

# COURSE *AND* EFFECTS *PART 2*

Words: Paddy O'Hare

We continue our extensive chat with special effects make-up artist SHAUNE HARRISON, who this month reveals some secrets from behind the scenes of his famous works, including THE FIFTH ELEMENT, HARRY POTTER, and STAR WARS: EPISODE I - THE PHANTOM MENACE...



**STARBURST: Nick Dudman was another one of the guys who got you into this work, right?**

Shaune Harrison: Yeah, Nick did Jack Nicholson's Joker make-up in *Batman* and worked on *Return of the Jedi* and *The Hunger* too. He was crewing-up for *The Fifth Element* and I was working on a film for Image Animation called *Killer Tongue*, which was a Spanish horror movie. It was supposed to have Bruce Campbell, Robert Englund, and Doug Bradley in it; the three icons of horror, but Bruce pulled out at the last minute. It was a really bizarre horror. At the time, *The Fifth Element* was called *Zaltman Bleros*, which was the name of Bruce Willis' character, and became the name of the Production Company Zaltman Films. I met him and joined the existing crew of thirty. Initially just for two weeks, but I ended up staying for two months, and the first thing he gave me to do was sculpt Milla Jovovich's orange costume.

**We bet that was a tough job!**

It was hard for me because I don't do costume sculpting! It's very regimented, it had also previously been sculpted by somebody else, but it was too baggy. We had just done this silicone suit for *Killer Tongue* and had the same issues of stretch. Nick said that we would have to take six inches of her stomach out so then it would fit really tight, and then I had to sculpt the holes as ovals so they would stretch out to circles. Nick wasn't sure it was going to work, but we tried it on Milla's double and it did. So I stayed with Nick for that film, and we did *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation* in Thailand. When we were still working on it in Leavesden, we heard about *Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace* and we saw George Lucas around. Nick said, "Do not tell anyone this is happening!" We were going away to Thailand for ten weeks, so we missed the first month of *Star Wars*. I also did *The Mummy* with Nick.

**Going back to *The Fifth Element*, what was your experience of Bruce Willis, considering his reputation?**

Actually he was lovely, I don't know if it was because it was a film he enjoyed working on, but he was genuinely nice to people and would say hello on set and we got no ego from him at all. Even to the point where catering would give donuts to the crew but production stopped it because they said it was too expensive. Bruce paid out of his money for 500 donuts every day for the crew.

It must have been hard for Gary Oldman, because he had just come off directing *Nil by Mouth*, which was a very violent British film and was literally editing that film when he came on board *The Fifth Element*.

**He gave a fantastic performance in the end; totally extravagant and bizarre.**

And you know they never worked together, if you watch the film they never share a scene! Bruce Willis had finished and a few weeks later, Gary Oldman started shooting; for the hero and the bad guy in the film that's quite odd, but it was a great project to work on.



**There seems to be a move back to using practical effects, and it looks like they are doing as much practically as possible in *Star Wars VII*. You just have to look at stuff like *Blade Runner* on Blu-ray to see that even now those plates and mattes look perfect!**

That's down to people like Douglas Trumbull, who's just a genius; *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, with lights and all that smoke-tank stuff, I just love that. I'd much rather see that than pristine CG. I think Trumbull was also underappreciated, he may have gotten a technical Oscar, but he never got one for the films he did. He was doing that Showscan stuff years ago in the '80s for large-format screen, he kind of invented IMAX there, he was always ahead of his time but just doesn't get the recognition.

**Did you ever meet him?**

No, I would have loved to have met him, and Dennis Muren, who he brought in on *Close Encounters*, he's another genius, and everything he does is beautiful.

**You must have got to work with Muren on *Episode I*?**

Yeah I met him once on *Episode I*, he was John Knoll who was doing all the plate photography stuff. It was one of the highlights of my career because I have letters from 1983 from ILM when I wrote to them for jobs. I got one back from the general manager Warren Franklin that was really sweet, he said, "You're doing the right things for your age and there's no reason why you can't do it, why not just go for it!" That gave me a massive boost! I see a lot

of people nowadays who say they are so passionate about make-up effects and I will say "Do you know Rick Baker?" And they say "No". All I ever wanted to do in life from 12 years was what I'm doing now, but I had no idea how to do it. When I told the careers person at school that I wanted to make monsters, they suggested I become a draftsman; the best thing people could ever say to me was that you can't do it! I was lucky because my parents left me alone to make monsters; Dad just worked at the factory, Mum was a cleaner. We had no money. I had to work out a way of getting my materials, I'd go to my local dentists and ask for a bag of alginate or plaster then I'd show them my work and they would give me more.



I'd go to local potters and ask for old clay that had been thrown away and just have to keep wetting it to get it working – recycling! My Dad worked in a factory that had window putty and he'd bring balls of it back and I would make skin out of it, it used to take forever to break it down, and I'd use my Mum's make-up and make it into a paste. I didn't know any other way of doing it, you know, that was my method because nobody told me what you can and can't do.

#### What did you work on for Episode I?

Bib Fortuna, which was a remake of the *Return of The Jedi* character, with Alan Ruscoe in the make-up, but strangely enough the scene that was shot with him was cut out of the film.

#### Wasn't he supposed to be in the pod race scene with Jabba?

Well that scene was shot six months later in LA, with my prosthetics, but ILM decided to use a make-up guy there. We had to send photos of Alan in the make-up and explain the process. They just put it on somebody from ILM and I didn't really like it. It really bugs me when I see it because there are weird wrinkles on the side of the face because it doesn't fit, as it was sculpted for Alan's face. The sequence we shot with Alan was in the senate pods with Terence Stamp, which was second unit for weeks and weeks – just a pod in a green room, pretty boring but we all got to play creatures, I played Hammerhead!

#### ET gets a cameo too!

Yep ET! I felt for Roger Christian, the second unit director; he's an Oscar winner, and he was just shooting pods in a sea of green for weeks on end!

#### They finished off putting some deleted scenes on the DVD, but by the sounds of it, there must have been hours and hours left on the floor?

Oh God, yeah! We shot quite a lot of creatures that aren't seen in the film any more, and other things where you wonder,



"What ever happened to those sequences we shot?" I even did baby Gamorrean Guards, we got sent over Don Post's original masks and I got to sculpt the baby versions from those which aren't in the film. We did baby versions of loads of things like Greedo, which made it in, but that was Warwick Davies in a full sized head. He's such a lovely bloke and he loved getting back into it, I've worked with Warwick loads on *Harry Potter* as well, of course. He even came into the workshop once to learn how to sculpt because he thought it was easy. After two hours he said, "I don't know how you guys have the patience!", and walked out.

#### And that's our cue to talk about Harry Potter...

I'd never read the books but I think there were only four of them out when we started in June 2000. Nick rang me up and asked if I was available to do this film... We all knew what it was; one of those top-secret things, but everyone knows things. So Nick was doing it, along with Jim Henson's Creature Shop, but Nick was based at Leavesden anyway so they were happy for him to do the prosthetics. Henson's ended up doing

the big animatronics stuff like the snake, the rat, and the troll. So we sculpted tonnes of goblins, which we did for months.

For one sequence, we shot over two days with Warwick as the bank teller, and Verne Troyer as Griphook. It was interesting because they weren't allowed to have American actors; it was supposed to be all British so we weren't allowed to say it was Verne! Robin Williams came in off the back of *Bicentennial Man* as he knows the director Chris Columbus, even though he wasn't going to be in the film we still hid the Verne heads just in case. We also did a Voldemort that was cut out of the film, for the death of Harry's parents, which we shot over a two-week period; it was quite a violent scene. In the film, you only ever see the hand going up to his head with the wand, but we did a full make-up on Richard Bremmer, who was initially signed for two films. They rethought it after the first film, and then eventually got Ralph Fiennes. So I did the first, second and third film, not realising I'd end up doing all eight of them which is ten years of your life!

#### More like a way of life than a job in the end!

It was kind of a nine-to-five job, without being arrogant, I thought I would have a job coming up next year and if the next Potter didn't start for another four to six weeks you'd think, "Why isn't it starting now, because I need my money to come back in", as there's always a break. When they began *Chamber of Secrets*, I started September 10th 2001; obviously, the next day was 9/11, which changed all the security measures, and there was concern we would have to shut down while we were in pre-production. We didn't start shooting the film until the week after the release of *Philosopher's Stone* when it made the £90 million opening, and they knew they had a hit, and the funds came back in. Chris Columbus didn't stop the whole time; it was amazing as they were literally shot back to back. I had a few months in-between but I think all he got was two weeks!

#### Don't you have a story about when Hermione Granger turns into a cat?

Yes, Emma Watson was about 12 at this point, we got the lifecast done which was



fine, all the kids had those done, and we did months of testing because we weren't sure how far to go with the cat. The Prosthetic was actually applied to her double Felicity as the make up was so big that you wouldn't recognise her in the make-up, Emma did a voice over for it later on. Poor Felicity was terrified because she was now acting on camera; we did about three more make-up tests with her. Every six weeks, we'd have a new piece made because all the hairs are individually punched into the piece, and we'd be ready for another camera test. We had a fake tail and paws that were never actually used in the end, and they asked us to make it more beastly. Felicity did a great job in the make up though.

On the fourth one, I was doing Mad-Eye Moody for about ten months, which was complex because it was a mechanical make-up and sixty-two days of shooting was done with that make-up. It was a great character to work on and Brendan Gleeson was such a lovely man to work with, we eventually got this make-up down to just over an hour and a half which is good going as it's a pretty complicated Prosthetic. I also helped Mark Coulier on Voldemort's character; it was Mark's make-up and he had spent months on it developing the way it all went together. Paul Catling in the Art Department designed the look of the character. With a character as big as Voldemort there's always lots of collaboration with departments. It was a pretty complicated design in terms of its look, even if it looked simple in design.

I helped Mark apply the make-up for the duration of the fourth film, the scene took around 2 weeks to shoot, which is fairly short, and we shot the scene in continuity. Working on an iconic character such as Voldemort was pretty amazing.

**The Voldemort make-up was simplified quite a lot from what was initially conceived, wasn't it?**

First of all we do a full body cast for the actor, which was six months prior to Ralph starting shooting, and you do all sorts, the art department do designs too. They were going for this whole idea of sagging skin, because he is supposed to be new born, so this skin would then kind of stretch back.



We did his full arms, chest, back of head (including this translucent skull that you could see into), it was complicated stuff. We started to do concept paintings of the make-ups, camera tests with doubles, and Ralph looked at it and said, "I'm not doing any of that." He pointed out that he had done one of the most evil characters ever in *Schindler's List* without prosthetics and could play a monster quite easily. He told us he would be happy to shave his head but he didn't want all this complicated stuff, because the test for those had been six hours of make-up. We totally understood that, of course, because he told us he didn't want to play it that way. It was interesting watching him trying to find the character on set; running round scaring people, but not knowing quite where he was going with it, and then pulling it back more and more until it just snapped and you thought, "Oh my God! That's Voldemort!" It was very interesting to watch this character come to life. I remember Mike Newell wondering how it was going to be done too because it's a very delicate role you want to be evil but you don't want to be the monster at the same time. I can't thank Mark and Nick Dudman enough for letting me be part of this character.

**It must have been a real leap and change of pace for Mike Newell too after doing films like *Four Weddings and a Funeral*...**

What was great about Mike was he knew he didn't know FX work, and it was funny because one of the first days on set they were shooting in the great hall, Mad-Eye Moody's entrance through the side door. He comes in and looks up at the roof, which is obviously just studio lighting, and zaps it with his wand while there is flashing going off, and the camera pans up. There are five hundred kids on set and Mike yells, "Cut! Cut! You just shot the ceiling, you can see the lights!" and the producer says, "No, no! That's all going to be digital up there, have you not seen it in the movies?," he just didn't understand that yet, so he apologised and said, "Look guys, you're going to have to train me up as you go along, I don't know blue screen." I thought that was really cool of him, and he was a really lovely bloke who knew what he wanted.

**We can imagine he was great at getting the performances out of the actors though.**

Watching him direct the kids, especially, he was amazing. He was really hard on them because you'd see them wane after fifteen or twenty takes and he had this thing of saying, "Come on, you've never done this before, do it again!" He was a headmaster and he was brilliant at it! One thing that happened was hilarious; while we were shooting Mad-Eye's big classroom scene for about three minutes, suddenly this Nokia ringtone goes off, and everyone checks their phone. Mike goes nuts, "Who the hell's left their phone on?" and hanging on the back of the chair is Mike's coat with the phone going off in it! Chris Carreras the First AD says, "Thank Christ it was your phone Mike!" Mike apologised, "I don't actually know how to turn this off!" Anyone else would've been fired for that!



**He must have been the total antithesis to people like Luc Besson then?**

Yes! I thought Luc was a bit of a genius and very cool, everyone looked up to him. In fact, if you look at Bruce Willis' character, it's what Luc wanted to be, you know with the dyed blonde hair, he'd walk in the workshop with his hoodie up and music blaring out, he's a very hands-on director and liked to grab the camera and shoot the movie!

You can find out more about THE SHAUNE HARRISON ACADEMY OF PROSTHETIC AND MAKE UP TRAINING by visiting [shauneharrisonacademy.com](http://shauneharrisonacademy.com), where you can also view the prospectus for the courses.

