Carpenter wrote in his last fanzine issue, "I hope to make something come of the interest I have for this particular field of entertainment."

SHORT NOTICES

DINNER FOR ADELE

Directed by Oldrich Lipsky (Czech w/English subtitles). Dimension Pictures, 2/80 (©77), 101 minutes, color. With: Michael Docolomansky, Olga Schoberova, Josef Lepvinia.

Turn of the century master-sleuth Nick Carter accepts a missing "person" case that leads him on the trail of an arch-enemy thought long dead—a fiendish botanist who enjoys feeding his man-eating plant. First screened as NICK CARTER IN PRAGUE, the film has recently been picked up for U.S. release. Don't be deterred by the English subtitles—DINNER FOR ADELE deserves the widest possible audience. Americans simply aren't making comedies this good anymore.

Director Lipsky is a master satirist capable of deftly kidding a dozen-odd genres simultaneously, giving slapstick more class than anyone might have thought possible, and all the while presenting this wonderful concoction with a visual and stylistic wit to match that of the story (watch for some unusual animation—a blend of cartoon and stop-motion). DINNER FOR ADELE packs more sheer fun than the last four Bond movies put together. Bravo! And when's the sequel? ***Jordan R. Fox***

EFFECTS

Directed by Dusty Nelson. Image Works/International Harmony, 4/80, 76 minutes, color. With: Joseph Pilato, Susan Chapek, John Harrison, Bernard McKenna, Debra Gordon, Tom Savini.

This unpleasant, slow-moving melodrama about a rich, kinky filmmaker and his strung-out skeleton crew pretends to be a complex psychological thriller, but is in fact a feature-length "snuff" film, with elements of a strained film-within-a-film-within-a-film format. George Romero protege Dusty Nelson ponders the crew's petty infighting and various romantic couplings during location shooting (outside of Pittsburgh) of a low-budget chiller about demonic possession. It turns out that the film-in-progress and the behind-the-scenes trysts are part of the jaded director's elaborate scheme to manipulate actors and technicians to "act out" actual murders for his network of hidden video cameras. Nelson proves a slicker filmmaker than mentor Romero, but he is hardly skilled enough to bring off this sort of enigmatic mind game. The narrative—though enhanced by moody shots of the countryside at dawn—dwells too long on characters who are more mundane than menacing. The grisly slayings are finally upstaged by a living room screening of a sickeningly real "snuff" film; even closet voyeurs will want to turn away. Special effects and makeup are by Tom Savini, who served in the same capacity on Romero's DAWN OF THE DEAD.

Glenn Lovell

THE GODSEND

Directed by Gabrielle Beaumont. Cannon Films, 1/80, color, 90 minutes. With: Cyd Hayman, Malcolm Stoddard, Wilhelmina Green.

This tepid, raggedly acted British film is the latest infection of OMEN-itis, borrowing most of its elements from that film's overworked plotline. Director Gabrielle Beaumont can inject no life whatsoever into the narrative and never gets over the insurmountable problem of showing the passage of years necessary to the story. What we are left with is a beautifully photographed (by Norman Warwick), fairly outrageous drama of domestic ill-fortune, as hubby and wife (Malcolm Stoddard and Cyd Hayman) lose all *four* (!) of their children to mysterious causes, while the sweet, strange child of Angela Pleasance—abandoned to them at birth—looks on menacingly as she grows into puberty. Between the bloodless deaths, we see ambiguous shots of the child which function by default as Kuleshavian experiments in viewer perception of movie images: she's either angelically innocent (mother's point of view) or demonically guilty (father's slow realization). And boy, is it slow. . .

David Bartholomew

MAD MAX

Directed by George Miller & Mel Gibson. Filmways Picutres, 4/80. 91 minutes, color & scope. With: Mel Gibson, Joanne Samuel and Hugh Keays-Byrne, Steve Bisley, Tim Burns.

Here's a real curio—an Australian exploitation film. "A few years from now," as the credits in this violent fantasy tell us, that continent's society has totally broken down. The only surviving law and order is represented by an improbable group of black-leather clad policemen, protecting the outlying highways in souped-up "Pursuit" and "Interceptor" vehicles. After a snappy, energetic start (including some spectacular car chases), directors Miller and Gibson let the story degenerate into a routine, disorganized, poorly paced revenge fantasy. It's all too familiar drive-in fare as the titled character—the Main Force Patrol's top cop—goes after the poofter motorcycle gang that did in his wife and kid ("poofter" is Aussie slang for gay—just about the worst thing that your average Down-Under Male can think of). The film boasts exciting, if erratic, bursts of kinetic energy, excellent color control and strong, primitive scope photography. However, the hyper-fetishism of the brass knuckles, chains, sawed-off shotguns (in thigh holsters), horsepower and overdrive are maddeningly undercut by the dubbing of anonymous American voices and obvious debts to THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS and the worst of the David Carradine DEATH RACE spin-offs. Though its quirky regional muscularity saves it from complete oblivion and bastes it with a certain exotic flavor, MAD MAX's crassly negative points, unfortunately, lay it squarely on the Roger Corman Rejection Rack. ***Paul M. Sammon***

SILENT SCREAM

Directed by Denny Harris. America Cinema Releasing, 2/80, 87 minutes, color. With: Rebecca Balding, Steve Doubet, Cameron Mitchell, Avery Schreiber, Barbara Steele, Yvonne DeCarlo.

Saturation ad campaigns are most often a clear sign to stay away (Pauline Kael once observed that 'the TV trailer *is* the movie') and while it can't quite deliver the frights promised in the TV spots, this modest, well-crafted thriller is otherwise an exception to the above-mentioned rule. Doubet and Balding are college students forced by a housing shortage to take lodging in one of those creepy old houses much beloved by the genre, where the dark secret of the messed-up family that once lived there imperils the lives of the newcomers. The story takes a sharp turn into implausibility at the climax, but director Denny Harris evinces a tight narrative economy and even a sense of style. Other assets of the film include casting that suggests real people more than actors (especially Rebecca Balding—a real find), and the welcome screen return of Barbara Steele, who has the talent to add pathos to the menace.

Jordan R. Fox

SUPERSONIC MAN

Directed by Juan Piquer. Topar Films, 1/80 (©79). Color, 95 minutes. With: Michael Coby, Cameron Mitchell, Diana Poliakoff.

Is it a bird? Is it a plane? No, it's another worthless dud fom Spain. This desperate attempt to invade the Salkind's territory is an uneasy mixture of non-existent plot, flat comic relief and the cheapest special effects seen yet in this post-STAR WARS era. With the words, "May the force of the Galaxies be with me," private detective Paul Brown turns into Kronos, the man of the title, who has been sent to Earth to investigate and resolve several experiments that are being made using stolen shipments of radioactive Iridium. At the center of these raids is the maniacal Dr. Gulk, a cliche mad doctor made all the more forgettable by Cameron Mitchell, who (surprise, surprise!) wants to take over the world. Dige in every possible respect, this is the sort of film you thought they'd stopped making in the '60s. ***Alan Jones***

REVIEWS

SATURN 3

". . .attempts to mix the production style of ALIEN with the dubious charms of Farrah Fawcett."

SATURN 3 An Associated Film Distribution Release. 2/80. 95 minutes. In color and Dolby stereo. Produced and directed by Stanley Donen. Executive producer Martin Starger. Screenplay by Martin Amis. Story by John Barry. Director of photography, Billy Williams. Music by Elmer Bernstein. Editor, Richard Marden. Associate producer and 2nd unit director, Eric Rattray. Production designer, Stuart Craig. Art director, Norman Dorme. Special effects, Colin Chilvers. Optical effects, Roy Field, Wally Veevers and Peter Parks.

Alex ..... Farrah Fawcett
Adam ..... Kirk Douglas
Benson/James ..... Harvey Keitel
Robot ..... Hector, 1st of the Demi-God series

After ALIEN discovered the box-office appeal of science fiction and violence, could sex be far behind? Apparently not. SATURN 3 is a gory, derivative "thriller" that attempts to mix the production values of Ridley Scott's visual exercise with the dubious charms of Farrah Fawcett. The result is one very limp noodle.

Harvey Keitel plays a psychotic space-jockey who murders a fellow pilot to replace the victim on a trip to Saturn 3, a hydroponic wonderland set in the hollowed-out interior of one of Saturn's moons. Keitel finds he's inadvertently stumbled on the idyllic existence of Kirk Douglas (playing it straight) and lovable, bubble-brained Farrah Fawcett, whose only evident talent is in filling out the massive wardrobe she models throughout the picture.

It seems these two have both been enjoying their sojourn in this chummy cosmic backwater, and Keitel is the worst kind of house guest: before long he's complimenting Fawcett on her body and politely asking if he can share it. She refuses, Harvey sulks and Kirk twits around in the background working on a slow burn.

The catalyst to all this heavy breathing is Hector the robot (the "first in the Demi-god series" according to the credits), who's been brought along on the ride by Keitel to help out with the maintenance chores. Unfortunately, Hector's also been programmed through a direct input with Keitel's drug-scrambled brain, resulting in one very confused, very horny, automaton. After an interminable build-up, Hector, in a fit of pique, does in Harvey and strikes out with plans of his own for Douglas and the toothy Ms. Fawcett.

Does much else need to be capsulized about this mess? Not really. The saddest thing about SATURN 3 isn't the fact that it took $10 million to slap this sludge together (with eight months spent on the maze-like sets, and two years and $1 million on its anatomically grotesque robot), but

Kirk Douglas battles Hector, a horny, spaced out robot in SATURN 3. But the only real suspense was waiting to see if Farrah (right) would take something off.

that it was one of the final projects of production designer John (STAR WARS) Barry. Although Barry didn't design this, he wrote the original story and was originally set to direct it until Douglas, who supposedly wanted the director's chair himself, reportedly began making waves. Taken off the picture, Barry died of meningitis soon after while working on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK.

Producer/director Stanley Donen (SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, SEVEN BRIDES FOR SEVEN BROTHERS, FUNNY FACE, BEDAZZLED) shows absolutely no feeling for, or understanding of, the science fiction format. He neither adds to nor subtracts from the body of SF film work, but merely follows the popular current. An indication of his inexperience comes in the film's first few minutes, when a space-station scene is staged exactly like the opening of a musical production number—complete with runway (SINGIN' IN THE RAYS?).

The Martin Amis screenplay dredges up any number of stale ideas—the perils of pill-popping, the sterility of mechanized man and, so help me, the Garden of Eden—and leaves them dangling, which is too bad considering the possibilities. For example, just how *would* a robot without the proper—ah—equipment do it anyway? No matter. Tack on an atrocious Elmer Bernstein score, penny-rate model work and a numbingly torpid pace and you've got the first large-scale loser of 1980.

Despite its shortcomings (there are, incidentally, some positive points: Billy Williams' cinematography is superb as usual, and the film makes for some mild interest before it turns foolish), one leaves SATURN 3 filled with wonder and hope. That is, wondering why Kirk Douglas persists in baring his (admittedly well-preserved) ass, and hoping that a glimpse of Fawcett's equally naked right breast will finally kill off the collective craving to see it. Come to think of it, this could kick off a whole new rating system—SATURN 3 is science fiction's first one-nipple movie.

Paul M. Sammon

THE CHANGELING

"The film gives way to a kind of cold heebie-jeebies of the mind."

THE CHANGELING An Associated Film Distribution release. 3/80. 115 minutes. In color. Produced by Joel B. Michaels and Garth H. Drabinsky. Directed by Peter Medak. Screenplay by William Gray and Diana Maddox. Story by Russell Hunter. Director of photography, John Coquillon. Production designer, Trevor Williams. Music by Rick Williams. Production manager, James Margellos. Art director, Rueben Freed. Special effects coordinator, Gene Grigg.

John Russell ..... George C. Scott
Claire Norman ..... Trish Van Devere
Senator Joe Carmichael ..... Melvyn Douglas
Captain DeWitt ..... John Colicos
Mrs. Russell ..... Jean Marsh
Dr. Pemberton ..... Barry Morse

Despite a prolonged absence from the screen, the classic ghost story is far from dead. Though its haunts may have been relegated to the foreign cinema over the last 15 years (and nothing truly exceptional made since Robert Wise's 1963 THE HAUNTING) almost singlehandedly, THE CHANGELING may breathe new life into a dormant genre.

George C. Scott is John Russell, a composer whose wife and daughter have recently died in a terrible accident. Scott moves to Seattle and rents an imposing old mansion from the local Historical Society, but shortly after moving in, disturbing and inexplicable things start happening. And it's not just your conventional noises in the middle of the night, lights and faucets turning themselves on and off and the like. There's an underlying purpose behind the noisy plumbing: the spirit in the house is not out *to get* its new tenant, but communicate with Scott to force him into taking certain actions. A series of clues leads to the discovery of a tiny, cobwebbed wheelchair in the boarded up attic, in a room that had served as a child's sickroom 70 years before. Murder and deceit are a part of the house's history and something, or someone, means to see the puzzle solved, and justice done.

THE CHANGELING uses a mystery story to propel and enrich the more obvious ghost story. Our attention is directed not so much towards the strange phenomena themselves as to their ultimate meaning, a tactic which keeps the curiosity level high and avoids the kind of standard emphasis on effects that invite disbelief. Credibility is also greatly enhanced whenever you can field a cast of the calibre brought together here: Scott, his wife Trish Van Devere and Melvyn Douglas.

They're at the service of a script that remains commendably intelligent most of the time, and commits no serious mistakes. While it's true, on reflection, that the story contains a number of points which make

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Bruce Davison is warned about the power of his dreams by a mysterious alien in THE LATHE OF HEAVEN.

THE LATHE OF HEAVEN

"Simply put, one of the 10 best science fiction films of all time."

THE LATHE OF HEAVEN A production of the Television Laboratory at WNET/13, New York. 1/9/80. 120 minutes. Produced and directed by David R. Loxton and Fred Barzyk. Executive producer David R. Loxton. Teleplay by Roger E. Swaybill and Diane English based on the novel by Ursula K. Le Guin. Director of photography, Robbie Greenberg. Edited by Dick Bartlett. Music by Michael Small. Art director, John Wright Stevens. Visual consultant, Ed Emshwiller.

George Orr ..... Bruce Davison
Dr. William Haber ..... Kevin Conway
Heather Lelache ..... Margaret Avery

On the whole, cinematic science fiction tags 20 to 30 years behind the literature. FLASH GORDON, though based on a contemporary comic strip, was preceded by Burrough's John Carter of Mars; Pal's imaginative excursions in the 1950s were firmly rooted in the pulps of the '20s and '30s; even Kubrick's 2001 metaphysics were foreshadowed by Van Vogt's mind-expanding exercises.

Still, a few films have come reasonably close to the literature of their times: METROPOLIS reflects the dystopian novels of the 1920s; THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL and FORBIDDEN PLANET came soon after similar sagas in *Astounding Stories*; and IT HAPPENED HERE and THE LAST DAYS OF MAN ON EARTH arrived on the heels of published groundbreakers.

Add to this list PBS' handsome production of Ursula K. Le Guin's THE LATHE OF HEAVEN. It may sound facetious to label LATHE the best science fiction film to date of the 1980s (its January 9th telecasting made it the *first* SF film of the '80s), but as the opening shot of a decade, it promises the most exciting 10 years in the history of science fiction films. Simply put, THE LATHE OF HEAVEN is one of the 10 best science fiction films of all time.

On the surface, LATHE is a low budget, low key little movie. Scratch that surface and one discovers an astonishingly complex, deep and moving experience. LATHE is about human dreams and nightmares, the thin line between objective and subjective reality. George Orr (Bruce Davidson of WILLARD infamy) lives in Portland, Oregon sometime in the near future. His world is a logical extension of ours—crowded but able to feed itself, with widespread government control, political tension and a general dissatisfaction with life. Orr, though, seems to be able to do something about his world. He suffers from "effective" dreams that change the very fabric of reality—past, present and future.

After a semi-accidental drug overdose taken in an effort to escape his dreams, Orr is ordered to take therapy with Dr. William Haber (Kevin Conway), a megalomaniac psychiatrist who is plainly skeptical of Orr's abilities until Orr changes the climate (not the weather, mind you, but the *climate*!) of soggy Portland.

Haber controls Orr's dream sessions through drugs, hypnosis, and the Augmentor—a device used to sink Orr quickly into a dream state. Since he can control Orr's dreams, Haber quickly realizes he can also control Orr's power. First he tells Orr to create a massive institute, "The William Haber Institute of Oneirology [the study of dreams]," effectively illustrated by having a plainly dressed, semi-surly public receptionist leave Haber's cramped public health office to return as an attractive executive secretary to a gleaming, James Bond-ish office. So far, so good.

But Haber's idealistic grasp soon stretches past the reach of his control. Instructed to eliminate overpopulation, Orr's subconscious responds with chilling results: six billion people die of the plague. Orr and Haber realize to their horror what they've done, but Lelache, Orr's court-appointed lawyer (Margaret Avery), is confused by two sets of memories, one of the "old" reality and another of a "new" reality in which most of the world's population died five years earlier (keep that date in mind, it's important later). Motivated by "the greatest good for the greatest number," Haber tries again, luring Orr back to unite the Earth's people. Again, Orr's subconscious is successful: he dreams that an alien fleet is attacking a colony on the moon, thereby uniting the people of Earth against a common foe.

Troubled and racked by guilt, Orr flees from Haber, and with Lelache's help, tries unsuccessfully to dream harmlessly on his own. Lelache tells him to dream that the aliens are off the moon. They leave the moon and invade Earth. But the aliens turn out to be friendly, and—looking something like giant two-legged turtles—become an accepted part of Earthly existence. In a series of dreams and "real life" meetings, the aliens try to warn Orr about his awesome power; that those who try to use it for themselves will be "turned on the lathe of Heaven." But Haber obviously hasn't got the message. Not satisfied with peace on Earth, good will to aliens and his huge institute, Haber forces Orr to construct an ever larger Augmentor (to allow the transfer of Orr's power to himself), and asks him to eliminate the racial problem as well. In a stunning scene he turns the entire human race a pale grey. No matter. With the new Augmentor in his grasp, Haber has what he wants and cuts Orr loose.

Suddenly, it dawns on Orr that there must be another reality—a *true* reality. The first minute of the film showed a badly injured Orr wandering through the bombed out rubble of Portland. Television audiences, conditioned through the years of viewing "teasers" at the beginning of programs, probably ignored the sequence. But that *was* the true reality! Orr, dying of radiation poisoning after the bombing of Portland in World War III, had his first "effective" dream: that he was alive and living in a reality four years later, a reality in which the war never occured.

Orr realizes he must regain his lost power or else his world will crumble back to holocaust. But Haber has immersed himself in the Augmentor and the world, and reality itself, seems to shudder. Orr merges with the stricken psychiatrist, regaining his power. But it's too late—reality has ended. At least, *that* reality ends as Orr emerges unscathed in a *new* reality. Damaged structures, barely sealed fissures and a crippled Haber are reminders of the "night things fell apart," and Lelache doesn't recognize Orr anymore. But Orr is unruffled. Once again, he is in charge of reality.

It's a fascinating film, but one that leaves its audience filled with questions. Not questions of puzzlement due to ambiguity or obfuscation, but questions about Orr and his talent, puzzles to ponder after the last phosphor dot has faded (and how many films of the 1970s made you feel that way?).

Producers/directors Loxton and Barzyk cleverly stretched their meager $800,000 budget to the limits. THE LATHE OF HEAVEN is clearly a low-budget film, but as any B movie enthusiast will say, a low budget and a lot of imagination is better than a big budget and no imagination. The effects are simple, achieved through Dick Bartlett's skillful editing and Swaybill and English's ingenious pacing. The lack of miniatures and matte work actually pays off. Filmed using existing futuristic architecture in and around Dallas, there is a solid sense of reality missing from even the best effects work in STAR WARS, ALIEN and STAR TREK.

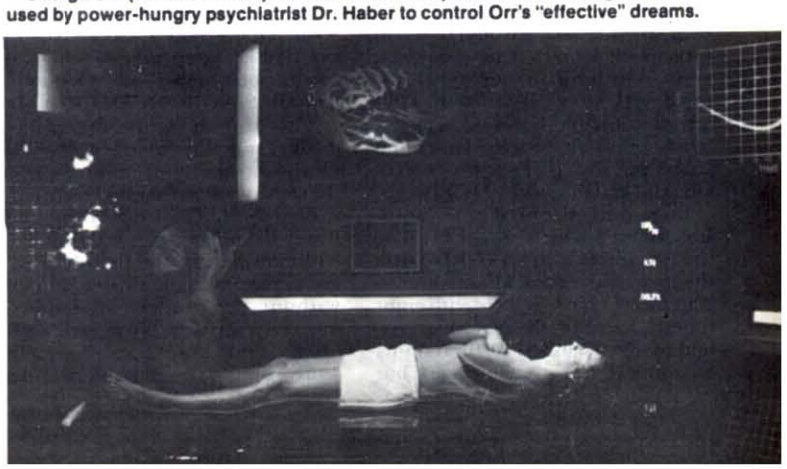
But perhaps nothing sums up the difference between LATHE and big budget special effects exercises as well as the sequence when Orr dreams the human race grey, a stunning piece of imagery. The true imagery of science fiction is often simple, small and inexpensive; its effective use shatters conceptions and prejudice and forces people to rethink values and interpretations. The Black Monolith of 2001 was a simple dark slab, yet it imparted more sense of wonder and was far more alien than anything filmed up to that time.

The performances are good, full of growth and development. Bruce Davidson takes Orr from a repressed neurotic to a confident, intelligent, good-natured hero. Haber could have easily turned into a silly, cardboard character, but Kevin Conway's performance is convincing, and he articulated well the psychiatrist's motives, rise and fall. From Lelache's first cold, officious, unsympathetic appearance to her final reunion with Orr, Margaret Avery shows tremendous growth and depth. She carries off the role with much aplomb and deserves (as do her co-stars) wider recognition. But the ultimate credit must be given to Ursula K. Le Guin, who wrote the original novel as a children's story and contributed much as technical advisor.

Those who missed THE LATHE OF HEAVEN are urged to see it as soon as it's reshown. Those who have seen it are urged to write their local PBS station that they want more films like it. LATHE, it seems, was conceived as the pilot for a series of filmed science fiction novels and short stories. THE LATHE OF HEAVEN as a pilot...the mind truly boggles!

Buzz Dixon

George Orr (Bruce Davison) lies on the man-shaped table of the Augmentor, used by power-hungry psychiatrist Dr. Haber to control Orr's "effective" dreams.



THE FOG

"Like the best ghost stories, the film is enjoyably scary."

THE FOG An Avco Embassy Pictures release. 2/80. 91 minutes. In color and scope. Produced by Debra Hill. Executive producer, Charles B. Bloch. Directed by John Carpenter. Screenplay by Carpenter and Hill. Director of photography, Dean Cundey. Production design/co-editor, Tommy Wallace. Co-editor, Charles Bornstein. Special effects, Dick Albain, Jr. Music by John Carpenter.

Stevie Wayne ..... Adrienne Barbeau
Father Malone ..... Hal Holbrook
Kathy Williams ..... Janet Leigh
Elizabeth Solley ..... Jamie Lee Curtis
Machen ..... John Houseman
Nick Castle ..... Tommy Atkins
Sandy Fadel ..... Nancy Loomis

THE FOG's opening quote from Edgar Allen Poe ("It's all that we see or seem that is but the dream within the dream") sets us up for a somewhat more intellectual film than the unabashedly hardcore commercial horror movie that John Carpenter has given us. The tone of the film is better indicated by what comes next: the campfire tale spun by John Houseman ("Five minutes before midnight—time for one more story.") that provides the needed background to the film's plot. Carpenter shrewdly uses the sequence—set within the blackness of night broken only by the fire's warm light; the eerie tale told to an audience of wide-eyed, silent and scared children—as a metaphor for the communal audience, gathered together in the dark to be scared witless.

It is evident that Carpenter has made this movie in hopes of repeating the tremendous success of his previous horror film, HALLOWEEN. Many other filmmakers have been caught up in the same "bigger and better" Hollywood syndrome (De Palma with THE FURY after CARRIE, Altman with A WEDDING after NASHVILLE), with a second film made with similar themes, elements and styles designed to top the previous film's success with more of the same. Like all of these "second" films, THE FOG is inferior to HALLOWEEN in most respects.

Carpenter's films, like most of the great horror films, trap their characters in claustrophobic enclosures; humanity huddling together from the terror outside trying to get in. The problem with THE FOG is that's all there is. The basic situations are set up and immediately set into motion: the fishermen on their trawler, Barbeau in her radio station, the technician in his weather station, Barbeau's child and housekeeper in their home and the collection of characters in the church.

While complicated stories have never been a strong point with Carpenter, here the inconsistent (if not downright incoherent) plot barely serves to establish the resolutely stock characters and to act as a peg on which to hang the horror sequences. The pastor of the church (Hal Holbrook) mentions at one point that the ghosts have returned to Antonio Bay not only to reclaim the gold for which town leaders lured their ship through the heavy fog 100 years before, but also to kill the descendants of the six conspirators. This seems to have been forgotten about in the finished film, as the killings are indiscriminate. The gold itself, on which Antonio Bay is supposed to have flourished, suddenly surfaces—molded into a huge cross—from the bowels of the church.

The horror sequences include a cliched hospital scene as a victim suddenly comes back to life (the doctor has just completed the autopsy) to menace an unnoticing (of course, female) character. This sequence, however effective, goes against the interior logic of the story, as none of the other victims revive from the dead. And Carpenter sadly cannot resist the impulse so tiresomely evident in so many post-CARRIE genre films: the socko "surprise" ending, here the decapitation of Holbrook just as he thought he was safe and the town's danger over (the ghosts have already gotten what they came for: the gold). The film's logic is again violated, for the ghosts are apparently unable to travel without the icy shrouding provided by the fog, yet they materialize in the church long after the fog has receded.

All this said, I hasten to admit that Carpenter has succeeded in his primary purpose: like the best ghost stories, the film is enjoyably scary. For the most part, Carpenter eschews the explicit qualities of a George Romero, and thankfully there is only one Hammer Film-like closeup of the face of a ghost with maggots crawling about here and there. Instead, the sound track carries some of the most gruesome sound effects I've heard, doubly effective given the film's visual restraint. Several of the horror sequences are masterful, particularly Barbeau being stalked in her lighthouse/radio station.

For one so young (32), Carpenter has an uncannily adept grasp of the kinetic aspects of his medium, the ability to make us believe the unbelievable, by carefully molding the plastic elements of filmmaking. There is no director working today who uses the wide-screen frame as adroitly as Carpenter, and his night sequences (lit by cameraman Dean Cundey, who has shot most of Carpenter's other films) exhibit a wonderfully graceful, *film-noir*-ish modulation of light and darkness that carries a powerful emotional force.

What allows the film to work at all is the quality of the fog effects, eerily devised by Dick Albain, Jr., without which—or if filmed less convincingly—the film would have been ludicrous. If the long-shot opticals of the fog bank rolling toward shore are readily apparent, the scenes of fog slowly invading the town's silent streets are beautifully accomplished and fully menacing.

Perhaps it's our own fault for expecting too much, but I feel a lingering disappointment in THE FOG because the movie isn't more than it is, or hasn't broken any new ground, especially since Carpenter is filming his own (and his long-term producer Debra Hill's) original screenplay. But as it is, THE FOG is a frisky, efficient and scary movie in a genre overloaded with ineptly lifeless pictures. I'll gladly take it.

David Bartholomew

THE CHANGELING

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hardly any sense (beginning with the Historical Society offering such a house for rent and Scott's desire to lease it), is one of the film's peculiar achievements that this is never allowed to matter. Such failings are quickly overshadowed by the succession of telling scenes and details that hit their mark *just so*: Scott finding that an "original" composition of his already exists on an old music box he finds in the attic; a seance that seems authentic for a change, and plays all the stronger for it; and the discovery, in the best evidential tradition of BLOW-UP and THE CONVERSATION, that a tape recording made of the seance contains one *extra* voice crying faintly in the background.

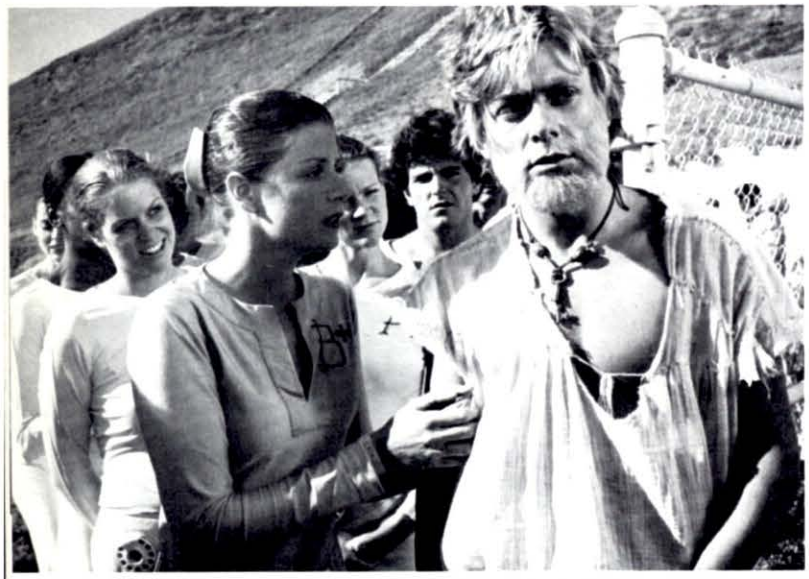
But despite its haunting advertising campaign, THE CHANGELING does not deal in visceral shock. Even the scene in which Van Devere is menaced by the antique wheelchair which comes to life does not really frighten, though it has the requisite amount of excitement. Instead, the film gives way to a kind of cold heebie-jeebies of the mind. The film's punch comes from the anticipation and excitement of discovering the clues to the supernatural riddle. These "thrills" may be different from the visceral, blood and spilled guts variety, but they are no less compelling. This approach is infinitely preferable to the pseudo-docudramatic claptrap of an AMITYVILLE HORROR.

An uncredited star of the $6 million movie is the haunted mansion itself, which didn't actually exist. Unlike most movies, where interior sets are placed back to back on the same level, production designer Trevor Williams built the 18-room interior as a single unit rising three stories, which allowed director of photography John Coquillon to set up towering boom shots, impressive camera angles and the rushing point of view scenes which dominate the film.

But the production details do not get in the way of enjoying the film, and the complex story is handled as well as the spontaneous fires. Fairly complex psychic phenomena are not always easily depicted visually, but THE CHANGELING manages nicely, with the demise of one nasty character forseen in a cracked mirror and—particularly at the denouement—in the way Melvyn Douglas (whose key to wealth and power lies in the title) must pay for the sins of his "father." One cavil that could justifiably be raised is that more was not made of the link between Scott's tragic loss of his family and his susceptibility to influences from "the other side."

George C. Scott and Trish Van Devere are terrified by a dusty, rusty wheelchair in THE CHANGELING, director Peter Medak's first feature film in nine years.

With THE CHANGELING, director Peter Medak makes a strong return from nine years of television exile following the commercial debacle of his last feature, THE RULING CLASS. There is no connection or point of comparison between that *very* bizarre musical/fantasy/comedy and this film, nothing to suggest that they were in fact directed by the same person. Here, Medak's masterful moving camera adds a constantly troubling dynamic, his ability to orchestrate and maintain mood keeps our rapt interest and his understanding of the material and his fresh approach satisfies—good reasons to welcome him back. ***Jordan R. Fox***



Marcia Strassman tries to comfort Kristoffer Tabori, a Shakespeare-quoting moral outcast in Huxley's BRAVE NEW WORLD, a three-hour movie for NBC—TV.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

"Retains much of Huxley's satirical impact, and in some cases, improves on the original."

BRAVE NEW WORLD An NBC and Universal Television production. 3/7/80. In Color. 180 minutes. Produced by Jacqueline Babbin. Directed by Burt Brinkerhoff. Screenplay by Robert E. Thompson. Executive producer, Milton Sperlund. Associate producer, Norman Chandler Fox. Director of photography, Harry L. Wolf. Music, Paul Chihara. Art director, Tom H. John. Film editor, James T. Heckert. Set decorator, Mary Ann Biddle. Sound effects editor, M. Troutman. Costume designer, Kent Warner.

Thomas Grahambell ..... Keir Dullea
Linda Lysenko ..... Julie Cobb
Bernard Marx ..... Bud Cort
John Savage ..... Kristoffer Tabori
Lenina Disney ..... Marcia Strassman
Mustapha Mond ..... Ron O'Neal
Helmholtz Watson ... Dick Anthony Williams

"Brave" is the operative word in the television adaptation of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*, which NBC finally aired in March. It was brave of producer Jacqueline (SYBIL) Babbin to attempt what no producer had been able to do in the 48 years since the book's publication: a literate adaptation for a visual medium. Considering the built-in restrictions for a story about a sterile but sexual future society of stratified conformists, it was particularly brave of her to produce such an ambitious effort for TV rather than the big screen.

Unfortunately, the courage stops with the NBC executives who held off airing this film for almost a year (it was ready last spring), callously interrupted the movie with commercials at the damnedest times, put it on as a truncated three-hour TV movie rather than as the four-hour, two-part miniseries it was written to be and made it compete against high-powered rivals like ABC's three-hour James Bond epic ON HER MAJESTY'S SECRET SERVICE and the annual CBS broadcast of THE WIZARD OF OZ.

For those courageous and curious few who tuned in against these overwhelming odds, the TV adaptation proved to be one of the most imaginative SF films made for the medium. Still a bit long at three hours and perhaps too ambitiously literate with its Shakespearean allusions, this reasonably faithful interpretation retains much of Huxley's satirical impact and in some cases, even improves on the original's ideas. Antiseptic sets, updated dialogue and generally controlled performances streamline this satire to make us realize this picture is more of a mirror than even Huxley might have thought possible.

With an eye on character, scriptwriter Robert E. Thompson simplified Huxley's vision of a nightmarish caste society based on genetic engineering's grandest dream—manufacturing babies as needed, from intellectual leaders (Alpha-plus) to manual laborers (Deltas and Epsilons) content with their lot.

Rather than using flashbacks to recount the origin of the main character John Savage (Kristoffer Tabori), Thompson begins the story with the Director of Hatcheries and Conditioning Thomas Grahambell (Keir Dullea) and his vacation trip to the Reservations peopled with "savages" denied the "benefits" of this technological utopia. There, "Tomakin" commits an unpardonable sin when he accidentally impregnates his lover, a Beta named Linda (Julie Cobb), who falls to her death before he leaves. Or so he thinks. Rescued by the natives, she eventually bears the child that becomes John Savage. Mother and son are discovered years later by Bernard Marx (Bud Cort), a physically and emotionally stunted Alpha-plus who was the victim of an assembly-line screw-up at birth, who jumps at the chance to use this skeleton-in-the-closet against the intimidating Director. Not knowing the real reason for his invitation to the sprawling corporate city (not London, as in the book, but an indefinable "world" city with inevitable American overtones), the Savage accepts with the same words and wide-eyed enthusiasm as Shakespeare's Miranda in "The Tempest" when she exclaims to a band of conniving cutthroats, "O brave new world that has such people in it!"

His great expectations, of course, begin to flag when, among other things, he falls in love with Lenina Disney (Marcia Strassman) and has to deal with the frustrations of his desire for moral monogamy against her soma-fed happy hookering. When his mother's death is greeted with programmed indifference, the Savage is galvanized into active revolt against the society and his Shakespeare-quoting spiritual brother, the "world controller" Mustapha Mond (Ron O'Neal). The Savage welcomes his banishment at an abandoned lighthouse (the symbolism is obvious in both the novel and the movie), but the people refuse to leave him alone, fascinated by his eccentric independence. When they are forcefully repelled with soma gas at the end, Lenina happens to be in the crowd and appears to succumb. Mistaking her for dead, the Savage immediately runs back inside where he hangs himself.

Thompson has most tampered with Huxley by toning down the sex for the harmless grayness required by televison, and sometimes that hurts. When the Savage finally confesses his love to Lenina in the novel, she happily disrobes, at which he recoils in horror. When all she does is offer herself to him verbally in the teleplay and Tabori goes overboard with his "impudent strumpet" routine (even tossing in a "Get thee to a nunnery!"), it's not an example of star-crossed lovers forever separated by their radically different worlds, but rather of Tabori's crazed overreaction. And at the end of the book, the Savage kills himself not after a gas attack involving Lenina, but after an orgy involving *him*. What destroys him there is moral self-revulsion, not romantic despair.

On the other hand, the watering down sometimes works. In deference to the Puritan ethics of NBC executives, Thompson had to come up with another phrase besides "having" someone sexually. So instead everyone "engages" everyone else, a euphemism that fuels the satire in its own engaging affectedness. Rather than having the Savage attend a silly "feelie" with Lenina called "Three Weeks in a Helicopter" that climaxes with a rescued woman taking on her saviors as lovers, the couple watches an obvious rip-off of "Romeo and Juliet" replete with futuristic jargon. This modification is more interesting than effective; it only reinforces Thompson's honorable but misdirected intent to overstate the Savage's literary romanticism.

Overall though, the more linear progress of John Savage's coming of age in an age where he cannot fit helps obviate Huxley's tendency to stop the plot for philosophical or scientific discussions. In some cases Babbin's team adds touches that make Huxley's tale even more biting and timely. Showing rare insight in these post-STAR WARS days, Babbin sidesteps razzle-dazzle special effects for simplicity and substance. Production designer Tom John's sets are properly stark but unassuming, backdrop clearly taking the back seat to character. Costuming is equally austere, but perhaps a bit too much so: the light gold outfits for the Alphas and flesh-colored uniforms for the Betas look disconcertingly like leotards—great on females, a little distracting on the males. But the short masked Epsilon workers dressed in gray and the lowly Deltas dressed in blue with pink caps, dark circles around their eyes, are evocative visualizations. Babbin has also subtly stressed the mechanical regularity of this society not with an overstated soundtrack, but with the constant thrumming of the machines in the background, an innovative touch that enhances the world's ominous monotony.

Elsewhere, efforts to update Huxley's satire with more contemporary references only underscore the classic timelessness of the novel. Rather than test-tube babies decanted in bottles, as Huxley had it, we get babies in baggies. And instead of a character like "Benito Hoover," we have references to people like "Adolph Rockefeller" and others with patronyms like "Exxon" and "Firestone." In one typically wry move, Lenina Crowne's name—invoking both Lenin and the British crown—here becomes Lenina *Disney*. And who can fail to miss the reference when one of the VIPs Marx invites to John Savage's coming-out party is introduced as "Edgar Millhouse, Professor of Shredology"? Even having a Professor of Disco Worship at that reception seems to fit in Huxley's efficient but still superficially hedonistic world.

Babbin and Thompson have been careful in the opening scenes to make it clear that the Ford revered here is not the Edsel we had for an interim President, but our century's lord of production-line mentality. While it may be dated today, the characters saluting each other with the sign of the "T" from the Model T broadens the satirical target as a much crasser cross we have to bear in these days of institutionalized hypocrisy. To make it obvious the warning is directed at an already product-oriented society like ours, Bud Cort at one time even describes the results of his character's attempt to conform as "the new improved Bernard Marx." And if we can't understand how a society could live on the mindless jingles of "Hug me till you drug me," "A gram (of soma) is better than a damn," or "A soma a day keeps the jim-jam away," ponder the significance of "Catch that Pepsi spirit." The "soma comas" elevated by the

populace here can't help but remind us of the hard-drug renaissance we've been caught up in since the late 1960s. Mention of Muzak (on arriving at the Reservation, Linda whines, "There isn't even any Muzak!") only gives a different name to Huxley's original "Synthetic Music Box." And how different are our own "happy hours" from their soma-induced "Joy Hour"?

Sometimes, it's true, Babbin's team gets a little carried away. The satire is somewhat diffused when we have to watch the children taken through their "nature nausea" or "death training" classes. What *is* effective is that moment just after Savage's mother dies "of terminal bliss" when a worker undercuts the potential sentimentality with an astonished, "There's nothing wrong. She's just dead."

The acting is suitably uniform in its excellence. Bud Cort carries on in his own neurotic, dumbfounded tradition started back in BREWSTER MCCLOUD (1970) and HAROLD AND MAUDE (1972), here sporting a Dagwood-like cowlick and a pasty complexion that visually accentuates Bernard Marx's unwanted nonconformity. Keir Dullea has a chance to reveal humanness even in Huxley's non-human world by at once declaring and disclaiming his love for a woman that was literally his downfall as Director.

But Kristofer Tabori is the pleasant surprise. Bearded with obvious Christ-like overtones, he has an opportunity to demonstrate what he can do as an actor, something denied him since his debut as a hippie draft evader in JOURNEY THROUGH ROSEBUD almost 10 years ago. Regrettably, the temptation is to overact when he's given so many quotations from Shakespeare. While the long, literate passages work well in print, these outbursts seem too staid to be convincing on the screen. Either this element or his stubborn romanticism holds us at too far a distance from his character to feel remorse at the end, but Tabori makes a valiant effort, and adds a vibrancy to Huxley's somewhat unrealistically learned primitive.

Trimming from the beginning might have helped concentrate more on John Savage at the expense of the Director and forced the scriptwriter to focus on more specific satirical targets without the shotgun effect we end up with. Sticking to the essence if not always the words from Huxley's futuristic jargon—"sensiosex," "computopix," etc.—may also put off all but SF fans already accustomed to the customs of the genre. But despite these drawbacks, TV's BRAVE NEW WORLD surfaces as a brave new world in its own right. What's sad is that it won't have much of a chance against our present world of vapid network leaders and an industry that values commercial expediency over quality. But then, as we other savages might put it, "O brave new world that has such people in it." ***Steven Dimeo***

ALL THAT JAZZ

". . .a confusing goulash of beautiful girls, homosexuality, open heart surgery, stand-up comedy and age anxiety."

ALL THAT JAZZ A 20th Century Fox Release with Columbia Pictures. 12/79. Technicolor. 123 minutes. Produced by Robert Alan Aurthur. Directed by Bob Fosse. Screenplay by Robert Alan Aurthur and Bob Fosse. Executive Producer, Daniel Melnick. Associate producers, Kenneth Utt and Wolfgang Glattes. Director of photography, Giuseppe Rotunno. Editor, Alan Heim. Production designer, Philip Rosenberg. Fantasy designer, Tony Walton. Choreography by Bob Fosse.

Joe Gideon	Roy Scheider
Angelique	Jessica Lange
Kate Jagger	Ann Reinking
Audrey Paris	Leland Palmer
David Newman	Cliff Gorman
O'Conner Flood	Ben Vereen

ALL THAT JAZZ is a narcissistic psuedo-autobiography in which Bob Fosse makes believe he's dying, for the edification of us lesser mortals. Unfortunately for him, Fosse's collaborator, the late Robert Alan Aurthur, didn't get to pretend. The film doesn't get to pretend either: ALL THAT JAZZ is dead before it begins, but there are enough worms in the carcass to give it an occasional obscene wiggle.

Coming on like an amateur Ken Russell or a two-bit Fellini, Fosse, or "Joe Gideon," tells us about his terrible problems as an ace choreographer of blockbuster Broadway shows and as a lover of beautiful women. A chain-smoking, pill-popping Lothario, Gideon is rushing to choreograph his new Broadway show (Fosse's *Chicago*), edit a stubborn film (Fosse's LENNY) and he can't keep his nervous fingers off a single pretty young thing. He has a marriage down the drain, a love affair on the rocks and an adoring young daughter he never has time for. Enter the Angel of Death, as Jessica Lange in white chiffon. This frigid, alabaster beauty opens her cold embrace and promises him the solace of absolute oblivion, as he tells her about his crowded, sordid, but glamorous life.

Every movie musical is a fantasia of a sort, but ALL THAT JAZZ is *cinefantastique* with a wild, bloody vengeance. Joe Gideon is an express commuter from a hectic, fever dream Broadway to a gaudy, orgiastic Beyond. From start to finish, Gideon undergoes psychotherapy in a Fellini-like dreamland, with Lange's beautiful Thanatos promising him the final solution to all his problems. ALL THAT JAZZ pushes, kicks and prods the customary stylization of the musical into familiar realms usually reserved for horror and science fiction. Fosse's choreography is nothing so modest as mere dancing—it's a high gloss spectacle that could elbow Doug Trumbull out of the way. The final number is a Rock gotterdammerung with Gideon gyrating his way to the grave. Guitarists in silver death masks accompany his show-stopper entrance into a plastic body bag in a fabulous, firecracker exit to The End. Every stop is pulled as music, set design, make up and costume blaze and burn out in sound and fury.

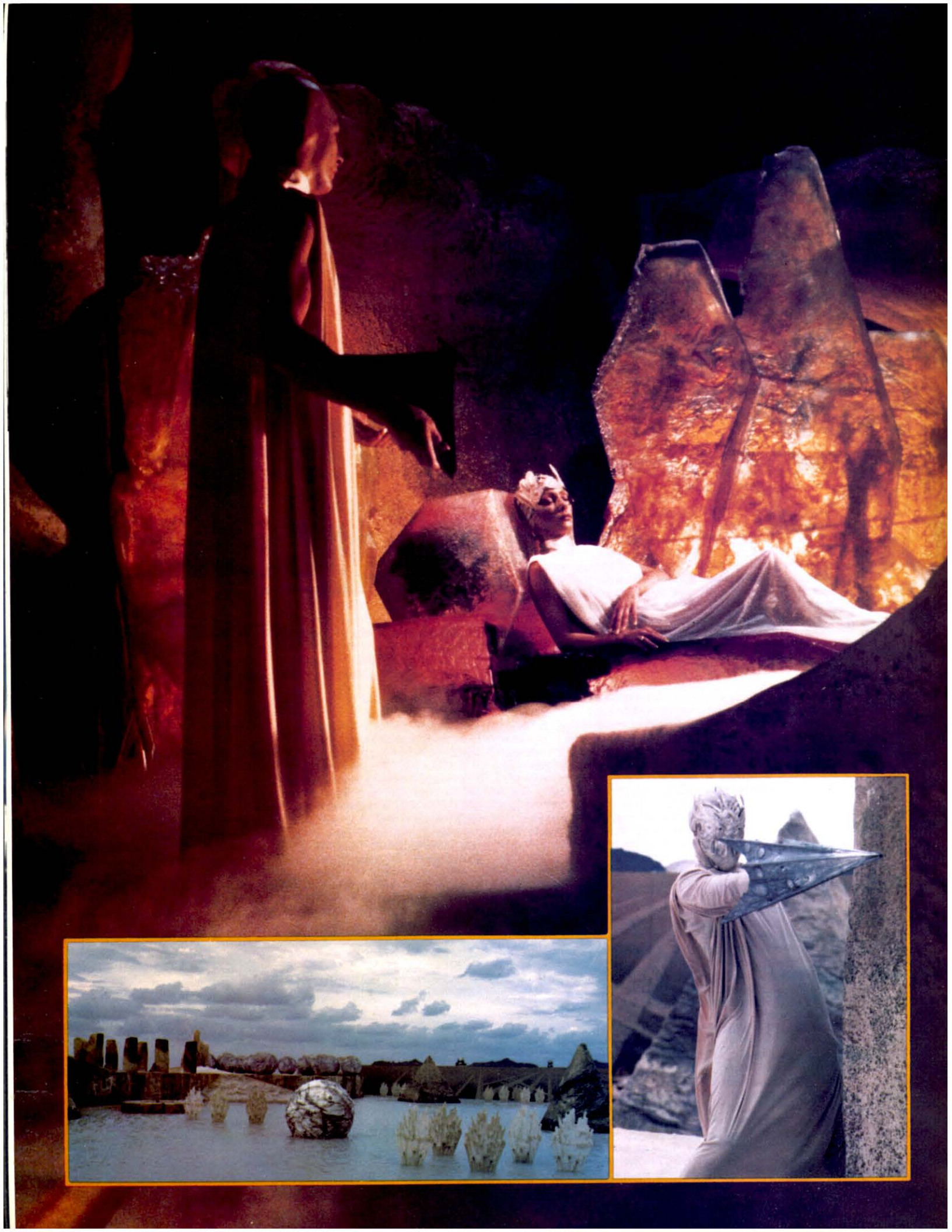
Roy Scheider reaches to the heavens in ALL THAT JAZZ, Bob Fosse's glittery, but often confusing tribute to his own success and mortality.

But it's impossible to figure out what Fosse is getting at in this confusing goulash of beautiful girls, homosexuality, open heart surgery, stand-up comedy and age anxiety. ALL THAT JAZZ is just that, all the syncopated confusion that Fosse can fill between the show biz sex that opens the film and the three ring hospital sequences that end it. A Nicholas Roeg could have drawn this material tightly together in a complex web of visual rhymes and repetitions, but Fosse's hop, skip and jump editing splits it apart into a thousand disconnected pieces.

The great Fosse is never more daring or more misguided than when he's presenting the opening night bomb as the chronic malaise of show business. ALL THAT JAZZ is filled to the rafters with burlesque pitchmen tossing jokes to sullen, unamused audiences, voiceless song writers croaking their own insipid tunes and night club comics so bad they rightfully should die of shame. Cliff Gorman—playing Dustin Hoffman playing Cliff Gorman playing Lenny Bruce (Gorman originated the role on Broadway; Hoffman recreated it for Fosse's film)—is forced to dredge new depths in the abysmal as he delivers a pretentious comedy monologue about Elizabeth Kubler-Ross. Of course, fifth-rate comedy wouldn't be half so embarrassing a subject if the film that contained it was securely second rate.

The majority of these routines—some of them almost mind-bogglingly bad—are greeted with storms of laughter by Fosse-Gideon's entourage of idiot collaborators. In THE BANDWAGON, Oscar Levant and Nanette Fabray at least had misgivings about Jack Buchanan's modern musical FAUST; in ALL THAT JAZZ, Fosse-Gideon is surrounded by sycophantic assistants who wouldn't know a funny line if it came with a license. It's as if the theater were merely a home for the tasteless and an asylum for the talentless—except, of course, for Joe Gideon.

Most of ALL THAT JAZZ is so bad it may make you forget that Bob Fosse was ever any good. But sandwiched into this morbid rehash of 8½ are two dazzling dance numbers that prove that not all the fizz has gone out of Fosse. An erotic tangle of bodies twists and arches into strange angles, searching for some perfect, provocative pose. And in a penultimate rock number, Joe Gideon hellishly burns himself out to the tune of "Bye, Bye, Love." Fosse is the Edgar Allen Poe of Broadway, and his choreographic genius is for strangeness—the outre. At its very infrequent best, ALL THAT JAZZ gives a welcome added stretch to the term "musical comedy," moving it well past humor into some interestingly unsavory realms. But unfortunately, two good numbers don't quite redeem a musical. ***John Azzopardi***



THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES

Classic SF Comes To TV Without Class

THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES An NBC-Television miniseries. 1/27, 1/28, 1/29/80. In color. 110 minutes per segment. Executive producers, Charles Fries and Dick Berg. Produced by Andrew Donally and Milton Subotsky. Directed by Michael Anderson. Teleplay by Richard Matheson. Based on the novel by Ray Bradbury. Director of photography, Ted Moore. Associate producer, Charles M. Fries. Supervising editor, John Jympson. Production designer, Assheton Gorton. Costumes by Cynthia Tingey. Special effects and second unit director, John Stears. Music by Stanley Myers. U.S. postproduction supervisor, Thomas Fries. Film editor, Eunice Mountjoy. Sound editors, Teddy Mason and Ron Davis. Production managers, Graham Ford and William P. Owens. Assistant director, David Bracknell. Second unit and model photography, Bob Kindred. Construction manager, John Godfrey. Make-up created by George Frost. Electronic music by Richard Harvey. Music editor, Graham Harris.

Colonel John Wilder ..... Rock Hudson
Ruth Wilder ..... Gayle Hunnicutt
Jeff Spender ..... Bernie Casey
Driscoll ..... Christopher Connelly
Black ..... Nicholas Hammond
Father Stone ..... Roddy McDowall
Sam Parkhill ..... Darren McGavin
Genevieve ..... Bernadette Peters
Anna Lustig ..... Maria Schell
Father Peregrine ..... Fritz Weaver
David Lustig .... Michael Anderson, Jr.
Jesus Christ ..... Jon Finch
Martian Elder ..... Terence Longdon
Hathaway ..... Barry Morse
Lafe Lustig ..... Wolfgang Reichmann

Left: A scene from "Ylla," the only episode to come close to the spirit of poetic fantasy in Bradbury's writing. Mr. K (James Faulkner) is troubled by the dream-like premonitions of his love-sick wife Ylla (Maggie Wright). Inset Left: Production designer Assheton Gorton's concept of the Martian canals and Stonehenge-like architecture built in the Canary Islands on Lanzarote, as seen in the concluding episode, "The Million Year Picnic." Inset Right: Spender (Bernie Casey) takes up the defense of the extinct Martian civilization and attempts to murder the members of his own expedition in "And the Moon Be Still as Bright," ending the first two hour segment.

When Ray Bradbury's *The Martian Chronicles* was published in 1950, its brand of "mood" science fiction revolutionized the field. However novel its style, though, it was never meant to be read as a novel in the traditional sense. Bradbury had merely taken 15 short stories written over a four-year period, forced them into some kind of chronological order, and tied them together with new narrative passages. What the tales had in common was theme: man's weakness for exploiting divergent people and places, the consequences of loneliness and the potentially destructive influence of dreams, particularly of things past. Most of the stories also happened, of course, to take place on Mars, a Mars that was clearly not as uninviting as our unmanned satellites have since found it to be. Despite its dated vision of space exploration and the disjointedness of its childish improbabilities, *The Martian Chronicles* remains Bradbury's best known work. Its surrealistic settings, symbolic characters and poetic and allusive language represented science fiction's first major breakthrough as respectable literature.

Because of its emphasis on the verbal, however, visual adaptations have proved challenging at best. During the 1960s, both MGM and Universal Studios planned to film the *Chronicles* and Bradbury had been hired to write the screenplay. But by the time man landed on the moon in mid-1969, the project had been shelved for good. It wasn't just the estimated $20 million it would cost to produce even back then. It was those Mariner photographs of a barren, pock-marked Mars. What could be left to the imagination in his prose had to be credible to the last detail on the screen. The Mars of reality wasn't very accomodating to Bradbury's romanticism.

But neither cash nor credibility stopped producers Charles Fries and Dick Berg in the 1970s. Without approaching Bradbury at all, NBC asked Richard Matheson to write the teleplay. A noted author of horror stories, Matheson has achieved more recognition as a screenwriter: among his best films are adaptations from his own material such as THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN (1957) and his personal favorite, the TV movie DUEL made back in 1971 when its director Steven Spielberg had yet to have his close encounter with JAWS. Matheson took nine months to complete THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES screenplay, from his extensive outline to a final shooting script. Working with producer Berg, he finished by the end of 1978. He had nothing more to do with it after that.

To direct Matheson's script, the producers decided on Michael Anderson. Known primarily for his Academy-Award winning work on AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHTY DAYS (1956), he had attempted only two other SF adaptations before, 1984 (1955) and LOGAN'S RUN (1975). Heading up the cast with the boxoffice security of Rock Hudson as the recurring character of Col. Wilder, Anderson's team shot most of the script in the Mediterranean on Malta and in the Canary Islands on Lanzarote which is mostly lava flow. The film was still being processed in early September of 1979, so a scheduled airing during NBC's season premiere week was postponed (see article 9:1:8). After $8 million and two years, THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES was finally aired in January, 1980 as a six-hour miniseries in three two-hour segments.

The results? To be generous, it will not be remembered with anything close to the distant admiration we have for the original Bradbury material.

And what does Bradbury himself think of the long-awaited film version? He refuses to comment specifically. "I'd rather wait awhile until everything's simmered down," he said, "I'm much too close to it right now. I want to write my own view of it anyway," a story *TV Guide* has been after him to do for months. "A lot of people have written me," Bradbury added. "The reactions have been medium to negative. A few good ones. I think most people feel the director was a failure and it was a bore. That's the main thing." Referring to his criticism upon seeing a private preview in 1979, he concluded, "Six months ago I warned them. Some parts of it are excellent, thank God, but that's not good enough, is it?"

Matheson, whose screenwriting credits include ambitious efforts like BURN, WITCH, BURN (1962) and DE SADE (1969) as well as more superficially entertaining TV films like THE NIGHT STALKER (1972), THE NIGHT STRANGLER (1973) and DRACULA (1974), is a good deal more forgiving. Whatever flaws he admits to in the production he attributes to misplaced budget priorities. And he insists that Bradbury, a long-time friend, was content with his teleplay. "The general feeling was that the first two hours were the weakest and then it picked up after that," he said. He does not consider THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES one of his more important adaptations because, "wherever I did the stories I just literally took them right out of the book." His purpose was, he said, "to stay as close as possible to the book within the confines of making it appear to be one story, which it isn't." And what was his overall impression of the effort? He simply shrugs, "It's all right."

Critique by Steven Dimeo

'I just literally took the stories right out of the book, to stay as close as possible to the book within the confines of making it appear to be one story, which it isn't.'
Richard Matheson

Right: A full scale Martian "Sandship" seen in "The Off Season," where a group of the ships chase Parkhill (Darren McGavin), only to have the Martians deed him half the planet when they catch him. The sequence is made laughable by cuts of amateurishly done miniature ships filmed on a totally unconvincing table-top set by John Stears.

A HISTRIONIC HISTORY

The history of adapting Bradbury's material should have served as fair warning. His literate, imaginary worlds cannot be lifted intact to the screen, as several top writers and directors have discovered. Bradbury wrote just one teleplay for Rod Serling's TWILIGHT ZONE, his short story "I Sing the Body Electric," which was to become the title piece of his last short story collection published in 1970. To Bradbury's dismay, when the episode aired in May, 1961, the concluding monologue in praise of life was cut. As Serling later observed:

"Bradbury is much more effective on the page than he is on the proscenium. The lyrical quality of his work seems to lend itself to the printed page, rather than to spoken dialogue. In the case of "I Sing the Body Electric," the words that seem so beautiful in the story turned out archaic and wooden and somehow unbelievable when a person speaks them."

The same problems held true five years later when Francois Truffaut adapted Bradbury's 1953 novel FAHRENHEIT 451, the expanded *Galaxy* novelette of a future society's "fireman" who eventually rejects his career as a book-burner. The film, languid but visionary, does have some good moments (Bradbury applauded it, saying, "it's a lovely film that gets better every year.") but the movie is seldom convincing. As critic George Bluestone wrote in the Summer, 1967, *Film Quarterly*, "What could be accepted as a literary fable in Bradbury seems a little absurd on the screen."

Bradbury recognized early what veteran screenwriter Matheson did not—that his work has to be considerably modified to succeed on the screen. Stressing images more than words, relying on an overly poetic off-screen narrator and on the character of John Wilder as unifying threads much as Matheson tries to do, Bradbury tightened both place and storyline in his own, unfilmed screenplay. Rather than lingering pointlessly on any Earth-based scenes as the miniseries does, Bradbury's 178-page script starts out immediately on Mars with the most important expedition, the fourth (third in the TV version). Many stories are cut, some becoming mere dream-like vignettes which might well have worked on the screen. Significantly, too, Bradbury felt it necessary to include a completely new story called "The Lost City of Mars" (first published in the January 1967 issue of *Playboy*). In that episode, while other superficial and greedy characters confront their dreams and self-truths in an ancient once-automated Martian city that returns to life, Wilder rejects its comfortable illusions of voyages beyond Mars for the hard work of reaching out for the stars on his own. In his script, Bradbury clearly realized the limitations of his earlier work and attempted to recreate a more dream-like and visually oriented film.

Matheson should certainly know by now the professional requirements of the written vs. the visual medium. But by striving for faithfulness and a screen realism that is just not compatible with Bradbury's *Chronicles*, Matheson is largely responsible for why the TV miniseries never works as a coherent film. The tiny television screen enhances the principal flaws of disunity, plot improbabilities, unrealistic settings, one-dimensional characterization and—worst of all—wordiness.

First, despite Matheson's effort to the contrary, we never forget we're just watching a group of loosely related stories. He shuffles a few of Bradbury's characters around, replacing some with others we've seen before, but that doesn't help. We still have little more than an ambitious series of 10 stories out of Bradbury's original 15, plus another lifted from an earlier out-of-date edition of the *Chronicles*. For the most part, Matheson arranges them much as Bradbury did, breaking them into three parts.

First Night

- "Ylla." The title character, played by British actress Maggie Wright falls in love with a vision of Nathaniel York (Richard Oldfield) from the first Earth expedition only to have her husband Mr. K (James Faulkner) murder his potential rival once the rocket lands.
- "The Third Expedition." The miniseries' second expedition, often anthologized under its original title, "Mars is Heaven!" where Captain John Black (Nicholas Hammond) is stupidly duped into thinking that he and his crew have landed back in the Green Bluff, Illinois, of his youth, only to learn in the end that it has been an elaborate hoax by the Martians to kill them off.
- "And the Moon Be Still As Bright." The fourth expedition (the third in the miniseries) discovers that the previous expeditions unwittingly exterminated the Martians with a smallpox epidemic—at which point Jeff Spender (Bernie Casey) curiously takes up the torch of the lost civilization and suicidally begins picking off crew members who show any disrespect to the dead.

Second Night

- "The Fire Balloons." The story is actually from *The Illustrated Man* but was incorporated into Bradbury's screenplay and apparently included in a little-known edition of the *Chronicles*. Father Peregrine (Fritz Weaver) sees in the blue globes of the incorporeal Old Ones a Martian perfection comparable to what he and Father Stone (Roddy McDowall) had imagined only in Christ on Earth.
- "The Martian." One of the last Martians (Michael Anderson Jr., son of the miniseries' director), shows up suddenly as David Lustig, a crewman from the ill-fated second expedition, to Lustig's parents (Maria Schell and Wolfgang Reichmann) who have come to Mars looking for him. Others later see him as loved ones they, too, have lost—until his protean transformations at last destroy him.
- "The Off Season." Wilder's friend Sam Parkhill (Darren McGavin) and his wife Elma (Joyce Van Patten) set up a cafe on Mars in hopes of cashing in on the imminent consumer exodus from Earth. After he accidentally kills a Martian and runs from other Martians who strangely deed him half the planet, Parkhill looks on in horror at the destruction of his home planet.

Third Night

- "The Silent Towns." A superficial *tour de force* playing on the "last man" cliche. One of the last Earthlings left on Mars, Benjamin Driscoll (Richard Masur), travels 1500 miles to find a "last woman," whom he then rejects.
- "The Long Years." Wilder and Stone come upon Hathaway (Barry Morse) just before he dies, and they learn his wife and daughter (two daughters and a son in the book) are robot duplicates built to "replace" his real wife and daughter who died of a virus seven years before.
- "Night Meeting." Wilder confronts the ghost of another "last" Martian (Terence Longdon) who suggests how best to live life. Matheson shifted this story towards the end, and featured Wilder rather than Bradbury's Chicano boy.
- "The Million-Year Picnic." Bradbury's latent optimism is confirmed at a canal-side picnic when Wilder, burning away anything from their Earth past, including papers and even his own rocket, shows his son a reflection in the water and tells him that *they* are now the real Martians.

Among those stories omitted are three that Matheson adapted but were radically altered or scrapped before shooting, including the much-anthologized "There Will Come Soft Rains" about an automated house on Earth that continues its daily routine even when it has no more humans to serve. Substituting

By sticking close to Bradbury, Matheson expects us to accept his Mars on faith, but the visual medium requires greater realism, the kind Bradbury cannot inherently supply.

Left: The third expedition (book's fourth) in "And the Moon Be Still As Bright." From left to right, Briggs (John Cassady), Spender (Bernie Casey), Parkhill (Darren McGavin), McClure (Peter Marinker), Colonel Wilder (Rock Hudson) and Conover (Richard Heffer). The attempt at NASA-like realism fails miserably.

is a clumsy scene of Wilder returning to the space command center back on Earth after the war to catch an interrupted videotape of his brother just before the end came. "They didn't want to do 'There Will Come Soft Rains,'" Matheson said, "because they had already spent a lot of money on the space command center."

Matheson also hoped to have "The Earth Men" and "Usher II" included. In the first, the members of the book's second expedition are thought to be Martian lunatics whose appearance, memories and ship are all believed to be hallucinations by a Martian doctor who only learns they are real after he shoots them all. In "Usher II," a nostalgia freak builds an automated museum on Mars full of creations from fantasy writers—which are banned on Earth—and eventually murders the "G-man" who tries to outlaw the house which like Poe's own House of Usher self-destructs anyway. It's easy to see why "Usher II" and "There Will Come Soft Rains" were left out: the sets would have been prohibitively expensive. The series is certainly no worse off without these two or yet one more ill-fated expedition to Mars.

Out of Bradbury's stories, the two with the greatest potential are "The Martian" and "The Fire Balloons." But Matheson's strained effort at continuity tends to undercut their effectiveness.

"The Martian" stands out—in Matheson's words—as "one of the best sequences in the whole script." The fantasy of a Martian who can change from one person to another somehow harmonizes with the realism of the Lustig home and ordinary city streets. Here both photographic effects and story help bring home the point unobtrusively—that being what other people expect us to be can often destroy the value of what we really are.

But Matheson diminishes the effectiveness by introducing an extraneous element. To tie in with "The Fire Balloons," Father Peregrine meets the malleable Martian and confronts *his* secret longing—seeing the Martian as Christ Himself. Matheson should have merely stuck with the ending of "The Fire Balloons," however flawed that was. Compare, for instance, Matheson's ending as follows with Bradbury's original prose:

PERGRINE
It spoke to me. I replied that we'd build a church in the hills, a blue globe instead of a cross for—

STONE
What are you saying?
(challenging)
A *voice?*

PEREGRINE
(nodding)
Yes. A voice.
(pause)
***His* voice, Father Stone.**

In Bradbury's story it isn't Father Peregrine that speaks aloud this realization but rather the skeptical fundamentalist Stone, an all-important difference:

"And you know," said Father Stone finally, fixing his eyes on Brother Mathias, who strode ahead with the glass sphere tenderly carried in his arms, that glass sphere with the blue phosphorus light glowing forever inside it, "you know, Father Peregrine, that globe there—"
"Yes?"
"It's Him. It *is* Him, after all."
Father Peregrine smiled, and they walked down out of the hills toward the new town.

Bradbury means that Stone also comes to know what Peregrine has already discovered: that the *meaning* of Christ, of human perfection, can assume many forms. But by having Peregrine see Christ in the Martian, Matheson shows all the grace of one of his Van Helsings blundering towards another Dracula with an enormous crucifix: *his* Father Peregrine, still hankering after the earthly Christ, has learned absolutely nothing from this close encounter!

SEEING IS *NOT* BELIEVING

By sticking close to Bradbury, Matheson expects us to accept his Mars on faith. But unless we know at the outset that everything is only meant to be like a dream—a better way of treating Bradbury were it not for his damnably persistent Martian setting—the visual medium requires greater realism, the kind Bradbury cannot inherently provide.

Herewith is a sampling of the plot improbabilities transferred directly to the screen from Bradbury:

- That much of the supposedly great Martian civilization could be so easily exterminated by a disease like smallpox from astronauts in a space program where decontamination has always been paramount—and from an Earth civilization where that disease has all but disappeared.
- That Jeff Spender, with no previously mentioned background in medicine or archeology, can recognize deaths from a little-known disease, determine that alien beings have been dead precisely 10 days and know that four out of five Martian cities have been abandoned for a thousand years.
- That in "Mars is Heaven!" trained astronauts would ever believe for a minute that they could have found on Mars an exact duplicate of Green Bluff, Illinois, as it used to be—or that the Martians would go to so much trouble just to murder intruders. (The production team, incidentally, must have felt obliged to compete with Martian mentality when it erected that town on Malta rather than filming the segment in any of countless small towns closer to home!)
- That the Martian civilization so susceptible to an Earth disease would also boast powers of illusion that could recreate an entire town from another planet or make Martians appear to be anyone an Earthling wanted.
- That Mars, particularly when colonies were still in their infancy, would ever attract Christian proselytizers when no proof existed that there were any aliens to convert.
- That Earthlings, settled in on Mars within a phenomenal seven years, would so quickly rush back to Earth only to be extinguished in a global nuclear war.
- That in the next quarter of a century someone like Hathaway would have the wherewithal—on another planet yet—to create perfect android replicas of his wife and daughter.
- That, apparently just to make a literary point, someone on Mars would burn not only Earth documents but his own perfectly good rocket ship.

Actually there are two problems exemplified here. First, Bradbury's material is painfully obsolete. The Mars of 1950 with canals and silver spires is not the Mars of 1980. And second, these separate stories do not come together with a single vision of what the Martians are. With their emphasis on masks and illusion, however, the Martians could have been characterized more consistently according to the overriding theme—that their own powers of illusion demonstrated a fatal inflexibility much as the Earthlings' dreams of past glories incapacitated them both on Earth and on Mars.

But Matheson's revision of this vision only adds to the improbabilities. Striving for a continuity alien to the original book, Matheson is forced to use Wilder as a unifying thread, which only focuses the absurd inconsistancies of the screen reality: Wilder, Spender and Parkhill swilling at a cocktail party on the eve before the launch of the first rocket; Wilder traveling back to Earth to rescue his brother from the imminent nuclear conflict when his brother and family could have escaped without him; Wilder coming back to Mars just in time to watch Hathaway croak and stepping outside Hathaway's hut and conveniently noting the graves of the wife and daughter. And so on.

'I think most people feel the director was a failure and it was a bore. Some parts of it were excellent, thank God, but that's not good enough, is it?'
Ray Bradbury

Right: Maggie Wright as Ylla pines for the vision of her Earth lover which came to her in a dream, while her husband Mr. K (James Faulkner) does a slow burn, then goes out and shoots the first expedition from Earth in "Ylla." Cynthia Tingey's costumes for the Martians have a nice Grecian fluidity which works well with George Frost's futuristic makeup concept.

What makes these improbabilities even more absurd are the similarly unevocative, unconvincing and uninspired sets, props and special effects.

Sometimes they work. Costume designer Cynthia Tingey reminds us appropriately of Grecian fluidity with the long white gowns slit at the sides. When Maggie Wright as the bored but love-sick Martian housewife Ylla walks in that gown through the fog wreathing through her hut, the mood is properly dreamlike. Make-up man George Frost has also come up with an interesting conception for the Martians, their hairless, earless faces lending futurism to the fluidity. (One can't help wondering, though, that if Martians are so acutely attuned to "listening" to their books, wouldn't their auditory sensors logically be *larger* rather than non-existent?) The masks, vital to the theme, alternate between being fitting and fatuous. But more often than not, they fail.

All we have to show for past Martian majesty—besides Spender's empty words—are those cheap-looking sets of geometric rocks from art director Assheton Gorton, who worked on Antonioni's BLOW-UP (1966), and those 45 phony matte paintings by ALIEN artist Ray Caple. It's essential that we see Bradbury's "crystal cities" up close so we can know their tarnished beauty for ourselves. But we never do. Matheson explains that the space command center—the least essential set and where much of the series' time is wasted—also took too much of the money. "They had to cut corners which was unfortunate," he said. "It would have been better had they taken some of that money and spent it on the Martian stuff."

And those *weapons*! If the producers were too tight to have laser-like beams animated in on the film afterwards, why couldn't they avoid showing us the weapons firing by, say, closing in on the Martian faces and implying more sophisticated weapons with sound effects? Their guns and the primitive pistols of the Earthlings only jar us away from the illusion that any of this could happen even in the near future on a nearby world.

As for the special effects, Matheson's praise is reserved for scenes without John (STAR WARS) Stears' embarrassing miniatures. "I thought the sandship sequence was effective where they weren't shown in miniature," he said, "where you got the illusion of movement although nothing was actually moving. Where you actually saw all the sandships in one scene it didn't quite have that same feeling." When asked about the destruction of the Earth, which in one scene is depicted as a shriveling red wafer seen through Parkhill's small refractor telescope (which could never have magnified it so), Matheson focuses only on the stock cuts: "One had to wonder why they used the mushroom cloud when it turned out that this bomb didn't destroy property anyway. It was like a neutron bomb; it just vaporized people. There again it was a financial thing. They were stuck. They had to do something and they couldn't very well destroy their set so they just did what they could."

The fact is, the space command set, that stock footage of the Saturn 5 taking off from Canaveral and the hydrogen bomb being detonated, those ridiculous miniatures spurting flames in the vacuum of space on their way to Mars, sandships scooting across a table-top set like wind-up decoy ducks—all of these could have been cut. Particularly when expense is so important as it was here, suggestiveness is not only cheaper but better than "realities" that only question the illusion of reality on the screen.

PAPER PUPPETS

If disjointedness, plot improbabilities, and unconvincing sets aren't enough by themselves to deflate these televised realities, we've still got all those undeveloped stereotypic characters under Michael Anderson's flaccid, and presumably indifferent, direction.

The problem with Spender, for instance, is that Matheson never covers up Bradbury's lack of character motivation. Spender defends the Martian ways against the casual selfishness of people like Parkhill simply because Bradbury told him to on paper. Nothing about Spender's past is offered up to rationalize the behavior. The producers may have been groping desperately for a reason by giving the role to a black actor, but the casting—never suggested in the script—actually distorts Bradbury's intent. A black Spender added nothing, according to Matheson, "because I don't think the performance was up to what it should be." That's certainly true since Casey, like so many here, overplays his overwritten lines. But worse, stuffing these self-righteous words into the mouth of a minority, even in this day and age, only calls attention to the blatant moralizing and its mad insincerity. It's not the easiest thing in the world to make friends with a paper puppet.

In the case of Father Peregrine, Matheson misses an opportunity to humanize with a detail that Bradbury does provide. In the book, the blue globes remind Peregrine of the "fire balloons" from his childhood, the fireworks on Independence Day in his small Ohio hometown. That detail alone would have softened the priestly stereotype we're left with. For neither Peregrine nor Stone are interested in anything more than being the first to bring Christianity to a new world—and humans happen to have more inside them than that. An exchange between these two, lifted directly from Bradbury, inadvertantly underlines the problem: "Can't you recognize the human in the inhuman?" asks Peregrine. And Stone quips back, "I'd rather recognize the inhuman in the human. The scene is ironic, since there's nothing even remotely human about either of them.

The character of Wilder, of course, is where the script fails us the most. He, above all, has to be more than another Matheson marionette. But all we know about Wilder is that he loves his wife and brother. Very homey, but that's not enough. Matheson believed the character portrayed by Hudson grows in the course of the six hours: "He became more and more disenchanted with the Earth effort to colonize Mars," Matheson said. "Things were happening just as they had on Earth." But does Wilder really change? By the opening of the second night of the miniseries, seated at dinner with Peregrine long after the Spender episode, Wilder is already saying, "Too many people are taking advantage of what's going on. Bringing things to Mars I'd hoped we'd left behind. Graft—corruption—bureaucracy. It's a pity." But we haven't seen anything happen to him that would explain why he has lost his naive expectations. Matheson also praised Rock Hudson's "interpretation" of the character: "I thought he was fine. He was very sincere, strong." But the stone-faced Hudson, duplicating his non-performance in that SF picture three years ago, EMBRYO, only entombs us further in the Gorgon curse of this script.

But what ultimately kills any hope for life in this television adaptation is the easiest trap and the worst mistake a screenwriter can make: the teleplay talks us to death. Rather than dramatic interaction, characters incessantly talk to each other.

Although he can still get away with poetic excess in dialogue and description on the written page, Bradbury himself has recognized the importance of a crucial shift towards visualization in another medium. When he was working on his own adaptation of the *Chronicles*, he told Frank Roberts in the March 1967 *Writer's Digest*, "I'm trying to write a silent picture as much as possible."

'Matheson seems anxious to compete with the windiness of the Martian surface, stressing Bradbury's gift for overwriting, literary affectation and armchair moralizing.'

Right: The ghost of another "last" Martian (Terence Longdon) preaches to Wilder about how to live life in "Night Meeting." Left: Author Ray Bradbury seated at NASA's Mission Control. Bradbury's original Chronicles, *published in 1950, are hopelessly outdated by today's standards, yet screenwriter Richard Matheson tries unsuccessfuly to wed them to the realities of today's space program.*

But Matheson seems anxious to compete with the windiness of the Martian surface, stressing instead Bradbury's gift for repetitious overwriting, literary affectation and armchair moralizing.

Any conscientious scriptwriter would have at least approached with greater caution someone like Bradbury who eschews the title of "science fiction writer" (actually his "science" is non-existent) for labels like "cautionary fabulist" or a "writer of moral fairy tales." As Bradbury put it with only some degree of levity, "I realize very late in life now that I could have made a fine priest or minister." He is at his best when his messages come across as insightful commentaries on the human condition rather than jeremiads against moral turpitude. Rather than aiming for that more literate subtlety, however, Matheson demonstrates all the sensitivity of a blustering, hell-and-damnation preacher. Spender is little more than that when he hammers home exactly what Matheson means the miniseries to teach: "No matter how we touch Mars, we'll never really be able to touch it. So we'll get mad and rip it up. Change it to suit ourselves. Ruin it. Just the way we've ruined Earth." Towards the end the wise Martian Wilder meets actually tells us how we should lead our lives in order to avoid making the mistakes that destroyed Earth and almost did the same to Mars:

By living life for itself, don't you see. Deriving pleasure from the gift of pure being. Life is its own answer! Accept it and enjoy it, day by day. Live as well as possible, expect no more. Destroy nothing, humble nothing, look for fault in nothing. Leave, unsullied and untouch, all that is beautiful. Hold that which lives in all reverence—for life itself is given by the sovereign of our universe; given to be savored, to be. . . ***luxuriated*** **in. To be** ***respected.***

Thank you, Kahlil Gibran! In both cases, Matheson may overdo the greeting-card obviousness, but the sentiment, if not always the words, are disastrously true to Bradbury: what may have sounded profound for the lackluster science fiction of the 1950s comes off as hackneyed and exploitative.

When we don't have sermons, we get needless overstatement, particularly from the off-screen narrator. The entire "Mars is Heaven" episode is a good example. It only emphasizes the silliness when we have to listen to the crew's musings about why they have landed in a town just like Green Bluff—that Mars might have evolved *exactly* as Earth, that the men have perhaps been sent back in time through a "space warp" (shouldn't that be a "time" warp?), that there might have been space travel back on Earth when nobody knew about it and those who emigrated to Mars now suffer from acute homesickness! Then there's Capt. Black speculating aloud in the bedroom with his brother that he couldn't be with his dead brother and therefore this fellow must be a Martian—all of which takes long enough for poison he's been given to take affect—only, of course, after the alien has given us *his* lengthy explanation for the masquerade!

As if this isn't enough, the narrator at the end of this story states with sentimental overkill what we could have more effectively seen for ourselves through the camera:

The minister makes a sad speech, his face sometimes looking like himself, sometimes looking like something else. Mother and Father Black are there with brother Edward. As they weep, their faces melt, now and then, from a familiar face into something altogether different. The caskets are lowered. Someone murmurs something about the sudden and unexpected deaths of three fine men during the night. Dirt pounds down on the casket lids. Then everyone goes back into town.

While the figures and then the town are slowly faded off the screen, these words only force us to consider why they have just acted that way when there's no longer anybody to act for.

When the characters don't tell us the obvious, they drive other things into the ground through unceasing repetition. Peregrine, for instance, keeps wondering to either Stone or Wilder whether there are *really* any Martians still left alive. Parkhill likewise brings the story to a standstill when he has to recount in detail at the beginning of the third night in the series his encounter with the Martian sandships. Subliminal flashbacks do the same at the end when Wilder remembers Spender's warnings, that protean Martian's death, Parkhill's close encounter and the Earth's destruction. Some of the redundancies exist either to remind us of a faint continuity or to bring up to date viewers who might have missed past episodes. Neither is excuse enough for more television boredom.

Matheson permeates the dialogue with so many idiotically obvious observations and such incredible overstatement that the project constantly seems aimed at the kind of audience mentality that appreciated BATTLESTAR GALACTICA.

Wilder leaves nothing to our imagination when he burns his pages and tells his son, "I'm buning what's behind us, Robert. Burning a way of life. Just like that way of life was burned on Earth." Wouldn't it have been a subtler analogy showing us another subliminal flashback instead of the Earth catching fire?

Self-mockery might have salvaged some of these passages, but what little appears here shows us either Bradbury or Matheson trying too hard. At the end of "The Off Season," for instance, we might believe the sarcasm of a reluctant wife who doesn't much care for her husband even if she has journeyed all the way to Mars to be with him. But we can't accept the offhandedness Matheson retains from Bradbury's story. After witnessing Earth's destruction and the end of any hope for a livelihood on Mars as cafe owners, she turns to her husband and says, "It looks like it's going to be an off season." When Matheson makes up humor of his own, it lacks the ironic punch he has so masterfully shown us in much of his fiction. We only cringe when the supposedly soul-searching Peregrine, thinking them to be irrevocably lost, says to Stone, "Keep the faith, Father." The pun is as corny in "The Silent Towns" when Driscoll responds to Genevieve's desire for a massage with words like, "*I* could stimulate your blood cells."

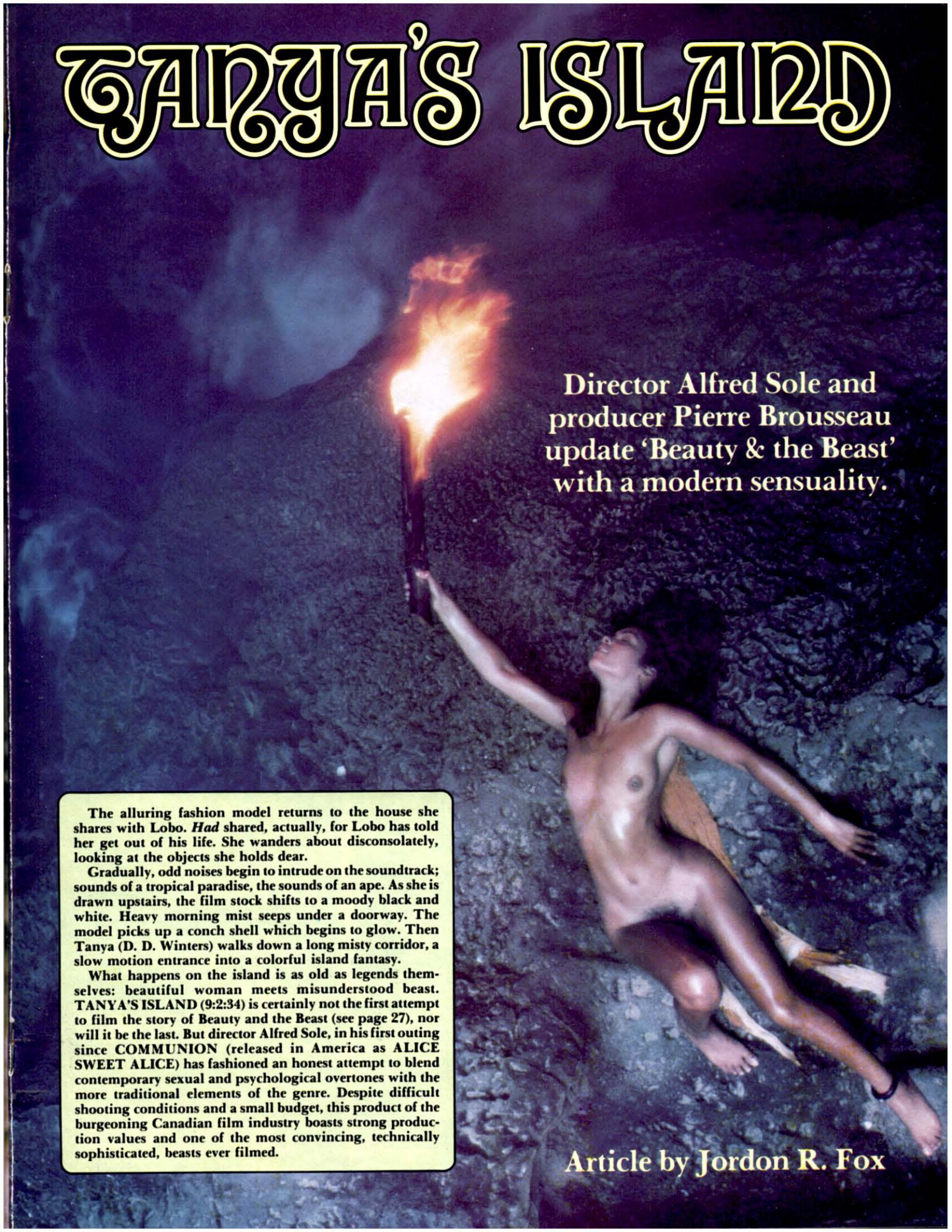
In too many cases, it's words rather than credible action; endless narrative rather than drama.

How then could the *Chronicles* have been improved? If it had to be made into a film at all—and it remains a lousy source for any filmed treatment—Bradbury's book should have been set aside in favor of a more cinematic approach.

Matheson takes all the flaws of the original—the cracker-barrel moralism, the wordiness and the unbelievable plots and characters—and magnifies them tenfold by trying to translate them intact to the television screen with a bungled token effort at continuity through the hollow figure of Wilder. Padded with unessential and embarrassing special effects, extended to an unendurable six hours in a futile attempt to make back the squandered $8 million, the writer, director and producers miss the only ways they had of infusing some life into Bradbury's aging world: to dramatize rather than discourse, to employ Wilder as the story's narrator, to compress the loosely linked stories into one demonstrating a singleness of purpose within a standard two-hour format and to recognize the values of unity of place.

Only a truly new version of Bradbury's *Chronicles*, it seems, could have succeeded as a movie. This TV version will live on only as one more unnecessary reminder that, as Bradbury himself might have said, we should never try to relive the flamboyance and foibles of the past exactly as they were. □

TANYA'S ISLAND



Director Alfred Sole and producer Pierre Brousseau update 'Beauty & the Beast' with a modern sensuality.

The alluring fashion model returns to the house she shares with Lobo. *Had* shared, actually, for Lobo has told her get out of his life. She wanders about disconsolately, looking at the objects she holds dear.

Gradually, odd noises begin to intrude on the soundtrack; sounds of a tropical paradise, the sounds of an ape. As she is drawn upstairs, the film stock shifts to a moody black and white. Heavy morning mist seeps under a doorway. The model picks up a conch shell which begins to glow. Then Tanya (D. D. Winters) walks down a long misty corridor, a slow motion entrance into a colorful island fantasy.

What happens on the island is as old as legends themselves: beautiful woman meets misunderstood beast. TANYA'S ISLAND (9:2:34) is certainly not the first attempt to film the story of Beauty and the Beast (see page 27), nor will it be the last. But director Alfred Sole, in his first outing since COMMUNION (released in America as ALICE SWEET ALICE) has fashioned an honest attempt to blend contemporary sexual and psychological overtones with the more traditional elements of the genre. Despite difficult shooting conditions and a small budget, this product of the burgeoning Canadian film industry boasts strong production values and one of the most convincing, technically sophisticated, beasts ever filmed.

Article by Jordon R. Fox

TANYA'S ISLAND depicts what few 'Beauty & the Beast' films ever dared!

Below: Tanya (D. D. Winters) flees with the Beast who has stolen her away from her lover, Lobo. Bottom: Lobo (Richard Sargent), enraged by Tanya's affection for the Beast becomes progressively more savage. Preceeding Page: Tanya signals her beast to come to her, perched precariously on the rock face of his deep cave open to the sky, a stunning Puerto Rican location.

Most interestingly, director Sole and producer Pierre Brousseau have elected to depict what few (if any) serious Beauty and the Beast films have ever dared: what the beast *really* wants to do with his new found friend.

The TANYA'S ISLAND project, as yet unscheduled for U. S. release but set to debut in Canada in May, began with Brousseau as a marketing concept. Having spent the last six years with Filmplan International, a Canadian-based distribution company, Brousseau noted how certain films handled by Filmplan (including the EMMANUELLE films) did well without expensive promotional campaigns. Brousseau decided a film with a similar European flavor, exploitable sex ("sensuousness," he corrected) and a storyline paying *hommage* to two films he admired—Cocteau's BEAUTY AND THE BEAST and LORD OF THE FLIES—could be successful on the international market.

Brousseau took his story treatment to director Sole, whom he had worked with on a script years before, and whose COMMUNION was distributed in Canada by Filmplan. Though COMMUNION bombed commercially, Brousseau saw something in the film, and in Sole's work, that he liked. "People who really have talent," he said, "can show it when there's very little money to work with."

As with most projects, the script went through several changes between concept and celluloid. Apparently, the sexual references in the original version were too obvious for some—make-up wizard Rick Baker (KING KONG, INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN, STAR WARS) designed the Beast, but expressed reservations about getting involved fearing the film would get an X-rating.

A second draft written by Sole and Mick Garris was rejected for its pronounced tongue-in-cheek approach but a third draft hammered out in Canada by Sole, Brousseau and Rosemary Ritvo (who co-wrote COMMUNION) proved acceptable.

Tanya is a vulnerable model. She lives in Toronto with Lobo (Richard Sargent), a surrealist painter who abruptly ends the relationship, the shock of which sends Tanya drifting into an idyllic fantasy life with Lobo on an apparently uninhabited tropical island. But exploring a volcanic cavern, Tanya meets the island's third inhabitant: a baboon-like creature with bright blue eyes and a flowing mane who bears more than a slight resemblance to a character from one of Lobo's paintings. She passes out only to awaken on a bed of beautiful wildflowers obviously arranged for her. Placing one of the flowers in her hair, her fear is gone.

But the friendly Beast, with whom Tanya spends more and more time, is seen as a rival by Lobo. And so begins the role reversal between man and beast and the private war on the island for possession of Tanya. Boy meets girl meets ape. Boy loses girl. Ape gets girl. The lyrical fantasy turns into a nightmare, and at film's end the audience is left wondering exactly where reality ended and fantasy took over.

"The whole basis of the concept," said Brousseau, "is that this is not an animal,

BEAUTY & THE BEASTS

Heroines in the grip of a hairy paw—a Hollywood staple

***TANYA'S ISLAND** is but the latest example of one of the most enduring of Hollywood's cliches—"Beauty and the Ape." Dating back to silent pictures, uncounted jungle and horror programmers have shown at some point the ape carrying off the girl. Shown top right and moving counterclockwise are a few examples: 1) **KING KONG** ('33), the best known and most beloved, with top screamer Fay Wray being groped by Willis O'Brien's animated ape; 2) **MIGHTY JOE YOUNG** ('49), O'Brien's followup, where cowpoke Ben Johnson and Joe form a* menage a trois *with beauty Terry Moore. 3) The '76 **KING KONG** had feminist Jessica Lange to add a new slant; 4) **KING OF THE CONGO** ('52), a Buster Crabbe serial with a classic B-picture gorilla; 5) **KONGA** ('61); and 6) **SCHLOCK!** ('73), a John Landis satire that attempts to sum-up all the absurdities of this particular subgenre, with an ape built and played by Rick Baker, the artist who designed the ape suit in **TANYA'S ISLAND**. All of these owe a debt to one of the most enduring of story forms in the entire genre of fantasy, the fairytale legend of "Beauty & the Beast," often filmed itself. Shown at right is **LA BELLE ET LA BETE** ('46), widely considered to be the most definitive version, filmed by poet Jean Cocteau. **THE BEAST** ('78), was the first film to make the tale sexually explicit, filmed by Polish director Walerian Borowczyk. As a playful reference, **TANYA'S ISLAND** director Alfred Sole uses **MIGHTY JOE YOUNG** clips on a TV monitor during the main titles of Tanya's modeling work.*

Below: Mime Don McCleod prepares to suit up as the Beast, and adjusts the cables which make the head mechanisms operate. Note the Beast's hands resting on the cliff face at left. Bottom: D. D. Winters and McCleod rehearse a scene with the camera operator, outfitted with a body harness to carry the Steadicam unit which simplified shooting in the rugged Puerto Rican locales.

'Making a movie in Puerto Rico,' says Alfred Sole, 'is Apocalypse *manana!*'

a creature equal to man. Tanya was not at all involved with the ape on a sexual level, but that is all the man can see. He makes it impossible for her to befriend the animal. What we have is the violence of two worlds against the female, the weaker sex. At the end the ape rapes her because he has seen this is the way man treats the female. When the ape comes into contact with 'society,' the ape becomes more and more like man, just as the man becomes more like a beast."

Though the story is lyrical, production problems were brutal. Making TANYA'S ISLAND proved to be a study in doing without: without rudimentary things like tables and chairs, trailers for the crew (they ended up making crude shelters out of palm leaves) and even water or electricity at many locations. Much of the film was shot in the wilds of Puerto Rico, in areas unserved by roads or other such conveniences. Accomodations reserved for the production went instead to participants in the Pan-American Games, and most of the crew ended up rooming for 10 days at a sleazy, bug-infested motel (actually a brothel) until Brousseau managed to book a floor at a Hilton 50 miles away.

For director Sole, the lack of help from the newly formed and inexperienced Puerto Rican Film Commission meant more than just inconvenience. "I made a movie without seeing one foot of film!" he said. "We could not get dailies over there. I didn't even know if I was covered on half the stuff. I was just winging and shooting it. What'd I know? I'm used to shooting in Patterson.

"Making a movie in Puerto Rico," he said, "is Apocalypse Manana!"

A major factor in choosing Puerto Rico was a spectacular deep cave, partially open to the sky, with natural pools at the bottom. A natural choice for the Beast's lair, but even this decision caused problems. "The simplest thing, like the water source dripping into the cavern, became a special effect," said Sole. "That water was brought by hose over a mountain from the sea. It shows you the hardships the crew had in getting the basic minimum we would need."

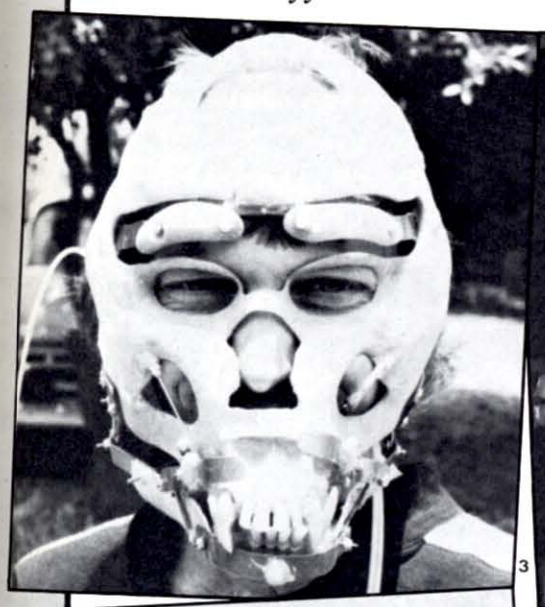
Equipment stranded when the DC10s were grounded cost Sole five shooting days. "Right off, I was into the script throwing pages away," he said. Scenes deleted helped explain why Tanya was leaving Lobo for the beast and helped make her situation on the island more clear. Even so, to get back on schedule 15-hour days became the rule.

Total disaster was only averted by two strokes of fortuitous planning. First was hiring David Cronenberg's (RABID, THE BROOD) regular crew, one of the top Canadian film crews, which relied on its cool professionalism in trying situations. The second was the early decision to shoot most of the film with a Steadicam, allowing Sole to negotiate a schedule that spared little or no rehearsal time and demanded 40 set-ups a day on rocky terrain.

If the crew had a hard time on the film, life for the cast was no picnic. D. D. Winters had to climb up the towering rock walls of the cavern and ride a horse as if born to the saddle, though she had never ridden before. "They risked their lives," said Sole, "riding along the edge of a cliff, doing things that if the horse turned the wrong way, it would have been all over—even for an experienced

HOW TO MAKE AN APE

Effects makeup artist Rob Bottin pulls the strings



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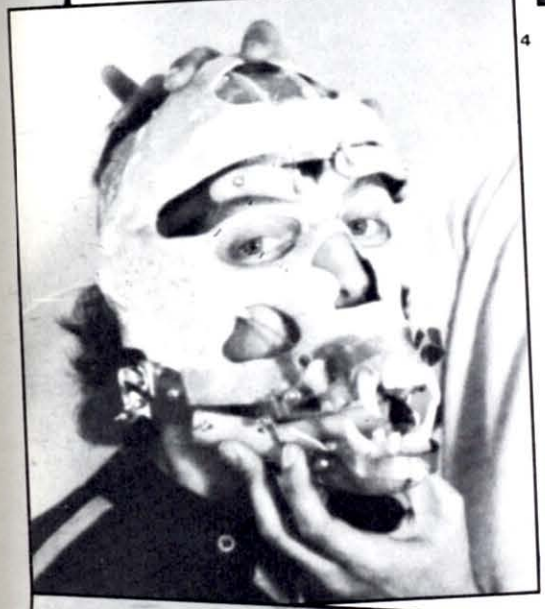

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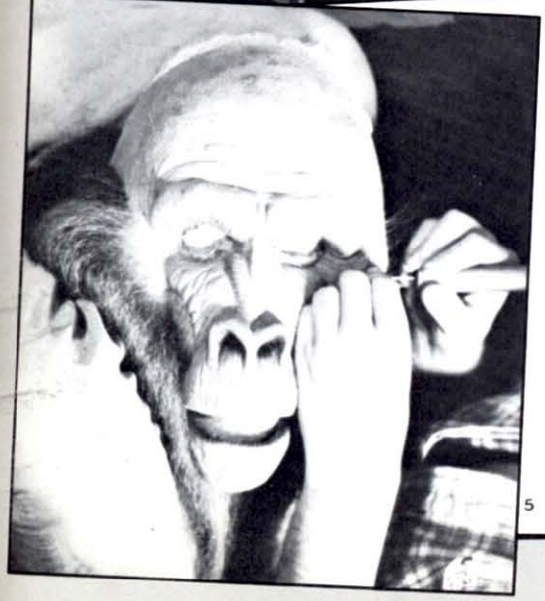

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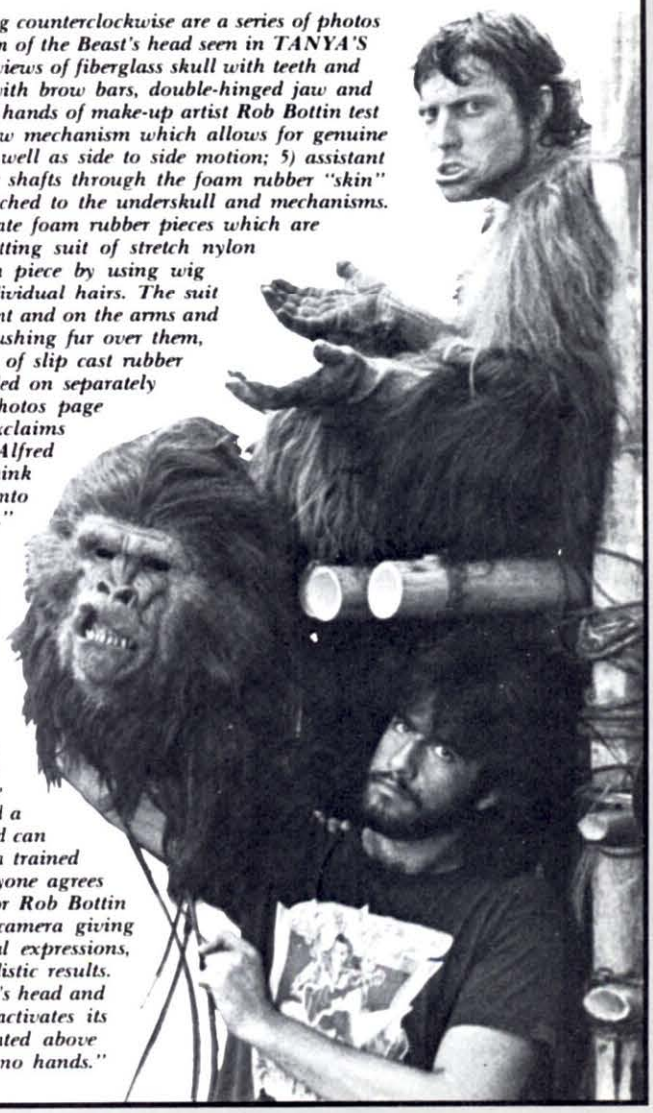
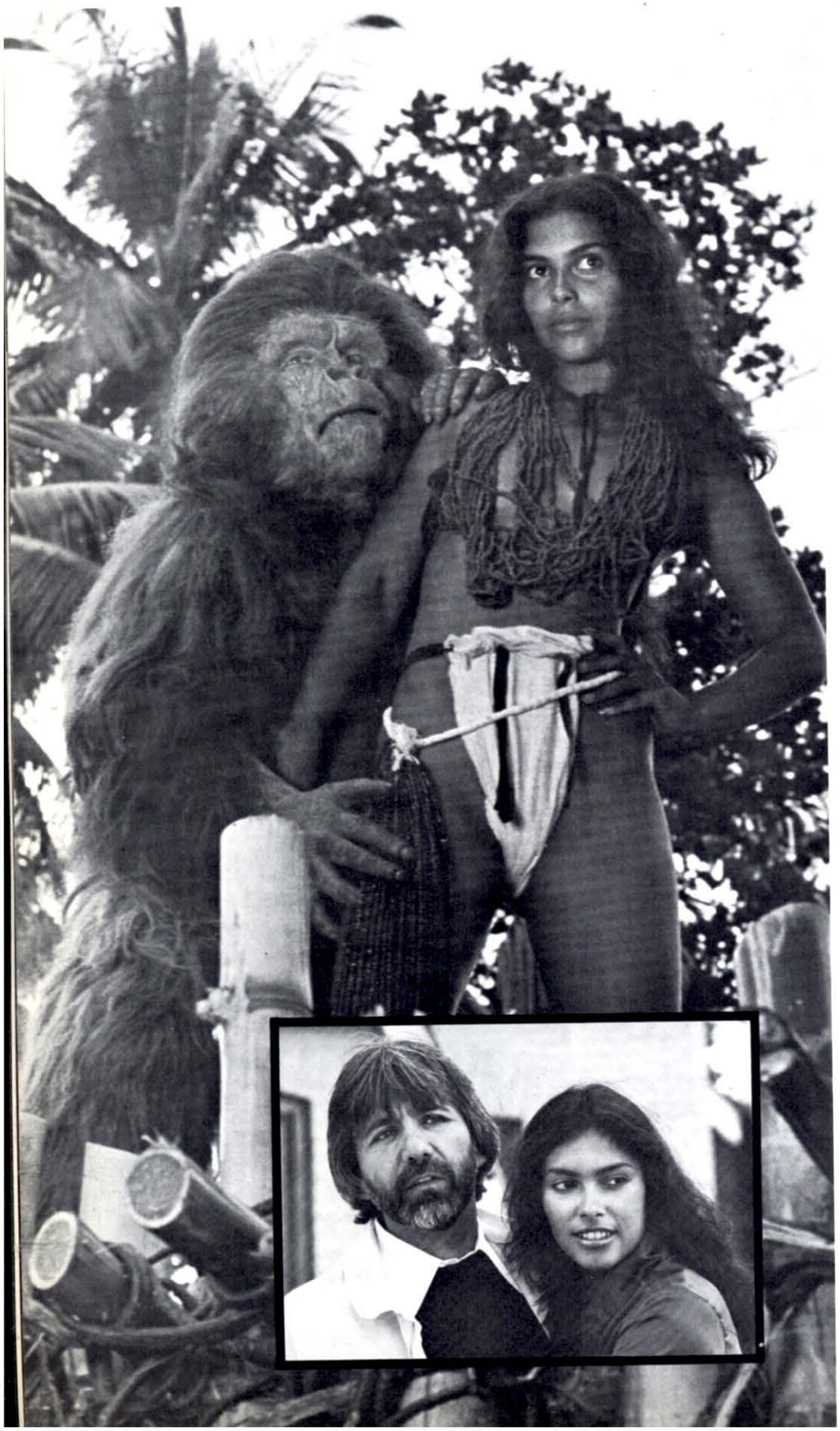
Shown top right and proceeding counterclockwise are a series of photos which illustrate the construction of the Beast's head seen in TANYA'S ISLAND: 1&2) Front and side views of fiberglass skull with teeth and unhinged jaw; 3) underskull with brow bars, double-hinged jaw and two of eight cables attached; 4) hands of make-up artist Rob Bottin test action of the double-hinged jaw mechanism which allows for genuine chewing: an up and down as well as side to side motion; 5) assistant Shawn McEnroe punches hair shafts through the foam rubber "skin" of the face, which is then attached to the underskull and mechanisms. The suit itself is cast in separate foam rubber pieces which are glued or sewn onto a tight-fitting suit of stretch nylon Spandex. Fur is sewn to each piece by using wig wefts, little bunches of ten individual hairs. The suit is equipped with zippers in front and on the arms and legs for easy access, hid by brushing fur over them, and is complete with addition of slip cast rubber feet and hands which are pulled on separately and overlapped by fur (see photos page opposite). "It is the best," exclaims TANYA'S ISLAND director Alfred Sole, "especially when you think of all the money that went into De Laurentiis' KING KONG." Filmmaker Pierre Brousseau agrees, and adds, "You look at PLANET OF THE APES, the effects makeup of which absolutely everyone praised, and it shows how much the method has evolved in the last five or six years." There were still some limitations admits Sole, mainly a need to keep the suit's zippers hidden from view, which curtailed the desired movements. This placed a restraint on what Don McCleod can accomplish with the part, as a trained mime inside the suit. Yet everyone agrees that McCleod and beast creator Rob Bottin who activated the cables off camera giving the beast a repertoire of facial expressions, achieved some remarkably realistic results. At right, Bottin holds the beast's head and pulls one of the cables that activates its snarl, as partner McCleod seated above in the suit snarls, "Look ma, no hands."



Right & Below: Tanya (D. D. Winters) and Blue (Don McCleod), her Beast. Make-up artist Rob Bottin who built the amazingly realistic costume, jokingly refers to the Beast as "your basic blond, blue-eyed, all-American surfer monkey." Bottom inset: Winters with TANYA'S ISLAND director Alfred Sole. Winters, a model, was cast after producer Pierre Brousseau spotted her in a magazine.

D. D. Winters, cast as Tanya, is soon to make all former '10s' obsolete.



rider. We didn't realize it. We just had to do it, and we did it. At the end of a day it might sink in."

But the biggest risk was taken by mime Don McCleod, the man behind the mask (with McCleod's baby blues peering out from behind the suit, choosing a name for the Beast was simple: it was immediately dubbed Blue). McCleod passed out while filming a scene at the bottom of the isolated cave on a hot humid day. Struggling under heavy fur and rubber masks that made movement and breathing difficult ("Every time he ran more than 10 feet, he would stop and fall to his knees," said Sole. "You couldn't push him), McCleod nearly gave his life for the production.

"At the hospital they told us that two minutes more without oxygen to the skin—caused by the tightness of the rubber—and he would have died," said Brousseau. "Don took a chance on his own for the sake of the production, but it could have been lethal."

Lethal not only for McCleod, but for TANYA'S ISLAND as well. The film's creators agree that without the realistic portrayal of the beast there would be no film. And Sole and Brousseau spare no words in praising McCleod and Rob Bottin, who built and operated the suit with a series of short cables (see preceding page, and a previous technical article, 9:2:34).

"I loved that beast," said Brousseau. "There's no way in the world you could think this is not an ape, unless you consider that you are in a theater watching a movie. Don McCloud was so clever and so emotional, projecting only with movements and his eyes. You could care for that ape. It was not just a creature, it was a creature with feeling."

"Let's face it—it could have been a man in a monkey suit," said Sole. "If the Beast didn't work for the audience, there's no movie. It had to breathe, the lips had to move, it had to snore, had to blink its eyes. You *had* to buy it."

And what proportion of the film's $1 million budget went towards things simian? "Not very much," said Sole. "They [Bottin and McCleod] performed miracles on a shoestring. We had no second suit, no duplicates of anything."

While McCleod is the face behind the mask, a lamp was nearly the voice. Sole found what he wanted when he stumbled on the sound of a dying oil lantern—something halfway between a whisper and a growl. Though it sounded wonderful to the ear, it didn't record that way for technical reasons, and more conventional ape sounds (an actor's voice) were dubbed in later in Toronto.

But at least Sole got *most* of what he wanted. "What I wanted to achieve was a contemporary fairy tale," he said, "maybe taking it where BEAUTY AND THE BEAST was afraid to go. Right now I'm too close to judge. What does a girl say to a beast, anyway? It could have been silly. At least you don't laugh. I look at the film now not in terms of the film itself, but what we accomplished despite the production problems, things that were really rough but were made to work. Good or bad, the film works technically and cinematically. I feel good about that." □

COMING

MANIAC

DAWN OF THE DEAD gore meets STARCRASH sex in a summer psycho saga

By David Bartholomew

A simple plot device—a psycho on a wild killing spree—is the engine behind MANIAC, a powerfully violent film directed and independently co-produced (with Andrew Garroni) by Bill Lustig. The film stars Caroline Munro and executive producer Joe Spinell, and features the graphic makeup talents of Tom Savini, best known for his work with George Romero on DAWN OF THE DEAD. MANIAC wrapped five weeks of location shooting in the New York City area late in 1979 and is currently targeted for a summer release.

Lustig, a friendly, energetic, slightly tubby man, comes out of the New York porno film industry, producing and directing (under the pseudonym "Billy Bagg") several hardcore films, including HOT HONEY and THE VIOLATION OF CLAUDIA. For MANIAC, however, Lustig is shifting his commercial focus from vice to violence, and from sex to scares.

"I see the difference between those horror pictures that break loose, like JAWS or THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and those that don't," said Lustig, whose previous genre experience included assisting with the special effects on the ill-fated and under-distributed ALICE SWEET ALICE. "Those films move. They have energy. They're like riding the Cyclone at Coney Island. The problem with a horror film like ALICE SWEET ALICE is that it is too static. My editor, Lorenzo Marinelli, tells me that the usual genre picture has spurts of action every nine or 10 minutes. He rough-timed what we have done on MANIAC, and it comes out close to six. Even he was surprised."

To insure that MANIAC won't be as static as ALICE, Lustig is relying on the talents of Munro and Savini, separately and together, to keep the audience hooked. Munro was actually the third choice for the role of a curvaceous photographer who accidentally snaps a picture of a maniac (Joe Spinell) who is killing beautiful women. Originally, Daria Nicolini, wife of Italian director Dario Argento, was set to star, but an Italian telefilm she was making dragged on into the shooting schedule for MANIAC.

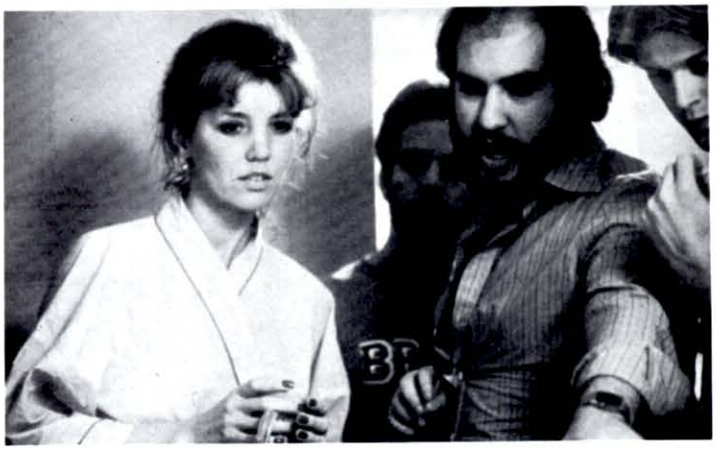
"She was suddenly unavailable," Lustig said. "We picked another girl here in New York to take over, and well, Caroline happened in."

"It was a strange thing how it all happened," said Munro, lounging in jeans and a Hopalong Cassidy shirt in a New York hotel, waiting to see if the producers wanted any of her scenes reshot. "My husband Judd [Hamilton, a musician and composer] and I attended a SF convention here, and at the fancy dress ball Tom Savini was sitting at our table."

Introductions led to small talk led to a late-night phone call from Spinell, who had worked with Munro on STAR CRASH. "Joe called my hotel and asked me to do it," said Munro, who now has ten films to her credit, not including her American debut as an extra in CASINO ROYALE. "I looked at some rushes, which were mostly dialogue scenes, and I met Bill [Lustig]. Of course, they were in the midst of shooting. Joe sent the script over to my hotel at 11 p.m. and said I had an hour to make up my mind, since the other girl was technically ready to start. He phoned at midnight. I said OK, and he said, 'Great, see you at 6 a.m. tomorrow.'"

Lustig met Savini, who is handling the special effects and makeup chores, through George Romero's producer, Richard Rubinstein, sometime after the release of DAWN OF THE DEAD. MANIAC is full of bloody horror effects, "including some that haven't been done before," said Lustig. "Tom is an incredibly fast worker—he's a top-notch professional. He never says, 'I can't do this,' it's always, 'Let's try this or this.' He did one scene in which a guy gets shotgunned through a car windshield—Tom timed the shattering windshield with blood effects on the dummy inside. We also show a guy getting his head torn off by the maniac's hands alone. We will be as explicit as DAWN OF THE DEAD. I would hate to get an X rating, but we may be stuck with it. I admire the way Rubenstein handled DAWN, in that he pointed up the inequities of the system, made an issue of it, and distributed the film, quite successfully, without a rating."

Caroline Munro



Top: MANIAC co-star and executive producer Joe Spinell comes to a bloody end after Caroline Munro decapitates him with a shovel; makeup by Tom Savini. Bottom: Bill Lustig, in his first genre film, directs Gail Lawrence.

Lustig wouldn't say much about the story itself, other than to acknowledge that by the time it's over, everyone will have been killed at least once. Everyone, that is, except Munro. "How could you kill off a heroine like Caroline?" Lustig asked. Munro is also the only character to escape the maniac's (and Savini's) bloody touch, a loss that suits her just fine.

"I'm not really too keen on violence in films," said Munro, "unless there's a moral point behind it." When DAWN OF THE DEAD was mentioned, she gasped, "Oh, I would *never* be able to get through it. But frankly, I was fascinated with Tom's work. I'd not seen too much of those kinds of effects. I'd go on the set just to watch: he rigged up exploding heads, girls having their scalps ripped off, and for the conclusion, Tom made a model of Joe's head which was then crushed by all the women he's killed. That happens, of course, after I have killed him with a shovel."

Munro seemed pleased with working on the picture. "It's been marvelous," she said of the location shooting. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world, even though we did a lot of all night shooting and it was very cold."

Lustig said there were few problems during the shooting, despite his film's non-union status in a highly unionized town. "The weather cooperated with us pretty well. We shot all over town, in Queens, Long Island, Central Park, under the Verrazano Bridge, on the beach at Coney Island, even Staten Island. And who shoots *anything* on Staten Island? We also spent three or four nights doing special effects in a beautiful cemetary in Fort Lee, New Jersey."

Robert Lindsay, who worked with Lustig on his porn films, photographed MANIAC and Jay Chattaway is composing an electronic score for release in Dolby stereo. Lustig said he hopes to take the film to Cannes to sell it in May and release it in America shortly thereafter, the same basic pattern Rubinstein and Romero followed with DAWN OF THE DEAD last year. □

Disney/Paramount join forces, combine talents to film DRAGONSLAYER

For the first time in its history, Walt Disney Productions has entered into an agreement with another studio (Paramount) to coproduce two major motion pictures. The initial project, Robert Altman's POPEYE, is currently filming on Malta. The second co-venture, DRAGONSLAYER, joins several other recently announced live-action sword and sorcery productions which have shown exciting preproduction possibilities, including Dino DeLaurentiis' CONAN and Milton Subotsky's THONGOR AND THE VALLEY OF THE DEMONS.

DRAGONSLAYER is set in medieval England and concerns the drama of a small village plagued by marauding dragons. Forced to ritualistically sacrifice maidens to the beasts on a yearly basis, the townspeople turn in desperation to a young sorcerer's apprentice, who has his own plans for dispatching the creatures. Producers Hal Barwood and Matthew Robbins (who is also said to be directing) have penned the DRAGONSLAYER script, which inside sources claim contains a large amount of hard-core violence and fairly graphic sexual situations. Because of these elements, the film is currently being approached with an "R" rating in mind.

Preproduction on DRAGONSLAYER began in February of 1980 in England's Pinewood Studios, where principal photography will also take place. Although the project is still in an embryonic stage, Douglas Trumbull has been hinted as being in overall control of the picture's special effects. Barwood and Robbins also intend to employ stop-motion wizards Jon Berg and Phil Tippet to animate the two Harryhausen-like dragons which are featured prominently (Berg and Tippet's latest work can be seen in THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK).

The full technical involvement of the Disney Studios is unclear at the moment, although plans have been made to supplement the dimensional animation with a full-scale mechanical dragon built under the supervision of Danny Lee, Disney's director of special effects. The studio's matte department, flush with the success of their innovative Matte Scan camera, has also been mentioned as being responsible for DRAGONSLAYER's extensive matte paintings. Other sources, however, have indicated that such matte chores will be handled by George Lucas' new Miniatures Studio, located in San Rafael, California.

It appears that if DRAGONSLAYER gets a final go-ahead and carries along its present talent roster, the 1980s may mark the shift from big-budget space opera to big-budget sword and sorcery films.

Paul M Sammon

FUN HOUSE

No laughs, but plenty of carnival frights in director Tobe Hooper's $4 million shocker

By Bill Kelley

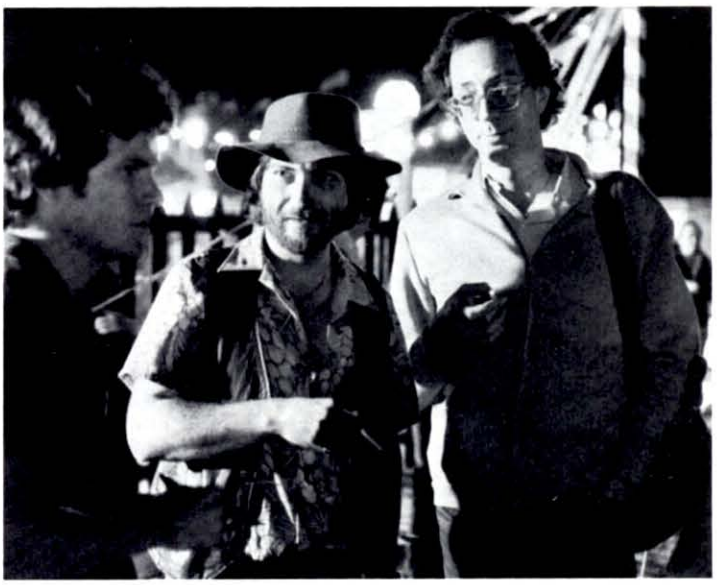
Director Tobe Hooper's follow-up to SALEM'S LOT is FUN HOUSE, a theatrical horror shocker set in a Midwestern carnival and slated for a widespread October release by a major, but still unnamed, distributor. Produced independently, FUN HOUSE began its 30-day shooting schedule March 10 at the Norin Studios in Miami, Florida, which will lodge the entire production. The movie's action focuses on two high school couples who are locked in the carnival's house of horrors overnight—and discover that at least one of its grotesque exhibits, a hideous, sub-human mutant, is *real*.

Hooper and his producers—Mace Neufeld (THE OMEN), Derek Power (who brought THE LAST WAVE to America) and Steven Bernhardt (GET TO KNOW YOUR RABBIT, the Brian DePalma Tom Smothers film)—have contracted Rick Baker to create the monster, whose physical appearance is a closely guarded secret. "We don't want what happened to the producers of ALIEN to happen to us," said Power. "The movie opened, nobody knew what the monster looked like, and the next week there was a full-color picture of it in *Newsweek*."

The producers are also reluctant to discuss FUN HOUSE's budget, though they admit it is modest—between $3 and $4 million. "But it's tough to say," said one insider, "because things are still so spread out, and the big effects have yet to be done." It's Hooper and his producers' intention to release the film in Dolby stereo, with several key 70mm playdates. That, of course, entails more ambitious shooting arrangements than a routine exploitation picture.

FUN HOUSE re-unites Hooper with some old cohorts, and returns him to the thematic foundation of his early horror features: William Finley, who co-starred in Brian DePalma's SISTERS, PHANTOM OF THE PARADISE and THE FURY, and was fed to a crocodile in Hooper's EATEN ALIVE, plays Marco the Magnificent, a dissolute sideshow magician; Mort Rabinowitz, Hooper's production designer on SALEM'S LOT returns in the same capacity, and is responsible for the fun house interior, a huge, two-level structure built from scratch on a Norin sound stage; and Derek Power was executive producer of THE DARK, a film Hooper started but from which, explained Power, "he resigned under pressure from the other producer. Nothing of Tobe's appears in the completed movie. It was an unfortunate situation none of us wants to remember."

The most noticeable similarity FUN HOUSE bears to THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE and EATEN ALIVE (Hooper's first Hollywood movie, which was tampered with by its producers but has a strong cult following) is the strong unity of time. All the action occurs in one night—a very bad night with, in the Hooper tradition, harbingers of doom all around. A drooling geek (played by Dan Carson, an actor and writer and the brother of filmmaker Kit Carson, Karen Black's husband) roams the fairgrounds, the four protagonists are almost hit by another car as they drive up to the carnival, a foul-mouthed old man accosts one of the girls and so on. And looming over the whole setting is the fun house/den of horrors itself, designed and built—along with the entire carnival—by Rabinowitz's crew on the Norin back lot.



Above: (left to right) author Bill Kelley, Tobe Hooper and William Finley relax on the brightly lit midway set, constructed on the back lot of Miami's Norin Studios. Below Right: David Carson as the geek—note chicken legs. (Photos by Greg Oatis.)

How much of FUN HOUSE is Hooper and how much was in the original Larry Block screenplay is initially hard to tell, since a copy of the script was not immediately available. But Hooper and cinematographer Andrew Laszlo (responsible for the garish, ominous look of Walter Hill's THE WARRIORS) have been refining the visual tone of the film on a daily basis.

Rabinowitz said that approximately 200 mechanical figures—from elves, to a huge laughing fat lady, to a 10-foot Oriental—adorn the interior and exterior of the fun house. An accomplished mime, wearing the suit designed and built by Baker, portrays the mutant.

At least six people are savagely murdered in FUN HOUSE. "It will be terrifying and build its suspense steadily," said Hooper, "but there will be an hallucinatory quality. It's not going to be a bloodbath. Don't expect a lot of gore."

Asked about the film's rating, Power replied, "It'll be an R. We're not even going to try for anything less."

Co-starring with Finley are Sylvia Miles, Cooper Huckabee (who appears with John Travolta in URBAN COWBOY), Largo Woodruff (who plays a comic bedroom scene in Woody Allen's new film), Miles Chapin (HAIR, FRENCH POSTCARDS) and Elizabeth Berridge. Kevin Conway (who starred in the PBS adaptation of THE LATHE OF HEAVEN) also appears as the owner of the House of Horrors. □

STEPHEN KING

The master of the horror novel abandons television and turns to writing for the screen

By Paul R. Gagne

For fans of Stephen King, there's both bad news and good news this month.

First, the bad: the NIGHT SHIFT miniseries set for production on NBC has been scrapped, according to King, because the Standards and Practices office felt it was too intense and gruesome for television. "I thought it was pretty tame," said the bearded author, "but that's the way it goes."

The good news, however, is that at least one of the *Night Shift* stories may yet have a life of its own.

All in all, the last few months have been good for King and for visual adaptations of his work. SALEM'S LOT aired as a CBS miniseries last fall under director Tobe Hooper and Stanley Kubrick's hotly-awaited version of THE SHINING is set to open June 13. (Hollywood rumors hint that the film might receive an X-rating unless major cuts are made.) George Romero recently announced a two-picture package with King which includes directing King's own screenplay for THE STAND (9:3/9:4:78) and King's latest novel, *The Dead Zone*, has been picked up for director Sidney Pollack (THREE DAYS OF THE CONDOR).

CHILDREN OF THE CORN (part of the *Night Shift* anthology) is now set as King's sixth published story to be adapted for the screen. The low-budget project is under the helm of Harry Wiland, a 35-year-old documentary filmmaker from Maine. For the last several years Wiland worked for Mobil Oil, producing commercials and films, including the PBS series TEN WHO DARED. To produce his first theatrical release, Wiland brought in Joseph Masefield, whose credits include DON'T GO IN THE HOUSE and LIVING PLANET, which was made in the 70mm IMAX system for the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum.

"I've always wanted to do a relatively low-budget feature film," said Wiland. "If you know what you're doing, you can put a great deal of production value onto the screen for a lot less money." Like many filmmakers hoping to score a commercial success in his first outing, Wiland went looking for property in the horror/exploitation field. It was only natural that the Maine-based filmmaker looked around for a Maine-based author.

"About a year and a half ago I called Stephen King up," said Wiland. "I said, 'Stephen, I live in Maine and you live in Maine. We're both sort of outcasts. Nevertheless, we're both successful in show business. How about getting together and seeing if we can do a project together?'"

Stephen King

King happened to have a screenplay of CHILDREN OF THE CORN handy and a deal was quickly struck. That Wiland's deal meant a theatrical release probably counted for a lot with King, who admits he's weary of battling network executives over what, if any, of his material is suitable for home viewing. "As far as I'm concerned, I'm done with TV," said King. "My idea as a writer is that you go for broke every time. You really do try to scare people, you want to make them come up out of their seats. On TV that's not possible. There are all sorts of artificial restrictions on what you can and can't do."

Even when Hollywood's powerful producers proffered baubles and riches—or in this case a series to write and host—King held firm. "The people who originally had the NIGHT SHIFT movie for NBC held out the possibility of doing something like that [a series]," he said. "The guy who does CHARLIE'S ANGELS, Aaron Spelling, called up with the same sort of idea. But television is a different kind of world. My own feeling is that television ate up Rod Serling and spit him out, and I don't want to get into something like that."

Instead, King is concentrating his considerable talents on better controlling what happens to his books on film, branching out from novels to screenplays and producing, roles studios have been reluctant to give him. In addition to the script to CHILDREN OF THE CORN, King is writing the screenplays for both THE STAND and CREEP SHOW, the two Romero projects.

CREEP SHOW is an anthological film of four or five segments, "aimed at really scaring the wits out of the audience," said King. "To be effective, you have to make each one of the segments as scary as hell. That's the only way to keep people interested." However King said the main idea behind the film, "is to put together a budget mostly out of foreign money that will enable us to make this picture, get it out there, and make a profit. It will show people that we're for real. Then we can go ahead and make a deal with one of the majors to do THE STAND."

Actually, King said, raising the money for THE STAND wouldn't be that difficult. The key is having enough clout to do it right.

"I'd hate to see some vice-president in charge of ass-scratching at a major studio come out at the end saying how this wonderful idea was all his simply because he controlled the money," King said. "The question is how much control over the project we can get so that George [Romero], in particular, can do the kind of picture he wants to do with THE STAND.

"We've been offered option deals on THE STAND before and have turned them down," King said. "Some of them have been for pretty good money. But this is maybe the one thing I've done that I want as much creative control as I can get over it. If it's gonna get bitched up, I want to do the bitching up. I don't want to let somebody else do it."

Even so, King generally likes the results when "somebody else does it." He praised DePalma for the adaptation of CARRIE and King said he basically liked Tobe Hooper's SALEM'S LOT, which was scripted by Paul Monash, who is also writing the script for THE DEAD ZONE. "Most of what television touches within the horror genre turns to absolute drivel," King said. "I think [producer] Richard Kobritz and Tobe Hooper made SALEM'S LOT rise well above that. It certainly wasn't typical of horror movies made for television."

Even so, King had certain objections. "I wasn't happy with the makeup they used to bring Barlow to the screen," he said. "It was too much like NOSFERATU. And I objected to the fact that the network showed the two parts of the film a week apart, rather than on consecutive nights. I think that did a lot of damage to the continuity of the thing.

"When I first learned that SALEM'S LOT was being done for television rather than as a theatrical release, I was disappointed," said King. "But keeping in mind the fact that it was done as a TV movie, I think it was done quite well."

But King isn't at all certain how he'll react to Kubrick's version of THE SHINING. Published reports that Kubrick considered drastically changing the ending of the book has brought criticism from King, but as of yet, all he's seen is the "elevator of blood" from the theatrical trailer. "Warner Bros. has been in touch asking if I would be interested in helping promote the picture. I will promote the picture once I *see* the picture," King said. "I want to be assured that it's something I want to be involved with. Everything that I hear about it is good."

Still, there are some doubts. "I don't know if I'm looking forward to it," he said. "I think the film is going to frighten me. I've heard that when Kubrick was showing a rough cut to the cast, Shelley Duvall left halfway through because she was so scared."

Is that possible? Is King scared by what he writes? "Not often," he said. "I was with THE SHINING, though."

Presumably, King wasn't scared while writing the short story *Children of the Corn*. But it's doubtful those who see the morbid story of cult worship in the corn belt will be so unaffected. "Stephen has given us a re-write, and I've incorporated things into the revision that flesh out the story more. Right now, there's a lot of collaboration and feedback going on between Stephen and I," said Wiland. "It's not that we spend an enormous amount of time together, because we don't. But we are on the same wavelength, and we both see the potential of this movie. We both see things that need to be fleshed out or polished, and we're doing it."

King's short story dealt with two travelers, Burt and Vicki Robeson, who ride into the town of Gatlin, Nebraska, looking to tell authorities about the boy they accidentally slammed into when he jumped out from the rows of corn lining the road a few miles back. What they find are murderous children (led in the film by Lance Kerwin, who starred in SALEM'S LOT) who have killed all the adults and who worship "He Who Walks Behind The Rows."

In fleshing out the story, Wiland and King have made Burt a Vietnam vet who uses the cornfields for cover as if they were the Indochina jungles and made heavy significance of the year the children took over: 1968. "That was really the year the whole country went mad," said Wiland, referring to the war, riots, assassinations and unrest. "It's kind of a poetic license to say that in Gatlin, they went even madder."

Filming will take place this fall in the small Kansas towns of Butler and Lawrence, against midwest landscapes Wiland termed "almost supernatural. If you've ever been out there and you've seen a Kansas or Nebraska sunset across a field, it's just extraordinary. It's very eerie."

While preproduction proceeds on THE STAND, CREEP SHOW and CHILDREN OF THE CORN, King has not been idle. He is polishing up a non-fiction book *Danse Macabre in America*, a look at horror in the American media over the past 25 years, and a new novel, *Fire Starter* is due out this summer. In addition, a new anthology, *Dark Forces* is due for publication by Viking this August. □

Telepathic power is responsible for the mind-blowing violence in SCANNERS, a new film by David Cronenberg (inset).

SCANNERS

*Canada's David Cronenberg films an explosive telepathic drama: 'My films work because they deal with **adult** fears,' he explained.*

By Mike Childs & Alan Jones

Fresh from the success of THE BROOD, and the drawing power of his name firmly entrenched above the title, Canadian horror director David Cronenberg (RABID, THEY CAME FROM WITHIN) is preparing his fourth major feature, SCANNERS, for release early in 1981 by Avco-Embassy. Starring Patrick McGoohan and Jennifer O'Neill, the feature (already dubbed "the ultimate E.S.P. film" by producer Claude Heroux) borrows its premise from STEREO, a low-budget film Cronenberg made in 1969 for $5,000 which pops up occasionally on the art house circuit.

"SCANNERS deals with artificially created telepaths," explained Cronenberg, visiting London recently during a short hiatus between shooting and postproduction work. "The film makes it evident that the gift of telepathy would be more of a curse than a blessing. To have that kind of sensitivity to the thoughts and emotions of others would be an incredibly painful and difficult burden to cope with." Cronenberg compares the film to RABID because, he said, "it is very much an action film."

Cronenberg, who also wrote the screenplay, said he plans at least six months of postproduction on SCANNERS, a long period by his standards. First, Cronenberg wants the time to create the proper sound effects (possibly for Dolby release) for the "scanning" power of the telepaths. "I want there to be what I refer to in the script as a scan tone, which revolves around and does a lot of other things," he said.

Secondly, Cronenberg is trying to make up for an unfortunate lack in *pre*production. "The deal we made on this film gave me exactly two weeks of preproduction. Two weeks on the biggest picture I've ever done!" Cronenberg said. "It was also the least together script as I was rewriting it as I was shooting. I had a very hasty postproduction on THE BROOD and I never want to do it that fast again."

Though much of the project is shrouded in secrecy, it's known that the minds of the scanners become extremely powerful weapons of destruction. One of the film's violent sequences, a man's head exploding in a shower of blood and guts, invites comparison with THE FURY, which also dealt with the forces of telepathy being used as a lethal tool.

"Hopefully when it is released it will compare favorably with THE FURY," he said. "In truth, some of the images are going to be very similar. Even though I feel that the origins have nothing to do with THE FURY, I had to decide consciously to ignore it because if I had been worried about comparisons I wouldn't have done it. I think the subject is worth exploring again, as I thought THE FURY wasn't very good at all."

To create the various explosions, fires and incidents of destruction called for by his screenplay, Cronenberg enlisted Gary Zeller, whose credits include DAWN OF THE DEAD and ALTERED STATES (which will be released in December). And to create the graphic violence caused by the "scanning" power of the title characters, Zeller turned to three special makeup artists, Tom Schwartz, Stephen Dupuis and Chris Walas. (Makeup veteran Dick Smith, who designed the makeup for THE FURY, is credited as a consultant.)

The required gore included various gashes, bruises, bleedings and burnings. But the main challenge was to blow up a human head realistically enough to withstand the camera's close stare.

How do you destroy a head? The make-up artists first put alginade—used to create dental impressions and a substance which doesn't adhere to hair—on the actor's face to create a negative image which is then filled with plaster to create a positive. Next, a rubber mold is made from which a gelatin head is created. To give the impression of skin, the top coat is skin color, but a second coat is colored red for the muscles. The plaster shell, used for support, is then filled with gelatin blood and guts for the big bang. Painted eyes made with resin glue, false teeth, hair, glasses and heavy stage makeup completes the illusion. All that's missing is the explosive charge.

SCANNERS follows Cronenberg's pattern of exploring outwardly rational scientists, who in trying to further the interests of science and themselves, wreak havoc. "Not mad scientists," Cronenberg corrected, "mad men. I'm not interested in saying science can be dangerous. Nor am I being satirical, even though I do enjoy inventing something like THE BROOD's psychoplasmics as a jab at Est and scientology. I'm sure I could make money in L.A. if I set up some such clinics!

"No, I deal more with the process by which a man is *so* rational, and *so* controlled that he is insane. Insane without realizing it. Everyone struggles for some order in his life against all odds and really it is impossible. Total chaos lies outside the window of the room we are sitting in. I am in touch with these sorts of fears more than other people, but I am not obsessed. I attempt to turn what seems to be destructive and negative into something very positive and creative.

"Even though I was feeling very pessimistic when I wrote THE BROOD," he said, "the ending has the child alive. She will have a struggle to face, but life goes on." But Cronenberg is adamant that optimistic films can also be extremely chilling experiences.

"George Romero says he deals with childhood fears in his films," he said. "I think my films work because they deal with *adult* fears." □

THE NUDE BOMB

*Would you believe Agent 86 is back in action with a **touch-tone** shoe phone? Believe it.*

By Jordan R. Fox

When one of those diabolical supervillains threatens to unleash an awesome new weapon—a device that disintegrates any fabric from which clothing is made—you just know this won't be an assignment for 007. No, the nature of the threat should alert you that the only man for the job is Secret Agent 86: Maxwell Smart.

STAR TREK, it seems, is not the only American television program to snowball into having a sizable cult following around the world. GET SMART, unleashed in 1964 by Buck Henry and Mel Brooks, was a comic reaction to the early 60s spy thrillers. After becoming thoroughly *Bonded* and *U.N.C.L.E.*d, something that presented the ridiculous flip side with real flair was bound to be a success. The silly saga of Agent 86, frequently in error but never in doubt, as he blundered his way to victory over the sinister forces of KAOS, managed to stay on the air in first run for twice as many seasons as STAR TREK. And in the course of it all, star Don Adams picked up three Emmys for his creation of the role, introduced us to a number of memorably unnecessary gadgets like the shoe phone and the cone of silence and added some key Smartian phrases to the language ("Sorry about that, Chief," and "Would you believe. . .?"). With the series in wide syndication in America and 67 other countries, the demand seemed substantial enough to warrant the furthering of a trend—the conversion of a classic television series into a big-budget feature film. So Maxwell Smart is back and Universal's got him.

THE NUDE BOMB (originally titled THE RETURN OF MAXWELL SMART) was directed by veteran British director Clive Donner, whose credits include THE CARETAKER, NOTHING BUT THE BEST, HERE WE GO 'ROUND THE MULBERRY BUSH, WHAT'S NEW PUSSYCAT? and VAMPIRA (OLD DRACULA in the U.S.). Noted comic and comedy writer Bill Dana (creator of the Jose Jimenez character, and also one of the regular writers on GET SMART) came out of early retirement to work on the project, co-writing the screenplay with Arne Sultan and Leonard Stearn, both of whom had been involved with the series. The $8.5 million film was shot mostly in Southern California, with convenient use made of home-court advantages like the Universal Studios Tour (including a run-in with Cylon Warriors). Since there were no huge superstar salaries to pay out, much of the film's budget could be channeled into a plethora of stunts and mechanical effects. Among Smart's updated arsenal of gadgets is the new shoe-phone, now a "Touch-Tone" model, and an armed, armored, turbo-charged desk that can be driven in pursuit of the enemy.

Expanding what had been a set half-hour form to a scale needed for a feature film, while retaining the style of the original, is the film's major challenge, according to director Donner. "We had to develop a story that would sustain a full-length theatrical movie," he said. "It needed a stronger plot, characters who related more often throughout the story to Maxwell Smart and a build-up to (a confrontation with) a villain."

Flanked by three sexy sleuths, Don Adams is Maxwell Smart in THE NUDE BOMB.

Like STAR TREK, the line had to be drawn between updating the series and tampering with the formula of success. "The series is well known and well loved," Donner said. "It would be *dumb* to throw away all that good will." Still, there are differences apart from structure and scale. Ed Platt, who played the Chief (Max's superior, and head of CONTROL), died a few years ago, and is replaced by character actor Dana Elcar. KAOS is still the supreme organization of evil, but Max now works for P.I.T.S.—the Provisional Intelligence Tactical Service. Max's foil, the dim-witted Larabee, will return, but other characters, including Agent 99 (Barbara Feldon), will not. Smart won't lack for female companionship though: his shapely co-stars include Andrea Howard, Pamela Hensley (Princess Ardala on television's BUCK ROGERS) and Sylvia Kristel.

For a televison comedy, GET SMART had a surprising amount of violence to it—shoot-outs, fights and the bodies of informants reached too late—and it gave the show a sharp edge that set it apart from other comedy fare. The film version is expected to follow that tradition, though it will also attempt to balance out the comic mayhem and bumbling slapstick with a mix of verbal humor.

"I think there is the quality of the eternal 'little' man in Maxwell Smart," said Donner, trying to explain the character's continuing and international appeal. "Here he is, just one small cog in this organization, yet he thinks of himself as dashing and debonair. People identify with that. The fact that he does fumble the catches makes him human—unlike James Bond.

"He fights his own organization on the one hand, and the villain on the other," said Donner. The Chief is always saying 'Max, don't be so stupid. That's the most ridiculous thing I ever heard in my life.' And the next thing that happens is that what Max says, works. That's not what really happens in organizations, but it's what people wish would happen. Also, Max takes on these bizarre, monster challenges—*as if they were real*—and he wins."

THE NUDE BOMB opens in May and Donner is optimistic. "The preview audiences who have seen it," he said, "have responded rather like seeing an old friend." □

Fate of Ray Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED adaptation still uncertain

The status of the long-awaited adaptation of Ray Bradbury's SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES is still a matter of some confusion, but the story of good and evil set within a small town carnival may finally make it to the screen.

First announced for filming in the mid-1960s with director Sam Peckinpah, the property languished until The Bryna Company (a production unit started by Kirk Douglas in the '50s) purchased the rights a few years ago. Bryna is no stranger to the battles needed to bring projects to the screen, having nursed along ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST for years until producer Michael Douglas could find receptive ears in Hollywood. Now, another of Douglas' sons, Peter, has made bringing Bradbury's novel to the screen his personal project.

"Unfortunately, it is one of those projects that had so much interest it was overexposed, and this worked against it," said Douglas, whose big-budget film THE FINAL COUNTDOWN is due this summer. "Because of that we decided to back off for a while. It is not at the studios. We're trying to give it some air, and it will be made—as well as humanly possible and with as much money as it needs. I'm very excited about the piece. It will sweep the Oscars."

Douglas was nearly able to produce SOMETHING WICKED—considered a classic in the field of imaginative literature—at Paramount in 1977 with director Jack Clayton (THE INNOCENTS), but the film was caught in the crossfire of a high-level corporate shootout between president David Picker and board chairman Barry Diller. When the smoke cleared, Picker was out and so were a number of the projects under his sponsorship, including SOMETHING WICKED.

There have reportedly been a series of offers to buy the property (including one from Disney), but Douglas said Bryna has no interest in selling. More recently, Avco-Embassy initiated informal discussions towards a possible co-production with director John Carpenter (he said the book is one of his favorites), but Douglas said the talks never reached the "negotiations" stage. While Douglas insists talk of any director would be premature, it appears that several obstacles would stand in the way of Carpenter directing, not the least of which is that Carpenter is booked through his next four films and not expected to be available, even if a production start on SOMETHING WICKED is as far away as two years, which is Douglas' maximum estimate.

There are also questions about Bradbury's screenplay. "The script needs a lot of work," said Carpenter. "There are all these beautiful, poetic lines that are absolutely undeliverable by an actor. It's just not very cinematic." But Douglas replied, "It only needs a little more refining." And neither Carpenter nor Douglas seems to relish the (sometimes creatively fruitful) clash of a strong director and a strong producer.

"I'm very protective of it," said Douglas of the project, "and would continue to be with Steven Speilberg, or *anyone* for that matter. I suppose that's the luxury of owning it." He added parenthetically, "Ray appreciates that. We stay in constant touch." ***Jordan R. Fox***

Above right: A masked technician gives a final touch-up to the beast in BLOOD BEACH, a non-anthropomorphic creature designed by director Jeffrey Bloom (below) and built by Del Rheaume. Above left: The beast snatches another sandy victim (photos by Wynn Hammer).

BLOOD BEACH

A slimy creature sucks on sandy sun worshippers for his (her?) supper as Californians scurry for cover in Jeffrey Bloom's genre debut.

By Kay Anderson

"We hope after seeing BLOOD BEACH, the beach will take on a different feeling for the audience," says screenwriter-director Jeffrey Bloom of his first genre film, now in the final stages of postproduction and scheduled for a July or August release. "We're taking the pleasant, benign experience of lying buried in the nice warm sand and turning it into a horrible possibility."

BLOOD BEACH can be described as a sort of JAWS in the sand, as an outbreak of disappearances and grisly murders takes place at a popular Southern California beach. Eventually it becomes clear that it's the work of some unknown sort of creature which lies hidden in the sand and pulls its prey down beneath. Efforts to capture or kill it are thwarted by the thing's evident intelligence and ominous sense of purpose.

Bloom has been active in television and motion pictures since about 1972, first as a writer, then adding directing to his credits. His first job in filmmaking was seven years ago when he wrote a screen adaptation for Ron Shusett, later of ALIEN fame. "I turned in a script for a tight little low-budget terror picture called THE RAT. Ronnie shopped it all over town and everyone said it was a good script, but you just can't make a film about a rat, it's taboo. So finally after about a year of exhausting work trying to get it made, we gave up. About six months later out comes WILLARD."

Writing the screenplay got Bloom's creative juices flowing and he soon wrote others, acquired an agent and attracted the attention of producer Elliott Kastner, for whom he did rewrites, screenplays from books, original stories and eventually his first directorial job. "Elliott knew I wanted to direct, and he asked me if I could film my screenplay DOGPOUND SHUFFLE for half a million dollars, and I said yes." In 1974, he brought in the film, starring David Soul, Ron Moody and Pamela McMyler, for $530,000.

During preparations for the release of DOGPOUND SHUFFLE, Bloom met Steven Navelansky, a former trial attorney and professor of law at Pepperdine University who was brought in to do corporate work for the release of the film. Navelansky had a long-time interest in filmmaking, and found himself spending more and more time at Paramount Studios with Bloom and less and less with his law practice and at the university. He and Bloom found they worked well together and came up with an idea that led to a development deal with Universal. "The picture was never made," Navelansky recalled, "but it was a very interesting and lucrative experience. Then Jeffrey had a chance to do a picture in England, THE STICK-UP, from another of his scripts, and from my corporate law experience I was able to serve as coproducer." The two are now partnered in their own film production company, Feature Films Inc., and Navelansky produced BLOOD BEACH.

The pair dreamed up the idea for BLOOD BEACH in May, 1979, and within four or five days Bloom had written the screenplay and sent it to his agents. While the agents were still mulling it over, Bloom, Navelansky, and some friends went out to dinner wearing some buttons they had confidently made up to promote the film. At the same restaurant was producer Sidney Beckerman, who knew Bloom and had liked DOGPOUND SHUFFLE. Curious about the bright yellow buttons with the message "BLOOD BEACH Sucks You In," he asked to see the script, phoned Bloom the next day to ask for a conference and had the production financed and in preproduction within two months. The film went before the cameras in late October with David Huffman, Marianna Hill, Otis Young, Burt Young and Stefan Gierasch toplining the cast, and it wrapped ahead of schedule and under budget in mid-December.

"I looked forward to BLOOD BEACH because as a horror film it's already a stylized idea and therefore you can have more fun visually," said Bloom. "It intrudes upon a simple story if you get too tricky visually, but not in a horror movie. I think that's why people like them so much. It's very clear that nobody goes to the movies anymore just to see a movie or just to pass the time, because they can get that on television. The only reason they're going to go out and spend four bucks to see a movie is if it's going to do something for them. Either they're going to laugh hysterically or they're going to cry or they're going to be dazzled by a science fiction movie or they're going to be scared out of their wits."

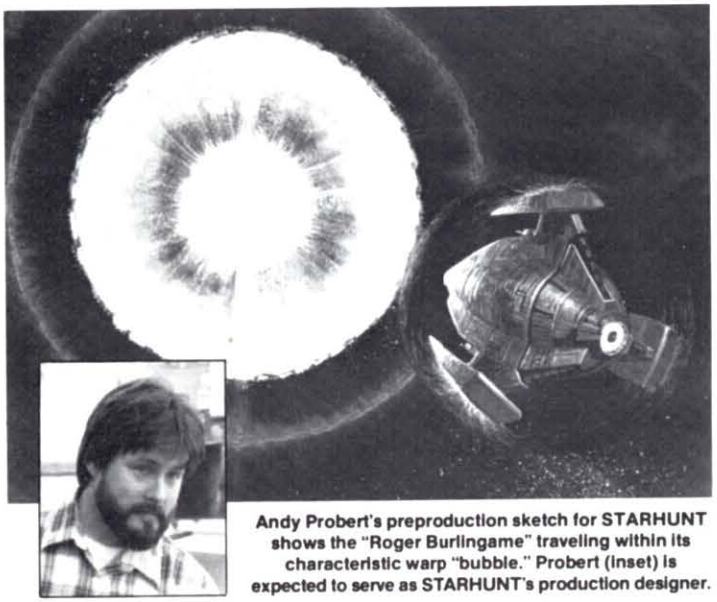
For his effort to scare people, Bloom and artist-photographer Malcolm Lubliner, did sketches and came up with the design for the creature. Del Rheaume, who did the fine special effects work on the 1978 remake of INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, was hired for the film and created the monster, a very alien-looking non-anthropomorphic creature which was operated by air valves and dozens of individually controlled tubes. "It was an incredibly elaborate affair that actually did far more than we used. It could rear up and open its mouth and lots of other things," Bloom says. "We ultimately decided not to use all those capabilities because it would mean our concentrating on the creature too much. In a monster movie you don't want to O.D. the audience on the monster when it's finally seen because no matter how good and horrific it is, if you look at it too long, suddenly it's not scary anymore. The creature is seen briefly, which I think is enough." Rheaume also built the contraptions which sucked people down under the sand, made holes in the sand where the creature was supposed to be, and was in complete charge of the special effects for the movie, which uses no opticals.

Rheaume's work and the score by jazz musician Gil Melle contribute to Bloom's pleasure in how his film turned out. "This film has a real nice style to it. It's nice to look at," he said. "It's not a down-and-dirty kind of shock-shock-shock, murder-murder-murder picture. We have some real seat-jumpers in BLOOD BEACH. Characterization and a strong plot are the most important elements of story-telling and I'm a story-teller. The question is what the audience can relate to. Can the audience relate to a monster as well as they can to the possibility that there's a guy in your closet with a knife? The story about the guy in the closet with a knife is a lot easier to sell than a monster movie." □

STARHUNT

David Gerrold to adapt his 1972 novel for newly-organized Grayson Productions

By Kay Anderson



Andy Probert's preproduction sketch for STARHUNT shows the "Roger Burlingame" traveling within its characteristic warp "bubble." Probert (inset) is expected to serve as STARHUNT's production designer.

David Gerrold's 1972 novel *Yesterday's Children* has been set for adaptation to the big screen as STARHUNT (9:3/9:4:78), the first film venture of the newly-formed Grayson Productions. Preproduction work is under way while financing and distribution details are being ironed out.

The Gerrold screenplay, his first for a feature film, deals with a rather tired starship, the battlecruiser *Roger Burlingame*, which has been reprieved from a scheduled scrapping and partially renovated to meet the pressures of a galactic war. The crew becomes involved in chasing an enemy ship and ends up with a tiger by the tail, in a contest the *Burlingame* cannot break off and cannot win.

"What we are trying to do is a science fiction film that has a solid story which deals with real characters," said producer Mark Nelson, a graduate of Northwestern University working on his first production. "It will be a consistent, balanced picture which stresses the story and the characterization rather than the special effects. The film will prod the mind and get the audience involved with the characters without having a lot of zap-it-up action and laser blasts over the screen."

The film will attempt to be technologically accurate without being technologically overpowering in presenting a story the producers say is "not unlike a World War II submarine story that happens to take place in outer space." Executive producer Ashley Grayson, a literary agent with an extensive background in computer science and associated technologies, was involved with Don Bluth, a former key animator with Walt Disney who left the studio to form his own company. Bluth and Grayson worked on the development of a computer-supported system to assist in producing low-cost animated films, a technique presumably to be incorporated in STARHUNT's visual effects, now being worked out by Andy Probert, who worked as a designer for STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE and the pilot of BATTLESTAR GALACTICA. Probert is expected to stay on as production designer if and when production begins.

"We're still grinding away on a distribution arrangement to lock in financing of the project," Nelson said, "but every day it looks a little better."

Nelson and Grayson are negotiating with Gerd Oswald, a veteran of more than 1,000 hours of television and feature productions, to direct the picture. The German-born Oswald directed many episodes of THE OUTER LIMITS and two episodes of STAR TREK ("The Conscience of the King" and "The Alternative Factor"), as well as such features as SCREAMING MIMI and AGENT FOR H.A.R.M.

Upon the advice of veteran cinematographer George Folsey (FORBIDDEN PLANET), Bryan England was signed as director of photography. As with Nelson, Grayson and Gerrold, this will be England's first feature film. A 1980 graduate of the American Film Institute and a student of Folsey's, England worked as film director for the PBS station in Nashville and as cinematographer for more than 20 commercials and documentaries.

The project hopes to combine the expertise of past masters Oswald and Folsey and the input of relative newcomers Gerrold, Probert, Nelson and Grayson. The producer and executive producer first met through Grayson's function as a literary agent (Nelson describes himself as a writer "of nothing worth mentioning") and Grayson began calling upon Nelson for input from a production point of view when he was involved as a consultant on such films as RESURRECTION, which will be released by Universal late this year, and the STAR TREK motion picture. Grayson also met David Gerrold through his literary agent capacity when both were on the science fiction convention circuit. Gerrold showed Grayson a script he had been working on, and Grayson told him he would rather see *Yesterday's Children* produced as a film. When he formed his own film company last year, Grayson arranged to buy the film rights of the novel.

"Because it is basically a psychological drama, STARHUNT could be produced on a fairly low budget for a science fiction film, and would allow a lot of the technology to which Ashley has access to be put to full force," Nelson explained.

Grayson described Gerrold's screenplay as a "good, solid story by an experienced science fiction writer."

"Because of the demands of the interstellar war," explained Nelson, "the fleet has been forced to recommission this ship and send it out in space with a rather motley crew. The crew has to cope with two generations of technology because the ship was not intended to last to this time, and they've had to rip out sections of her and replace them with newer technology that would allow her to be battleworthy, supposedly, in this particular war. The first officer is convinced that the ship *is* battleworthy. The captain isn't, and they have a major disagreement which runs through the course of the film.

"As we join this group they are in pursuit of something that they believe to be an enemy ship until an imbalance in their own engines forces them to give up the chase, at which moment the other ship stops as well and they can no longer detect it. It looks like it's just hovering there waiting. After the *Burlingame's* engines are repaired they try to sneak up on the other ship, but when they pop into the place it should be, it isn't there. They search for it, and eventually the crew begins to doubt that it actually exists at all. They know that if there *is* an enemy ship out there and they turn around and go home, it'll start chasing them, and if it really is a ship and they don't go home, they haven't a chance in a battle with it if it attacks. And if there is no ship, they're all making fools of themselves."

Nelson is hoping that STARHUNT can be a successful, powerful science fiction film without letting the flash get in the way. "It's astounding that science fiction has become so popular in the movies," he said, "and yet we haven't had another THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL or other stories that involve characters rather than dynamics." □

PHOBIA vs. PHOBIA

Two thrillers battle for custody of their titles

A collision course seems imminent between two films with the same title and the same general subject matter. Producers of the two films, both completed, both psychological murder mysteries and both titled PHOBIA, are threatening each other with legal action over the title.

On one side is Canadian-backed Borough Park Productions, whose PHOBIA stars Paul Michael Glaser (Starsky of STARSKY & HUTCH), was directed by John Huston and will be distributed by Paramount. On the other side are executive producers Sam Lakes and Robert Sumner, whose PHOBIA premiered in Washington in March. Lakes and Sumner plan a May release of their film while Paramount has scheduled the John Huston production for release in late September.

Both producers claim first rights to the title, the Borough Park production by virtue of an announced production start more than three years ago, the Lakes/Sumner production by virtue of first completion and first release.

The Lakes/Sumner PHOBIA, directed by Armand Weston (named best director by the Adult Film Association for his X-rated TAKEOFF), centers on a mystery writer who goes to a country house to cope with her psychological problems. The house mysteriously attacks her, and it turns out her prostitute mother was brutally murdered in the house and is still lurking around in ghost form with revenge in mind. Originally announced as THE NESTING, Weston said the lack of big-name stars in the low-budget production mandated a stronger title.

The John Huston-directed PHOBIA, originally subtitled A DESCENT INTO TERROR, focuses on controversial phobia-alleviation techniques used on prison inmates. Psychiatrist Glaser finds his patients murdered by overloads of their personal phobias.

Judy Goldstein, co-producer of the Borough Park production, said the film was first officially announced in 1976 and that Lakes/Sumner was put on notice last August that the title was registered with the Motion Picture Association of America. According to published reports, the MPAA has confirmed the "pending copyright" of the film by Borough Park. But the same report quoted Lakes as insisting the copyright was his, and noted that the Lakes/Sumner version had received an "R" rating, while the Borough Park version, still in postproduction, had not been submitted to the rating board yet.

Kay Anderson

EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

George Lucas—has the $165 million made by STAR WARS gone to his head?

By Frederick S. Clarke

"THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK is better than STAR WARS!" This is the report of a knowledgeable critic in theatrical circles, who viewed the finished film at the end of April. "The sequel doesn't just capitalize on the earlier film," he said. "It's not like STAR WARS. It's a more serious film, with some humor of course, but with a deeper philosophical undercurrent." The 20th Century-Fox release is scheduled to open in 70mm and Dolby stereo sound at nearly 120 theaters nationwide beginning May 21, then expand to almost 1000 engagements by July 4 with the addition of 35mm prints.

One of the most delightful surprises of the film is Yoda (see right), a small wizened alien creature which, as first reported in our pages over a year ago (8:2/8:3:82), teaches Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) about the mysteries of the Force. The voice and expressive movement of Yoda, an incredibly realistic hand puppet, is supplied by Frank Oz, one of the major talents behind the success of THE MUPPET SHOW and the creator of "Miss Piggy." When Yoda is called upon to jump onto Luke's arm from a tree stump or perform some other action requiring full view of his body, a 3½ foot mechanical device created by makeup artist Stuart Freeborn is used, often filmed in reverse and manipulated via wires. Yoda is given a lot of screen time, and the high degree of realism achieved using these techniques is termed "amazing" by our source, a fan of the genre and a special effects buff. "THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK," he said, "has more and better effects than STAR WARS."

Supervised by Oscar-winners Brian Johnson (ALIEN) and Richard Edlund (STAR WARS, see interview 6:4/7:1:17), the special visual effects pit Solo's Millenium Falcon against a fleet of new and larger Star Destroyers as well as their complement of T.I.E. fighters, including a newly designed model with two pods. There are no space battles this time, but substituting is a remarkably frenetic zig-zag chase as Solo, star drive out of commission, heads into an asteroid field to discourage pursuit. Followed still, he avoids annihilation by feinting to ram the bridge of the pursuing Imperial *Avenger*, landing surreptitiously on its huge hull at the last moment to make its confused Admiral believe he has disappeared into hyperdrive.

The sequel's extensive use of stop-motion animation is, per our source, "better looking than the work of Ray Harryhausen." Animators Jon Berg and Phil Tippett reportedly use a newly developed and patented technique to reduce the problem of strobing, which often gives stop-motion effects an unnatural, flickering quality. Strobing is a result of the fact that when something is moving in stop-motion it does not produce a blurred image on the film as do natural moving objects. The new technique, exclusive to Lucasfilm, uses a computer to automatically blur the motion of the animation model during photography.

Viewed predominantly in long shots, using quick cuts, the stop-motion effects include shots of Luke, Han and Chewbacca riding their Tauntauns, furry kangaroo-like steeds (see photo 9:1:9), across the snowy wastes of Hoth; the Imperial Probe Droid, which lands like the Martians in WAR OF THE WORLDS and resembles H.G. Wells' original stilt-legged concept, in a laser gun battle with Han; and an armada of Imperial All Terrain Transport Vehicles, which look like striding, mechanical pachyderms. In an extended battle sequence at the beginning, Luke leads the Rebel defense against these Imperial walkers and saves the day by toppling them on their mechanical legs, using a harpoon and a tow cable in his flying snowspeeder. Since these battle scenes are set against the white vistas of Hoth (actually Finse, Norway), effects technicians developed a "white" matte system to make tell-tale matte lines and fringing less obvious.

There is no alien *shtick* to compare with the hijinks at Mos Eisley's Cantina in the original, but assorted aliens and monsters are peppered throughout the film. Achieved live, chiefly through makeup and mechanical means, they're only briefly, tantalizingly seen: on Hoth, Luke is attacked and captured by a Yeti-like Wampa Ice Creature, seen only from the rear; Luke also encounters an aquatic swamp dinosaur on Dagobah, the bog planet of Jedi master Yoda; Solo flies the Millenium Falcon into hiding inside an asteroid's mammoth cave only to discover much later that he is inside the closing jaws of a gigantic, slow moving space slug. Inside the cave, Han and crew encounter Mynocks: leathery batlike creatures straight out of NOT OF THIS EARTH. Stuart Freeborn's makeup also affords us a brief glimpse, from the rear, of Darth Vader unmasked, looking quite a bit like Vincent Price as Dr. Phibes.

This might all sound like STAR WARS business as usual—it is. What seems to account for impressions that THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK is different are some of its rather grim turns of plot. The concluding scenes on Cloud City see Han Solo entombed in carbonite and shipped off in hibernation with bounty hunter Boba Fett to be turned over to Jabba the Hut on Tatooine. Luke attempts to face down Darth Vader in a wonderfully choreographed light saber duel, only to be crushed psychologically by some *heavy news* from Vader's own lips, getting his hand sliced off in the process!

The only differece here, really, is that Lucasfilm, now confident of continuing success, are hooking their audience for the next sequel by leaving the story totally unresolved. Unable to end the sequel with a big effects production number like the destruction of the Death Star, Lucasfilm gives us a "big revelation" instead—Luke Skywalker is Darth Vader's son! Huh? Never mind this makes little sense and even seems to contradict the earlier film, it *will be* explained in further sequels now carefully mapped out. THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK begins with a crawl introduction that labels it "Episode 5." Prints of STAR WARS are soon to have their crawls replaced with an introduction labeled "Episode 4." The next sequel, "Episode 6" begins filming this December, telling of Han's rescue from Jabba on Tatooine and following Luke, now equipped with a mechanical hand, as he further masters the Force. Lucasfilm intends to churn out a STAR WARS episode every 18 months: the fourth film will be a prequel, "Episode 1," telling the saga of a young Ben Kenobi in the Clone Wars, the dissolution of the Jedi Knights and the rise of Darth Vader and the Empire. It's reported that episodes will then alternate with sequels and prequels to STAR WARS until the series is concluded with "Episode 9" in 1991.

Such a grandiose plan certainly seems unprecedented in the history of film, but can George Lucas pull it off, or has the $165 million made by STAR WARS gone to his head? The relative success of THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK will be some indication. Even our source in exhibition circles, who so admires the film, admits "the romantic interludes between Luke and Leia and Han and Leia are weak." Can Lucasfilm continue to prop up the series with slick visual presentations and further technological innovations? That's what they'll have to do, once the novelty wears off, because the cardboard characters seen thus far won't be able to carry the weight. □

Yoda, the 3½-foot wizened alien who teaches Luke Skywalker the ways of the Force. Puppeteer Frank Oz (the man behind "Miss Piggy") is credited for the realistic hand-puppet. For scenes requiring Yoda's entire body, a mechanical version by makeup artist Stuart Freeborn was used.

ILLUSTRATION/JIM COHEN

JOHN CARPENTER

continued from page 10

no interference! They (the studio) were a little worried at first. I got called in by the president of the company. He said, "I can't understand your dailies. They're not suspenseful. Where are the masters? Where are the closeups? I explained to him that I shoot film the way it's going to be cut. I don't waste film. If you're worried, we'll have the editor put the sequences together and we'll look at them next week. He did, and said "You're right."

ELVIS came to me in the mail; my agent knew someone at ABC. I'm a tremendous rock 'n roll fan—equal with the movies. I opened the script, saw the title, and said "Yes." Elvis' music had done a lot for me, and I wanted to pay some of that back. A lot of name directors had turned this project down, thinking it was too hard. I saw it as a chance to avoid being typed as a director of horror movies. I knew that whether it turned out bad or good, it would show that I could do other things.

Would you consider doing another TV project?

I don't think so—not unless it was such an extraordinary project that it went beyond the medium. I don't like television for a number of reasons—censorship mostly. What they want you to do in television is be homogenized. They want zero point of view. That's against everything I believe in.

When you shoot in editing units, doesn't that take away a lot of flexibility later on, and add an element of risk?

Yes. It means you pre-plan and commit to what the film is going to be beforehand. All film involves risk. I shoot masters—just not the traditional masters and closeups. What you don't want to end up with is predictability.

Few directors have the advantage of a background in music. It's hard to name even one working today who can compose his own score, as you do regularly.

My father was the head of a music department (at the University of Kentucky) and has been involved in almost every aspect of teaching music for thirty years—from individual instruments to full orchestra, and even synthesizers. In addition, he was a session musician in Nashville, playing with people like Roy Orbison, Frank Sinatra, Brenda Lee. He's one of the people who originated the Nashville sound. I would be at some of these recording sessions, so I got the full spectrum, from classical to rock and roll and country music. It was mainly just osmosis and being exposed to it. I can play just about any keyboard instrument, but I can't read or write a note. Fortunately, I have a good ear.

What was that anecdote showing the importance of music in your films?

An executive from 20th Century Fox saw a final cut of HALLOWEEN, without the music. This was to possibly offer me a film. This person, who shall remain nameless, thought it wasn't scary. Later, we added the music, and the movie came alive. Movies are sound *and* image.

One of the more impressive things about HALLOWEEN was your use of the subjective tracking shot.

We used the Panaglide, which is just another brand name for the Steadicam. I couldn't afford to spend time laying dolly tracks everywhere. The gyroscopic mount gives you a drifting look, almost like you're floating. Originally this motion becomes identified with the young boy going through the house, up the stairs and so forth. In the first scene you're forced to identify with the killer: *You're* going up the stairs; *You're* picking up the mask; *You're* stabbing your sister. Every time I use this camera later on, the audience is thinking, "Oh Jesus, am I the killer now? Am I going to creep up on someone?" But no, maybe not. . .

You make great use of the scope frame.

I love Panavision. It is the best compositional frame of all. Before television they had the square, 1:1.33. It was excellent. You could compose in it very well. Then came CinemaScope, which is a large rectangle. They also came up with an amplified 1:1.33 image, 1:1.85. Every film made now that is not in CinemaScope is 1:1.85. The problem with that is that it's neither here nor there, not a square or a rectangle. It is impossible to compose for. DARK STAR taught me a lot, because so many of the compositions were ruined when we blew it up to 35mm (from 1:1.33 to 1:1.85).

The first time I used Panavision I thought, "This is like painting a picture. Look at the room you have, on the sides. You can use space."

Your sense of composition is very clean and direct. Would that be a major influence from Hawks?

He's called "the invisible technician." His style is to watch from a bit of a distance, at his eye level. I'm not influenced half as much by Hitchcock as by Hawks. . .

I try to be very specific. You don't do anything without a very good reason, whether it's pan, or have something in the foreground or whatever. There must be a motivation to the visual image. That's what I find wrong with so many films. They're meandering and unfocused. You have to lead the audience, show them what you want them to see.

Part of the criticism that's been leveled at HALLOWEEN concerns the nearly last-minute injection of a supernatural element. What's your response to the charge that this is another Bob Clark/BLACK CHRISTMAS-style cheat, pulling the rug out from under the audience?

Poor Bob Clark. [laughs] Don't say that. I'm not that familiar with his films, but he's an awfully nice guy.

HALLOWEEN is not about a crazy guy killing people. That's the story, but not what it's about. The movie is about evil, and it's about sex. In my opinion, evil never dies. The script was done to a rigid structure, without a lot of agonizing. I was aware some people might raise that objection, but it seemed like the right thing to do at the time.

BLACK CHRISTMAS was about *who* the killer was. In my movie his identity is irrelevant. Wait 'til next Halloween: he'll be back to getcha!

Another objection that has been raised concerns the supposedly simplistic equation of promiscuity with the eventual victims.

In the beginning, yes. But after that the victims are chosen at random. He doesn't know they're going to be promiscuous, doesn't know anything about them. People get all riled up about that, but they miss an important point. Ironically, the one girl in the film who does not fool around, Jamie Lee Curtis, is the one who stabs him over and over with this long knife! She's as repressed as he is, getting rid of this sexual energy. And no one sees this.

HALLOWEEN actually got more serious reviews than are ever afforded an "exploitation" film.

One of the most incredible reviews I've ever gotten was from the *L.A. Herald Examiner*. Their hatchet man was out for blood, and he made it amazingly personal. He even went after anyone who liked the movie.

How do you respond to charges that your films, however well made, function only on the level of commercial entertainment? Are you trying to establish a solid commercial base from which you can later do something more ambitious and daring?

No, I think I'm doing that already. It's all in there—people just aren't looking for it, and they don't recognize it. . .Each film I've made I'm extraordinarily proud of, and each one, I feel, is part of me. . .I don't feel that the criticism of my work from the popular press

Above: Makeup artist Rob Bottin as one of the inhabitants of THE FOG, filmed by Carpenter as a dark shape in the night. Below: Bottin in his makeup for the role, never glimpsed in the final film. Bottin also played Captain Blake and did the grisly makeup, seen briefly, for Wormface.

'If you want audiences to feel something, let them project. But you can't totally suggest it. You strike a balance between what you show and what you don't show. What you don't show is often stronger.'

Partners in Horror

Producer Debra Hill shares in Carpenter's success

Debra Hill worked as a script supervisor on more than a dozen features before edging into editing and 2nd unit work. John Carpenter, who knew her for several years, felt she was fully capable of producing, and gave her the opportunity on HALLOWEEN, a screenplay that they wrote together. She also produced and co-wrote THE FOG, and is collaborating with Carpenter on his next, as yet unscheduled, project.

Some of the in-jokes in HALLOWEEN originated with her: the film is set in Haddonfield, Illinois; she grew up in Haddonfield, New Jersey; the score, by Carpenter, is credited to the Bowling Green Philharmonic (Carpenter hails from Kentucky); her hands, standing in for Michael's, perform the initial stabbing that kicks off the story. Carpenter and Hill also slipped a plethora of in-jokes into THE FOG. Characters are named after Robert Fuest's DR. PHIBES; DARK STAR collaborator Dan O'Bannon; Nick Castle, who played the masked psycho in HALLOWEEN; editor/production designer Tommy Wallce; and Richard Kobritz, who produced Carpenter's SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME. There are also references to Hitchcock's Bodega Bay and the Lovecraftian Wheatley.

But more importantly, Hill met the formidable task of making a modest budget look like far more on the screen, and called on her background in film production to pull her out of seemingly impossible situations.

"I'm not the kind of producer who puts a package together and finds money for it. I'm strictly a line producer," Hill explained. "A lot of times executive producers are people who deal with getting money, and know nothing at all about budgetary problems, shooting problems or how to read a board. My background is in film, so if a soundman comes to me and says he needs something, I know what to ask for. I speak the language. That gets respect."

It is easy to be deceived by the gentle voice and the little girl demeanor Hill displays for interviewers. Colleagues say she is a sharp, knowledgeable producer. Exclaimed one cast member in THE FOG, "Little girl demeanor? What?! Are we talking about the same person? Debra is a very forceful presence on the set. I'd rate her about eight on the Richter Scale."

"I knew I had it in me, but I was scared," Hill said. "John and I surrounded ourselves with people that I knew and that he knew. They were pulling for me. If I had had to step into a foreign group of people, I may not have done as successfully.

"I had done 2nd unit directing, so I knew what it was like to be a crew boss. The biggest problem was doling out money to friends, having to say 'no.' These are people you spent years complaining about the producers of other films with, and all of a sudden the tables are turned.

"John and I worked for nothing (on HALLOWEEN)," she said, explaining how the rich-looking film was brought in so cheaply—under $400,000. "I made a very judicious work schedule, with actors coming in when they were needed, rather than signing on for four or five weeeks. Donald Pleasance's scenes were done in five days. The entire film was story-boarded, very well prepared. Organization and communication keeps you from making mistakes. Most of the money went for camera equipment and the lab. I called in a lot of favors. I could never match that budget again."

Flush with the success of producing HALLOWEEN and THE FOG, Hill has received several directing offers. So far, the scripts are mostly typical "women's" films. But Hill is holding out for something more to her tastes.

"I don't want to become the 'Queen of Morbid Terror,' as John calls me," Hill said. "But I do have a natural feel for the genre. Anything that can touch the audience, get them involved—that is to me the excitement of movies. It's bigger than life.

"I think I write horror well. Maybe it's just a sadistic streak in me. I remember I once said to John, thank God he can get his outlet for killing women in a movie. Think if it was suppressed!" **—J.R.F.**

Above: Producer, co-scripter Debra Hill goes over Michael's initial stabbing scene with director John Carpenter during filming of HALLOWEEN. Only Hill's hands, standing in for the little boy's, were seen in the film. Left: Carpenter and Hill relax on the front steps of the killer's house. Hill, whose father was an art director on many of the Hope/Crosby "Road" pictures, also served as producer and co-scripter on THE FOG and is working with Carpenter on his next film.

isn't correct. I appreciate it, and some of the criticisms are valid. But they still are missing the point. . . You don't make a film for the critics. The audience is my one criterion.

Even among fairly commercial films though, something like TAXI DRIVER, with a bit more character depth and thematic complexity. . .

What depth? What complexity? I thought it was a good movie, but it's not real. It cheats. Harvey Keitel's character was real, but not the other [Travis Bickle]. I don't think the film has any more depth than STAR WARS.

In terms of your own work, DARK STAR and ASSAULT were much stronger in the areas of character and theme than what has come after.

I understate everything. I try not to make thematic statements. It's more in the way people behave. There is thematic material in all my films—between the lines—but it's not my job to spell it out. HALLOWEEN, ELVIS, THE FOG, ASSAULT—they exist on an entertainment level, and that's fine, but there's more going on there.

This (perception) changes from person to person and country to country. It depends on how you look at films. You know the basis of the auteur theory? In France, before the war and up through 1946, they didn't see any American films. After the war we sent them everything. The fellow who started the Cinematheque saw all of Howard Hawks' work in, like, one week. They (the French critics) suddenly said, 'Wait a minute! It doesn't matter what the project is, or who the writer was or the producer. There are concerns that go from film to film.' You have to look at somebody's work—their *entire* work.

You're talking about dealing with characters in thematic ways. That's not the way I would make a movie, because I believe it's pretentious. This is my own choice as a filmmaker. That stuff fades. I think you will look back on films that were considered works of art, and see how shallow they are.

This is just a shot in the dark, but should we take your position as being a preference for expressing these things primarily through action, much as in a film like Kurosawa's SEVEN SAMURAI?

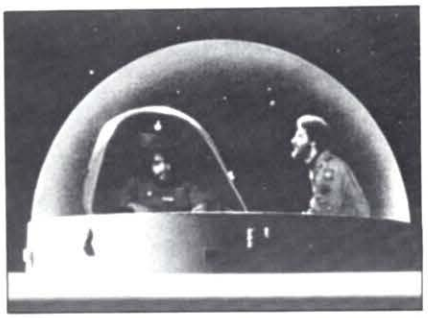
You're getting close. I'm against interpretation in a classical sense. Film is a visual medium. Pictures are more powerful than dialogue. The samurai is a good example, because it's a strict form; each time you make one, you don't have to go back and establish the legend of the samurai. He *is*.

My approach is not the only way. I'm not saying I'm right all the time. But my approach is to shorthand a great deal of the material that I'm not interested in, and get down to what I am interested in.

Susan Sontag says several things in her book *Against Interpretation* which I kind of believe in. I'll see if I can give you the quotes. She says: "Interpretation, which is based on the theory that a work of art is composed of items of content, violates art. It makes art into an article for use, for arrangement into a mental scheme of categories. Ideally, it is possible to elude interpretation in another way, by making works of art whose surface is so unified and clean, whose momentum is so rapid, and whose address is so direct that the work can be just what it is." I feel that sums up my attitude towards filmmaking, much better than I can express it myself.

Above: Dan O'Bannon as Pinback, the comically bungling crewman of DARK STAR, a film he co-wrote with director John Carpenter while both were students at U.S.C. O'Bannon also edited, was responsible for production design and some special effects. "He did not direct one frame" however, insists Carpenter, referring to the way interviewers have lately come away from O'Bannon with that impression. Below: A moody scene between Talby (Andreijah Pahich, voice dubbed by Carpenter) and Doolittle (Brian Narelle) which O'Bannon duplicated in his unused ALIEN script.

'After reading your article on the ALIEN script, I have to admit Dan O'Bannon did take a lot from DARK STAR. That was shocking.'



Are you in the position of the writer/director, interested only in directing his own scripts?

No. I'm interested in scripts that I can do, those with cinematic values. By which I mean point of view, moving camera, and other things I value as a director. It could be most any subject matter though.

But you won't sign on for something you can't rewrite?

No, no. It can be someone else's script, but I have to be free to rework it as necessary. It would be fabulous to get a script where there was no need to touch it. But I have to be able to make it my movie.

People like Spielberg and Lucas seem to be devoting two or three years to each project. You, on the other hand, seem to prefer to work more quickly and to have a larger output.

I'm interested in making a body of work that encompasses more films. Just as a director—purely without commercial considerations—because you learn and grow from every film.

Variety's *review of THE FOG made a really valid point. Some critics are trying to lay this heavy Hitchcockian mantle on you, and the tremendous expectations that go with it. But their reviewer pointed out that Hitchcock didn't really get up to speed until his sixteenth film.*

Of course not. There's all this pressure to become an instant auteur. That'll kill you fast. A director can't operate under those conditions. . .But it is important to be commercial.

The kinds of films I've made have been considered exploitation films. You cannot fail at those; if you do, you're sunk.

So far you have stayed in the low-budget area, with one of the major reasons being the advantage of control. Larger budget projects are likely to involve less control and more compromise—or at least collaboration. Are you amenable to that?

That would depend on who I was collaborating with. I haven't been willing to give up control so far. I'm making a tentative step in that area with Universal on THE THING. It's the first film where I don't have contractual control. I don't want to move too fast into bigger budgets.

The idea of doing a large budget project doesn't give you pause?

Not at all.

In your original concept, THE FOG depended almost entirely on mood and atmosphere for it's effect. But this is no longer the case? There have been some changes?

Yes. We went back and added the visceral shock. Had this not been a fantasy, it (our original plan) might have worked. But it was a miscalculation on my part. We've come a long way since Val Lewton. My commercial sense told me something was missing.

I don't mean to put down Val Lewton. I just came to a point on THE FOG where I said, "They have seen ALIEN, HALLOWEEN, PHANTASM, and a lot of other movies. If my film is going to be viable in the marketplace, it's got to compete with those." Originally I was trying to compete only with Val Lewton movies—very understated horror with a brooding atmospheric feel to it. But if you released ISLE OF THE DEAD today, I don't think it could compete because it doesn't have those visceral shocks.

Anyway, we screened the first version for Avco and some of my colleagues whose opinions I respect, and a lot of them said 'Don't touch it.' But Debra and my editor, Tommy Wallace, agreed with me. Avco was great about it, advancing the money to shoot additional scenes. Their attitude was 'Get it the way you want it.' The changes amount to less than 10%, but what a difference!

What, specifically, was added in post-production?

The title sequence, showing Antonio Bay falling apart. The whole top-of-the-lighthouse sequence at the end, with Wormface. Little things scattered here and there. The trawler deaths were reshot to show more. We made our violence more explicit, and all the sound effects were redone.

The first version also ran a bit short?

It's a complicated matter. This film is a montage from beginning to end. There's very little moving camera; it's done in cuts. I wanted to try that. The tension, and the timing, and the motion comes from cutting.

Left: Captain Blake returns to dispatch Father Malone (Hal Holbrook) in THE FOG's "surprise" ending. Right: Director John Carpenter goes over the campfire prologue with storyteller John Houseman. You can spot Carpenter in a cameo role at the film's beginning, as the church alter boy who requests his pay. Below: The fog begins to surround the beach house and threaten the safety of Andy and his babysitter. It proved impossible on Point Reyes to get the fog to surround the house in full scale, so the fog had to be filmed in miniature and matted in optically.

You need about three or four times the amount of coverage to do that. The first version was paced a lot slower, and I found that the film just ate up the footage. It needed more. More energy.

THE FOG has an entirely different visual strategy than HALLOWEEN.

THE FOG is a multi-character story and it happens over a much bigger area. You have to crosscut. HALLOWEEN is much more confined. You have one relentless character. It's easier to stage. THE FOG is a much more elusive idea.

Your ghosts in THE FOG are closer to the reanimated corpses of Romero's NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD than to the traditional variety. Do you see this relationship, or are there perhaps some other genre precedents?

No, that never occurred to me. I see more of a parallel with ASSAULT. . .Why should they (the ghosts) be unseen or invisible? Who put up that rule?

I don't know of a film like THE FOG ever. THE FOG is an E.C. horror comic. Go back to "Tales from the Crypt." The things that came back were always as solid as you or I.

Unlike a number of other genre directors, you tend to avoid outright depiction of blood and gore.

In all of our minds, our fantasies of the gore and violence are stronger than anything I could show you. I didn't like DAWN OF THE DEAD; I was shocked at how bad much of it was. When the gore started happening, when they cut to the meat, it's not frightening, not effective. Some people vomit in the bathrooms or stagger out of the theatre. But that's gross-out time, not suspense or thrills. If I want the audience to feel something, let them fantasize and project. . .But then, you can't totally suggest it; you have to go a ways. You have to commit. It's the balance between what you show and what you don't show. What you don't show is often stronger.

You have nothing against using blood for effect then?

Depending on what you're doing. ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13 had more blood than you'll ever see—squibs all over the place; people were dying left and right.

Do any directors working in the genre impress you?

David Cronenberg is pretty amazing. I like his sense of humor and his total personal vision. Some people don't like his work, but I think he directs circles around George Romero.

Could that have something to do with your sharing Cronenberg's morbidity and cynicism?

I have a certain feeling for it, yes. But I judge directors not just by what they do, but how they pull it off, which is the secret of filmmaking. If you attempt to make a film about a chair and you pull it off, then you've succeeded. Romero goes after a lot—and I admire him for it—but I don't think he's as successful at accomplishing what he sets out to do (as Cronenberg).

'The editing process runs the gamut from a feeling of initial confidence all the way down to asking 'Why did I make this movie?''

You seem very critical of Romero?

I don't mean to be. I love Romero's work. I think that Romero, of all of us, is probably one of the most influential horror filmmakers of all time. He's influenced all of us. He came along in 1968 with NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, which is a very daring film shot in black and white 16 mm, and changed the shape of horror films with a totally personal style. And for that reason, I think we all have to look up to him. I certainly didn't mean to put him down. I find faults in his work, sure, but what do you want, the guy works in Pittsburgh! He's a very heroic man for doing that.

Who else would you praise in the genre.?

Another director whose work I'm extremely fond of is Dario Argento. I think he's a master. THE BIRD WITH THE CRYSTAL PLUMAGE, FOUR FLIES ON GREY VELVET, SUSPIRA—less than the others—and DEEP RED, brilliant movies. He's pefected a certain genre.

At your Point Reyes locations, you had a lot of problems in generating your various kinds of fog. Could you go into that?

The fog was very difficult to control. It took a lot longer than scenes themselves; it was never the same from scene to scene. When we were outdoors it was windy, so most of those scenes we couldn't shoot the fog in them. Occasionally, the wind would change and we'd get something great.

Most of the fog stuff happens indoors. To do that we had to tent in the entire set and make sure no air was getting in, so it wouldn't blow away. Then it was a case of using the right machine for whatever you wanted the fog to do. If the fog had to drift in, sit close to the floor, bubble and churn, we used dry ice. Squirting it under a door, we used a foofer—the small [hand held] fog machine. If we had to cover a big area, it was a honker [a large fog machine. The latter two run on "fog juice," a mixture of kerosene, water, and certain minerals, which is heated electrically to produce fog].

Long shots of the fog were done optically?

Where Adrienne would see it off across the water, and things like that, because of the size. We'd shoot the (background) plates, then shoot the fog, and combine them optically. Getting the right color, the right density, the right movement—not too fast or too slow—it just went on and on.

Fog for these shots was done in miniature?

On a sound stage. For example, a shot of it drifting around the Point towards the town. When we shot the Point, we'd take a measurement of the degrees from the camera to the horizon. The sound stage is totally black. We'd anchor the camera for the same height and distance. Computing the difference in size, the film is slowed down to get the scale correct.

And the glow?

Lights. Either inside the fog, or above, on dimmers.

The ghost ship, The Elizabeth Dane, was very impressive.

It's real. The ship is anchored down in Long Beach. Our art directors put our own sails on it. We surrounded it with fog machines—in boats, on the ship, on the dock. We shot it from another boat, moving past it. Since the camera is shooting over two men, it looks like the ship [the Dane] is moving.

What about miniatures?

For some of the opticals. The shot at the

beach house, where Tom Atkins grabs the little boy and runs out. The fog comes over the house after him. The plate of that has nothing there. On the sound stage, we built a miniature of the house in black. The fog comes up around it in scale. Then the two go together optically. The miniature is also a matte.

Because of the problems controlling the fog outdoors, you had to shoot a few shots in reverse?

There was one near the end, where the Fog leaves Adrienne and flows away. We tried it forwards, but the fog just sat there. So we had her act backwards, with the fog pushed over her till it obliterated the lens. In reverse, it jumps off and goes away. What she had to do was figure out how to react in reverse. If she was terrified when it was around her, perplexed as it was going off, and watching it as it would disappear off in the distance, she would go from watching it to perplexion to fear. We had to watch that she didn't blink her eyes, because in reverse that looks funny. Adrienne is ready for any challenge and she loved it.

The major reverse scene in the film is with Tommy Atkins, Jamie Lee Curtis and Ty Mitchell. They're driving into town and they stop. The fog appears in front of them and comes down the street towards the truck. She puts it in reverse and backs away from the fog; it follows her down the street. That was a reverse. The truck had to back in, and pull up to a stop. It was well-timed and worked perfectly.

Isn't it almost impossible to maintain your objectivity or enthusiasm through the editing process?

It runs from a feeling of initial confidence all the way down to a feeling of 'Why did I make this movie?'. . .The movie you make in editing is often not the movie you thought you were going to make. . .The objectivity just goes after awhile and you feel drained, useless. It's hard to say what works or not. Then it just becomes a matter of timing and of instinct. Concentrating on the film's pacing is what sees you through.

Are there any new developments on your upcoming remake of THE THING?

It's being written by Bill Lancaster, who wrote THE BAD NEWS BEARS.

That seems a bit incongruous.

There you go. That's exactly what's wrong with the system: 'What's his name can only do X.' Lancaster happens to be a fabulous writer.

Sorry. Is this one of the imminent projects? And will it be closer to the original story?

It will *be* the short story [*Who Goes There?* by John W. Campbell]. The timing depends on which is ready first. EL DIABLO or 'THE UNTITLED JOHN CARPENTER PROJECT FOR AVCO-EMBASSY' might go first.

PROMETHEUS CRISIS is out then?

For me. I wrote a script [based on the best-selling novel, by Thomas N. Scortia and Frank M. Robinson, about a nuclear accident], but the producers [George C. Braunstein and Ron Hamady of Chelsea Pictures] flubbed up on the financial end. Also I couldn't figure out how to make an entertaining movie out of something that grim. But I hear they're still trying to get someone for it.

Facing Page & Below: The masked, supernatural killer of HALLOWEEN, the low-budget boxoffice hit that put John Carpenter's name on the map in Hollywood. Above: Actor Nick Castle jokes on the set between scenes. As one of THE FOG's many *hommages* and in-jokes, that film's hero, played by Tommy Atkins, is named Nick Castle.

'I'm no great fan of STAR WARS or ALIEN. What these films have mainly accomplished is to perfect the technique of showing ships moving around in outer space.'

The subject matter wasn't salvageable?

THE CHINA SYNDROME came out; Three Mile Island happened. It would have been a cheap shot, making a horror movie about something that awful. There was a way to do it—make a musical out of it. But they would never have let me do it.

That sounds really off the wall.

If there's something frightening about a nuclear plant in itself, you don't just go play that, because it's too easy. You've got to play against it—like humor in a horror movie. It's important to come up with something that surprises the audience.

Your remake of THE THING will have to weather the inevitable comparisons to Howard Hawks' original. Are you concerned?

I'm just not going to try to make it like the Hawks version. The short story is different. I'm finding that the closer we stick to the short story, the better off we are. You have the same basic set-up with the men at the Arctic, but you know, his films always ended up being about *the group*. I can't do those as well as he could, so I plan to stay away from it. I'll be careful. We're trying to open the story up, so it won't be *so* confined. There are a couple of things I want to keep, just as an *hommage*. Something along the lines of the 'circle on the ice.'

There are those who feel Hawks may not have been wrong in deviating from the short story. That whole business that The Thing can look like anyone. . .

Become anyone.

. . .well, form-changing; it may have been fresh when the story was first published, but it has since been done many times on television.

Depends on how you do it. I still feel the short story is hot stuff. INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS is somewhat of a steal of the idea. . .The toughest part of it is this one sequence where you're dealing with paranoia—a bunch of men in a room saying "Are you *it*?". . .We'll see. Maybe I'll fall on my ass. But I haven't tackled anything easy yet, and why stop now?

Your western, EL DIABLO, in Spanish it means The Devil.

It's a gothic western. Almost always I've got some weird elements. I'm a weird guy.

It's been described as an on-again, off-again project.

No, it's always been on. The script hasn't been completed, because John has been busy . . .with interviews.

Can you tell us anything about your untitled project for Avco?

It's a mystery thriller, with certain science-fictional elements. I can't get into that, because the source material is in the public domain.

Is there any truth to reports that the Department of Defense is leaning heavily on you because the subject matter disturbs them?

No comment.

Have you got any major unproduced genre scripts out floating around that you could tell us about?

I have a real nifty one called ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK CITY. It's about Manhattan Island as a prison in the future. It's been walled off, and all the criminals in the world are confined there for life. They have their own society. It's hell on earth. Our hero has to go and get someone out.

Some company recently offered you a Dan O'Bannon script?

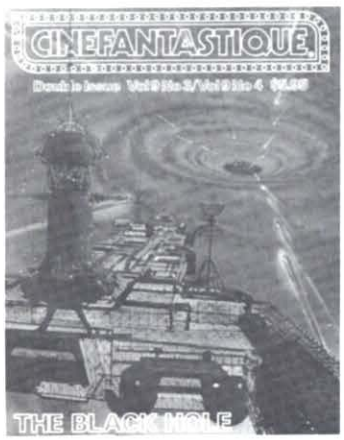
I was offered TOTAL RECALL, a detective story set in the future, sort of like James Bond. I really enjoyed it. It's about an agent who goes to Mars and actually finds out he's been there before but doesn't remember it. The memory of that journey and his mission have been taken out of his mind by a group of people called "Total Recall," and implanted instead is the memory of another life. He's got to go back and find out what's going on [The script is based on a Philip Dick story, *I Can Remember It For You Wholesale*, according to O'Bannon]. It's one of Dan's most human works, and it's very exciting. It would be terribly expensive to do. I don't think I'll be doing it, even though I like it very much, for a variety of reasons but mostly because other things have come up.

Your star really seems to be in the ascendant right now. How do you react to all this sudden acclaim?

You have to fight against taking it too seriously. "You're only as good as your last movie" is close to correct. I feel I'm just starting out. I don't feel I've arrived. □

HALLOWEEN

LETTERS



BLACK HOLE BLUES

I've written you once before on my feelings about your double issue homages to films of questionable worth. Your double issue on THE BLACK HOLE (9:3/9:4:5) is like salt in the wound. This film is the biggest embarrassment to the genre since DAMNATION ALLEY. The fact that you share this opinion of the film and yet still devote almost two entire issues to it is almost nauseating. The fact that neither you nor author Paul M. Sammon were allowed to view the film (would that Disney had been so kind to the rest of us) is no excuse, certainly we all could have waited another couple of months till you could see it and place it in the perspective it deserves. Yes, the effects were excellent, and you wisely devote most of your coverage to them. Yet despite their technical excellence I found them strangely unimpressive, emotionally vacuous.

To my surprise, I do find myself wishing for a double issue on STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE. If ever a film deserved such coverage this is the one. Not that it is a great film, but this has got to be the most interesting production story in history, and only your magazine can tell that story. If you insist on sticking with this inane policy of giving full or double issue coverage to every big budget film no matter what its merits, then at least give us something worthwhile.

I usually spend hours reading CINEFANTASTIQUE from cover to cover. For months afterward, I will pick an issue up and reread a particular gem. The BLACK HOLE issue took about 45 minutes and I may never touch it again. You can deliver a lot more than this.

John Thonen, Jr.
Independence, Missouri

It is beyond the scope of my imagination why you and your staff are convinced that the readership is interested in being swamped in a sea of technical information on such films as STAR WARS, CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, FORBIDDEN PLANET, BLACK HOLE, STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE, etcetera, etcetera, ETCETERA!! I had to laugh when I saw an advertisement in your last issue for a magazine devoted to special effects. You've got the edge on them, I can tell you!

CINEFANTASTIQUE has come to have a sterile, predictable look about it. The format needs shaking up. Let's have a little more imagination from the magazine with a "sense of wonder."

Ted Di Paulo
Staten Island, New York

THE BLACK HOLE held the potential to be a truly superior film, and early promises from Disney's executives—that the film would be an effects showcase and that the studio would abandon its kiddie format—convinced us to cover it in depth. We start work on our major issues well in advance (in this case, May, 1979) to reduce the time between a film's general release and our coverage. As for the format, we had already planned on the "shaking up" you see here to make the magazine more attractive and easier to read. We hope you like it.

ALL WIRED UP

There's one interesting fact about THE BLACK HOLE that makes all your talk of its "technical wizardry" sound just a little hollow: although the robots were supposed to fly or float or hover in the air, *you could see the goddamned wires!* Just the way you could in one of the face-hugger scenes in ALIEN. When the critter is lying "dead" on the lab floor there's a visible black wire or thread attached to each of its little crab claws. For all the millions they spend on special effects, filmmakers are an awfully careless breed.

T. E. D. Klein
New York, New York

QUESTIONABLE TASTE

What is it about THE BLACK HOLE which seems to inspire certain lapses of taste in the public print? First, a reviewer in a major cinema journal refers to "a title [which is both] sexist and racist." And now comes Steven Dimeo's critique (9:3/9:4:68) with its interesting premise on the function of the female in dramaturgy, to wit: "So why insert such a blah character as Mimieux depicts if she isn't going to take off her clothes?"

At first, I couldn't believe I had read that sentence. While I have not seen THE BLACK HOLE and therefore have no quarrel with Dimeo's low opinion of the film, I can't allow his rhetorical question to slip by without comment. Was he trying to be funny? If so: Yuk Yuk Yuk. Was he serious? If so, may I suggest that, in movies as in life, a woman need not shed her clothes to justify her existence. And, may I add that anyone who sincerely believes otherwise calls into serious question his ability to appraise a movie, or anything else, along, "the standards of classic literature and quality cinema."

Preston Neal Jones
Hollywood, California

Steven Dimeo responds: *"In defense of flippancy and the age old attributes of distaff dishabille, I should affirm only these similarly timeless touchstones to the SF/fantasy field: In "pulp" drama, Ms. Mimieux would have sported a dress (or in deference to the times, a pantsuit) torn in strategic places; in a "quality" piece, she would have been beautifully unadorned; and in a "mainstream" work, she would have appeared naked but revoltingly wrinkled. Clothed and dull as her character is here, she suits only the Disney genre."*

CRITICAL ERRORS

I agree that STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE is a disappointment, but even so I was appalled by Kay Anderson's unperceptive, irresponsible and obviously biased review of the film (9:3/9:4:65). The piece is shot through with critical miscalculations, but it's the many absolute mistakes that are inexcusable. Indeed, had the film been titled "STELLAR VOYAGES," it might have at least received some fair criticism instead of the embarrassingly extreme views that have appeared. Such self-indulgent nonsense, only serves to dim the credibility of the publication that presents it. I had expected more from CINEFANTASTIQUE.

Chris Kinsinger
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

If you read further last issue you should have noticed that we ranked STAR TREK as one of the top films of the decade. Nevertheless, we chose to run Kay Anderson's review because we felt it perceptively focused attention on flaws which caused the film to fall far short of the excellence of many of the series' own episodes.

IN DEFENSE OF 'TREK'

I *liked* STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE. I think that given the tremendous problems Gene Roddenberry had in getting it to the screen, it turned out very well. After Robert Abel left the production, many of us didn't think there'd be *any* special effects; now everyone is complaining that there are *too many*. The film is an intelligent speculative fiction movie, and how many of those have we seen in the last three years?

Stephen Mantalvo
San Antonio, Texas

SHOCKING HO HUM

What a shock! The last thing I expected from CFQ was John Azzopardi's ho-hum review of THE LATHE OF HEAVEN (9:3/9:4:71). In my opinion, the film compares favorably with the best cinematic SF in character depiction and philosophical scope.

The plot was intelligent and tantalizing in its fascinating suggestion of alternate universes. The film's quasi-religious implications allude to concepts that, although irrational, are by no means shallow. The production was not too lavish: special effects were used tastefully and not overdone. The characters and script were believable, the acting in general was amazingly top notch and the soundtrack embellished the action beautifully.

So, unless one "yearns for a dank gothic crypt," what's not to like? THE LATHE OF HEAVEN is obviously a colossal leap ahead for television SF. No doubt your excellent magazine will eventually give the film the credit it deserves.

Stuart Staley
Mahopac, New York

No doubt, Stuart. For an in-depth (and more favorable) review of THE LATHE OF HEAVEN, see page 14.

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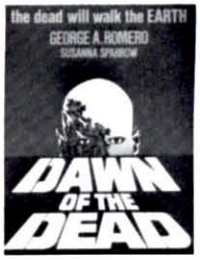

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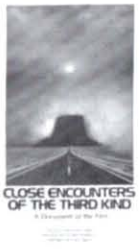

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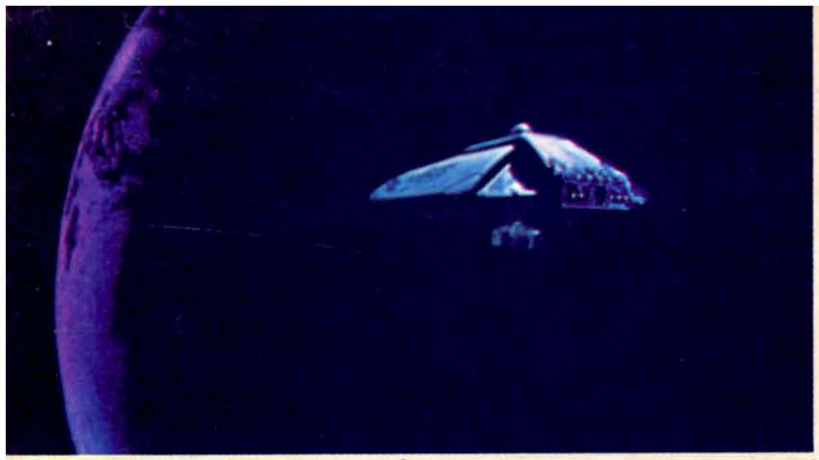

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DARK STAR

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1) Carpenter with 2nd unit cameraman Cliff Fennman, directing DARK STAR in 1972 at the age of 24. 2) The Dark Star, about to bomb an unstable planet; ship model by Greg Jein. 3) Andrei Pahich as Talby, the spaced-out recluse who mans the ship's observation bubble. 4) Carpenter films the comic elevator shaft sequence with cameraman Doug Knapp (left). The upside-down camera films Dan O'Bannon as Pinback, lying on his stomach. 5) Jim Danforth's glass shot of the Veil Nebula. 6) The ship's leap into hyperspace, a form of streak photography, predating a similar effect in STAR WARS by four years. 7) The ship's alien mascot, a beachball with claws.

John Carpenter reminisces about directing science fiction on a shoestring, see page 5.

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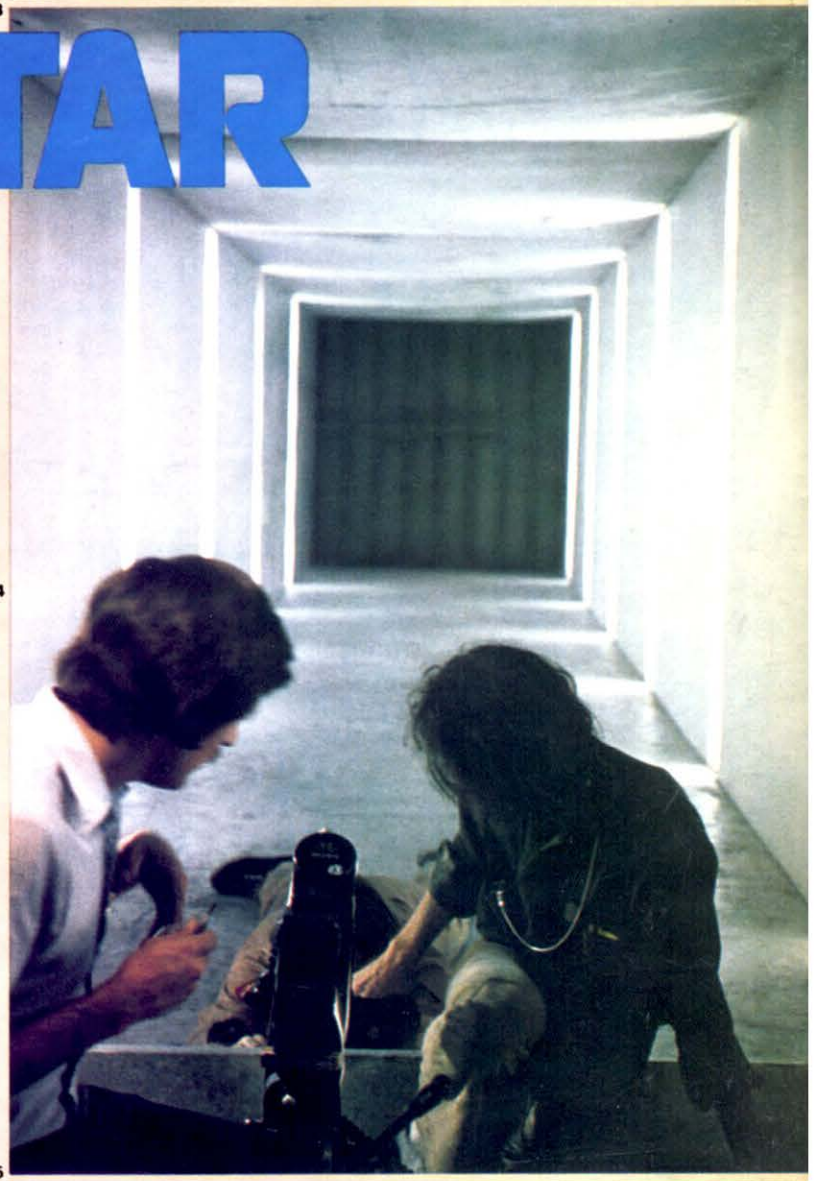

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