

CINEFANTASTIQUE

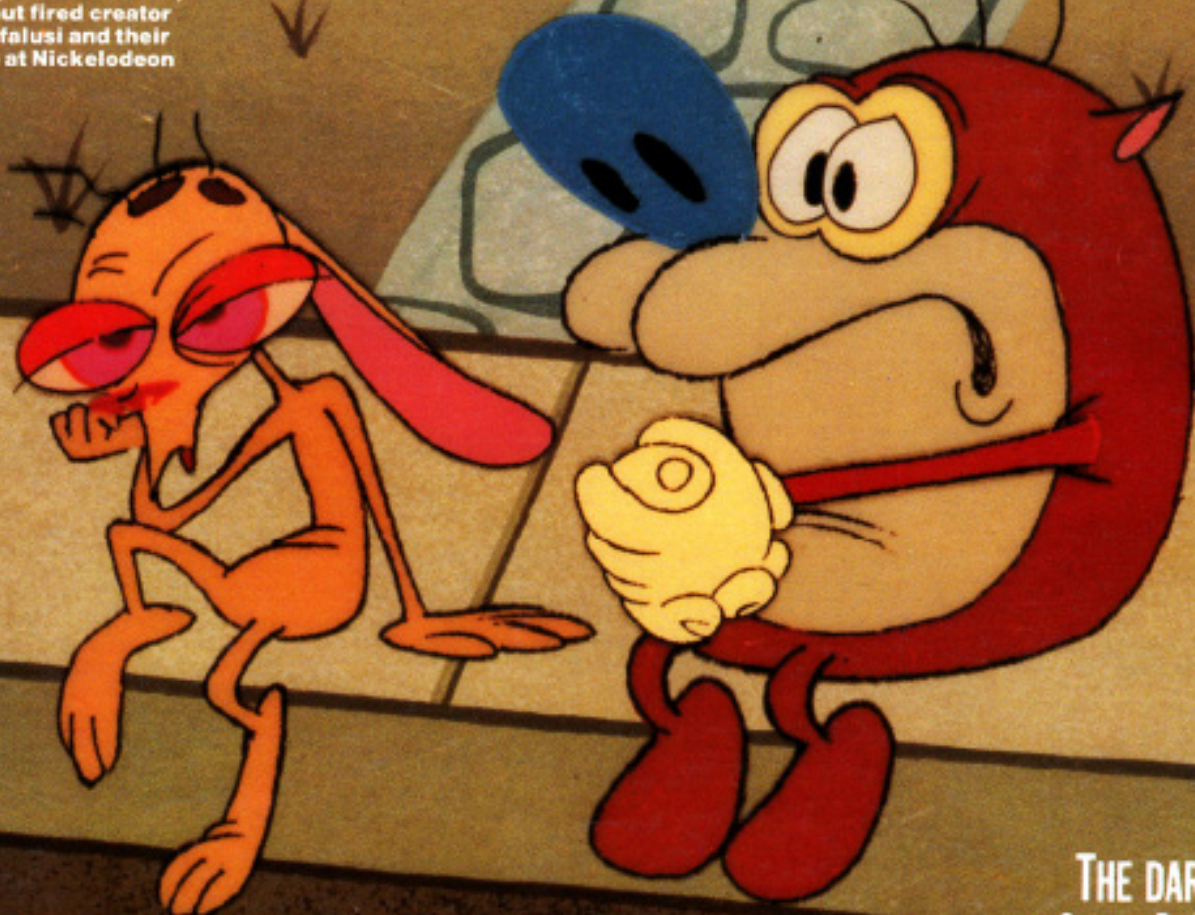
\$5.50
CAN \$6.75
UK £3.00

June 1993

Ren & Stimpy

NETWORK SUITS VS. CARTOON GENIUS

Moving day in cartoonland,
worry about fired creator
John Kricfalusi and their
new home at Nickelodeon



THE DARK HALF
George Romero films
Stephen King's horror

Volume 24 Number 1



SUPER MARIO BROS
Nintendo's Big Budget Live Action Dinosaur Fantasy

CONTENTS

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 1

The magazine with a "Sense of Wonder."

JUNE, 1993

What's with REN & STIMPY? If you're not a fan of the show, you've probably heard about it. It appeals to kids and adults and has given the creatively barren world of kidvid animation a needed shakeup. New York correspondent Dan Persons, who wrote this issue's cover story, has followed the Nickelodeon show from its early Sunday morning beginnings (episodes now also air on Saturday nights on MTV, for the older crowd), and encouraged me to watch it. I slept in.

But one Sunday morning I descended the stairs of our house just as the show was starting, and got corralled in front of the TV set, with wife Celeste, by daughters Whitney, 8 and Caitlin, 5, already camped out in front of the TV. "Dad, you've got to see this! It's REN & STIMPY!" As luck would have it, airing was one of the show's masterworks, "Stimpy's Invention," a riff on the mad scientist genre and a hallmark of the series' bent, melodramatic humor. It was one of those great, communal moments: I was wowed and my girls beamed, having introduced me to one of the finer things in life. But REN & STIMPY isn't for everyone. Mom—a clinical social worker by trade—seemed to be grappling with a response to the episode's intense outburst of raw emotion. She arched an eyebrow and shrugged noting defensively, "Boy, cartoons sure have changed since I was a kid."

Needless to say, we put Persons right to work on the cover story you now hold, our first ever on cartoon animation. But an interesting thing happened along the way. John Kricfalusi (pronounced Chri-fah-loo-see), the show's creator and guiding light, got fired by Nickelodeon, who took away production responsibilities from Kricfalusi's Hollywood-based Spumco animators. Persons goes behind-the-scenes to chronicle the events that derailed the show, and provides an episode guide for those inspired to seek out Kricfalusi's cable cartoon gems. The question now among the show's legion of fans: can Nick do the show without the genius who inspired it?

Frederick S. Clarke



Page 4



Page 16



Page 27



Page 32



Page 58

4 BODY SNATCHERS—THE NEW INVASION

Interviews with RE-ANIMATOR auteur Stuart Gordon and bad boy director Abel Ferrara about bringing Jack Finney's science fiction classic into the '90s. / Preview by Keith Holder

6 JENNIFER LYNCH'S "BOXING HELENA"

No, it's not the story of a female ROCKY! The daughter of David Lynch makes her film directing debut with a tale of obsessive love starring Sherilyn Fenn and Julian Sands. / Interview by Patricia Ross

8 SUPERMARIO BROS

Nintendo meets BLADERUNNER—producer Roland Joffe on his big-budget fantasy, starring Bob Hoskins as Mario in a dinosaurian alternate universe. / Preview by William Wilson Goodson Jr.

16 STEPHEN KING'S "THE DARK HALF"

Horror Maestro George Romero's film version of King's bestseller emerges from Orion Pictures' bankruptcy limbo, a visit to the set in Pittsburgh. / Production articles by Charles Leayman

24 SPUMCO'S "REN & STIMPY" REVOLUTION

How Hollywood cartoon director John Kricfalusi and his Spumco animation group created a hit series for Nickelodeon and got fired for their troubles. / Cover story by Dan Persons

27 "REN & STIMPY" EPISODE GUIDE

Using the methods of the great Warner Bros cartoonists, Spumco's quirky series redeemed an art form thought beyond redemption, Saturday-morning kidvid. / Cartoon chronology by Dan Persons

32 LIFE AFTER "REN & STIMPY"

John Kricfalusi's Spumco cartoon studio has a raft of projects in development, including a proposed series of theatrical shorts and a science fiction movie epic. / Preview by Dan Persons

35 THIS IS YOUR LIFE, JOHN KRICFALUSI

A look at the animation auteur behind the Ren & Stimpy phenomenon explains a lot about the images that have made parents' jaws drop and a cable network shudder. / Interview by Dan Persons

56 REN & STIMPY'S NEW MASTERS

The shape of things to come glimpsed inside Nickelodeon's Games Productions, as Spumco emigres Bob Camp and Billy Wray talk about doing the show without Kricfalusi. / Article by Dan Persons

58 MAKING "MANT," JOE DANTE'S "MATINEE"

Effects supervisors Jim McPherson and Dennis Michelson on crafting director Joe Dante's sly film-within-a-film tribute to '50s horror movies. / Article by Steve Biodrowski

59 REVIEWS

62 LETTERS

60 BOXOFFICE SURVEY

Publisher & Editor: Frederick S. Clarke. **Bureaus:** New York/Dan Scapperotti, Dan Persons. **Los Angeles:** Steve Biodrowski, Sheldon Teitelbaum. **London:** Alan Jones. **Contributors:** Thomas Doherty, William Wilson Goodson Jr., Judith P. Harris, Keith Holder, Charles Leayman, Patricia Ross, David Wilt. **Editorial Operations Manager:** Elaine Fiedler. **Editorial Production:** Lisa A. Tomczak. **Production Associate:** Ruth Kopala. **Circulation:** Staci Richardson. **Business Manager:** Celeste Casey Clarke.

PHOTO CREDITS: *Bob Clampett Prod. (25, 36, 37B); *Nickelodeon (1, 25T, 26, 29, 30, 31, 34, 37T, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44B, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 56T, 57); *1993 Nintendo (Merle W. Wallace 8-15); *1991 Orion (16, 17, 18, 23); Lynne Warberg 19, 20, 22; Dan Scapperotti (56B); *Spumco (24, 25B, 28, 32, 33, 44T, 53); *1991 Universal (58, 59); *1992 Warner Bros (4, 5T). **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:** Bob Clampett Collection, Stuart Gordon, John Kricfalusi, Optic Nerve, Joe Rebo, Spumco, Larry Teterewsky, Visual Concept Engineering. **COVER ART:** John Kricfalusi.

CINEFANTASTIQUE MAGAZINE (ISSN 0145-6032) is published bimonthly in February, April, June, August, October and December at 7240 W. Roosevelt Rd., Forest Park, IL 60130. (708)366-5566. Second class postage paid at Forest Park, IL 60130 & additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to CINEFANTASTIQUE, P.O. Box 270, Oak Park, IL 60303. **Subscriptions:** Six Issues \$27. Twelve Issues \$48. Eighteen Issues \$69. (Foreign & Canada: Six Issues \$32. Twelve Issues \$55. Eighteen Issues \$80.) Single copies: \$8. **Retail Distribution:** In the U.S. by Eastern News Distributors, 230 W. 55th St., New York, NY 10019. (800)221-3148. In Great Britain by Titan Distributors, P.O. Box 250, London E3 4RT. Phone: (01)980-6567. **Submissions:** of artwork and articles are encouraged, but must be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Contents copyright © 1993 by Frederick S. Clarke. CINEFANTASTIQUE® is a Registered U.S. Trademark. **PRINTED IN USA.**

NINTENDO'S "BLADERUNNER"

SUPER MARIO BROS

An effects head trip from the gurus behind Max Headroom.

By William Wilson Goodson Jr.

Mario originated in Nintendo's 1980 arcade video game called Donkey Kong. Three sequels followed, Super Mario Bros. II, III, and Dr. Mario, as well as two cartoon shows—SATURDAY SUPERCAR and THE SUPER MARIO SUPER SHOW. Now superstardom beckons as Mario appears in his first feature film, SUPER MARIO BROS., played by Brit Bob Hoskins. Walt Disney opens the big-budget, live-action fantasy nationwide May 28.

Orchestrated by producer Roland Joffe and his Lightmotion Fat Man company, the film was shot last year in a deserted cement factory in Wilmington, North Carolina, directed by the MAX HEADROOM team of Annabel Jankel and Rocky Morton and designed by David L. Snyder with his usual BLADE RUNNER flourish.

Joffe raised the estimated \$35 million budget from outside investors, after purchasing the rights to the characters from Nintendo. Joffe noted, "Every element in it is based on the game. Our deal with Nintendo is that we will treat the characters well, but they have no input on the story or storyline."



Dennis Hopper as dinosaur descendant King Koopa, brandishing a Goomba flame gun, reptilian hairstyling by Michelle Johnson.

SUPER MARIO BROS. is a bit of a departure for Joffe, the director of films like THE MISSION and THE KILLING FIELDS. "The Super Mario games are really fascinating," said Joffe by way of explanation. "There is a combination of Brooklynian dramas and dinosaurs, mixed with Japanese legends, an off-kilter world view of what America is. It's unique." Joffe's film was written by Barry Morrow (RAIN

MAN) with revisions by Ed Solomon (BILL AND TED'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE).

The two Mario brothers, Mario Mario (Bob Hoskins) and Luigi Mario (John Leguizamo) are half broke plumbers in Brooklyn. Luigi, the dreamy younger brother, is smitten by Daisy (Samantha Mathis of PUMP UP THE VOLUME) an archeologist excavating a subway fossil bed. When Daisy is abducted, the plumbers follow her kidnappers through a portal into Dinoyark—New York in an alternate universe in which man evolved from the dinosaurs. At the end of the film a pair of Japanese executives is seen to approach the brothers to purchase the video game rights to their adventure.

Joffe pegged the film's appeal to realizing a fantasy adventure with a high degree of verisimilitude. "The level of realism in the film is very, very high," he said. Joffe noted that the film's realism extended to its performances. "The key to the movie is to say that this is a believable story," he said. "The characters [also] have to be believable, even the ones that are really odd."

Hoskins was only familiar with the Nintendo games



DINOYARK
MAX HEADROOM directors Rocky Morton and wife Annabel Jankel conceived of an alternate universe New York, where man evolved from the dinosaurs. Built in a vacant concrete factory in North Carolina by designer David L. Snyder, the million-dollar set was christened "Dinohattan" by the cast & crew.



through his children Rosa and Jack. And their attempts to explain it to him, he noted, were useless. He took the role of Mario only after Joffe pursued him strenuously. "I didn't like the script at first and I really didn't want to do another kid's film," said Hoskins of his initial reticence. "I'd done ROGER RABBIT. I'd done HOOK. I didn't want to become like Dick Van Dyke. But he [Joffe] kept sending me scripts and they kept getting better. Eventually, I said, 'Yeh, alright, yeh, I'll do it.' It always comes down to the script really. I don't think you can make a silk purse out of a sow's ear."

Hoskins is noted as an actor for his extensive preparation, but had little to go on to flesh out Mario's cartoon character. "Basically all I could really go for was the relationship between me and John [Leguizamo]," said Hoskins. "I think he came up with the same idea. If we work as a pair of brothers, then no matter what situation we are in, it will have as much reality as possible."

Hoskins is renowned for the number of odd jobs he worked at before becoming an actor, almost by accident. He trained as both a commercial artist and an accountant, was a merchant seaman, fruit picker and, after becoming an actor, spent a season working in a circus. And like Mario, his resume includes a brush with plumbing. "I wasn't very good," said Hos-



Samantha Mathis as Daisy, the 'Bro' damsel in distress, in the clutches of one of Koopa's reptilian Goombas.

kins. "The plumber was up the ladder, and I was his mate, holding a glow lamp. It was on one of those streets where amazing-looking women pass. Well, I started looking at the women, and the glow lamp went straight on the sole of his boots and made the nails in his boots red hot. That was the end of my career as a plumber."

Leguizamo (CASUALTIES OF WAR) was approached to star opposite Hoskins after the producers saw his award-winning one man show Mambo Mouth. "What I liked about the

The victorious Bros. John Leguizamo as Luigi (l) and Bob Hoskins as Mario (r). Left: Hoskins dodges a Dinoyark cab—New York's aggressive drivers to the max.



SUPER MARIOS

DINOSAUR CREATIONS

Puppet effects peopled the streets of Dinohattan with a cast of reptilian characters.

By William Wilson Goodson, Jr.

Among the creatures inhabiting Dinoyark are the towering Goombas, the lizard men henchmen of evil ruler King Koopa (Dennis Hopper), and Yoshi, a three-foot-tall dinosaur intended to be more on the cute side. SUPER MARIO BROS conceptual designer Patrick Tatopoulos (BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA) conceived the creatures and supervised their construction, working with various makeup effects experts in Hollywood.

Tatopoulos hired Mark Maitre (BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER) to sculpt

Yoshi. Maitre produced a simple model for the director's approval in January 1991 and then fashioned the 36-inch creature, a cross between a Tyrannosaurus Rex and an iguana, sculpted in oil-based clay over a welded metal armature. Maitre added folds around the knees and elbows to provide the appearance of a young animal who has not yet grown into his skin. The proper scaly texture was created by pressing a carved stamp all over the clay.

Maitre hired Paul Barnes (BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA) to make molds of Yoshi out of Ultra Cal 30, a quick set plaster that dries in an hour. Barnes cast the figure in pieces,



Samantha Mathis as Daisy with Yoshi, a baby Tyrannosaurus Rex modeled on the Bros dinosaur pal in their video game Super Mario World, a \$500,000 puppet pet.

separating the arms, legs, torso and head and produced a skin of foam latex about an inch thick but as thin as 1/8 inch around the eyelids. The work for the most part was completed in Maitre's garage.

Maitre recommended David Nelson (ALIEN 3) as the cable puppeteer and mechanical effects designer needed to bring Yoshi to life. Running was deemed too expensive to realize. Nelson mechanized two figures for filming, one rigged to lock into various stationary poses, and another for walking scenes. The walking Yoshi was mounted on a boom arm and could turn 90 degrees and be filmed from any angle. Seventy cables produced ten distinct movements, including lips, arms and eyes, controlled by a team of nine operators hired and trained by Nelson. The team rehearsed to video playback prior to filming.

Nelson fitted Yoshi with two specialized tongues. One is a bladder which, when filled, sticks out two or three inches, making it appear as if Yoshi is licking his lips. Another, three feet long, which could be oper-

ated separate from the figure, was designed to grab things. Total cost, \$500,000.

To realize the Goombas, Tatopoulos hired North Hollywood's Makeup and Effects Laboratories (SLEEPWALKERS). So pleased were directors Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel, that they came up with additional scenes for the characters. The bodies are worn by actors in giant hoots and three-fingered gloves. Helmets allow the performers to turn the Goombas' heads while peering out through the cloth in the figures' shirts, receiving direction by radio headphones.

MEL fabricated four types of Goomba heads, mixed and matched with seven distinct costumes. One Goomba, Hark, was mechanized with eye and facial movements, worn by MEL partner John R. Fifer, and puppeteered by partner Allan A. Apone.

The SUPER MARIO BROS creatures may soon be available as dolls or puppets. Yoshi already has his own video game. Noted sculptor Maitre, "It has merchandising written all over it." □

Two of Koopa's Goomba henchmen, effects by North Hollywood's Makeup Effects Labs. Originally written as background thugs, the characters won bigger roles.



"Every element in the film is based on the game," said producer Roland Joffe. "Our deal with Nintendo is that we will treat the characters well, but they have no input in the storyline."

script was the adventure and the action that was involved," said Leguizamo. "Sort of a PRINCESS BRIDE meets BEETLEJUICE." Leguizamo noted how he worked with Hoskins to develop a rapport as a performance base. "He [Hoskins] is a very likeable guy, fun to be with. We went out together, to get the brother relationship."

Nearly all of the inhabitants of Dinoyark are rendered with straight makeup supervised by Jeff Goodwin, with bizarre hairstyles created by Michelle Johnson to give them a punk, reptilian flair. Lizard prosthetics are reserved mostly for background characters. Scenes with effects lizard tongues were planned to drive home the prehistoric ancestry of the characters.

In one planned shot, Richard Edson as Spike, one of Daisy's kidnappers, catches a fly with his tongue. In his effects trailer, Goodwin displayed two tongues made for the scene. One, a small extension, fits on the tip of Edson's tongue, to be animated fully as a visual effect. Another latex tongue prop is to perform the actual scooping up of a plastic fly. Another planned scene called for two lizard characters to kiss, their tongues locking in mid-air. This will be filmed in reverse, by pulling the two latex tongues apart.

Creature effects for the film include an early scene in Dinoyark of two mighty dinosaurs fighting. As the camera pulls back, we realize that the monsters are fighting over a banana peel. The "ratosauruses," seen running around in many scenes, are puppets created by Makeup Effects Labs, controlled by two cable operators each. Displayed in the effects workshop near the set, each figure is rigged

with cables running out of different parts of the body so various puppets can be shot from different angles. Two immobile full figures have head and body movements triggered by remote radio controls like those used for toy cars and boats. The rats are clearly fun to spar with, and I'm told the puppeteers, who turned them into their own form of arcade game, had to be ordered out of their bare concrete factory workshop late at night after filming had wrapped.

At the climax of SUPER MARIO BROS, King Koopa, the Mario Brothers' nemesis, played by Dennis Hopper, slowly devolves into what conceptual designer Patrick Tato-



Koopa (Dennis Hopper) gets grief from Hark, the most fully articulated of the Goombas, de-evolved by Koopa from a rebellious street musician named Toad.

poulos (BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA) termed "an abstract, fantasy T-Rex." Computer morphing supervised by Chris Woods transforms Hopper, with the aid of makeup, into the mechanized puppet monster. Rob Burman (CAT PEOPLE) and Tatopoulos sculpted four stages in the transformation, mechanized by Bud McGrew, who worked on the live

arena shows for the "Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles." McGrew actually got the job by bringing one of his remote-controlled heads to an interview with the directors.

Originally, Greg Beeman (MOM AND DAD SAVE THE WORLD) was set to direct SUPER MARIO BROS. Visual effects supervisor Woods, who was originally

MOJO'S TOAD TALKS

Mojo Nixon, known as the court jester of punk, the Moj and the Chuck Yeager of free spirits, has gone Hollywood. Sporting a striking new hairdo on the set of SUPER MARIO BROS in Wilmington, N.C., Nixon plays Toad, a humanoid descendant of the dinosaurs. The irreverent son of the white owner of an all black gospel station, Nixon is the creator of such celebrity-jabbing songs as "Debbie Gibson is Pregnant with My Two-Headed Love Child."

"Toad is a crazed musician, playing the streets of Dinoyark," said Nixon. "He is kind of innocent and street wise at the same time, with a 'Bob Dylan in his second album' glazed look on his face—, so he is out there singing protest songs."

Nixon sings bits and pieces of three songs, which



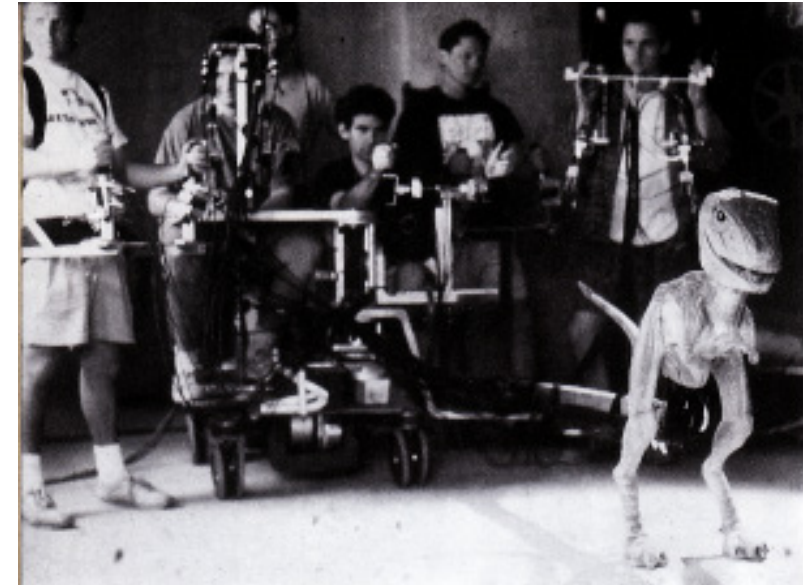
Punk singer Mojo Nixon, coliffed as Toad.

he didn't write, but fiddled with. "If enough lawyers can get together and wrestle, I will probably get a song in the soundtrack," he said. "I am not a real actor. This character I've created, Mojo Nixon, is not all that different from my real self, and Toad is just another step from there. If I ever become any kind of serious actor, I will

be a character actor, playing malcontents and roustabouts. No one is going to pay to see me fall in love or cry."

Nixon seemed to relish Toad's spiraled, reptilian hairdo. "My son, he's nine, has determined he's got to have it," said Nixon. Originally, he was asked to shave his head for the part. Recalled Nixon, "My manager, Bullethead, didn't even call me. He just said, 'Sure, for 2000 more dollars.' We were broke. We needed the money."

Nixon termed SUPER MARIO BROS "a cross between PEE-WEE'S ADVENTURE and ROBOCOP 2." It's his second film, after a brief appearance in GREAT BALLS OF FIRE. His own film project, CITIZEN MOJO, is tied up in the collapse of Enigma Records. □



Yoshi walks: connected to a pole arm rigged to a dolly truck, Daisy's Dinohattan pet struts its stuff thanks to a cadre of cable puppeteers headed by David Nelson.

hired by Beeman in July 1991, noted how Beeman's film would have been completely different. "We did a whole set of concept work that was nothing like we have now," said Woods. According to conceptual designer Tatopoulos, who also worked with Beeman, the original concept called for an alternate universe with more of an sword and sorcery setting.

Tatopoulos likened the revised concept of Jankel and Morton to "a combination of BEETLE-JUICE and BLADE RUNNER."

Noted Joffe of the change in directors, "In the end we separated over artistic differences. I felt the screenplay was coming out a little too young." Joffe turned to Jankel and Morton because he was impressed with

CARTOON TYPECASTING

"I didn't like the script at first and I really didn't want to do another kid's film," said Bob Hoskins. "I'd done ROGER RABBIT and HOOK, I didn't want to become like Dick Van Dyke."

their work on MAX HEADROOM. "I thought they would have the unique visual sensibilities to bring this animated world to life. They came up with the idea of Dinoyark, this parallel world that, in a way, has sprung from ours."

Joffe said that he had worked closely with Morton and Jankel, bringing his feature film experience to their familiarity with television and commercials production. "Directing a film is a little like commanding an air-craft carrier," said Joffe. "It takes a lot of crew and about four-and-a-half-miles to stop. A commercial or a television show is rather like

driving a small speed boat. You can spin it on a six pence and if that's what you choose to do, nobody gets hurt. I hope that they have found me a very creative and supportive arm to lean on. They are very imaginative, and it was a delight watching that imagination grow."

Noted Hoskins of the husband and wife directing team, "They have got a single mind. At first I thought it was going to be very confusing, with one idea from one, and another idea from the other, but it wasn't. They're also very good with actors, which is unusual with people coming out of commercials. When they get to the set, they know what they want."

Woods was comfortable with the switch to Jankel and Morton because he had worked with them before, at Digital Effects in New York in 1980. "They were graphic designer/animators at the time," said Woods. The delay in getting the film under way actually turned out to be a blessing. "In that time digital technology has gone forward a little bit," said Woods. "Originally I thought we would be lucky to do maybe half of the film digitally, but now we will be able to do virtually all of the effects digitally."

Woods' effects chores on SUPER MARIO BROS ranged from the use of innovative 3-D mattes (see page 15) to more mundane tasks. "The simplest shot I would be involved in would be a wire removal shot," said Woods. Extensive wire work in the film involved flying the brothers in their "power boots" and targeting the flame balls of Koopa's Goomba henchmen, using rockets on guidewires.

On the set special effects supervisor Paul Lumbardi is fond of explaining how in the past the wires used for flying harnesses or guiding fireballs had to be very fine to be invisible to

DINOYARK PROPS

Paul Lumbardi's title is special effects supervisor, but he likes to point out that most of what he does is really prop shop work. Lumbardi runs Special Effects Unlimited, a company founded by his father, based at Riverwood Studios near Atlanta. Lumbardi provided SUPER MARIO BROTHERS with a fleet of cars for crashing, props like the fully operational Goomba flamethrowers, and wire work to make Bob Hoskins and John Leguizamo super flyers.

Demonstrating the flame gun, Lumbardi noted its off-camera connection to a suitcase-sized battery pack and a tank of propane. The trigger, designed for operation by the Goomba's three-fingered hand, dispenses a jet of propane under pressure past a set of electrodes which ignite the gas into a big puff of



Marios, armed with devolution Devo guns.

flame about a foot in diameter. Lumbardi rigged fireballs on the set as rockets, traveling 200 feet, on a wire. With a little work, Lumbardi's "fireballs" will appear to knock down walls.

On a studio workbench Lumbardi's crew was seen assembling the sheets of fungus that hang like a shroud over much of Dinoyark.

Lumbardi rigged some of the fungus to act as tentacles, cable puppets operated by joy sticks, able to reach out, touch and wrap around their victims.

One entire room of Lumbardi's shop in Wilmington, is devoted to making icicles from safety glass. The liquid compound is poured into a mold, with a wire inserted for hanging before it solidifies. The icicle props are for a scene of the Mario Brothers being chased through an ice tunnel, riding an improvised sled. The glass ice is not slick, however, calling for another Lumbardi special effect prop to complete the scene. The brothers' sled rolls down the five-degree drop on skateboard wheels. All 20 wheels must turn in the same direction at the same time to work. □

SUPER MARIOS

DESIGNING DINOHATTAN

BLADE RUNNER production designer
David L. Snyder remakes New York.

By William Wilson
Goodson, Jr.

For production designer David L. Snyder (*BLADE RUNNER*, *BILL & TED'S BOGUS JOURNEY*) the first step in designing *SUPER MARIO BROTHERS* was a tour of deserted factories around the U.S. Before settling on the Ideal Concrete factory in Wilmington, North Carolina, Snyder and the production team visited various sites nationwide. "We considered another location in eastern Texas, a sister facility, but it was near ruins," said Snyder. "It was impossible to film there because of the safety factor."

Why a deserted factory? From the first it was obvious *SUPER MARIO BROTHERS* was going to require a number of enormous sets. An already existing steel and concrete structure has drawbacks, but designing the sets to fit allowed most of the money to be spent on scenery, rather than something holding it up. The occasional crumbling spots were used to help produce the effect of a decaying, failing world.

Snyder beamed with pride as he provided a tour of the concrete facility-turned-Dinoyark. First stop, the Boom Boom Bar, a bare room being transformed into a tough leather joint. The patrons don't wear leather—their skin is leather. "It has been constructed around the existing concrete columns to give it more scale," said Snyder. "We will take my office [a room with a window overlooking the bar] and make it into the disc jockey's booth."

Snyder pointed to a metal



SUPER MARIO BROS producer
Roland Joffe, demanding designs
with a high degree of realism.

grid installed over a well in the factory floor. "We built this entire platform, because with 14 feet below we can have a lot of light pouring up. Under usual soundstage conditions you might put the platform up two feet and try to have lights underneath. But under here we can have really powerful lights, and add steam and fog effects."

Outside the bar set is an elevated sidewalk beside a major city street, a story above ground level. Snyder noted "this presents a unique opportunity to be inside the club, and see all the action out on the street, to give it a more realistic look. Across the street you will be able to look into the club."

Visible is the outline of the two-level city street under construction, with shops and business on the second level walkway, traffic on the ground. The two walkways are constructed across already existing concrete piles. Above the shop roofs there are still several feet up to the ceiling of the enormous room, making it possible to put cameras and lights at a number of angles at

Dinoyark's jail, where the Bros are booked, defoused and briefly incarcerated, actually stacks of scrap metal shipping containers converted to cells by Snyder.



Snyder made full use of the film's concrete factory production base, turning the mammoth pipe of its kiln furnace into the subway set excavated by Daisy.

any point on the street.

"We took basic New York architecture and New York elements," said Snyder, "but it's more aggressive because it's a carnivorous society that descended from the dinosaurs." One of the shops is a plain but completely equipped doughnut shop. "'Drippies' Doughnuts," said Snyder, reading the sign. "Those are raw meat doughnuts. People are into meat here." No shots are planned to take place in "Drippies," but it must be ready if the camera should focus in the window's direction.

Snyder pointed to a pile of cars which have been crushed and mangled. "It's sort of like a kid's idea of the world. There are no traffic lights, no traffic patterns, cars just go and bang into one another." When there is a parking violation they just take the car, crush it, and put it in a pile.

"Aggressive! Aggressive! It's taking everything in New York and raising it to the 10th power!"

"They have no [fossil fuels] because dinosaurs were never extinct in this world. Everything runs on electricity. The reason there is no wood visible is they have used up all their resources. There is nothing left."

The street, Koopa Square, is only 200-feet long, leading to an enormous pair of outside doors. At times the doors will be blocked off by a giant tent to resemble a construction sight. Other times, with matte paintings and composites, vehicles driving out the doors will appear to be on another stretch of the street. The set cost a million dollars, give or take a few. □



Hopper with Fiona Shaw as Lena, his reptilian girlfriend. Though evolved from the dinosaurs, a lizard look was rendered mostly with straight makeup and hair.

the camera. Now that the wires are removed optically, they have to be large, sometimes colored orange, so the visual effects people can be sure to find them.

The technical crew on the production all commented on the continuous changes, large and small, in the script and staging during production. Several used the term "mutation"

to describe the way the film's story changed and developed. On the set, production designer David L. Snyder pointed to the film's de-evolution chamber as a prime example of how ideas developed. Hopper as Dino-yark's villainous King Koopa uses the device to turn citizens into his lizard-like Goomba henchmen. The original sketches for the device by creative il-

ARCADE VERSIMILITUDE

"The level of realism is very, very high," said producer Roland Joffe. "The key to the movie is to say that the characters have to be believable, even the ones who are really odd."

lustrator Simon Murton (UNIVERSAL SOLDIER) featured an actual chamber. But Snyder discovered two giant cone-shaped coal hoppers in the deserted cement plant that served as a studio and these quickly became the basis of the de-evolution machines.

Snyder made full use of the film's concrete factory studio base in designing the sets. The subway in which Daisy excavates is a pasteboard cave with the tunnel created with a huge 200-foot wide pipe, part of the factory's kiln furnace.

Showing off the Goomba barracks Snyder noted, "This

was the compressor room in the factory. The compressors were on the concrete blocks. The coil springs come from some of the cars we junked and we put mattresses on top. Everything was already in here except for the dressing. It was so good, I decided not to mess with it too much." Overlooking the nine-foot beds is a poster "Be All A Goomba Can Be."

The adjoining police station set, where Mario and Luigi are jailed after being arrested in Dinoyark, consisted of several large factory booths and offices made of wood. Since there is no wood in Dinohattan—with no "fossil fuels" the reptiles have burned it all—Snyder covered the wood with metal sheets studded with decorative rivets. The cells behind the offices are enormous stacks of cages, originally the factory's scrap metal shipping containers. Prisoners are transported in cells by forklift, stacked over 20 feet off the ground. The level of police work in Dinohattan can be deduced from a poster that forbids officers to refuse bribes.

Snyder likes to design expansive sets. "All production designers like to have big gigantic shots where you can see as much as possible," he said. "[Jankel and Morton] are oriented toward the small screen. You see a lot of pictures that are appropriate to television."

Joffe insisted the film's long development and the constant changes on the set weren't a problem, comparing the making of the film to the enveloping fungus that pervades Dinoyark. "For me a screenplay is never finished," said Joffe. "You work a screenplay all the time. When you bring actors in a screenplay goes through another evolution. So you can say that rather like the fungus in the movie the screenplay constantly evolves." □

DINOSAUR MAKEUPS

Though the denizens of Dinoyark are descended from the dinosaurs, reptilian features to indicate their ancestry were given to the cast in varying degrees. Makeup artist Jeff Goodwin and hairstylist Michelle Johnson gave Dennis Hopper as King Koopa a hairdo with a scaly look. Hopper was also required to shave off his eyebrows and body hair for a very smooth-skinned reptilian appearance. Goodwin noted the lack of hair makes Hopper look more muscular and sleeker, a technique he also used on RAMBO III.

Fiona Shaw as Lena, Koopa's reptilian girlfriend, was given scales running down her spine for a bathing scene. Goodwin fashioned the scales from bald cap material, a translucent plastic he flesh-colored before mold-



"Ratosauruses" by Makeup Effects Labs.

ing. Shaw plucked her eyebrows, and used cosmetic ones drawn up to a point, accentuated with a greenish/yellowish eye shadow.

Goodwin also supervised prosthetics for seven half-lizard characters, extras for the Boom Boom Club (a la the STAR WARS cantina) and other scenes. Goodwin also brought in

New Jersey makeup artist Vincent Guastini to assist. Due to a lack of time—only two weeks—the makeups were designed from scratch on life casts of the performers. "Most of them are what we call 'partial appliances,'" said Guastini. "Sort of like Lone Ranger masks. They cover part of the face and then fade off, to give the impression of dinosaur/lizard-features trying to fight through a human face. Contacts and false teeth completed the designs."

Guastini's favorite is the Dragon Man, with a full crown of horns, sculpted in just two days, fitted with foam latex gloves, sporting long, threatening nails.

Goodwin's favorite is Crocodile Man, featuring a mouth that ranges from human to a reptilian. "It's comical and frightening," he said. □

SUPER MARIOS

SPECIAL VISUAL EFFECTS

State-of-the-art digital effects include the first extensive use of 3-D mattes, fantasy rendered on a grand scale.

By William Goodson Jr.

The visual effects of SUPER MARIO BROS., designed by Chris Woods, feature the use of 3-D matte paintings, computer graphics technology first utilized, according to Woods, in Steven Spielberg's HOOK. "We are using them where somebody else might use a large, rather expensive model," said Woods. "With a 3-D matte painting we can move all around and it will seem to move in perspective."

One of the more striking shots planned for the film is a scene of Dinohattan on the horizon, as Mario and Luigi circle it in a garbage truck. The perspective change on the painting is achieved by scanning the flat art into a computer. The image is mapped dimensionally, shaded, with surface textures added to create the illusion of depth. But why paint it? Why not render the entire setting digitally? Noted Woods, "The computer is very



Bob Hoskins as Mario emerging out of Dinohattan, digital composite supervised by Chris Woods. Inset: The blue screen live-action plate of Hoskins prior to animation.

good at calculating true perspective for any given lens, but it is not good at the kind of detail a matte painter is.

SUPER MARIO BROS 3-D mattes are generated using NetRenderMan, a new program used on this production for the first time. "RenderMan has been available as a high-quality renderer for a number of years," said Woods. "NetRenderMan actually runs on a net-

work between Macintosh and any number of other computers. In this case, we are using Macintosh and Silicon Graphics Inc. machines.

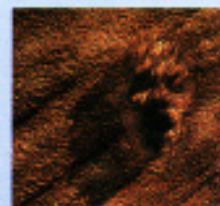
"Basically, the 3-D modeling and the animation are being done on a Macintosh but the actual rendering of the images, at very high resolution, film resolution, is done between the Macintosh and the SGI workstations."

The standard RenderMan program allows the operator to assign shades and textures to surfaces. Before, using these features to help add a 3-D effect would have been too complex because it was necessary to split the image into several pieces or layers. Each piece would then be rendered on a separate computer and finally composited together, a time consuming process. Noted Woods, "[Network rendering] programs allow the operator to work on the whole image at a single computer, while the program hunts through the net-

work of interconnected computers seeking processing time to perform the necessary computations. It allows you to put artists on a simpler machine, and yet have the power of a device like the SGI, that is much more technically difficult to work with."

Woods estimated that actual 3-D modeling will only constitute four or five shots in SUPER MARIO BROS. Most computer graphics applications will deal with image compositing or image manipulations of two dimensional effects like removing wires from wire shots. Noted Woods, "We are using two packages, Flame, written in Australia, and Eddie, out of Canada. Both are brand new, never used on a production, as far as I know, and both run on Silicon Graphics." □

Daisy emerges through rock. Bottom: Samantha Mathis (l) and composite.



Hoskins and John Leguizamo as Mario and Luigi, propelled by their power boots up through the skylight. Inset: With flying wires before digital magic.

