

WAR OF THE WORLDS

R E V I S I T E D

A television series retread of George Pal's classic 1953 H. G. Wells feature.

By Gary Kimber

Following on the heels of their successful launch last year of *STAR TREK: THE NEXT GENERATION*, Paramount Television decided to dust off George Pal's classic 1953 science fiction film and turn it into a weekly syndicated series, set to premiere in October. Back are the film's reddish, three-fingered Martians (referred to now simply as "aliens") and their menacing cobra-necked war machines, wedded to a modern-day action-adventure plot. The series is the brainchild of executive

producer Sam Strangis, a former Paramount exec whose Ten Four Productions produced the series in Toronto independently of the studio. Co-executive producer of the show is Strangis' son Greg, who wrote the two-hour pilot called "The Resurrection."

With the Fall premieres of most other major series scuttled by the writers' strike, Paramount managed to beat the competition by filming the show in Canada, apparently with non-Guild writers. It's a subject the producers are loathe to discuss. Publicists at Paramount declined to sched-



The aliens are based on those of the 1953 Pal film, painting by Vincent Di Fate.

ule an interview with Greg Strangis, they said, because the young Strangis, who is a member of the Writers Guild, didn't want to discuss matters pertaining to the writers' strike. A source at the Writers Guild revealed that Strangis *films* served as a "hyphenate-observer" on the Guild committee in charge of negotiating the new contract with producers. "Obviously, he has divided loyalties," said the source.

The premise for the pilot and twenty-two hour-long episodes has the dead Martians of the 1953 film, stored in barrels *a la* *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD*, spring back to life when they come in contact with nuclear material. *A la* *THE HIDDEN*, the Martians can enter the bodies of the earthlings they kill. They make a bee-line for Nellis Air Force Base, where three of their deadly war machines are kept in mothballs.

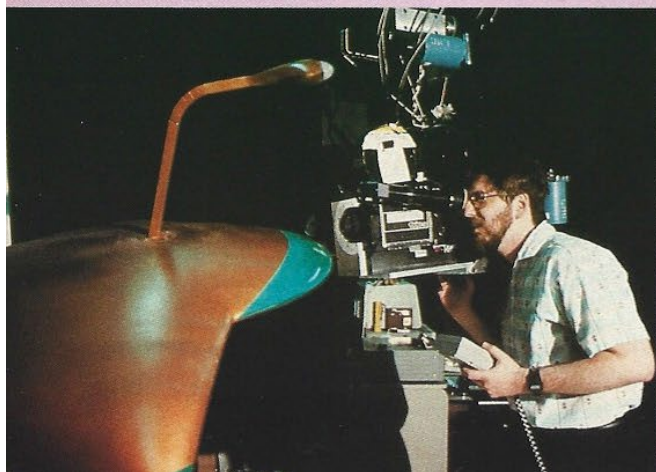
Opposing the Martians are brilliant astrophysicist Jared Martin, gruff military man Richard Chavez (PREDA-

TOR), a beautiful microbiologist, and a black, wheelchair-bound computer whiz. Says Martin in the pilot, "A war of the worlds happened in 1953, but it isn't in any of the history books." In another allusion to the Pal film, also made for Paramount, the movie's star Anne Robinson, becomes a series regular with the eighth episode, recreating her character from the 1953 film, now 35 years older and found in a madhouse by the son of the character played by Gene Barry in the original.

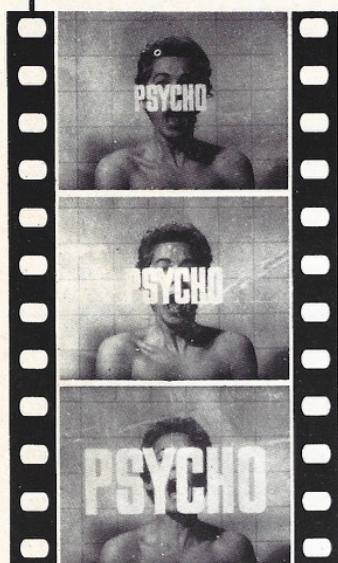
The show's Martians and war machines copy the classic designs of art director Albert Nozaki as seen in the 1953 film. The Martians are the work of 26 year-old makeup artist William Sturgeon, a Strangis family friend, who devised makeups for the promotional short that sold the series and then spent a year in Canada fabricating the suits and other effects for the series. Sturgeon said that originally he based his designs on the slug-like aliens described in

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Filming the Martian war machines at Light and Motion Effects in Toronto, Canada with models built by Greg Jein from Albert Nozaki's designs for the 1953 film.



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HORROR/SF I

Frankenstein, Earth Vs the Flying Saucer, Golden Voyage of Sinbad, The Time Machine, Freaks, It Came From Outer Space, Man of a Thousand Faces, Them, They Came From Within, King Kong, Dr. Terror's House of Horrors, Legend of Hell House, The Tingler, Monster on the Campus, It, The Terror From Beyond Space, Phantom of the Paradise, Phantom of the Opera '62, The Mole People, Son of Kong, Incredible Shrinking Man, Squirm, Mad Monster Party, Psycho, Willard, Creeping Flesh, Homicidal, Night of the Living Dead, Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Silent Night Evil Night, Invasion of the Saucer Men, The Green Slime, War of the Worlds - 60 mins.

HORROR/SF II

The Thing, Man Who Turned to Stone, Fiend Without a Face, Barbarella, Rodan, Blood Beast From Outer Space, Giant Gila Monster, The Alligator People, Curse of the Fly, Children of the Damned, The Gamma People, Day of the Triffids, Attack of the Crab Monsters, The Human Vapor, Target Earth, Varan the Unbelievable, Creeping Unknown, The Omega Man, 20 Million Miles to Earth, Latitude Zero, The Unknown Terror, Monster That Challenged the World, The Andromeda Strain, Monster from Green Hell, Five First Men in the Moon, This Island Earth, The Invisible Ray, Forbidden Planet, Godzilla King of the Monsters - 60 mins.

HORROR/SF III

Werewolf in a Girls Dormitory, Corridors of Blood, Attack of the Killer Shrews, Eggah!, Creature From the Haunted Sea, Creature Walks Among Us, Horror of Party Beach, The Old Dark House (Castle), The Mysterious Island (29), The Bride of Frankenstein, The Skull, Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman, From Hell It Came, Gorilla at Large, Bride of the Monster, The Haunting, The Mummy (31), Frankenstein 1970, The Slime People, Dr. Blood's Coffin, Mighty Joe Young, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, The Manster, The Exorcist, The Crawling Hand, Haunted Strangler, Curse of the Demon, Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas, Little Shop of Horrors (Corman), Fearless Vampire Killers, The Phantom of the Opera (42), The Devil Dolls (Browning), The Climax (Karloff) - 60 mins.

HORROR/SF IV (HAMMER HORROR)

Curse of Frankenstein, Revenge of Frankenstein, Evil of Frankenstein, Frankenstein Created Woman, Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed, Horror of Frankenstein, Frankenstein & the Monster From Hell, Hound of the Baskervilles, Creeping Unknown, Enemy From Space, 5 Million Years to Earth, Curse of the Werewolf, The Mummy, Curse of the Mummy's Tomb, Mummy's Shroud, Blood From the Mummy's Tomb, Gorgon, Phantom of the Opera, Horror of Dracula, The Brides of Dracula, Kiss of the Vampire, Dracula Prince of Darkness, Dracula

Has Risen From the Grave, Taste the Blood of Dracula, Scars of Dracula, Vampire's Lovers, Lust for a Vampire, Countess Dracula, Vampire Circus, Dracula A.D. 1972, Count Dracula & His Vampire Bride, Legend of the 7 Golden Vampires - 75 mins.

HORROR/SF V (HORRIBLE HONEYES)

Bride of Frankenstein, Bride of the Monster, Brides of Fu Manchu, Brides of Dracula, Frankenstein's Daughter, Daughter of Dr. Jekyll, Jessie James Meets Frankenstein's Daughter, Cat Girl, Devil Girl From Mars, Voodoo Woman, Wasp Woman, Leech Woman, Snake Woman, Night of the Cobra Woman, Attack of the 50-Foot Woman, Prehistoric Women, Werewolf Vs. the Vampire Woman, Wild Women of Wonga, She Creature, She Freak, Astounding She Monster, She Demons, Lady Frankenstein, Queen of Blood, Teenage Gang Debs, Girls on Probation, Monica: Story of a Bad Girl, Female Jungle, Blood of Dracula, Straight Jacket, Berserk, Frankenstein Created Woman, Brain That Wouldn't Die, Sinderella & the Golden Bra - 75 mins.

HORROR/SF VI (SUPER GIANTS)

The Blob, Son of Blob, Kronos, Konga, Frankenstein Conquers the World, Frankenstein Meets the Space Monster, Amazing Colossal Man, Village of the Giants, The Mysterians, It Came From Beneath the Sea, Beginning of the End, Reptilicus, Mothra, Night of the Lepus, The Deadly Mantis, Tarantula, Godzilla Vs The Smog Monster, The Lost World, The Valley of Gwangi, The Beast of Hollow Mountain, Attack of the Giant Leeches, Dinosauros, Gorgo, The Giant Behemoth, War of the Colossal Beast, Destroy All Monsters - 60 mins.

HITCHCOCK COLLECTION

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AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL PICTURES

Meteor, High Ballin, The Wild Party, Squirm, The Gay Deceivers, Return of Count Yorga, Bloody Mama, The Oblong Box, Wild in the Streets, Blood Bath, Ghost in the Invisible Bikini, Beach Blanket Bingo, Masque of the Red Death, Muscle Beach Party, Bikini Beach, Comedy of Terrors, Beach Party, The Haunted Palace, The Raven, The Pit and the Pendulum, The Premature Burial, The Fall of the House of Usher, The Amazing Transparent Man, Bucket of Blood, The Brain That Wouldn't Die, Attack of the Puppet People, Night of the Blood Beast, How to Make a Monster, I Was a Teenage Frankenstein, I Was a Teenage Werewolf, Blood of Dracula, Invasion of the Saucer Men, Phantom From 10,000 Leagues - 60 mins.

THEY LIVE

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Martin Quatermass, to be the director's own work. Carpenter denied that, but refused to divulge the writer's true identity. The pseudonym stems from Carpenter's fondness for the Quatermass films written by Nigel Kneale, "one of my heroes," he said.

Carpenter said he is dissatisfied with what he sees coming out of Hollywood today. "There are some nice films, but overall it's pretty bad," he said. "In the old days they used to make some gutsy pictures, but I think those days are gone. In Hollywood, movies have turned into television because the people running the studios have all come from TV. What they do with a picture is they take it out and they test it with several audiences and they get demographics on the film. They alter the film to play to the audience. It's like computer-done movies. There's no humanity in them. They're extremely popular because everybody has grown up on TV. Like little junkies, we all go to the movies to get our fix on the big screen. They don't want unhappy endings or ambiguous endings. Just look at the films—they are all a six-act structure from television. They have so many climaxes. They go on videotape really well because they are all shot a certain way—dead center. All they are are giant programs."

Carpenter said he was offered FATAL ATTRACTION to direct and turned it down. "[Clint] Eastwood did it better [in PLAY MISTY FOR ME]," said Carpenter about his decision. "I'm not going to be able to top that. And I think Eastwood's the better picture still. The wife coming and shooting the killer is like what! Wait a minute, it's not about her, it's about him [Michael Douglas]. What the hell is he doing? It's gutless. The script was pretty well written. At the end, the gal [Glenn Close] wins. She gets Michael Douglas—very chilling, very woo! They went out and they showed the movie to the public, and they hated that this gal won. So what the filmmakers did was they went back and had the wife shoot the gal. Of all the creative ideas, that is the most cliched, middle-of-the-road. I mean, come on, guys, have some balls here."

Carpenter pointed to Universal's difficulty in releasing Martin Scorsese's THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST as a sign of why films are so bland. "I think it's a real bad time in America, a real Nazi time," said Carpenter. "The attitude is machines are great, we're hip and don't say anything I don't agree with."

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H.G. Wells' novel, but producer Sam Strangis insisted on using Nozaki's concept. Sturgeon said he made "major" modifications.

Sturgeon's other effects include a zombie-type makeup for Earthlings taken over by the Martians, who begin to deteriorate from radiation poisoning and eventually dissolve into a puddle of putrescence. "I'm still not real sure what the bounds are on a television show," said Sturgeon about the fate of his grislier effects.

The Martian war machine miniatures were built for the show by renowned model maker Greg Jein (CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND), and were filmed motion control at Toronto's Light and Motion, a new full-service effects house. Despite their modern technology, the company is providing the 44 inch-wide models with the same heat ray seen in the 1953 film.

"We're going back to the most rudimentary methods we can," said co-director of visual effects Michael Lennick. "We are using grinding wheels on iron and an air pressure acetylene torch. We could find newer ways of doing that with animation elements or other techniques but we are all fans of the film and we want that identifiable, almost signature look." Lennick said he had tremendous respect for Gordon Jennings' Oscar-winning effects for the original. "Nothing we do is going to be anything more than an approximation," said Lennick.

Light and Motion, started in March 1987 by Bob and Sonja Ryan, bills itself as "Canada's largest special effects house." They are set up for both front screen and bluescreen composites and boast the only VistaVision camera and printer outside of California and the U.K. Two emigres from ILM, Michael Pangrazio and Craig Barron, run the company's matte painting department and matte camera department, respectively. The company also boasts two large motion control stages, their specialty.

While working on WAR OF THE WORLDS, Light and Motion also completed visual effects for MILLENIUM, a big-budget time travel story for Gladden Entertainment and 20th Century-Fox release, and a host of other film and television projects now shooting in Toronto, the Hollywood of the North. Though the Martian war machines are destroyed at the end of the two-hour pilot, no one will be surprised if reinforcements should arrive from Mars in future episodes, keeping Light and Motion blasting away.

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