

STARBURST™

GRAND 50th ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

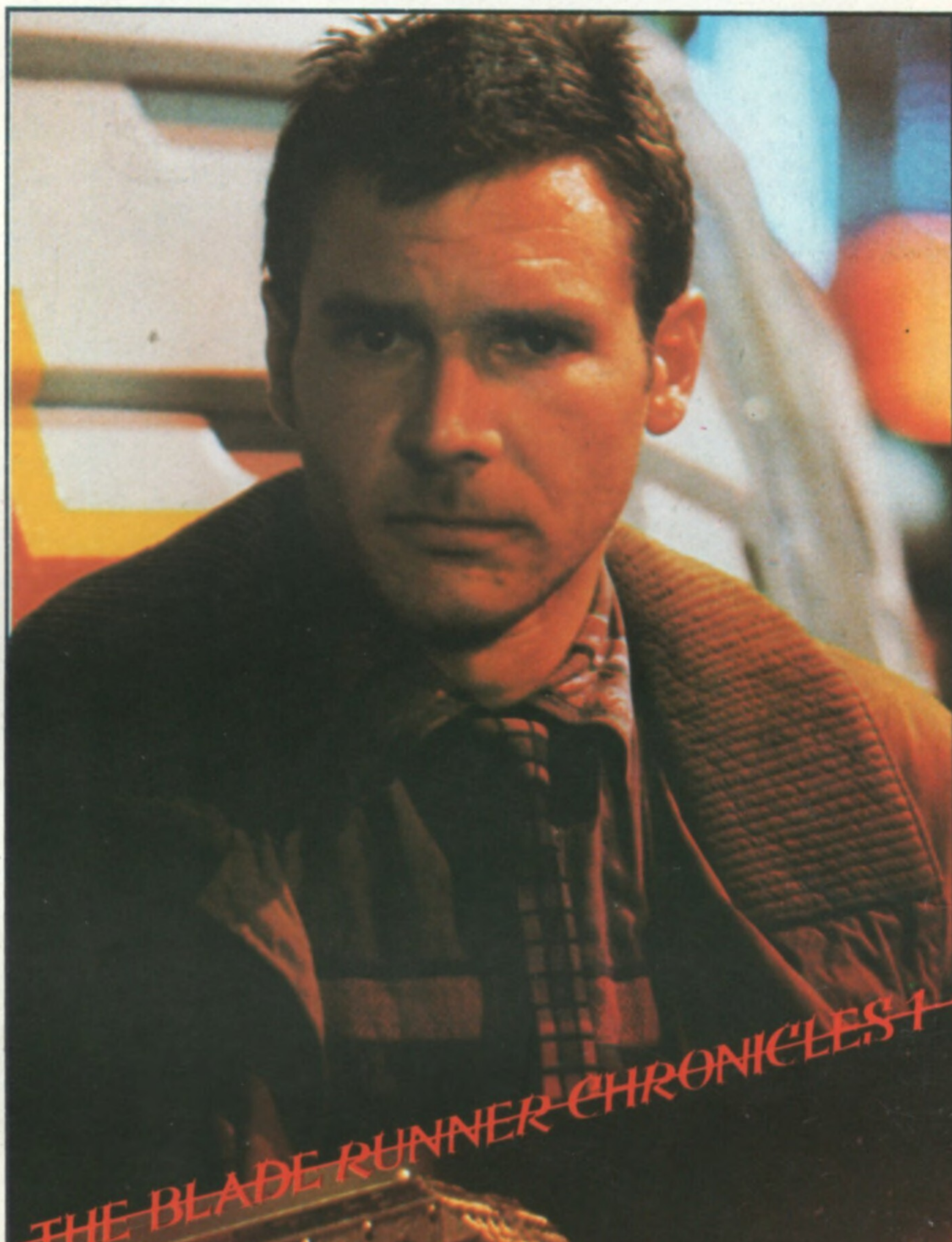
featuring reviews of
BLADE RUNNER
POLTERGEIST
THE THING

PLUS interviews with
FRANK MARSHALL

MAKEUP WIZARD
RICK BAKER

BLADE RUNNER
ASSOCIATE
PRODUCER
IVOR POWELL

and bonus colour poster for
Ghost of Slumber Mountain
Willis O'Brien's 1919
special effects
masterpiece



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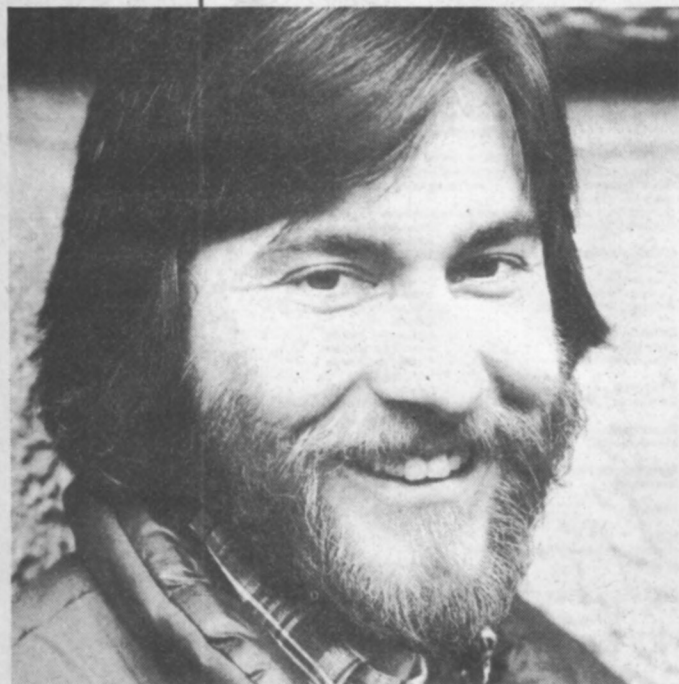
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**Interview by
Phil Edwards**

*Below: A portrait
of Rick Baker.*



First of all I'd like to thank the Academy for creating this new category and I'm very proud to be the first winner. I'd like to thank John Landis and George Folsey for making the film, David Naughton and Griffin Dunne for their co-operation, I'd like to thank my crew, Doug Beswick, Tom Hester, Steve Johnson, Sean McEnroe, Bill Sturgeon and Elaine Baker for working so hard. I'd like to thank my parents Doris and Ralph Baker for their love and support. Last, but not least, I'd like to thank the man who has been a real inspiration to me—Dick Smith—for all that Dick has contributed to the art of make-up. Thank you!

metamorphosis takes in *The Howling*. They'd be out the door...! I think the worst thing was that they overdid it. They just kept showing it and showing it. They overdid it with bladders. Also, it was obscured a lot and it was a much darker room and ours is in a well-lit room and there's no mistake about what's happening. Would you consider it your best work? I think it is some of the best work I've done. Because each thing you do, you put that knowledge into the next one. You worked with John Landis on *Schlock* didn't you,



RICK BAKER

It was with these words that Rick Baker accepted the first Oscar for Make-up in a new category created by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

Baker was born in Binghamton, New York in 1950, son of artist Ralph Baker. From an early age, Rick was fascinated by apes, monsters and monster movies. According to his long-time friend John Landis, Baker wanted to be a doctor, just like Frankenstein, until he realized it wasn't the doctor who created the Monster—it was the make-up wizardry of Jack Pierce.

As with so many creative film makers working in the genre today, it was the picture-packed pages of Forry Ackerman's *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine which inspired Baker's interest in monster make-up and the work of Dick Smith in particular.

Baker became friends with stop-motion animators Jim Danforth, Doug Beswick and David Allen and in 1968 was employed by Art Cloakey Productions, producers of the *Gumby* television shorts.

In 1970 Baker and Beswick created the low budget monster *Octoman* and in 1971 Baker teamed with Landis to make *Schlock*. Rick created the suit for Landis to wear and the feature managed to pick up the award of Best Film and Best Director at the 1973 Trieste Science Fiction Film Festival.

In his twelve years in the business Rick Baker has created some stunning work, from the low budget exploitation of *The Thing With Two Heads* and *Incredible Melting Man*, to assisting Dick Smith on *The Exorcist*. He has created monsters and effects for a whole host of fantasy features including *It's Alive*, *King Kong*, *Funhouse*, *Live and Let Die*, *The Fury*, *Squirm*, and most recently *American Werewolf* and *Videodrome*. He is currently working on pre-production of *Greystoke*.

Starburst: I found the metamorphosis in *American Werewolf* a lot more disturbing than its equivalent in *The Howling*.

Rick Baker: I don't think the transformation in *The Howling* is anywhere near as clear as what happens in this film.

It's hardly believable that anyone would stand there watching for the four minutes that the

and you talked about American Werewolf way back then? Did you actually think it was going to happen? No, I really didn't think it would after all this time. There were several times when it looked like it would happen and it didn't. That's how I kind of got involved in *The Howling* to tell you the truth. I'd figured out some of the things that I really wanted to do and John was saying "We're going to make *American Werewolf* in the summer" but I'd heard things like that before. A lot of times in the film business you hear things like that and here were these guys saying "We're going to do a werewolf film and we'll give you a free hand to do anything you want," and there was adequate money.

*Is that the same kind of thing that happened when John was going to do *Incredible Shrinking Woman* and you were going to make the ultimate gorilla?*

Yeh. I had a lot of freedom and a lot of money. Just now they're starting to get a lot more educated into what it takes to do this stuff right. It takes pre-production time and they just usually call us in when they're doing a film at the normal time they call everybody in at pre-production and when you have a lot of effects, like in the picture, you have a lot of effects, you need time. I think this contains more things than I've ever made for any one film.

You handled all the make-up in the film?

Well, special effects and stuff, me and my crew. I have a company called BFX that are all young, really talented people.

You were the first of a new generation of make-up men. Since you there have been quite a few others. Do you feel that you have been to helpful to other people? *The Howling*, I think, is a good example.

That's an interesting point. I have created my own competition in a lot of ways, yeh. Rob is a good example of that. Rob is like my protégé—I taught him from when he was a kid of fourteen. I taught him from scratch how to do all the stuff. I know Rob's really good because I taught him well. On this film is where it was really obvious. We're both doing werewolf films. The guy that I taught, whose work, I think, is better than anybody else's doing these kind of effects, is competing with me on the same kind of movie. I have to keep up with what my protégé is





doing. And the funny thing is that the idea for the metamorphosis in **The Howling** was my idea, of how it was going to work. I'm real proud of Rob.

Do you regret it?

I really don't. In some ways I think "Oh, maybe I shouldn't have done this." Rob is up for a couple of jobs that I'm up for now. It's really a weird situation because Rob is practically like my son. It's like now every time I go for a job, he's going to be in the picture. But I've taught several people since Rob and I've decided that I'll just go ahead and start this company and the people I teach will stay with me for a while.

So you're not taking on new talent?

I will if somebody comes along who has what it takes. Because there are a lot of jobs out there now for people who do the kind of work that I do. When I first started there was nothing and now Rob and the others I've taught have their hands full and each of the jobs has a lot more work in it.

So how did you actually start? Were you interested as a child?

Yeh. I think I was the first of the new breed of makeup artist that got into it as a fan, that was interested in make-up and in this kind of stuff, in monster films especially. I just enjoyed monster movies and watched my tv, went to the theatre, bought *Famous Monsters* and I learned stuff from *Famous Monsters* and from different magazines and books and just kind of taught myself.

You were associated with Dick Smith very early on, weren't you?

Yes, when I was about eighteen.

How did that come about?

Well, I always thought Dick was the best—I still do—and I was always quite a shy kid. By the time I was eighteen I'd acquired a collection of some pretty good work. At that time my parents decided they were going to go to New York to visit some relatives. So I asked if we could get around to New York City so I could meet Dick Smith and they said "sure". I sent him a letter with a bunch of photographs of things that I'd done—a lot of it was copies of things that he'd done. I got a reply right away and he thought it was terrific, he went on and on about it which made me really excited. So I spent the day with him in New York and he gave me a notepad, and I said "What's this, I thought I was just going to visit with you for a few hours" and he said "I'm going to tell you a lot of stuff I don't want you to forget." So he started rattling off formulas of how to do things and my work improved about 100% in just that one day. Things that I'd figured out on my own through long courses of trial and error, in just that one day he told me so much more. He just made so many more refinements. Dick's been great. Dick was like I was to Rob.

*I want to ask you about **Incredible Shrinking Woman**.*

I enjoyed the movie very much and I enjoyed Sidney more than anything else in the movie. Had Sidney originally played a bigger part than he ended up with on the screen?

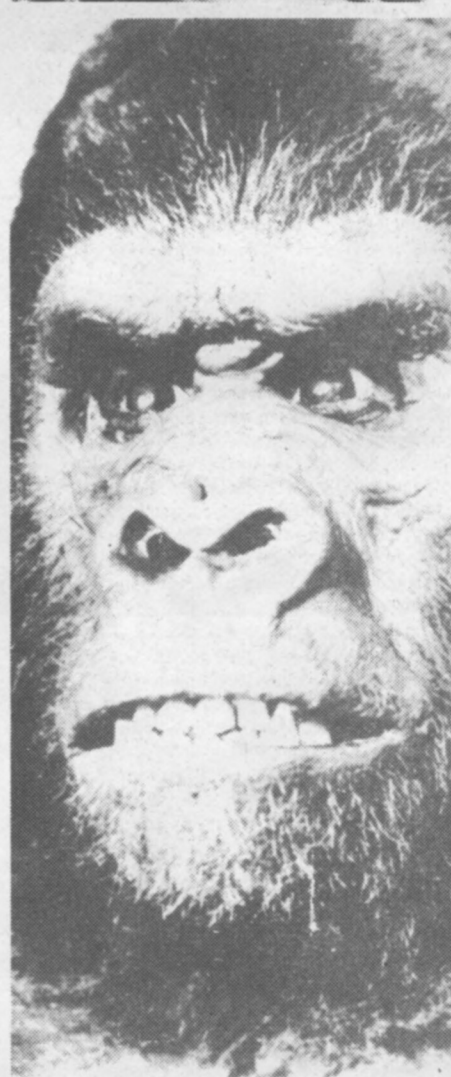
When John was going to direct the film, and in the original script, it was totally different than the film you saw—totally different. There was hardly anything similar except the fact that she gets smaller. In the original script Sidney was one of the main characters which was the reason that they would spend the money and the time to build a suit and John and I are both crazy about gorillas and apes so that worked out really well. So the only reason I was able to build that suit was because John said, "Listen there's only one guy I know that can build this and it's Rick Baker." He really wanted to give me the opportunity to build a suit like I was going to build it. So I was really the first one to start it, besides John, and I started to build Sidney and the picture got canned. They said it was going to cost too much money and I'd finished the suit already. Then the film started up again because another producer got involved who said he could do it a lot cheaper by changing things. I think the only reason they kept Sidney in it was because they'd already spent money on it. They said, "Well we've got this gorilla, we might as well use it." They cut the part down—a lot. It was probably a smart move for Lily's (Tomlin) career. The whole response that I got was that Sidney was the best thing in the movie.



Left: One of the Baker uglies from the dream sequence in *An American Werewolf in London*.



Above left: Baker works on the grotesque "rotting corpse" makeup for American Werewolf. Above: The final result as worn by Griffin Dunne in the film. Far left: A policeman discovers the grisly remains of one of the werewolf's victims. Left: Baker as King Kong in the Dino de Laurentiis remake.



How did Sidney differ from Kong as a suit?

The Sidney suit, if you see it in person, I think looks even better than it does on film. It can be totally self-contained. It could be walking around this room. The Kong suit if it's in person is a piece of s**t! There are big seams and gaps—you can see it in the film and that's the most carefully lit of anything I've ever seen in my life, in my career as a makeup artist. Dick Kline who lit that film, spent a lot of time putting gobos and little things in to block lights off at parts that didn't look too good. The Kong suit was bear hides, which I was very much against. The way I build Sidney is how I wanted to build Kong. I had it all planned out then. Sidney has mechanical arm extensions. Those hands he uses are not mine. They're much longer than mine and quite a bit larger. They're pretty incredible and they do more, again, than you see in the film. I can pick things up with them, and catch stuff, besides do the sign language. Each hair is hand tied like a wig, every hair is individually knotted in the proper direction on a stretch fabric, so you've got the right hair texture and length and direction, which is nice, whereas Kong was just hides sewn together. Millions of words have been written about **King Kong** and what happened on it and I don't want to bore you by asking you in detail about it yet again, but could you just sum up the "Kong experience"?

It was f***ed! It was a big disappointment. How many times in a guy's life—especially for a guy like me who really likes gorillas and would like to do a really decent realistic gorilla suit—is there going to be a film like **King Kong** made, where the lead in the film is the gorilla? When I went in there and talked to them they wanted it to be a neanderthal man. They didn't even want it to be a gorilla. My god, these guys were so off-base. I was just really disappointed. I thought, now we'll have the money and the time to really do this properly and they'll want it really good because it'll have to be good to work.

This was before anybody realised that Dino was going to do what he did, which is screw up something like Kong—and he screwed up Flash Gordon.

Destroying myths—I'm sure he doesn't try to but he couldn't do a better job if he tried.

Well, it was at that point I went in there and spoke to him about it. They just really didn't have an understanding of what Kong was and what they were getting involved in and their attitude was "That movie wasn't so hot, we're really going to make a good movie." The way they saw it was, **King Kong** was a disaster movie, that's all it was.

So they hired a disaster movie director.

I liked John Guillermin.

Oh, I think he's a fine director.

Right: The title star of The Incredible Melting Man.

Below: Another Nazi ugly from the dream sequence in American Werewolf. Below: King Kong does his stuff in the remake.



Yeh. I really felt sorry for the poor guy, being involved on this picture with the people he was involved with and he looked like he aged ten years during that year. He was always really good to me.

I think he was just wrong for Kong. He's a great action director.

Well, a lot of that too was that he had other people he had to account for things and they said well "This is how we want it to be done, you know." But yes, I think they might have gotten somebody who may have had more of a feel for that film. But their attitude was that it was another disaster movie, and then later on after the movie was finished they were going on about "Oh, we've made a poem, it's Beauty and the Beast, and it's so lovely," etc. I thought it was real disappointing. The first thing I heard about somebody doing a remake of **King Kong** was from Landis. He said, "Hey, somebody's going to remake **King Kong**." I said, "Hey, no kiddin', wonder what they're gonna





do." He said, "I don't know, some Italian guy." I didn't even know who Dino De Laurentiis was, to tell the truth. I thought well, they're really going to screw this one up. Then when I heard they wanted to talk to me I really had mixed feelings. I went in with a friend of mine, John Berg. John was up at ILM, did a lot of the stop motion animation on **Empire Strikes Back**. Well, John and I went in together and we had the idea of making these people do a better job. I think we did because I think there are differences in the film because of my involvement with it.

One last thing on playing gorillas. When you get into a gorilla suit, how do you stop being Rick Baker and start thinking "Gorilla"?

It's very strange. First of all you have to do what I used to do on **Kong** all the time, which was completely tune out. In between takes you have to go up someplace deep inside your head so you don't go nuts because you've got more than fifty pounds of weight hanging on you, it's incredibly hot and the heat builds up. It's like having a wet suit on that's six inches thick. But **Kong** was also very difficult because of the pain I had wearing those contact lenses, trying to act.

Could you see very much through the lenses?

No, not really. Double images, etc. It was really hard to hit marks. I definitely do get into the part though. Especially when I played Sidney, because I felt much closer to Sidney and it was much more the way I wanted to do a gorilla in a film, only I wanted to play



him a little more realistically. The way we were going to do it with John was the first time you saw Sidney for a while, it was straight gorilla mime stuff so you had no indication that he was a fake gorilla. Then he started to get in more and more of the stupid comedy takes which I think would have made it funnier.

Whereas now it starts right off with Sidney making a dumb face which I object to because it obviously isn't a real gorilla. But I do get into it. Rick Baker is kind of just somebody else then. I got fascinated by makeup and stuff. I was a real shy kid. If you put something on my face so I didn't look like Rick Baker, I could do something that Rick Baker couldn't do. If I had a whole suit on I could do a lot of things that Rick Baker couldn't do.

*What great gorilla actors do you admire, because there have been for example, Bull Montana in **The Lost World** and Charlie Gemora.*

Charlie Gemora was my idol. It was Dick Smith and Charlie Gemora. I think Charlie was the only other guy besides me that made a suit that cared about gorillas. I really don't know anything about him—whether he really liked gorillas or not. He did at least do some research and made a gorilla that was as accurate as he could make it. There are a lot of other people who have made suits. George Barrows for example who made the suit in **Kong**. That was a pretty decent suit, but I don't think it looks as realistic as Gemora's did. He did have arm extensions on it at one time to try to get the proportions better. But there were a lot of compromises in it. Maybe he wasn't the artist that Charlie Gemora was

And this was, of course, in the days before you could do so much with facial expression.

Well, Charlie did have mechanisms in his mask. They were simple. The lips went up a little, but the materials weren't what we have now. But I'm sure his suits were all hand knotted the way Sidney was done, he had arm extensions that worked slightly. He also had, in **Phantom of the Rue Morgue**, some liquid-filled thing or heavy weighted padding because it moves around with him when he's up in the trees. You see

the weight move, which really added a lot. Charlie always had, I think, a feel for that stuff.

I always thought that was both an underrated gorilla and an underrated film.

I like it too and the gorilla's great. Did you ever see

The Monster and the Girl?

No.

That's one of his best. It's a strange film.

*How did you get involved in **Star Wars**?*

Melting Man and **Star Wars** came at the same time. I had friends working on **Star Wars**. I was really tight with all the stop motion animators working on it. We'd see each other daily and go out in the evenings and have fun together, etc. Dennis Muren was one of the guys in this group and Dennis was shooting some of the miniature effects. George Lucas came back from England and said, "what you want to do is shoot some of that stuff," and Dennis said "I know some people real good for it." So George found out the names of the other people. I went in with my work and I think what got me the job was that I was real enthusiastic and it sounded like the kind of movie I wanted to work on.

*Apart from **Kong** it was really **Star Wars** that gave you fame, wasn't it?*

Oh yes. My disappointment about **Star Wars** was that we couldn't do it as well as we wanted to because of the time because we had so much opportunity to do some really great stuff.

Was it only the Cantina sequence you worked on?

Yes. And what you see in the Cantina sequence isn't all my work. That was originally shot here and Stuart Freeborn did it. Stuart got ill towards the end and George wasn't crazy about some of the stuff.

Am I correct in saying they shot a lot of the Cantina sequence here and did other closeups in the States?

Yes, they built part of the set there.

Was that your work, the material shot in America?

Any time you just see aliens sitting around a table that's mine. If you see a bar, that's Stuart's. The Cantina band is mine.

Do you make any other things like that?

No, I don't at all—it's something we're working on. I've designed several things for films that have made millions of dollars for other people besides me. All the individual inserts, in fact the first few shots you see of the Cantina are my things. There's this kind of 'T' head thing you see sitting there drinking. There is one thing I think is pretty interesting. Greedo, the one that speaks with the subtitles, is one that Stuart made and that was George's favourite. It didn't do anything originally, and George said, "Do you think you could make that move?" So we made a mechanism for it. Then they reshot Greedo's closeups in L.A. and cut it together with the two shots that were done here. It took months to produce it and you'd never know it was done in two different places by entirely different people.

*What did you do after **Star Wars**?*

I did **The Fury** some time after **Star Wars**.

Was all the special makeup yours?

No, Dick Smith was a consultant on that film. I made most of the appliances and Bill Tuttle put most of it on. The dummy of Cassavetes that blows up at the end I made, and there's a dummy of Fiona Lewis that bleeds that you really can't see—it could have been a mannequin—that's the one that spins. I made appliances for Fiona that bled.

Did you do the pulsing veins?

Dick made those.

Are they "moles"?

They're the same type of thing. They're actually different materials.

Who invented the mole?

That was Dick's idea. Dick is actually responsible for most of the things we call Special Makeup Effects. Dick is the father of that stuff. Like in **The Godfather** he developed new ways to do bullet hits on skin, that type of thing. He's really great at developing new materials and finding uses for them, coming up with new formulas, etc. Once again, he shares the information. Dick will tell me something and I'll think "Hey I could use that—only this way, for something else." I'll tell him something and he'll use it another way. We bounce back and forth between each other, and it's just for the good of the art, so to speak.

Above left: Rick Baker in his gorilla costume for the **King Kong** remake. Left: Another shot of the **Kong** costume.

