

"SHOCKER": WES CRAVEN UNLEASHES A NEW TERROR!

DISPLAY UNTIL 10-11-89

HORRORFAN

PREVIEWS

James Cameron's
Undersea Adventure
THE ABYSS

Stay Awake!
Freddy's Back

**ELM
STREET 5**

They've Landed—
MARTIANS!!!

Gruesome
Experiments in
**THE
IMMORTALIZER**

Fall 1989 \$3.50 U.S./\$3.95 Canada
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Clive Barker's
NIGHTBREED

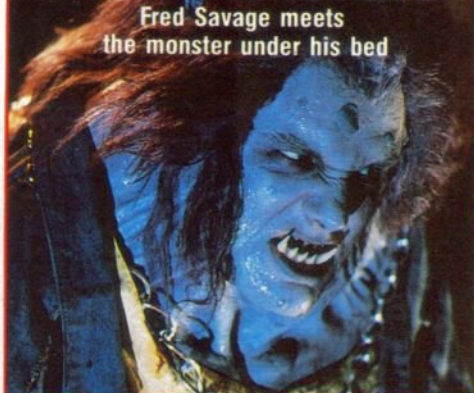
Barker directs
David Cronenberg in
a monster epic

The mad scientist
always blames...
**THE
ASSISTANT**



LITTLE MONSTERS

Fred Savage meets
the monster under his bed



BUG INVASION

These creepy crawlers
have invaded the silver screen



**PLUS: THE CAREER OF BASIL RATHBONE • FX WHIZ GREG NICOTERO
BLASTS THE MPAA • VETERAN MONSTER-MAKER JOHN BUECHLER
DIRECTS HIS OWN FUTURE • EXPANDED HOME VIDEO COVERAGE**



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Greg Nicotero

Make-up and effects people have lovingly created some of the most horrific and memorable movie monsters, but in doing so, they unknowingly provoke what many of them consider to be an insidious evil, one that often leaves the monster makers powerless—the MPAA. FX whiz Greg Nicotero speaks out about the horrors inflicted upon his creatures by the Ratings Board



Evil Dead II

"The horror cinema, to paraphrase George Romero, is like a roller coaster ride," explains Greg Nicotero. "You know before you're seated that the ride is going to be scary. There will be portions that may even make you feel uncomfortable, but the ride will conclude with you feeling exhausted, exhilarated and laughing with your friends."

Mr. Nicotero works with the fear architects, including Romero and Sam Raimi, to develop those fool-proof dips and peaks that incite passengers to scream or abrade their stomachs with a spring cleaning. Nicotero, however, is cautioning all good thrill-seekers that the MPAA is derailing the roller coaster.

As a fledgling makeup artist, Nicotero launched his career in earnest with *Day of the Dead*. The movie introduced Nicotero to Tom Savini, bonding a professional rapport that, five years later, "still holds strong." 1985 proved to be a professional "turning point"; taking the advice of co-worker and future partner, Howard Berger, he moved from his Pennsylvania home turf to California. Nicotero promptly landed some succulent assignments: *Invaders From Mars*,

From Beyond, *Raw Deal*, *Creepshow II*, *Predator*, *Monkey Shines*, *Phantasm II*, et al.

During his stint as the "Creature Supervisor" on *Deepstar Six*, Nicotero teamed up with Berger and associate Robert Kurtzman, to organize the K.N.B.-EFX Group. Their collective skills have been engaged for films concurrently in production, including *Night Wish*, *UHF*, *Police Academy VI* and *Night Angel*, in



Day of the Dead

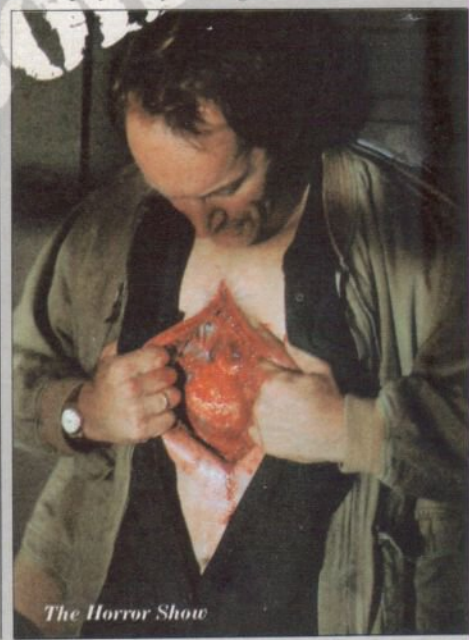
addition to a collaboration with Kevin Yagher on *The Borrower*. The company is currently absorbed in the effects work for *A Nightmare on Elm Street-Part 5: Dream Child* and *Gross Anatomy*, the latter for Disney Pictures.

Nicotero's prospective projects include an adaptation of the recently published novel, *Deadlines*, written by John Skipp and Craig Spector (reviewed in *HF* #2). The effects artist, who owns the option with partner Joe Winogradoff, would prefer to "work on the film in a producing capacity."

Nicotero considers *Horror Show* to be his company's "biggest break." The director, James Isaac, felt that the K.N.B.-EFX Group would be "just the guys" to deliver the murder and mayhem of killer Max Jenke. Unfortunately, that perennial watchdog, the MPAA, is not only aborting the company's work from

Horror Show, but threatening to censor all the "offensive" Grand Guignol effects that are a modern staple of the genre.

I think horror films are more vulnerable to the MPAA Board because of a distributor's resistance to releasing a film without a rating or a self-imposed "X" for violence. Censorship conflicts prevailed in George Romero's *Day of the Dead* (1985), which was also my first film as a make-up artist and effects assistant. The original script was epic, the greatest in the world, and we often referred to it as "The Ten Commandments of Zombie Movies"; the financiers, however, would raise only \$3 million unless the film was specifically tailored for an "R" rating. If George had compromised for an "R" rating, his budget would have expanded up to about \$8 million, though I'm not sure of the exact figures. But George insisted on an unrated movie, and was forced to rewrite the script for a smaller budget. We eventually adapted George's second version of the screenplay (I hope he'll get around to



The Horror Show

shooting the original script; it's a great story). This should serve as an example of how an unrated movie is instantly condemned with a kind of subliminal censorship; the company wouldn't make a more substantial investment, because an unrated movie is often denied theater space and prime-time advertisements and many newspapers refuse their ads. I remember the Florida debut of *Dawn of the Dead*; it premiered with an "X" rating, and I had to convince my mother that it wasn't a porno flick, but a horror film. Florida, as well as other areas, didn't know how to deal with an unrated movie, so they branded it with an "X!"

Evil Dead II was also plagued with rating problems. I had already seen the first *Evil Dead* and really flipped over its carte blanche effects. I was hired for the sequel by Mark Shostrom, and learned that director Sam Raimi wouldn't shoot certain (violent) scenes because he speculated the ratings board would inevitably demand their omission from the completed film. The De Laurentiis Entertainment Group (DEG), who financed the film, advised Sam to shoot for an "R" rating. Sam wasn't afforded the luxury of shooting two different versions, that is—a "down and dirty," no-holds-barred version and an alternate, "sanitized" version where the violence would have been trimmed. The result: Sam made a more timid interpretation of his original concept, and submitted what he assumed to be a "tame" movie to the ratings board. The MPAA looked at the finished product and collectively said, "Forget it! Too gruesome. We're not going to give you an "R" rating unless you make all these cuts." This was their verdict, even though Sam specifically advised us *not* to go too heavy on the blood. People couldn't understand why the demons bled colors of green, black, et al; actually, it was Sam's concession to the ratings board! He deliberately avoided the visualization of red blood being explicitly spilled in the cabin and the woods. Since the assorted demons were of supernatural origin, he took the liberty of changing the pigment of their body fluids to all colors but red; hence, audiences would be more likely to think of their blood as "green and black stuff" rather than gore. In spite of these precautions, the board slapped the film with an "X" rating. DEG was forced to set up its own company, called Rosebud, to release *Evil Dead II* as an unrated movie.

A year ago I also formed my own company with long-time co-workers Howard Berger and Robert Kurtzman, called the KNB-EFX Group. Our first assignment was furnishing make-up effects for *Intruder* (formerly *Night*



The Horror Show

Crew), a slasher film set in a supermarket. Scott Spiegel, who had co-written *Evil Dead II*, wrote and directed the film. Unfortunately, none of our effects from that film will ever be seen. The Board removed every one of our "death" scenes. Ironically, halfway through negotiating a deal on the special effects, the producer said, "We're really trying to keep the budget

"The Board, which has nothing to do with the creative process, dictates the removal of certain scenes."

low. I don't think we're going to do these effects." I replied, "Here's my opinion; this is a *horror* film. If you don't have any horrific elements in it, why waste the money and the film stock?" I finally persuaded the producers to retain the effects scenes, arguing, "If worse comes to worse, you can release an unrated version on video. The controversy is worth more rentals because people will want to see that footage that was formerly excised." We were very pleased with our effects, which kept the film flowing, though they were accomplished with almost literally a five-dollar budget. *Intruder* was the final film produced for Empire Pictures. The company dissolved before the film was released; as a result, *Intruder* was taken away from the director and temporarily lost in limbo. Paramount eventually picked up the film's option, and they recut the entire movie. In order to insure a soft rating, *all* of the effects footage was deleted! Neither the producer nor the director are consulted for advice; the Board, which has nothing to do with the creative process, dictates the removal of certain scenes. The *edited* version of *Intruder* will surface, direct to video, in the spring.

More recently, we did the effects for *Horror Show*. The photos, printed in this magazine's coverage of the movie (*HF* #2), originate from scenes that

have since been deleted from the movie! Many people in the industry think the MPAA pulverized the film because producer Sean Cunningham managed to slip his 1980 hit, *Friday the 13th*, by them. Sean has been indelibly linked with *Friday the 13th*; even the ads for *Deepstar Six* (1989) remind you it's "...from the man who brought you *Friday the 13th*!" Naturally, the Board reacts with "Ah-ha! This is the guy who got away with murder on *Friday the 13th*!" *Friday* premiered to a public outcry, and the ratings board was blamed for approving a "blood bath" with an "R" rating. The MPAA, which has never forgiven Sean, has exhaustively "policed" all films since *Friday's* original release.

From the beginning, director Jim Isaac's impression of *Horror Show* was to conceptualize a movie that went over the top. The film is prefaced with a scene where Lance Henriksen makes a forced entrance into a diner; he sees legs protruding from a meat grinder, a head frying in a cooker (the eyes explode), hands boiling in oil and blood smeared all over the walls. It's not intended to be simply gruesome, but black humor—a profile of an *absurdly* psychotic killer. We lost the legs, the severed head and everything else to the Board.

Personally, I don't understand the Board's discrimination of "offensive" scenes. As a random example, there's a sequence in *Hellbound: Hellraiser II* where a guy shaves the skin from his body with a razor blade. Though the rated version didn't linger on the gore, it's a *brutally* violent scene that remained in the movie. However, there's an hallucinatory sequence in *Horror*

Continued on page 60



Evil Dead II