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...the journal of cinematic illusions

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Behind the Lines of 'Enemy Mine' 4

Although Barry Longyear's futuristic story of survival and friendship in an unwelcoming environment seemed an ideal film property, the process of bringing *Enemy Mine* to the screen would prove anything but ideal. The need for intricate alien makeups, bizarre scenery and dogfighting spacecraft automatically earmarked the project as an especially challenging one — rendered even more so by the replacement of the original director in mid-production. Ultimately, however, the film would come together under the direction of Wolfgang Petersen who orchestrated both the demanding live-action shoot and an international assemblage of multitalented effects people. *Article by Janine Pourroy.*

Der Trickfilm — A Survey of German Special Effects 38

During the opening years of the twentieth century, when the art of filmmaking was being developed on an international scale, the German cinema promptly established a singular identity for itself — an identity shaped largely by the fact that its prime innovators seemed possessed by an insatiable fascination with the fantastic. Tasked with subjects ranging from epic fantasy to futuristic science fiction, German technicians were among the first to explore and exploit the magical capabilities of the motion picture camera. *Article by Rolf Giesen.*

Fright Night 54

Writer-director Tom Holland conceived of *Fright Night* as a contemporary tribute to the traditional vampire film, complete with all affectations of the genre. But instead of employing the simplistic techniques of yore, Holland was determined to utilize state-of-the-art special effects to their fullest. Undaunted by a relatively meager budget, Holland and Columbia Pictures turned to Richard Edlund and Boss Film Corporation with a unique challenge to produce an array of high-quality illusions — everything from flying bats to snarling man-beasts — all for an unprecedented bargain price. *Article by Jennifer Benidt and Janine Pourroy.*

FRONT COVER — Jeriba Shigan, the alien Drac from *Enemy Mine*.
Vampire Jerry Dandrige shows his ugly side in *Fright Night*. — BACK COVER



**FRIGHT
NIGHT**

When the charming, but mysterious, Jerry Dandrige moves into Charley Brewster's peaceful middle-class neighborhood, strange things begin to happen. Brutally murdered corpses start turning up around town, and one night Charley—who just happens to be a vampire film aficionado—inadvertently sees Dandrige sink his suspiciously-extended canines into a woman's neck. When the ordinarily rational teenager tries to convince his mother, friends and a skeptical police detective that one of the undead is among them, however, they quite naturally think he's OD'd on horror movies. Charley's friends even go so far as to hire 'vampire killer' Peter Vincent—an aging actor of 'B' picture fame—to pacify the frantic boy with a few bogus rituals. And although the understanding Dandrige plays along with their efforts to convince Charley of his folly, he views the teenager's wild accusations as a deadly serious matter.

Fright Night, a modern-day telling of the time-honored vampire tale, marks the directorial debut of Tom Holland, who also scripted the Columbia production. Originally an actor—with more than two hundred commercials, three soap operas and a smattering of feature films to his credit—Holland has more recently become known as a screenwriter, having written *The Beast Within*, *Psycho II* and *Cloak and Dagger*. In close association with producer Herb Jaffe, he developed the *Fright Night* project out of respect and admiration for the traditional vampire film. "I love vampires," stated Holland. "And I have a lot of affection for the old, sometimes corny, vampire movies and all the Hammer horror films. I hated *The Hunger* because it seemed to be ashamed of the genre and never even mentioned the word 'vampire' once. I think that if you're going to do it, do it out of affection. So when I decided to do a vampire movie myself, I wanted to play by all the conventions to be fair to my audience. It would have been very disappointing if Jerry Dandrige *hadn't* been attractive and suave and *didn't* get the girl. What kind of vampire would he have been? Vampires are metaphoric for seduction and sexuality, and you can make a much more interesting film if you explore the psychological subtext, if you investigate what's going on below the surface. Aside from viewing it as a seemingly simple horror film, you can look at it as a young boy fighting for his girl who is being stolen away by an older man. That's the primal level on which the story operates."

Though it is clearly an updated interpretation of the traditional vampire film, *Fright Night* remains well-rooted in the cinematic traditions of the genre. Dandrige sleeps by day, sucks blood by night, casts no reflection in mirrors, balks at crosses—so long as they're wielded by someone of faith—and even transforms himself into a bat. But while earlier movies had been forced to rely predominantly on the power of suggestion to

represent the fantastic elements of their stories—simple make-ups and rubber bats being about the limit of the effects work in most cases—the makers of *Fright Night* had much more sophisticated technologies at their disposal and so chose to depict the customary horrors in a more graphic manner.

To create the necessary visual effects, Holland and Jaffe turned to Academy Award-winner Richard Edlund, with whom Columbia Pictures had previously established a good working relationship on *Ghostbusters*. For Edlund and his Boss Film Corporation—accustomed as they were to working on multimillion dollar extravaganzas—*Fright Night*, with an effects budget well under the million dollar mark, was a clear deviation from the norm. Eager to explore new territory, however, and mindful of practical considerations, Edlund decided to accept the challenge. "I don't want to be in the business of just servicing multimillion dollar productions. If you limit yourself in that way, it's inevitable you'll end up committing to pictures you may not want to do, just to keep stoking the fire. Since we had finished *Ghostbusters* and *2010* with nothing new facing us, I met with Sheldon Schrager and Gary Martin at Columbia regarding the *Fright Night* project. It looked like a good script and seemed to us a very interesting experiment. How could we do a picture that wouldn't work unless the special effects worked, *without* an enormous special effects budget? Because it was such a small project, we had to scale back to a skeletal crew, where our main talent lies, and it proved very educational for us."

Holland had very specific ideas regarding the film's visual aspects, so he and production designer John DeCuir, Jr. came up with storyboards for the effects sequences as well. These initial boards were then given to BFC art director John Bruno and production illustrator Brent Boates for revisions. Bruno carefully considered the film's relatively modest budget while designing the various shots. "Tom and John DeCuir came up with some very good and elaborate ideas for the effects sequences which, because of the film's small budget, had to be reworked and simplified somewhat. Working with the group here, Brent and I designed each shot in the most direct, dramatic and economical way possible. The most challenging aspect of the project was that, unlike films with really big budgets, we tried to do everything as realistically as possible. We attempted to do the effects in-camera, rather than as opticals. We also took the attitude that just because the film had economic limitations, it didn't have to be approached as a 'B' picture. And it might easily have become one without the backing Columbia gave Tom in terms of production design, photography and special effects. Everyone took the position that only the best work would be acceptable."

Holland's fascination with the vampire film genre is apparent from the first frame of *Fright Night*. The movie begins with the traditional howl of a wolf paired with a shot of a full moon slightly obscured by clouds. But as the camera tilts down from the sky, rather than revealing the fog-drenched mountains of Transylvania, it pans slowly across a comfortable-looking suburban neighborhood and into Charley Brewster's upstairs bed-

Fright Night photographs copyright © 1985 by Columbia Pictures Industries, Inc. All rights reserved. Production unit still photography by Ron Balzdorff. Effects unit still photography by Virgil Mirano.

article by
**Jennifer Benidt &
Janine Pourroy**

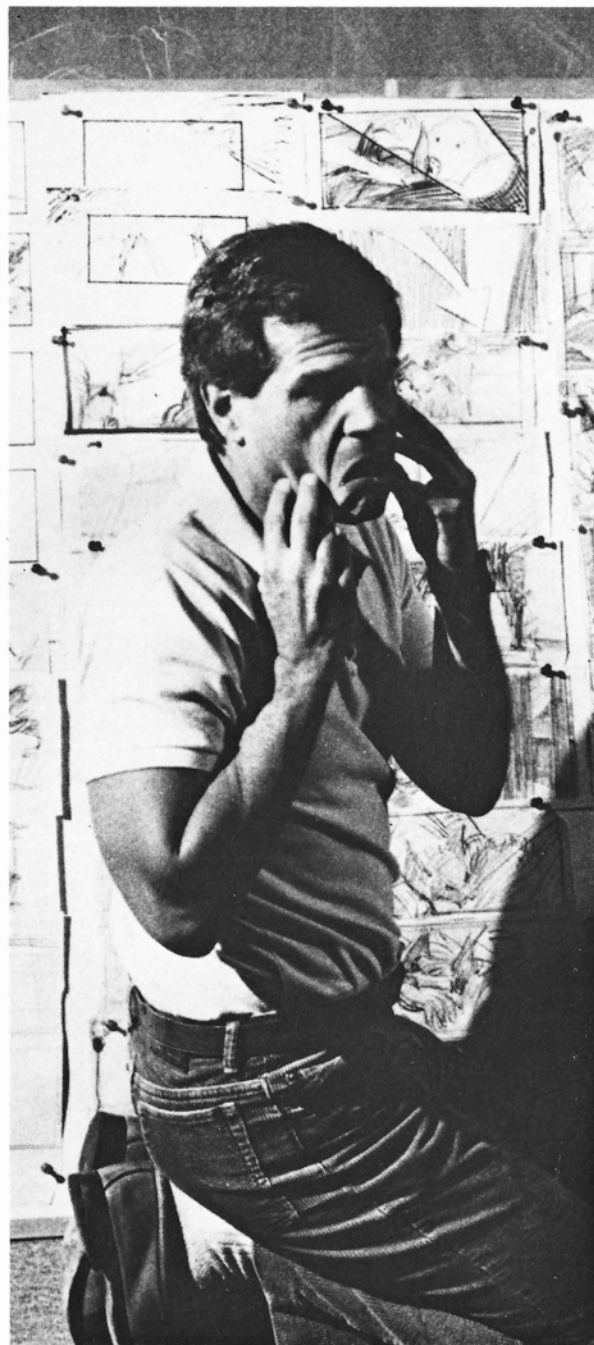
Writer-director Tom Holland makes his intentions clear during a Fright Night storyboard conference at Richard Edlund's Boss Film Corporation. Visual effects for the contemporary vampire yarn — involving an ordinary teenager who uncovers some extraordinary goings-on when a mysterious stranger moves in next door — featured some well-placed opticals and an abundance of creature shop creations. / One of the film's more subtle illusions passes by virtually unnoticed — a Matthew Yuricich matte painting used to conceal a soundstage and other extraneous buildings on the Disney backlot. / As composited, the painting extends the studio street set into an expansive view of fictional Rancho Corvalis, California.

room window where a late-night horror show flickers in the dark. The wolf's howl, it seems, was merely an echo from the soundtrack of a vintage vampire film going unwatched by Charley (William Ragsdale) and his girlfriend Amy (Amanda Bearse) who are otherwise engaged. The entire minute-and-a-half scene — from moon to neighborhood to bedroom window — was achieved by means of a realistic matte shot engineered by effects director of photography Neil Krepela and veteran matte artist Matthew Yuricich. "The film's opening matte shot runs about 150 feet," said Krepela, "which makes it the longest one I've ever done — and it was really kind of stretching things. The moon was actually a high-quality photograph from the Griffith Observatory in Los Angeles, printed from a big plate that had been shot right off their telescope. It was an old photograph, but still showed incredible detail — you could see craters and even topographical relief on the horizon. The scene was shot using a multiplane technique, with the moon frontlit on the back plane and cotton clouds on a separate piece of glass that moved slowly across in front. We had to illuminate the clouds very carefully so that they looked as if they were being lit by the moon. Both elements were shot together on the Compsy camera. Afterwards we diffused the whole thing quite a bit, and also separated it with a little red. The shot then goes into a brief section of black before coming to our large matte painting — which is also black at the very top."

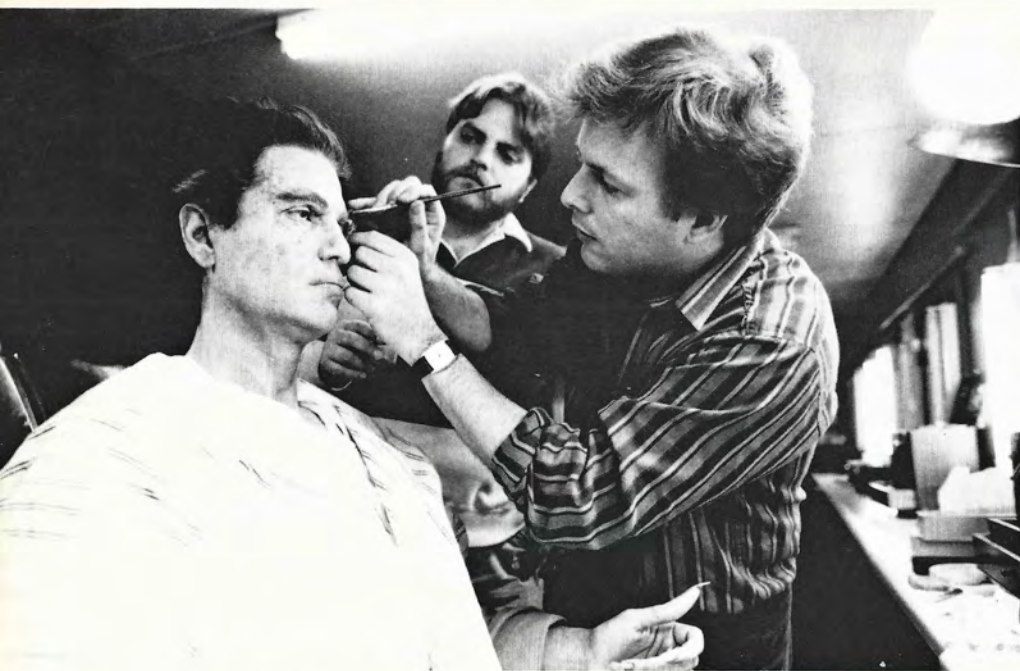
The five-and-a-half foot matte painting — designed to replace extraneous buildings in the plate with a view of Charley's nonexistent home town — was rendered by Yuricich, while the live-action plate was filmed by Krepela on the Disney backlot. Using a 65mm camera on a Titan crane, Krepela started shooting what was essentially a locked-off image. He then began moving the camera in very slowly to create a point-of-view shot, suggesting a hunting or searching action on the part of the vampire. "The main problem we had," said Yuricich, "was being able to tie the move used for the live-action footage in with the move done on the matte painting. We used to do similar things years ago with aerial image, but Neil is now doing it with the Compsy, where he can repeat his moves, making the process somewhat easier. We really had to work together on the painting. I painted and changed things a number of times. It was almost a 'design-as-you-go' matte painting."

To aid in a seamless transition from the moon and clouds to the matte painting of Charley's street, Krepela added a foreground tree blowing in the breeze. "We shot the tree against a blue sky, and there was just enough contrast between the sky and the tree to make a black-and-white matte. Once I had the camera move worked out, I was able to take that matte and rear-project it exactly where it needed to be on the painting. Then it was shot on black-and-white film to make a silhouette which was bipped in the camera as the painting and the rest of the scene was photographed."

As completed, the shot begins with the full moon and drifting clouds, tilts down briefly into black and then onto the tree, pans









across the painting — an additional painted foreground tree slides by in multiplane — and onto a rear-projected live-action plate which takes the audience into Charley's room. "We didn't dissolve at all," said Krepela. "We stayed with the RP all the way through. What made it work was that we used separations — although we didn't do it in the normal way. First of all, we used a special low-grain separation stock which worked fine for our purposes because it was a low-contrast scene. Then we did the actual shooting in six passes rather than three. That way we broke each record into two separate exposures. Between each one, we changed the position of our rear screen so that we weren't photographing the same screen texture from exposure to exposure. What most people do is project a color print and shoot only one pass. To really do it right, though, you have to go to the trouble of making a contrast matte when you're making the color print, to help lower the contrast. It is especially critical on a dark scene that the contrast be low. Then, since you're going to have to shoot the separations three times anyway, you might as well just increase them and shoot six. Since it's all shot motion control, what's another four hours in the dark?"

Soon after Jerry Dandrige (Chris Sarandon) takes up residence on the quiet street — the Disney backlot was modified via a simple latent image matte painting for the daytime scenes — he effortlessly charms Charley's mother. Unfortunately, however, the gullible woman does not realize that her suave and appealing neighbor has a rather unattractive side as well. Whenever he loses his temper, Dandrige's physical appearance reflects his inner turmoil by becoming more and more bat-like. As a result, Sarandon had to spend long hours in the makeup chair where appliances were employed to transform him into something decidedly nonhuman. "As far as the face was concerned," explained creature designer Randall William Cook, "I based its design on one of my favorite creature makeups — John Barrymore's Mr. Hyde, which featured an extended skull, scraggly hair and long claw-like fingers. The sloping-back forehead, however — which worked so well for Barrymore — didn't work at all for Chris. He has this wonderful, noble cranium that Barrymore didn't have, which was interesting as it gave the makeup an entirely different look. In fact, Chris' high forehead almost worked at odds with the design. The makeup itself was actually a two-stage process. The first, or transitional, stage was comprised of a brow piece and a nose tip sculpted by Steve Neill. The rest of the effect was done with paint. The second stage included a pair of ears and a full one-piece, paper-thin mask — beautifully applied by Ken Diaz — that resulted in an entirely new face for Chris."

Both stages of the makeup also required the use of contact lenses, finger extensions and claws and, of course, special vampire teeth — all created by creature designer Steve Johnson. "For me, the eyes were the most interesting aspect of the makeup," commented Johnson. "But they were the biggest problem we faced in the beginning because Tom Holland really

Vampire Jerry Dandrige pauses briefly at Judy Brewster's door before paying an unwelcome visit to her troublesome son, Charley. The vampire's understated non-reflection in the bedroom mirror was achieved by having actor Chris Sarandon pass in front of the glass which — for the one shot — was replaced with a blue screen. His matted image was then composited into a plate photographed with the actual mirror in place. / Sarandon endured long hours in the makeup chair during the application of an intricate, two-stage character makeup designed by Randall William Cook. / Between takes, makeup artist Rick Stratton touches up the vampire's bat-like visage. / Steve Johnson carefully aligns a telescoping pencil used for the scene in which Charley defends himself from the vampire's attack with a lucky stab. Smoke tubes and stage blood completed the illusion. / Not long after his confrontation with Charley, Dandrige inducts the boy's misfit friend, Evil Ed (Stephen Geoffreys), into the world of the undead. Ed's ghoulish makeup — including tooth extensions, glittering contact lenses and a cross branded into his forehead — was designed by Steve Johnson.

Makeup artist Jeff Kennemore adjusts a section of the full-body makeup worn by Stephen Geoffreys during Evil Ed's transformation from a vampiric wolf. In addition to the intricate makeup, the sequence employed a live trained wolf and a cable-operated mechanical wolf created by Steve Johnson. / Johnson prepares Geoffreys for a complicated sequence wherein the wolf is impaled by a broken banister and dies while retransforming into human form. The fiberglass chest plate was equipped with a retractable stake and concealed with prosthetic makeup. / With the creature's neck and shoulder sections not yet fully in place, Johnson tests the air bladder mechanisms which will cause the transfiguring wolf form to swell asymmetrically. Seventeen hours were required to complete the complex makeup procedure.

wanted them to glow. At first he wanted the roto department to animate a glow onto the eyes, but budgetary and time problems — as well as the impracticality of artists trying to line up with a constantly moving head — made that infeasible. So we decided to go with contact lenses, and I tried especially hard to make them look effective. I started with plastic shells obtained from Dr. Morton Greenspoon, who offered some suggestions and helpful tips, but we ended up doing the work ourselves. I painted the shells with fluorescent paint to make them as bright as possible, although we didn't shoot them with black light because of the obvious lighting problems. Then I laminated the lenses with layers of colored glitter, which I don't think had been done before. On top of that, I applied iridescent powders. So the vampire's eyes really kick alive. After the colors were built up and sealed in with methyl methacrylate, I painted just a little bit of delineation around the iris. They looked kind of funny at first — these brightly colored, glittery things — but when the actor wore them, they looked like natural striations. And there were some shots where the eyes actually looked as if they'd been roto-animated."

The vampire's long, spidery finger extensions were a result of Holland's desire to create a Nosferatu-type ambience for the character. "Originally, Tom wanted to concentrate only on his 'killing' hand," Johnson explained, "which I thought was an interesting idea — to exaggerate the right hand he used in wiping out his victims. But then he decided halfway through that it might look kind of absurd if the vampire had one long hand and one small hand, so we decided to embellish both. Since the plan at the time was to have the vampire wearing the extensions throughout the film, Randy Cook started by sculpting very small ones — something like a quarter of an inch out. But after discussing the matter with Tom, we realized that if we were going to go to all of the trouble of applying fingers on this guy every day, we might as well make sure the audience noticed. So we ended up making them almost an inch longer. Basically, we took casts of the actor's straight fingers and repositioned the joints so it wouldn't look as if the last digit just happened to be unusually long. For the joint closest to the fingernail, we cut the foam out, pinched it back and glued it so that it looked as if it were bent. That way, when the *real* joints bent, the finger followed the natural curve. If they were scheduled to shoot scenes where it was going to be obvious that Dandrige was moving his hands a lot, Ken Diaz applied the bent fingers. Otherwise, he put on simple straight extensions."

Johnson was also responsible for the vampire's requisite fangs. "I didn't want to go with just the standard vampire canine fangs, although for the first stage that's pretty much what they are. For the second stage, however, the teeth start changing subtly, and by the third stage they're much more dramatic. I had looked at photographs of bats and noticed that they have a lot of gum showing between the canines and their incisors. So we left this vast expanse of gum on the uppers and made real tiny teeth in the front like a bat's, using full dental plates. We made the lower

canines in front of the upper canines, which is sort of a switch — upside-down from the way most animals are. It was a different way of doing vampire teeth, but they look pretty ferocious."

When Charley stabs the vampire's hand with a pencil, the teenager becomes an unwilling witness to his neighbor's bestial nature. "John DeCuir thought it would be really horrifying to stick a pencil in his hand and then have him pull it out the *other* side," said Johnson, "which is different than going for the obvious and pulling it out from the same side. Also, I had seen a similar effect with a sword in *Excalibur* which really impressed me. So to accomplish the shot, floor effects supervisor Michael Lantieri made both a telescoping and a collapsible pencil, while Steve Neill created an appliance for Chris' hand — a kind of glove, with the knuckles cut out, that blended off under his sleeve on one end and into the wrinkles near his fingers on the other. Under that we glued a little plate to the hand, with the telescoping pencil attached. We did the actual stabbing with a collapsible pencil applied by Ken Diaz, and I put a tiny smoke tube in either side where the hole for the pencil was. But for the part when Dandrige turns his hand over, we had the telescoping pencil coming out of his palm. It's an over-the-shoulder shot, and what really sells it is when he brings his hand up and we see the eraser end sticking out of the back side. That half of the pencil was stuck into the appliance, with a wire tied onto it so that at the moment Dandrige turns his hand over to remove the telescoping pencil from his palm, we could jerk the eraser end away from the off-camera side. Then when he turns his hand back over, there's just a bloody, smoking hole remaining. A funny thing happened with that shot before the final print, though. For some reason, Tom Holland had forgotten the whole point of the effect and, while editing, had put a cutaway to Charley right in the middle of the shot, causing the illusion to lose all impact. When I saw the rough cut, I pointed it out to him — he was always great about listening to our input — and he recut it."

Despite Charley's frantic warnings, Amy and pal Evil Ed (Stephen Geoffreys) fall victim to the vampire's sinister persuasion; and after receiving their respective ill-fated bites, each undergoes a unique metamorphosis. For Amy, who bears an unfortunate resemblance to Dandrige's long-lost love, the transformation results in a girl-next-door type turned vampiric seductress. "Tom Holland wanted Amy to be very sexy and punkish," said Johnson, "so I made lenses for her as I had done for Dandrige. Steve Neill devised her growing teeth. Ken Diaz kept doing her makeup more and more stylized, and we fitted her with wigs made by Ziggy. I also figured that to make her really seductive, she'd need a little breast enhancement — so I sculpted my dream breasts for her."

For the final phase of Amy's transformation, Randy Cook fashioned an oversized mouth appliance with an array of razor-sharp teeth. "The mouth was designed as a shock-cut device and, as such, worked fine. The idea behind it, I suppose, was not unlike George Miller's method for punching up a reaction shot





by doing a quick cut of bulging eyeballs as he did in *Mad Max* and *Twilight Zone*. I had expected to see it edited with the same judicious treatment, but instead it was used in four or five cuts and the poster. Perhaps I'm a little tough on the appliance because I was in on its rather slapdash inception and execution; but Tom didn't seem to think it was as bad as I did, and so he decided to get a little more mileage out of it. It was a very quick piece done over a casting of Amanda's face wherein I made some teeth that fit on *top* of her face and then made a foam rubber appliance that fit over that. It was completed, basically, in about two days. Had I known that it was going to occupy as much screen time as it wound up doing, I would have detailed it a little more carefully."

Evil Ed's induction into the world of the undead results in the misfit teenager becoming Dandridge's gruesome henchman. Stephen Geoffreys' bizarre makeup was augmented by contact lenses, tooth extensions and, for the scene in which Ed is confronted by the now-faithful Peter Vincent (Roddy McDowall), the brand of a cross placed center forehead. In keeping with his philosophy of not employing the same old tricks used in other vampire films, Holland wanted the cross-in-the-forehead effect to have a slightly different look. So rather than resorting to the tried and true illusion of sizzling flesh, the creature effects team decided to melt the cross deep into Evil Ed's forehead. Steve Neill began by sculpting a forehead piece which measured approximately 3/4-inch at the thickest point in the middle — where the cross would be implanted — and sloped off gradually to either side. Cigarette smoke blown through tubes embellished the effect, as did the application of Elvacite, a sticky plastic substance which offered the grisly suggestion of seared flesh adhering to the cross as it pulls away from the branded forehead.

Later in the film, when Vincent flees Dandridge's abode in search of help next door, Evil Ed manifests yet another folkloric vampire guise, that of a wolf. John Bruno and Richard Edlund designed the sequence taking full advantage of partial darkness and quick glimpses. "I storyboarded the werewolf transition in *An American Werewolf in London*," Bruno explained, "and a lot of people complained that while the transformation itself was very good, shooting it in a brightly lit room revealed too much of the rubber. John DeCuir had already done some boards of the wolf transformation based on Tom Holland's notes, designing the scene so that Evil Ed leaps at Peter Vincent, is stabbed, goes over the balcony, lands on the floor below and then undergoes the transformation in full light. The main thing I wanted to do was reduce the amount of light in the scene. So Richard and I restructured it so that when the wolf goes over the balcony, it hits a chandelier causing it to swing. Thus, when it hit the ground, the wolf would at first be obscured by the swinging chandelier. Then I asked John to redesign the stairs so that there would be an empty space under them into which the wolf could crawl. The transformation would then take place under the stairs in shadow, with occasional illumination from the swinging chandelier. No matter how well we did it, I still wanted to

leave a lot to the audience's imagination."

For the first segment, a live trained wolf was filmed at Laird International Studios by effects director of photography Bill Neil. Its glowing red eyes were later supplied by rotoscope supervisor Annick Therrien. For subsequent shots, Steve Johnson created a cable-operated dummy wolf to hit the ground and crawl under the stairs. "We made a mold from a taxidermy form and cast an armature skeleton inside a soft foam rubber body. We then had a taxidermist cover it with a genuine wolf skin that matched pictures of the real wolf used in the film. Later, we made some cuts in the pelt and patched it with spandex — it looked very natural. We had about six puppeteers operating the creature, manipulating it in such a way as to suggest it was suffering — something we never could have done with a trained wolf."

Johnson was also responsible for transforming the impaled, vampiric wolf back into ordinary Ed. "I designed the transformation so that the change would occur asymmetrically — really unevenly — because I thought it would be nice to do something different from what is usually seen. Tom wanted a lot of empathy in the scene — you're really supposed to feel sorry for this kid rather than be horrified by him — so I tried to create a 'Hunchback of Notre Dame' sort of feeling where Ed would be truly pitiful. But I especially wanted to sell Tom on my asymmetrical idea. So when I was initially sculpting designs to show him, I worked really hard on that one particular concept and spent just a little time on the other two. They weren't bad, but they were basically just roughed-in clay sketches of very standard-looking werewolves. Well, he really liked the one I preferred, but later admitted to John Bruno: 'I like the asymmetrical werewolf, but I'm a little worried about Steve. The other sculptures were good, but they weren't great. Do you think this guy's going to be okay?' Rather than being offended, I was relieved — at that point it became clear that he knew the difference between good and bad."

The sequence begins with several insert shots of the creature's changing extremities. "For a closeup of the hand, we built a human hand over a wolf paw. All the parts of the hand were made meltable, and could be pulled away by hidden cables. We started off with the hand and melted it with heat guns as we pulled everything away — it got really soupy. By reversing the film, it appears as if this weird slimy wolf paw begins to grow tendons and bones, finally forming human skin on the hand. Craig Caton did most of the actual work on that effect. The insert of the foot was pretty standard. Dave Matherly created an extending mechanism inside a foam rubber foot and Rob Cantrell finished the look with a terrific paint job."

The rest of the transformation was achieved through a series of complex makeup applications on Stephen Geoffreys. "The makeups were done as postproduction shots here at our facility," Johnson continued, "and were some of the most difficult and time-consuming ones I know of. On *An American Werewolf in London*, Rick Baker and I spent about twelve-and-a-half hours

on the longest makeup. For *Fright Night*, we spent seventeen hours on the wolf get-up. Ken Diaz, Rick Stratton and Jeff Kennemore did an incredible job of painting the body — which was covered with motley yellow, bruise-like discolorations — and it was hours into the body painting before we could even begin to apply the hair and nails. The whole time Stephen was lying under the stairs, he had on a fiberglass chest plate with a retractable stake in it. He also wore an understructure that went beneath the shoulder padding and was equipped with bladders causing one side of his body to be more puffed up than the other. The whole thing was covered with an appliance that went over the neck and mechanical head. With the body painting and hair application, it was an extremely lengthy process."

The most impressive phase of the transformation sequence required a suit that was tantamount to a torture device for Geoffreys. "It's impossible to tell which parts are fake and which parts are real because he's changing asymmetrically," said Johnson. "At the beginning of the sequence, he had two fake legs sticking up through the floor, with one real arm and one fake arm. And we worked the head of the suit so that Stephen's head was actually bent down looking at the floor, with the wolf's head extended out over the top of his own. I also did a makeup that was really monstrous on one side and kind of like a sick-looking boy on the other. The idea of the shot was that there would be a profile of him lying on his back, and at first we would see only the wolf side. Then, as he turned his head, we would see the boy side of Evil Ed. The final step in the transformation comes full circle. In the very last shot, he's lying there with just a little bit of discoloration on his face and the cross still branded into his forehead. We locked his head down in an exact position with a fiberglass plate, took the cross off, put his head back into position and did the old Lon Chaney transformation, causing the cross to come right off his forehead. Later, the animation department embellished the cross a little so that it would appear to fade away more noticeably."

While Evil Ed's undoing was intended to inspire pity as well as fear, the demise of Jerry Dandridge's sinister sidekick, Billy Cole (Jonathan Stark), was designed to reduce the audience to horrified shudders. "Everyone is terrified of dying," said Holland. "We will all eventually end up like Billy does at the end of those thirty seconds — and that's very primal. Seeing a body turn into a corpse right in front of you is more terrifying than anything that could happen in terms of rubber effects or a face blowing up. It was simply a slow revelation of the skeleton underneath the surface. And I wanted the additional lime green element because green represents putrification."

Although Randy Cook and Steve Johnson experimented with several different ideas, they ultimately accomplished the task in a relatively straightforward manner. "Steve originally wanted to pump hexane — a liquid solvent — into the rubber, causing it to swell and distort," explained Cook, "so Rob Cantrell oversaw that and came up with a really good effect. But it wasn't what Tom wanted. He didn't want the head to bloat and malform; he

Evil Ed's death scene conjures pure pathos as the fatally injured wolf-boy reaches out in a final plea for help. / For an insert closeup filmed at BFC, Stephen Geoffreys lies patiently immobile as creature shop crew member Rob Cantrell holds the retractable wooden stake in place and Randy Cook operates the shriveled, mechanical arm struggling to remove it. Camera assistant Pete Romano measures the focus for cinematographer Jan Kiesser.

When Charley's girlfriend Amy (Amanda Barse) succumbs to Dandridge's seductive persuasion, the innocent girl-next-door is transformed into a vampiric seductress. For this initial stage, Barse underwent only minimal modification, including relatively conservative tooth extensions, a wig and breast enhancement. / The horrifically exaggerated phase of Amy's transfiguration was designed by Randy Cook. The slaver, oversized mouth appliance — intended for only a brief shock-cut — ultimately received substantial screen time. / Billy Cole, Dandridge's unsavory sidekick, gets his filmic comeuppance by slowly dissolving into basic skeletal form. To achieve the effect, a rubber and multicolored gelatin mockup of actor Jonathan Stark was placed beneath blazing heat guns and photographed in front of a blue screen with a modified time-lapse approach. / The torso was designed with access from the rear so the primary head moves could be executed in hand-puppet fashion while numerous cable and rod operators supplied additional articulations. / As finally composited, Billy Cole's gruesome demise transpires in the hallway of the Dandridge house.

wanted it to melt. The head was actually made of rubber for the most part — which we cut away in sections and then recast the missing portions in gelatin, blending the two together. And, worried that we'd have a *House of Wax* effect if we used just straight gelatin, we decided to go for a multicolored and varying consistency of gelatin. It was animated with rods and cables — and with the hand of fearless puppeteer Mark Wilson, who wound up withstanding some pretty tropical weather as there were a couple of heat guns aimed at him to melt the gelatin, which of course globbed all over him in the process. Bill Neil shot it against a blue screen at twelve frames a second rather than at a very, very low rate of speed. It just seemed better to make it happen twice as fast rather than six, seven or eight times as fast." Once completed, the bluescreen time-lapse material was turned over to optical supervisor Mark Vargo and his crew who flawlessly composited it with the live-action background plate shot at Laird International.

The cinematic transformation of a human being into an altogether different form inevitably introduces the risk of compromising the credibility of the scene and interrupting the flow of narrative. For Richard Edlund, the inherent difficulties were a consideration early on. "*Fright Night's* effects are basically a series of 'transformation' shots, which I never like. We're always looking for novel means of dealing with them, to achieve the shots in ways that have not been used before. What generally happens when you turn a man into a bat — or a werewolf, if you remember the old Lon Chaney movies — is that the film is going along and suddenly there's a transition where you detach yourself from the movie to watch the change. The problem with that, of course, is that the audience immediately gets out their magnifying glass. If the transformation is not done peerlessly or unexpectedly, then the drama is stopped short and the effect is invariably a failure."

Early in *Fright Night*, Dandridge turns into a bat and flies over Charley's head. The problems of transformation were avoided entirely in this case, with the shot being filmed on a crane from the bat's point of view. Later in the movie, however, Holland wanted to actually show Dandridge transform into a bat and attack Peter Vincent. In keeping with his philosophy of not wanting to slow the action, Edlund — along with John Bruno — designed a transformation shot so fast and smooth as to be almost a throwaway. "We tried to think as simply and economically as possible when designing the shot," commented Bruno, "so we came up with the idea of having Chris Sarandon's stunt double leap off the balcony and then pan off him to see the transformation happen as an animated shadow on the wall. The shadow would then gain out of frame and the bat would move past us in the foreground."

To shoot the effect, BFC mechanical effects supervisor Thaine Morris suspended the Dandridge-costumed stuntman from wires against a blue screen. Bill Neil accomplished the camera move. And because the wall on the live-action set was not long enough to be used for the background plate — due to the rapid speed at







which the stuntman was falling — a 25-foot-long miniature, simulating 150 feet of real wall space, was built along the Compsy camera track. Nell Krepela then programmed a motion control move down the track, precisely match-moving all the elements. From there, it was up to the animation department to execute the shadow transformation from man to bat. "We took the two elements — the stuntman and the hallway pan," explained animation supervisor Terry Windell, "and did a rough roto job, laying out where we thought the shadow positions should be and how long the pan would have to be. Then we figured where the bat would have to come through the scene. Bill Nell shot multiple takes of the bat at various speeds, and Mark Vargo did a precomp of the stunt double, the background and the bat. At that point, Sean Newton rotoscoped the man's shadow, faking realistically what his shadow would look like on the wall. Then he animated the transformation and a wing flap as the bat begins to exit the scene. It was a difficult piece of animation because of the transformation and because as the shadow flits across the wall it is interrupted by beams, doors, plants and things; so it had to contort to those shapes in order to look realistic. Sean did an incredibly convincing job." Once all the elements were completed, Vargo and company composited the final shot.

Although Holland wanted Dandridge to transform into the traditional guise of a bat, he did not want the bat itself to be traditional. "There's never been a successful bat in any vampire movie I've ever seen," commented Holland. "For *Fright Night*, I wanted to see a bat that had clearly been a man — something with an eight-foot wingspan. I wanted there to be a connection between the appearance of the vampire as a man and as a bat." The task of designing, sculpting and animating the nocturnal bloodsucker fell to Randy Cook. "I thought it would be fun to incorporate various elements of the actor's appearance into the bat sculpture. The only problem was that the bat had to be sculpted before the actor playing Jerry Dandridge was cast, so we didn't know who to make it look like! What saved us was that we *did* know the vampire was going to become more bestial each time he got angry, so I figured we could probably work backwards. That is, I thought we could design the bat first and then adapt stages of makeup to an actor that would have various resonances of the bat's appearance. We also made sure that the colors in the final transformed creature were reminiscent of the colors in the makeup palette that the vampire has when he's at his most overt — the grayish, almost bluish skin against the burning eyes. Another thing I wanted to do was get a feeling of translucency in the wings. I decided that rather than actually painting the wing detail with pigment — which would cause problems in lighting from behind — we should instead build the wings with layers of pigmented rubber. That would, when one was layered upon the other, give the impression of veins and fiber. Mark Wilson got the unenviable task of designing the circulatory pattern in the wings. Once he'd done that, he sent it to a place that does engraving and copper etching, because I

figured that airbrushing in something as delicate as the veins wouldn't result in the proper density. Mark then sprayed on a few layers of rubber and laid the etched stencil onto that and sprayed the veins on, removed the stencil, cleaned it off, flipped it over and put it on the other wing — thereby ensuring symmetry and lack of duplication of work."

Of the two bats created, the first was suspended by wires and shot against bluescreen to appear as if it were flying down the hallway. Cook originally wanted to animate the bat as a stop-motion puppet, but Richard Edlund and Bill Neil preferred to render it instead as a marionette. "I was a little worried by the marionette approach," confessed Cook, "because I've seen it done with small bats in fifty years of movies and it's never been convincing to me. Marionettes often look as if they're floating and weightless because their motivation comes from above and not from within. Another difficult thing to do with a marionette is get the feeling of muscles working. We had the problem of the wings being stiff from the shoulders to the tips, so we rigged them at the shoulders, wrists and wingtips — motivating the movement from the wrist and wing and letting the shoulder follow. Of course, we had to make it look, through pantomime, as though the shoulder was the source of motivation for the action. With the puppet's seven-foot wingspan, I knew that in order to get a look of power and solidity in the flapping, we had to make the downstroke of the wing fairly rapid — say in eight frames or so. If we were to frame using real time, the only way to get the proper speed would be to totally let loose of the marionette's wires and let them drop, which would sacrifice all the control. I figured we could get optimum control by doing the pantomime in slow motion and shooting at about two frames per second — which is what we did."

The second bat was a fully articulated hand puppet used to attack Peter Vincent. Also designed by Randy Cook, the creature was an exact duplicate of the marionette in size and appearance, but was operated manually and with cables and rods rather than by wires. "As far as the movement goes, it was done in a very straightforward manner, with my poor bloody hand crammed into the mechanism that I had built just a little too tight. It was awful, but I wanted to make sure that it was *my* hand in there. Aside from the tight fit, I had the same problem that every other puppeteer of this sort has. You put your hand up inside and by the time you get a take that's good, you have no strength left. I worked with a crew of about eight people who operated the creature's facial expressions, arms and wings. We would flail this silly thing around until some semblance of coordination fortuitously happened, doing it over and over again until they got enough good pieces to cut it all together. The puppeteers did a really nice job of effacing themselves and keeping the work fairly subtle, using the extremes of movement when it counted and knocking it off when it wasn't necessary. Poor Roddy McDowall had the biggest challenge of all, though. After maneuvering the bat for so long, I was exhausted — and so all he was fighting with was this incredibly weak thing, trying man-

In Fright Night, the vampire manifests its traditional bat guise via three separate means — a marionette puppet, a traditional hand puppet and cel animation. Randy Cook grapples with the hand puppet rendition during the live-action shoot on stage. Cook designed and sculpted the creature, incorporating human-like features and a 'man-size' seven-foot wingspan. Cables and rods — operated separately by other members of the crew — aided and abetted Cook's puppeteering efforts. / The marionette bat — identical in appearance to the hand puppet — was photographed against a blue screen and later composited to appear as if it were flying down the Dandridge hallway. To disguise the fact that it was merely a lightweight puppet dangling from wires, the creature's delicately veined, translucent wings were carefully choreographed to create the illusion of live musculature at work. / The actual transition from man to bat was achieved in shadow form via cel animation. With still photos on hand for ready reference, animator Sean Newton pencils in a frame for the sequence.

Puppeteers Mark Wilson and Randy Cook initiate a bat attack on 'vampire killer' Peter Vincent (Roddy MacDowall) during principal photography at Laird International Studios. / While struggling to assist Vincent, Charley Brewster (William Ragsdale) suffers a vicious bite. The creature's main motivation was provided by Cook, while an eight-member rod and cable team operated its facial expressions, arms and wings. / Peter Vincent valiantly resists the monster's terrifying assault. / Randy Cook positions the marionette's wings prior to a bluescreen run. / Effects director of photography Bill Neil lines up a shot while gaffer Robert Eyslee makes a slight adjustment to the bat. The sequence was filmed at two frames per second, thus affording the puppeteers optimum control over the wings' flapping motion.

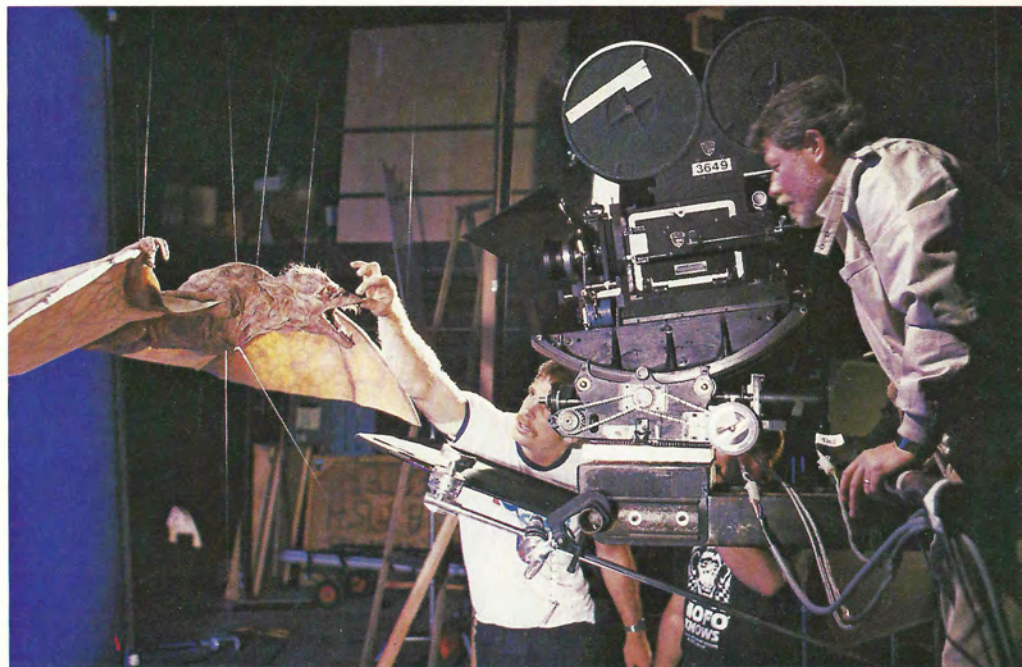
fully to make it look as if he were in peril. Of course, the only real danger was that my hand might collapse and strangle him."

Because of *Fright Night*'s low effects budget, Holland decided to reserve the majority of his optical trickery for the final, climactic twenty minutes. The momentum builds and builds until it literally explodes as Charley and Peter do battle with Dandrige and Amy, ultimately vanquishing the vampire for good and restoring Amy to her former sweet self. But before his eventual defeat, Dandrige gives the film's protagonists a run for their money. As a stake is about to be pounded through his heart, he rises up in his coffin. "In the original *Nosferatu*," explained John Bruno, "the vampire rises up at the end, too. That old-time effect was done by having the actor fall backwards and reversing the film. In *Fright Night*, it was done the same way. We filmed Chris Sarandon falling into the coffin and then reversed it. At that stage, Dandrige's face is completely burned since he was hit by light when flying down the hallway as a bat. Another appliance was added on top of his second stage makeup to create the burned look."

That minor encounter with sunlight was only a precursor to the fatal beam that ultimately strikes the vampire, picks him up, hurls him through the air, slams him into a wall and burns him to a crisp. The shaft of light that first hits Dandrige and knocks him out of frame was an animated beam. To actually propel him through the air, however, a stuntman stood on an air ram which threw him fifteen to twenty feet backwards. Then animation supervisor Garry Waller painstakingly match-moved a green flame with Dandrige, rotoscoping the movement frame-by-frame so the flame looked as if it were attached to the actor's chest.

The next cut, in which Dandrige shoots backwards through frame, required the most elaborate setup of the sequence. "To execute the shot," said Bruno, "a 75-foot-long track was constructed and a ten-foot platform was placed on top of it. On the platform, we put a camera dolly. We wanted Dandrige to move slightly ahead of us during the course of the shot; so as the platform was being pushed forward, we dollyed the camera back three or four feet during the move. The shot was originally designed for a stuntman who would actually be set on fire; but because we were so close to the actor, we had to use Chris Sarandon — which meant that we had to add the fire optically. On the platform, we had a 10K shining on Chris to represent the beam that's pushing him against the wall. Behind him were two large fans blowing his hair forward to help the illusion of his falling backwards. We did three takes at three different speeds, and ended up using the one shot at twelve frames per second. The shot turned out to be pretty spectacular when it was cut with him hitting the wall — which was accomplished by tilting the set and the camera 90-degrees and having a stuntman whose chest was on fire drop twenty feet straight down through the set. After he hits the wall, we have a dummy explode into flames. We used quite a bit more of Thaine's pyrotechnics wizardry for that shot. There was a green flame and quite a few red flares and









pops, then some magnesium powder that whites out everything."

The blast reduces Dandrige to a basic skeletal form which proceeds to writhe around on the wall before being vaporized. The plastic skeleton was conceived by Steve Johnson and John Bruno, then executed by Dale Brady. "Our intention in designing the skeleton," said Bruno, "was to imply that Dandrige was attempting to turn back into a bat but never makes it. It starts out as a normal human skeleton which then becomes more bat-like. We shortened its legs and extended the arms. The membrane burns away, the chest collapses and the head goes down. To make the skeleton, Richard asked Columbia to return the molds for the librarian ghost from *Ghostbusters*. It was her skull that punches through Dandrige's face and, oddly enough, it really resembled our bat."

Once the design was complete, Johnson appointed Mark Wilson and Makio Kida to build the creature. Then came the task of puppeteering the skeleton. "It was operated through a fireproof wall in our parking lot," Johnson explained, "and was capable of kicking around quite a lot. We had rotted skin built up all over it and ten organs inside the chest that pumped until it melted. We also hooked up flame jets inside the eyes and mouth so they could shoot long streams of fire. We mixed magnesium powder into melted wax, then brushed that compound over the bones to add some sparkle. The combination of our orange flame with the intense green flame that Thaine came up with turned out to be really interesting."

The live-action blaze eventually gives way to an optically induced fire blooming from the skeleton, which in turn disappears leaving behind a little bit of green flame requiring only minimal contributions from the optical department. "It was a pretty straightforward show as far as opticals were concerned," said Mark Vargo. "The bluescreen shots weren't as involved as they can be, and we got lucky because the shots usually went together on the first or second take and looked fantastic. Also, the show benefited from my experience on *Ghostbusters* and *2010*, because I was able to automatically plug in techniques that I'd spent quite a bit of time researching and employing on those films. I use about three different things for almost all bluescreen shots — some degree of diffusion, some degree of flash and some degree of focus change."

"Columbia really got their money's worth from us on this film," Edlund concluded. "My feeling with visual effects is that they work best when they're put in exactly the right place and not dwelt upon. You get more for your money if you design the show properly. The design attitude must be brought in immediately and the show shot around the effects so that the effects go precisely into place. If the effect is revealed for only a brief moment, the audience will always think they saw more than they did. But it's hard for a lot of directors to understand that because when they see the pricetag on a \$100,000 shot, they want to be sure they're getting what they paid for. In reality, they do get it when less is actually shown, provided what is seen is really convincing."

After surviving a close brush with a wooden stake and a minor skirmish with sunlight, the vampire is ultimately vanquished when a steady shaft of light transforms him into a blazing torch. Designed by Steve Johnson and built by Mark Wilson and Makio Kida, the half-man, half-bat skeleton was intended to suggest the vampire's dying attempt at returning to his winged guise. / Dandrige's unholy sleep is interrupted as the film draws to a climax. To suggest light-seared facial features, the second stage vampire makeup was embellished with an additional burned-flesh appliance. / Mechanical effects supervisor Thaine Morris rigs a Dandrige-costumed dummy with pyrotechnics for the vampire's blazing death scene. / A later-stage mechanical torso employed during the final conflagration. / Kida affixes the skeleton's head. Prior to photography, the figure would be covered with 'rotted skin' and equipped internally with ten bladder-operated organs that pumped as the rod-actuated creature was consumed by the flames.

