

Yikes!

War's special effects
are out of this world

War of the Worlds (syndicated) is definitely *not* the kind of show you want to watch during the dinner hour.

Shot in and around Toronto, the high-tech sci-fi series—about a handful of scientists and military people trying to halt an alien invasion—features some spectacularly stomach-churning special effects.

Three working groups combined to give *War of the Worlds*' effects their chills: The major contributor was Hollywood special effects veteran Bill Sturgeon, who created and operated the aliens' scaly exteriors (photo 1) and third "arm" (2), which bursts from alien-inhabited human chests. The animation and matting (superimposed film images such as the sample "claw," centre spread) were handled by Toronto post-production company Magnetic North. And much of the grisly makeup work (3) and similar effects went to the Toronto-based Cinetrix. "We did the rain, the smoke, the blown-up cars, as well as stuff like bullet wounds and hatchets in the head," says Marianne Klein of Cinetrix.

Creating the physical state of aliens who melt into a pile of steaming goo (4) upon dying was one of the most demanding tasks. "The melting aliens were actually big puddles of methyl cellulose—a kind of jelly ooze," says Klein. "We added a calcium compound to make it bubble and smoke, and green food coloring to give it a bit of color."

But does the average human viewer appreciate all the hard work? Although some people have complained about the gratuitous violence on *War of the Worlds*, Klein says, "So far, the *really* gory shows have been the ones that have had the highest ratings." —by Andrew Ryan

