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**KING KONG**  
**SPECTACULAR**





# KING KONG: 1976, OR IS IT '77?

BY JAMES VAN HISE

Just over one year ago, Producer Dino De Laurentis took out a full page ad in VARIETY announcing his intention to do the first Hollywood remake of KING KONG and the dust kicked up by that announcement still hasn't settled. Universal Studios then announced that they too were planning a KONG remake and that they too had the rights to do so. What De Laurentis with Paramount Studios had was the rights to do a remake of the film as purchased from RKO while Universal had the screen rights to the original novelization. A prolonged court battle was decided in Paramount's favor stipulating that Universal could do a version providing it wasn't released until eighteen months after Paramount's. This did not sit well with Universal as they believed, and probably rightly so, that the market on KONG films would have been satiated by then (especially with Paramount already planning a sequel to their remake). Thus although Universal had discussed suspending the entire project following the court's decision, they have since changed their minds and have gone back to court and as recently as July were still trying to have the earlier ruling overturned.

Irregardless, Paramount's version, under producer Dino De Laurentis (whose recent films include such diversities as DEATHWISH and BUFFALO BILL AND THE INDIANS) forges ahead with the primary filming with the actors already having been completed. The cast is headed by Jeff Bridges (in the role Bruce Cabot had in the original), Charles Grodin (in Robert Armstrong's role) and Jessica Lange reliving the part Fay Wray played. Needless to say, the cast is not impressive.

The cast Universal plans to go with, should production on their version ever begin, is decidedly more impressive but whether or not it is better is debatable. Universal's planned cast includes Paul Newman, Steve McQueen and Valerie Perrine.

Although Paramount originally announced that no stop-motion animation would be used in their remake, instead relying solely on a forty foot robot and blacks wearing apesuits, they have since changed their minds. One reason may be the problems they're having with their full scale model KONG. It weighs 3,000 pounds, cost two million dollars, and doesn't work properly. Supposedly the arms keep falling off. The original script for the remake contained no dinosaurs, just a giant snake which an actor in a KONG apesuit was supposed to fight. Jim Danforth, an animator whose work has been compared alongside that of Ray Harryhausen's, is under contract to Universal to do all the animating on their remake. Jim read Paramount's original version of their KONG remake script and said it was awful, nothing like KONG at all. Paramount has since announced that they are dropping some of the more sophomoric material from their script and are adding dinosaurs as well as stop motion animation. How much remains to be seen.

Although both the Universal and the Paramount versions planned to use men in ape suits, Universal had planned from the start to include dinosaurs and stopmotion work. It can be hoped that with the constant state of change undergoing the films, that one or both will abandon the idea of using costumed actors as the men in costumes can not help but be compared with the hopelessly shoddy Jap-

anese KONG sequels.

But despite everything, there is still one major difference in the planned remakes. Paramount plans to do an updated remake with Kong falling to his death from the World Trade Center in New York City while Universal's will remake the classic in period setting, that being 1933. Many people, myself included, cringe at the thought of seeing Kong shot off the World Trade Center by jets. It just reeks so of the Japanese trash it turns my stomach, not to mention the fact that it sounds like an obvious commercial ripoff. Interestingly enough, some people in New York have protested the change to the World Trade Center setting as Kong has traditionally been identified with the Empire State Building.

Another problem facing the Paramount version is that with all the changes and delays it may not make the promised X-Mas release date which both the studio and the producer have promised distributors. Personally, if it turns out the way it sounds, I'd rather they didn't release it at all.



Associated Press Wirephoto

## King Kong comes back

Guardsmen hold back extras at New York's World Trade Center while propman covers body of King Kong with realistic mix of syrup and vegetable coloring. King Kong, styrofoam with horsehair, dies again for his love of comely girl in this final scene of remake of classic 1933 chiller.



# King Kong Is Back in New York To Cash In on Wave of Ape Mania

By SIMON WINCHESTER  
Manchester Guardian Service

BEVERLY HILLS, Calif. — The good citizens of New York, whose lives are rarely humdrum, will find something lying in their streets this week at which even they may express surprise. A gorilla, 36 feet from hairy head to hairy toe, is to be spread-eagle on the concrete plaza 1,000 feet below the top of the World Trade Center, and will stay there for about a week.

The gorilla will be very much dead — and, although technicians say you'd never know it, will be fashioned from aluminum and special primate-toned nylon. And it will, apart from its size, be no ordinary gorilla: it will be King Kong, Fay Wray in his monstrous right hand, visiting New York to clamber up and down the Empire State Building. It is timed to catch a new outbreak of Kong mania, timed to grip America and all other civilized nations this coming Christmas.

A remake of the ancient RKO film of King Kong is progressing here now, under the direction of the grizzled Dino De Laurentiis — a small Italian gentleman with a penchant for violent films: "Death Wish," (about a man who kills muggers), "Lipstick" (about a lady who kills rapists), "Three Days of the Condor" (about a spy who kills other spies) and "Serpico" (about a policeman who kills other policemen). Filming of King Kong began in Hawaii last January, and all the scenes that did not call for the appearance of the ape himself have now been completed. What happens in New York next week is the beginning of Kong's appearance on the sets.

"YOU JUST WOULD not believe what we have done," said Gordon Armstrong, publicist for the man he and about 20 slim-hipped Neopolitans call "Dino."

"We have spent \$2 million building a mechanical King Kong that is so realistic it's unreal. There are these three things: a living Kong that is being built on the MGM set here; a 10-foot long mechanical arm that is going to do all the grabbing of the blondes; and the dead Kong we are shipping to New York next week. We have ten tons of gorilla here, full of pipes, wires and electronics. I tell you, it's just incredible."

For the time being the world is going to have to take Armstrong's word about the mechanical Kong, because De Laurentiis is not letting anyone see it until August, when it is ready to start lumbering about and squeezing young women and climbing up buildings. (Not the Empire State: in spite of strong protests from that building's management, King Kong will scale the Trade Center, and then only a reproduction, built in the studio).



King Kong, Second Time Around  
... Trade Center replaces Empire State

## King Kong Revisited . . .

**URBAN GORILLA:** Paramount Pictures, remaking the famous 1933 film and launching one of the most expensive promotion campaigns in cinema history, is seeking permission from New York City to erect a 33-foot-high statue of King Kong on Times Square. The furry monument, clutching a woman in one paw and a helicopter in the other, would be built atop a 15-foot base on a Broadway traffic island and stay there for a year or so. Cost: \$250,000. The various agencies involved haven't completed their deliberations, but city officials apparently find the idea appealing. "In the past, when New York was very snooty, such a proposal would have been out of the question," said one. "But in the present crisis anything that will help give vitality, and excitement is welcome. It can't hurt." The film is scheduled for Christmas release.



KING KONG

"I CAN TELL you he really is amazing," said Armstrong. "His face can contort into expressions of rage — they have pulleys and levers inside him that will make him scowl and roar. His arms go up and down and he can beat his chest. He can do everything, it's just unreal."

At present, all Armstrong will say about the beast is that he is quite nude "and in fact he is not really a king — nor is it a queen Kong for that matter. It is a sort of in between Kong," and he is waiting for his fur and his motors. "Hopefully, we will be able to keep him after the movie is finished: We will change it about a bit and do a son of Kong or something, I am sure."

All the preparations are going ahead for moving the dead Kong to New York. "He is just the same as the mechanical one except that he hasn't got any motors. And the bits he lies on haven't any hair: there wasn't much point in putting any hair on if all he does is lie on the floor."

Armstrong says he expects thousands of New Yorkers to turn up to look at the vast beast in its death throes "but the trouble is that we will have to use extras for the film. If any of those guys see themselves in the movie they will be sure to sue us for acting fees. People are like that up there, you know."







KERRY  
GAMILL '77



# AN INTERVIEW WITH: RICK BAKER

conducted by  
Kerry Gammill and  
Michael W. Davis.

As the final credits appear on the screen in Dino De Laurentiis' 24 million dollar remake of KING KONG, most people exiting the theater will be marveling over the movie's incredible special effects. What the majority of the audience does not know, is that what they assumed was a 40 foot mechanical ape . . . isn't. In fact, the much publicized 1.7 million creation was actually only used in 6 shots (a total of less than 30 seconds in the film). The rest of the ape footage was in reality a man in a monkey suit.

The man inside King Kong is Hollywood make-up artist Rick Baker, who designed the remarkable costume and portrayed the title character throughout the picture. The 26 year old Baker has been fascinated with gorillas since childhood and began making his own ape outfits in his early teens. He worked with monster and ape make-ups as a hobby throughout his boyhood, occasionally experimenting with his own 8mm films until, at the age of 18, he turned professional.

Since then, Rick has established himself as one of the best special make-up men in the business. His many credits include creating a half man/half octopus for THE OCTOMAN; turning John Landis into the missing-link in SCHLOCK; wearing one of his own creations, a two-headed gorilla, in AIP's THE THING WITH TWO HEADS; and assisting Dick Smith with the special effects in THE EXORCIST, including helping to create a dummy of Linda Blair for the scene in which her head does a 360 degree turn.

Baker has also contributed make-up and/or effects to such movies as LIVE AND LET DIE, FLESH GORDON, SQUIRM, and IT'S ALIVE. He was also one of the men responsible for realistically aging actress Cicely Tyson to the age of 110 for the CBS-TV movie, THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MISS JANE PITTMAN, for which he was awarded an Emmy. Not to mention creating King Kong's hand for the legendary Volkswagen commercial and designing the mask for the Jolly Green Giant. Baker is currently working on special make-up for Brian DePalma's next film, THE FURY.

On April 25th of this year, Rick gave RBCC this exclusive interview by telephone from his N. Hollywood home.

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HOW DID YOU BECOME INVOLVED WITH THE NEW KING KONG?

I have a lot of friends who are stop-motion animators. They talked to De Laurentiis about doing KING in stop-motion. He didn't want to use stop-motion. He wanted to use a man in a suit. Because they (Baker's friends) knew me and my background; that I'd built gorilla suits before and studied gorillas for sixteen years; they said, "Well, we know the guy to get". So they (De Laurentiis) called me in to talk to me.

DO YOU FEEL THAT IT IS STILL BASICALLY UNKNOWN THAT YOU WERE KING KONG?

From what I hear from different people out here in Hollywood, they say that the people in the business know

who did it. Now I really don't know how true that is. I think as far as the general public is concerned, that they still think that it's a mechanical King Kong that Carlo Rambaldi built.

HAS YOUR INVOLVEMENT WITH THE FILM AFFECTED YOUR CAREER IN ANY WAY AT ALL?

It's really hard to say. Not that much has changed since KONG yet. I did a couple of jobs immediately after KONG, but they weren't really influenced by KONG. One guy decided that he wanted to use me on his picture because he saw some work that I did on a film called SQUIRM, which I did right before KONG. At the time that I was hired 'Dino' KONG hadn't come out and he really didn't know anything about it. And this other picture that I did is a film called, STAR WARS, and they weren't really influenced by KONG that much either. So it really hasn't affected my career.

WHAT IS YOUR HONEST OPINION OF DE LAURENTIIS' VERSION OF KING KONG?

It's a lot better than I thought it would be, but it's not good enough. Especially for the money that was spent. I was a fan of the original film, and I was very much against their making this film. But when I found out that they were going to give me some money to do it, I said, "Well hell, I'll do it". Unfortunately, it could have been much better. Even done in the same amount of time with the same amount of money, if they had been a little more organized and had some of the right people. It's just disappointing to me that it isn't as good as it should have been.

THE WAY EVERYTHING TURNED OUT, AND THE WAY YOU WERE TREATED, WOULD YOU GO BACK AND DO IT AGAIN UNDER THE SAME CIRCUMSTANCES?

I think if it all happened again, and I had the knowledge I have now, I would probably do the same thing only I'd be a little wiser about some decisions. I'd be very specific in my contract as to my credits on the screen, which I didn't do, and that's why I didn't really get anything.

WHAT ABOUT THE ACADEMY AWARD THAT KONG RECEIVED? WHAT WERE YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THAT?

I don't know how much information you guys got, but it was printed up in a lot of papers here that the award was, uh . . . bought. I was called before the committee of the special effects section of the National Academy when they were screening the film. They had five different films. They screen clips from the films and then they vote on each of the five films. They give each film a specific number, like from one to ten, and the film has to get an average, say of six, to qualify. Then they pick the top three, which are the ones with the most points. This is going to sound very confusing. (Laughs) Anyway what happened is, the first time around KONG was eliminated. It didn't qualify for a special effects (award). It was between LOGAN'S RUN and two other pictures. As it turned out, LOGAN'S RUN was the winner. Now, they had called me in just to ask me some questions about KONG because they had received some information from the De Laurentiis Corp. that talked all about the work in the picture, which mainly said it was a mechanical King Kong designed by Carlo Rambaldi, etc.





RICK BAKER HOLDING DEVIL MASK (LATER TO BE USED IN "STAR WARS"). THE BACKGROUND IS AN ARRAY OF MASS PRODUCED RICK BAKER MASKS.

You know, the typical bullshit. That it had all these silicone muscles that flexed and moved and, you know, real bullshit stuff in it. So they just called me in to ask me what my contribution to the picture was, and how much of this stuff in the information that they got was bullshit. When they actually did the voting I wasn't allowed to be there, but I found out later that LOGAN'S RUN was going to win and KONG didn't even qualify. Then the next thing I hear is they're going to give awards to LOGAN'S RUN and KING KONG. So right away I thought, "Well, somebody's been payed off or something". And then it happened that a lot of the members of the effects academy resigned because of that.

I READ ABOUT JIM DANFORTH.

Yea, Jim did. And then several other prominent members resigned.

WHAT EXACTLY DID THOSE THREE MEN THAT ACCEPTED THE AWARDS DO ON THE FILM?

Well, Carlo was the man that got the most credit for designing and creating Kong. It was Carlo's idea to make a mechanical King Kong. Carlo designed the mechanical Kong and then gave the designs to Glen Robinson, who was one of the other men that went up on stage with him. And then Glen looked at the designs and said that they weren't really practical, and redesigned the mechanical King Kong. Glen got a crew of people together,

which he supervised, and they built the mechanical King Kong. So that was the end of Carlo's work on the (mechanical) Kong, he designed one that wasn't really workable. Then Frank Van Der Veer, who was the other man, was in charge of all the optical effects. He supervised all the blue screening shots and put the things together in the optical printer. Carlo and I were supposed to be equals on the creation of the suit. I sculpted everything, with the exception of a few things, which Carlo didn't sculpt either. We had professional sculptors work on some stuff, because of the time factor. I didn't have time to sculpt everything myself. Someone else sculpted the hands and feet. I sculpted the head and body. Carlo's main contribution to the suit was that he made the mechanism for the suit—for the face. Which really was an excellent job. It worked very well. But that was about all he really had to do with the suit.

ABOUT THE SEQUEL. WE UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE NOT GOING TO BE WORKING ON IT. COULD YOU GIVE US YOUR EXACT REASONS FOR THAT?

Nothing was ever permanently settled so that I would or I wouldn't. What had happened was, when we finished KONG back in November, they had a contract that they wanted me to sign that said that they were going to give me a retainer and pay me a certain amount of money per

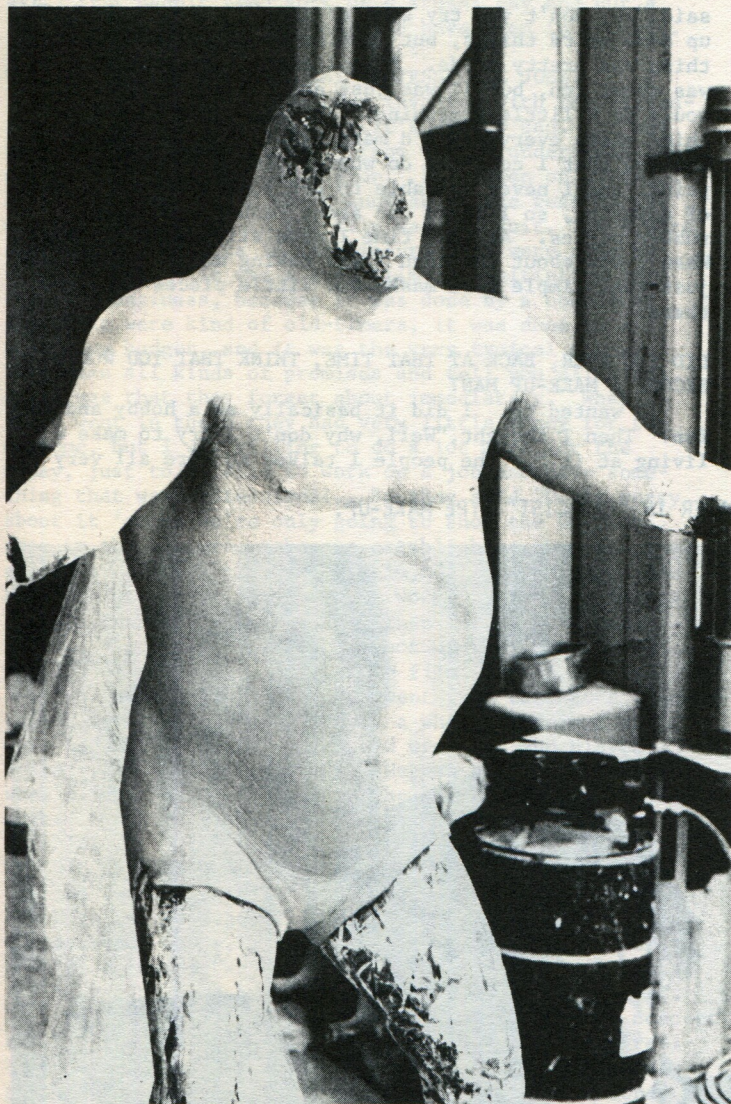


UPPER LEFT: The final design of "Kong's" body as sculpted by Rick Baker on body cast of Rick Baker.

UPPER RIGHT: Rick Baker and David Celitti sculpting Kong's body for the first test suit.

LOWER LEFT: Baker beginning sculpture of early Kong test design.

LOWER RIGHT: Baker putting finishing touches on Kong test suit. It was this suit that changed their minds about Kong being a "missing link".





week when I was shooting KONG II, the sequel. But some of the specifications of the contract said that I would not build a gorilla suit for anybody else—including myself—ever! And I would not play a gorilla for anybody but Dino De Laurentiis. And I said, "Well, I'm not going to sign that". I don't think they could give me enough money to just kind of forget about gorillas. Then they started getting nasty about it and withheld checks that they owed me and stuff like that, and said, "Well, you'll get your check when you sign the contract". They started pulling all kinds of shit like that. Then, I talked my way into getting my checks by lying to the accountant and saying I had signed the contract. But then all this bullshit started about the credits and all, because Dino was supposed to give me a different credit than what he did. Then they just started eliminating me from the whole scene. So then I said, "Well hell, I'm not going to do another picture for him and make Carlo Rambaldi look that much better". Basically, it's just the principle of the thing.

NOW WE'D LIKE YOU TO GO WAY BACK INTO YOUR CHILDHOOD. WHAT WERE YOUR VERY BEGINNINGS LIKE IN MAKE-UP? WHAT KINDS OF THINGS DID YOU FIRST START DOING TO YOUR FACE?

(Laughs) Really simple stuff. I had some black grease paint and some white grease paint, and I would do what I could with that. Starting out with real simple

vampire type things, doing things with really bold high-lights and shadows. The first kind of build-up type of make-up I did on my face was done with pie dough. My mom would be making a pie, and I'd get the dough from that and put a little food color in it and build the stuff up on my face.

HOW OLD WERE YOU AROUND THIS TIME?

About ten. Actually, it was my father's idea. He said, "Why don't you try some of this?". You could build up some weird things, but it didn't really last. Everything was pretty crude. Like I said, I started when I was about ten, but it was just every once in a while I would do a little something. It wasn't really a steady thing where every day I'd make myself up. I eventually decided that I couldn't do what I wanted to with grease paint, and I never was able to get nose putty to do much of anything, so I found out about rubber and making rubber pieces. At that time I made slip rubber things. When I was about thirteen I was making masks. They were just real simple face masks and little pieces here and there.

DID YOU EVER, BACK AT THAT TIME, THINK THAT YOU WOULD BECOME A MAKE-UP MAN?

I wanted to. I did it basically as a hobby and for fun. Then I thought, "Well, why don't I try to make a living at it?". The people I talked to were all very

BELOW: RICK BAKER MAKING-UP ELAINE BAKER IN "EXORCIST" TYPE MAKE-UP.





discouraging, and they were right. They said that it was a really hard thing to get into and it's gonna be a hard kind of a life. You may not know from one day to the next if you're going to be able to pay your bills and stuff. Fortunately, when I started doing some work professionally, that first few years that I worked were pretty good—pretty steady. Then when I married Elaine the first year I was married I hardly made any money at all. If I hadn't been sort of a frugal guy and put a lot of money away in the bank I'd have been in trouble.

#### WHAT WERE YOUR VERY EARLIEST PROFESSIONAL JOBS?

The first film I was ever involved with professionally was called *THE OCTOMAN*. It's really bad. It was never released theatrically, from what I understand, it was sold directly to television. It's been on TV quite a bit out here, but I don't know about the rest of the country. All I did in the film was the suit. There were some make-up effects in the picture that were done by somebody else. It was a good film for initiation into the film business, because it was done by a couple of guys that were kind of old-timers, it was done on a super-low budget, and it was the very typical thing. They make all kinds of promises and tell you all kinds of things that they forget about immediately. When we first went in there they had very little money for the costume, but I was willing to do a lot more for the money, just to be able to work on a job and have something that was professional. So they said, "Don't worry about it 'cause we're only going to show the Octoman once in the picture, take one establishing shot and then a couple of quick glimpses of him, but you'll never see him much at all". So we didn't worry about some things that we probably should have. Then in the finished picture, it starts out with a shot of the Octoman and he's in almost every shot in the film. But I learned a lot from that. Then I guess I went from that to a picture called *SCHLOCK*, and *SCHLOCK* was a whole different thing. John Landis, who directed it and wrote it and played Schlock, is a real crazy man. He was about my age and when I first talked to him on the phone I thought he was nuts. And I was right. (Laughs)

#### HOW DID HE FIND OUT ABOUT YOU?

He found out about me through Don Post. He went to Don Post to get a gorilla suit, a crummy gorilla suit, and somebody there, I don't know if it was Don or somebody else, said, "Why don't you talk to this Rick Baker guy 'cause he came by here and he had some good stuff". So when John saw my stuff he decided to change the concept of Schlock, from a really ratty looking suit, to a realistic ratty looking suit. (Laughs) Something that did more than just a regular gorilla head would have done. And he wanted it to be like a missing link, not a gorilla. *SCHLOCK* was different. I didn't get paid much money for *SCHLOCK* either, but it was an enjoyable picture. John is one of my best friends now.

#### ABOUT THE MAKE-UP FOR *SCHLOCK*, HOW DOES IT COMPARE IN TECHNIQUE TO A MAKE-UP SUCH AS *PLANET OF THE APES*?

Well, it's the same technique. They're very similar. I just redesigned the way the appliances worked. *PLANET OF THE APES* is not a new technique, which many people thought it was. It's a foam rubber appliance, and foam rubber appliances started back with *THE WIZARD OF OZ*. That's my favorite picture. I like the make-up and I like the picture. So it's nothing new, I mean that was back in the thirties. But because of all the publicity *PLANET OF THE APES* got, a lot of people thought this was something specifically invented for *PLANET OF THE APES* and it's not true. Foam rubber was done many years before that, and sometimes some things were done much better even. Like the Charles Laughton *HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME* was foam rubber, and it's an excellent make-up. Anyway, one thing I didn't like about *PLANET OF THE APES* was the way the corners of the mouth worked. The actual corners of the persons mouth were there and the appliance kind of

ended at the top lip and ended at the bottom lip and the person's face was in between. I made my chin appliance and major face muzzle appliance overlap in a way that it looked more like there was a corner of the mouth. The chin piece overlapped the upper appliance piece. Mine is more masklike in that it covers more area of the face than the *APES* appliances, because I knew that John Landis was going to be playing Schlock, as well as directing the picture, therefore he would be moving his face much longer than he would have been if he was just an actor. I also knew that it was going to be pretty hot where we were shooting. It was all exterior stuff, not with a studio, so I wanted to make it as easy to take care of as possible and still work.

#### WHO ARE SOME OF THE OTHER MAKE-UP ARTISTS THAT YOU ADMIRE?

The one I think is the best, and always have just about, is Dick Smith. I was a big fan of his work when I was younger. I liked his outlook on make-up and his concept of what good make-up and bad make-up was. I agreed with everything he said. I finally met Dick after I graduated from high school and found out that, besides being a fantastic make-up artist, he was just a fantastic person. He really had his stuff together and was just a really nice, great guy. So Dick is my favorite, but there are so many make-up artists that do good work, it's hard to say. When I was younger and I'd see a film that had bad make-up and see the guy's name, I used to say, "This guy's a lousy make-up artist", but that's not necessarily true. It may be the conditions under which he had to work. He may not have had any preparation time. No time to do the make-up and no money, and just tried to do something for the picture under those circumstances. All the ones who are into appliances and that are trying hard nowadays, I have respect for. And a lot of the old timers, too. Jack Pierce did some great things with his crude techniques. The people who worked for Jack Dawn during the *WIZARD OF OZ* times at MGM were good. All those kind of people.

#### DO YOU THINK THAT LON CHANEY, SR. REALLY DESERVES THE REPUTATION THAT HE HAS?

I think some of Chaney's make-ups are really neat, especially for his crude techniques. I'm finding out a lot of stuff now about Chaney not really doing that many of his own make-ups. A guy by the name of Cecil Holland did some of them. At first I didn't really believe it, but I'm hearing it more and more from different people who are old timers in the business that were around when Cecil Holland was around, and when Chaney was around even, and they all say the same kind of thing. I think some of the neatest things about Chaney's make-ups were the aesthetic values and the concept of the make-up itself, especially with the crude techniques that he had available to him at the time. Now, he may have designed and worked out some of the make-ups and somebody else just applied them. If he actually designed and thought out the make-up, then he deserves a lot of credit for it anyway.

#### OF ALL THE MOVIES THAT YOU'VE WORKED ON, WHICH DO YOU LIKE THE MOST?

That's hard to say. Probably the one I enjoyed the most was *SCHLOCK*. The one that would probably be the best movie of all of them is *THE EXORCIST*, but I don't really consider it one of my pictures. It was a Dick Smith make-up. I just worked with Dick, just labwork. I didn't do any of the creative work, Dick did everything creative in the picture.

#### HAD YOU MET DICK SMITH PRIOR TO WORKING WITH HIM ON *THE EXORCIST* OR ASSISTED HIM WITH ANY OTHER PICTURES?

What happened was, I wrote him a letter when I graduated from high school. I was born in New York, but we left there when I was really young, like two, and my parents were going to go back to New York to visit some



relatives. So I wrote to Dick and I sent him some photographs of my work and I said that I'd really like to meet him and told him what a big fan I was. Then I got this great letter from him and he said he really liked my work and that it was the best he'd ever seen from anybody like me and that he would really be happy to meet me. So I met Dick and spent part of a day with him, and he told me so much information in that one day it was incredible. The first time I ever worked with Dick, or had any type of learning experience from him, besides him just telling me stuff in letters, was on THE EXORCIST. He just needed somebody to help him on it, to do some of the work, and he thought I would be the best man to do that. I lived with Dick for about five months in New York while I worked on THE EXORCIST. Then we went to Iraq and I helped Dick do Max Von Sydow's make-up in the opening sequence of the picture, for another three or four weeks. That was the only time I ever really worked with Dick, kind of as a teacher/student kind of relationship, as an assistant.

DO YOU KNOW MUCH ABOUT THE SEQUEL, THE HERETIC? DID DICK SMITH DO THE MAKE-UP FOR IT ALSO?

Dick did do the make-up. There's a lot of make-up involved. There's a deal with Max Von Sydow at an earlier age. In the original EXORCIST, they mention something about a previous exorcism that he did. They do a flashback to Max when he was younger and in Africa, and he exorcises this little black kid. There's kind of a neat make-up on this black boy that I like a lot. Then it goes back to the present time and scenes that happened during the exorcism that we didn't see in the first film. So there's a duplication of the original



ABOVE: RICK BAKER APPLIES THE FINISHING TOUCHES TO THE WALKING BABY-MONSTER GLIMPSED ONLY HAZZILY IN THE FILM "IT'S ALIVE". BELOW LEFT: A CLOSE-UP OF THE CREATURE ITSELF WHICH IS DENIED US IN THE ACTUAL FILM.

make-up, and then it goes . . . well, it's hard to say because they keep changing it. Dick didn't even know how it was going to be. But there's a lot of make-up in it. It goes beyond the make-up that was in the (original) film.

COULD YOU TELL US EXACTLY WHAT YOU HAD TO DO WITH THE MOVIE FLESH GORDON? I UNDERSTAND THERE WERE A LOT OF PROBLEMS WITH IT.

Yeah. I requested not to have my name on the credits on that one. I had a lot of friends who worked on it and I just did it as a favor. I didn't do any make-up in the film. I did a prop building, a little building that's shaped like a spider and has a little man's head on it, an Emperor Wang's head. Then there's a stop-motion puppet in the picture, the Beetle Man. I sculpted it and made the mold, but I didn't cast it or finish it. And I did a giant mock-up of the Penisaurus, a full sized one, in three days. That was the extent of my work in the picture.

HOW MUCH FREEDOM ARE YOU USUALLY ALLOWED IN CREATING YOUR MAKE-UPS?

It really varies with the picture. Some directors and producers say, "You're the expert at make-up, we'll leave it up to you". Sometimes there's a vague description in the script and they say, "Well, kind of do something like this, but we don't really care". Or they say, "Do exactly this".

DID YOU CONCEIVE THE MAKE-UP FOR THE BABY MONSTER IN THE MOVIE IT'S ALIVE, WHICH HAS JUST BEEN RE-RELEASED?

Larry Cohen, the guy who wrote it and directed it and produced it, called me in New York while I was living at Dick's house, working on THE EXORCIST. I had worked for Larry before on some other cheap pictures doing some blood-and-guts make-up and stuff. He told me he had this movie with this baby monster. He wasn't really sure what he wanted it to look like, just a baby sized thing that kills people, and he asked me if it was possible to do. I said, "Sure, it's possible", but I suggested stop-motion, because I'd had some background in stop-motion and most of my friends are stop-motion animators. Anyway, he rejected that idea, so I told him the most important thing was to give me plenty of time to do it in. So he said, "Okay. Call me when you get back in town". So I did call him and he said, "I'll call you when it gets closer to the time when we're going to shoot". Then I get a call from Larry and he says, "We started shooting the picture last week and we're going to need the baby in two weeks". And I said, "Well Larry, I told you to let me know about this". So he said, "Well, it's not really that important because I'm never going to show the baby". So I went and talked to him and told him several ways to do the baby. He decided to have the





most simple one, which was just a dummy baby that really didn't do anything, it could just be repositioned. He said he just wanted something for the actors to react to, and it was going to be in such quick cuts that you wouldn't be able to tell. Then I said, "What do you want the baby to look like?" and he said it just had to be muscular and strange and it had to have teeth so it could rip somebody apart. I sculpted something and brought it out to him while it was still clay and said, "How's this?" He thought it was really good and said, "Maybe you could make the head bigger, or something like that", but it's basically my design. And what happened was, when I had the thing finished I went up to Larry's house, where they were shooting the picture, and said, "Let me stick this in front of the camera to see how it's going to photograph". Larry said, "Don't just stick it in front of the camera, let's shoot a scene with it". I said, "What do you mean 'shoot a scene with it'?" and he said, "Make it walk across the table and crawl to its mother". I said, "Larry, it's only a dummy. It's going to be used in quick cuts!" But he wanted to see it move. I said if he wanted it to move, we'd have to do something else. Then he decided on using the foam rubber mask and some hands.

#### SO THERE WAS THE DUMMY BABY AND ALSO A COSTUME?

Right. He wanted me to build it to fit myself because he didn't want to have to pay somebody. Elaine, my wife, who at that time was my girlfriend, volunteered to wear it, so I built it to fit her. Now the thing was, this was also a rush job so there was no time to do it right. The (dummy) baby was sculpted on an armature and I didn't sculpt it as if it was going to have to fit somebody, so I had to compromise the design (of the suit) slightly so it would fit a human and work. Originally, I was just going to build this mask and some hands and some shoulders, so they could shoot the head without getting

human shoulders in there, and just sit Elaine down and roll off a couple of thousand feet with a black background and they could cut it in wherever they wanted to. Well, Larry ended up shooting little scenes with it. Poor Elaine was crawling around on the ground and everything. She crawled around with it and tried to hide the rest of her body because there wasn't a whole suit. Larry actually shot a whole lot more than you ever saw in the picture, and he showed it too much because the big suit and the baby don't match that well.

#### DID YOU DO THE WOUNDS IN THE FILM?

It's funny. What happened was, like I said, they started shooting the picture before I ever came along. In the sequence in the delivery room, there's a bunch of blood, but not much of a wound or anything. Larry Cohen had a bottle of ketchup and was pouring it over everything. He decided he wanted to see something that was more than just ketchup, so when we were filming the little baby monster at his house he said, "Make a bite on somebody's neck and we'll put a doctor's outfit on him and we'll put him down here on the sidewalk and get a shot of him". So I put a bite on a guy's neck and they filmed him on the sidewalk with a doctor's suit on.

#### AND THAT WAS THE DOCTOR IN THE HALL AT THE HOSPITAL?

Right. That was on the sidewalk in front of Larry's house. Then he said, "The make-up still looks good. We'll change his clothes and put him somewhere else". So they took the doctor's suit off and threw him in the ivy. (Laughs) That was the only wound I did in the picture and they shot it twice. It was just real fast, mortician's wax stuff.

YOU'VE MENTIONED YOUR WIFE, ELAINE, SEVERAL TIMES. WE WERE WONDERING HOW SHE REACTS TO YOUR CAREER.

I used to make her up alot when we were going to-

RICK BAKER FINISHING SCULPTURES OF THE FOUR MAJOR STAGES OF "THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN".





gether. She was more cooperative then than she is now. (Laughs) I don't make her up that much anymore. Her face is getting a little tired of getting spirit gum and stuff all over it. But she's real good and she helps me when she can. She puts up with everything. My house is full of gorilla models and gorilla things all over. We've got a room in the house that's a make-up room and my masks and stuff are all over it and she's real good about it.

YOU TALKED ABOUT A COUPLE OF FILMS THAT YOU DID RIGHT AFTER KING KONG, ONE OF WHICH I BELIEVE IS TITLED, THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN. WHAT IS IT GOING TO BE LIKE?

Well, unfortunately, it was another of those things that could have been great, but isn't. They contacted me when I was working on KING KONG and sent me the script, and at that time the name of the picture was, THE GHOUL FROM OUTER SPACE. So I wasn't even going to read it. I said, "I can't do this picture. This is gonna stink". Anyway, I found out the guy who was directing it and wrote it was really crazy about my make-up and wanted to use me really bad. Then I said, "Well, the guy has to be pretty smart if he thinks that". (Laughs) So I read the script and there was some stuff that would be pretty interesting and hard to do. The basic concept of the movie is, it's an astronaut that has been in some journey in outer space and he got some kind of disease. And the disease is making him melt. His skin is just turning to mush. So he has to eat human flesh to stay alive. So besides the melting man make-up, there's a bunch of blood and guts stuff. I did a test make-up, which was just kind of done mostly on the face, which really turned out excellent, I think. I really liked it. It's really grotesque and really in bad taste, but it was well done. It just happened that they wanted it slightly different, and it turned out the actor that played the melting man was not very cooperative to the make-up artist. The make-up is very much compromised because it was a very short shooting schedule and they didn't have time enough for me to spend the hours necessary to do the make-up properly. And the actor wasn't really willing to sit there to have the make-up done properly. So I had four major stages of foam rubber head masks and there were additions and things on those head masks. Then there were four sets of hands and four sets of feet that went with the masks. One of the most difficult things in the picture to do, and probably one of the most effective, was the sequence where the melting man rips the head off this guy who's a fisherman. He throws the fisherman's head in the stream and it goes over a waterfall and breaks open and the brains and shit come out. I ended up making the head out of gelatin. It was actually cast with gelatin, with a wax skull that was full of brains and blood. It really worked nicely. When it hit on the rocks it split open like flesh would split, it didn't break like an egg or anything. And the stuff came out and then it kind of collapsed out of its own weight. But a lot of the other stuff has been cut, and I did a lot of appliances that I never used in the picture because there wasn't time to do it right.

IS THE FILM COMPLETED?

Completed shooting, but they're still in the editing stage and I really don't know who's going to release it or when.

HOW ABOUT STAR WARS? HAS IT BEEN COMPLETED YET?

Yeah, except for maybe a few opticals. It's supposed to be out in May.

WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE FILM?

The film was done in England. Stuart Freeborn, who is a very fine make-up artist, did some aliens for the film and the director, George Lucas, didn't really agree with Stuart's concept for some of the aliens. Stuart had also gotten sick during that time and couldn't really do them the way he wanted to. There's this one major sequence in the film that has aliens in it, and it takes place in this cantina in outer space. The main charac-

ters of the picture go into this cantina and there's a bunch of weird aliens from all these different planets. Most of Stuart's aliens were animal based creatures. There's a little rat man, and a little alligator man, and that kind of thing. George wanted more way-out looking aliens. So they just started looking around town for somebody to do it and they liked my work. One thing I've got to say though, when they actually told me to go ahead and do the film, I was already working on THE INCREDIBLE MELTING MAN, and I couldn't really devote my full time to STAR WARS. Because we had very little time, and many aliens to make, I got a crew together of five people and those five people did the majority of the work.

WHAT'S IN THE FUTURE FOR RICK BAKER? ARE THERE ANY FILMS YOU'RE PLANNING TO WORK ON, OR ANY PERSONAL PROJECTS YOU WOULD LIKE TO SEE DONE?

Well, there's a couple of people that have talked to me about some things that I would like to do very much. One is, they're going to do a feature of STAR TREK. They talked to me about doing some aliens for that. Another is, they're talking about doing a new version of TARZAN, much closer to the original book. There would be all kinds of ape suits in that. I don't really have a project of my own, per se, that I would like to see get done. But I would like to do just any film that I thought I could do some make-up for that I thought was really outstanding. I'd want it to be some kind of appliance make-up, not just a straight make-up. Whether it's an old age, or a really neat disguise, or a really great monster or something, just to be able to do a picture and say, "This is a great picture and I think the make-up is really good".



ABOVE: RICK BAKER EXAMINES THE AGED LIFE MASK OF MISS CICELY TYSON ESPECIALLY CREATED FOR THE TELEVISION SPECIAL "THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MISS JANE PITTMAN." THIS MAKEUP STUDIO HAS BEEN SET UP INSIDE HIS OWN HOME FOR VARIOUS EXPERIMENTAL PURPOSES.