



Director Russell Mulcahy knows what lurks at the heart of "The Shadow."

MASTER OF DEATH

By WILL MURRAY

Outside of Universal Soundstage 12, the Mongol warriors are definitely not restless.

Judging from the droop of their Fu Manchu mustaches, they're bored half out of their purple silk and brass mail armor as they lounge about in directors chairs. One is immersed in a book, *Christianity in Crisis*. Another is shooting hoops. A third, speaking unaccented English, wonders aloud if the Universal Commissary is open.

They hardly look up when their leader emerges. No, it's not Genghis Khan, but director Russell (*Highlander*) Mulcahy.

Climbing into a golf cart, Mulcahy, unshaven and sporting a blue Yankees baseball cap, explains how he came to helm Universal's long-planned adaptation of *The Shadow*, sullen Mongols and all.

"I had known about *The Shadow* for a number of years," he says in his laidback Australian accent. "More particularly I have some friends in England who are total addicts, and have piles and piles of books and information. I had heard that there was a script going around that they had been trying to get off the ground for

years. And with no connection, I did an HBO film with [producer] Marty Bregman, *Blue Ice*. And we got along well.

"During that project," Mulcahy goes on, "he asked me to do this other film with Kim Basinger, *The Real McCoy*. I knew then that he had *The Shadow*. I never really pushed it. I said, 'The Shadow's a really wonderful character. I can't believe it has never been done before in the movies.' And Marty said, 'It's going to happen, and I would love you to do it.' I guess he had also seen *Highlander*. At that point, I became very serious about looking back into the material."

Eleven years in pre-production and due out this month, *The Shadow* stars Alec (*The Hunt for Red October*) Baldwin in the dual role of millionaire mystery solver Lamont Cranston/*The Shadow*, Penelope Ann (*Kindergarten Cop*) Miller as socialite Margo Lane, John (*The Last Emperor*) Lone as the evil Shiwan Khan and a rich cast of supporting players including Peter Boyle, Jonathan Winters, Tim Curry and Sir Ian McKellen.

Mulcahy's research meant dipping into the vast body of *Shadow* lore, which includes 300-plus pulp novels, more than 100 comic-book adaptations, nearly 500 vintage radio programs and some of the blandest films ever committed to celluloid, of which the best was the 1940 Columbia *Shadow* serial starring Victor Jory.

"I know when I first saw the serial," Mulcahy recalls with a grimace, "I got very depressed. *The Shadow* is basically just some guy in a cloak and hat who punches people out. I was going, 'Oh my God.' It

Alec Baldwin (immediate right) "has a great strength about him," Mulcahy says.

Penelope Ann Miller plays the winsome Margo Lane.

Who stands against *The Shadow*? Shiwan Khan (John Lone, far right).

"I hadn't done a fantasy film for a while," notes Mulcahy (below).



was really dreadful. I thought they would do something a little more special. Even *Rocket Man* [a.k.a. *Commando Cody*] had an up and down switch."

The Unseen Killer

Working from a script by David (*Jurassic Park*) Koepp (CS#44), Mulcahy has woven a 1930s tapestry combining the mystical aspects of the long-running *Shadow* radio program with the explosive action of Walter B. Gibson's brilliant pulp novels. At first glance, the primary inspiration seems to be the novels, especially the quartet of 1940 stories in which the Master of Darkness battled Shiwan Khan, the villainous descendant of Genghis Khan, Mulcahy disagrees.

"It's much more based on the radio show," he states. "David Koepp took bits and pieces from a number of things. I think the spookiness of the radio show is coming across. The very sound of *The Shadow*'s voice sends chills through people. He spooks people."

On radio, *The Shadow* eschewed his matched .45 automatics for the mesmerizing power to cloud men's minds and render himself virtually but not actually invisible. "Invisible is a word we avoid," Mulcahy says. "I don't want to describe what you'll see, but I want to be very specific that this is not a movie about an invisible man. The attitude of *The Shadow* is more mystery and illusion, suspense and shock. Like the first *ALIEN*—bits and pieces. And when you see *The Shadow*, he'll look spectacular."



Although the precise look of The Shadow has yet to be finalized, he will wear the traditional cloak and hat, thanks to costume designer Bob (Batman) Ringwood (STARLOG #143), as well as carry twin Silver Heat .45 automatics. The filmmakers hope to spookify the character design through computer-generated enhancements. Until then, they're keeping their Shadow in the shadows.

"The Shadow *doesn't* look like Alec Baldwin," Mulcahy allows, a humorous wrinkle coming into his eyes. "He looks like The Shadow. He's quite striking. But you see enough of Alec Baldwin as Lamont Cranston."

Mulcahy dodges all questions surrounding prosthetic noses, without explicitly denying them. "I don't want to criticize, but I always thought it was a little strange in *Dick Tracy*, for example, that Warren Beatty looked like Warren Beatty. I thought it was a shame they *didn't* go that way. At least an attempt at it. Everyone *else* was running around with prosthetics on their faces, including Al Pacino."

The Whispering Eyes

An assistant director interrupts. "We're ready for the Lane Set." At one end of the appropriately gloomy soundstage, a 1930s-style scientist's lab is visible through the long window of a New York skyscraper mockup. Off to one side is a period cigarette billboard, showing a smoker pursing his lips. This isn't an extreme example of product

placement—not when the tag line reads, "I'd Climb a Mountain for a Llama."

"This is Lane's laboratory," Mulcahy explains, "which if you'll look over there has this great Llama sign. It blows smoke rings. That's what hypnotizes Lane. The face changes to Khan. Lane is Reinhardt Lane, Margo's father, who works on atomic research for the War Department."

Up in the lab set, grips are dropping pellets into the varicolored fluids in an assortment of racked test tubes. They start fizzing.

"The very sound of
The Shadow's voice
sends chills through
people."

Clunky electrical props straight out of *Frankenstein* begin sizzling and crackling ominously.

"Stetson's [miniature FX modelmakers] built this giant model city of New York," Mulcahy continues. "It takes up a whole soundstage. We go flying through that. We have a miniature of this lab with a miniature sign, and now we're doing a plate of Lane working in his lab, so we can project it in the window as we fly down to the model. Then, we cut inside to the set."

"Ian's up on top," an AD announces.

And sure enough, actor Ian (Broadway's *Amadeus*) McKellen, looking appropriately tweedy, has taken his place at the window.

Mulcahy climbs the high platform where the camera is stationed. He calls for action. McKellen begins puttering about his lab.

Suddenly—snap. The camera belt breaks. Mulcahy curses and calls cut. A minute later, they try again. And again, the annoying snap stops shooting cold.

While technicians try to fix the balky camera, Mulcahy takes a break.

"This is the soundstage where Alfred Hitchcock did *Saboteur*," he points out. "To be doing *The Shadow* in these wonderful, old, old stages has a good vibe about it."

Although mystery trappings predominate in *The Shadow*, special FX play a significant role too. "We have Alison Savitch, the FX supervisor on *Cliffhanger* and *Terminator 2*," Mulcahy reveals. "We have R/GA. We have Stetson's. We have Syd Dutton doing mattes. People who've really done the top work around. They're off shooting the model city as we speak, and they'll show me a tape and we'll talk about doing a change here and there, so it's a lot of juggling."

Finally, the camera is repaired.

"Action." Mulcahy calls from his perch. McKellen gets busy about his lab. Suddenly,

WILL MURRAY, veteran STARLOG correspondent, writes Doc Savage novels as "Kenneth Robeson" (Bantam, \$4.99). He profiled James Bama in issue #198.

Mulcahy's trademark visual style helps bring a murky, almost tangible attitude to *The Shadow*—and to Sir Ian McKellen as Reinhardt Lane.



Design & Layout: Jim McLemmon

he looks up, his eyes glazing as the unseen mind of Shivan Khan seizes control of his brain.

"And leave," Mulcahy instructs him. McKellen withdraws into the sputtering spark-lit forest of equipment. "And cut—rooney. Very good."

Shooting moves into the set's interior briefly for a closeup. Once done, grips begin striking the set. Within the hour, the elaborate set will be no more.

"I love working with FX," comments Mulcahy as he strolls through a maze of '30s-era props, including a miniature Empire State Building and several Beryllium spheres. "There are a lot of FX in this film,

but it's not an FX film. It's a character/story-driven film. The FX are part of the story. They're not there for the zap of it, even though I think they'll be thrilling. They're not thrown in to liven up a scene. They're integral to the story, like the Phurba Knife. The Phurba Knife is this dagger—I won't explain why, but it's a dagger with an attitude."

The Murder Master

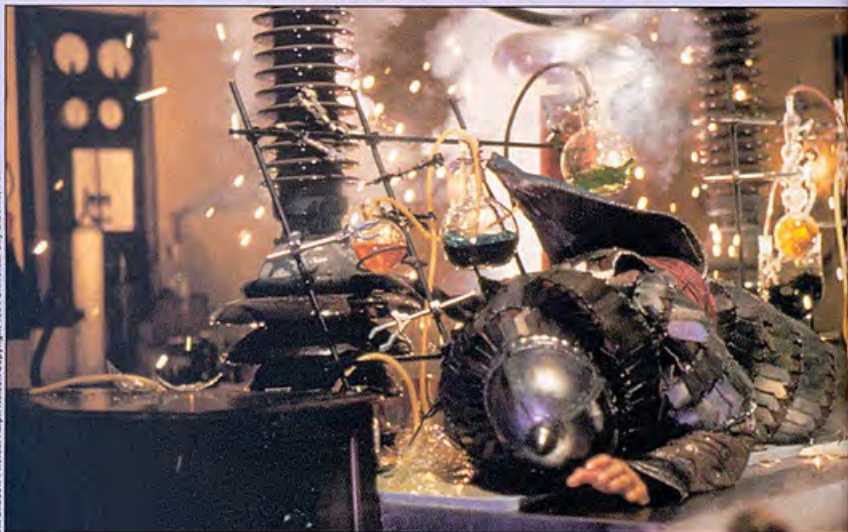
Despite its reliance on elements from *The Shadow* radio show, the apparatus of this film comes straight from the pulp novels, where The Shadow controlled a ring of crime-fighting secret agents, who include

"*Highlander* was a real good experience," says Mulcahy of the Sean Connery/Christopher Lambert fantasy. "It had this great romantic quality."



Margo Lane, taxi driver Moe Shreynitz and the faceless master of communications, Burbank.

"The communication between *The Shadow*'s agents is one of my favorite sequences in the film," Mulcahy reveals. "We call it the Pipe Ride. There are no *Star Trek*-like communicators. It's very thrilling, because I wanted to see everything work mechanically. For example, when *The Shadow* goes into his inner sanctum, everything in the communicating desk works with cogs and pistons and things. I thought it was really important to see that organic quality, to give it a reality. It's technology that's fun to watch."



All Shadow Photos: Ralph Nelsson Copyright 1994 Universal City Studios, Inc.



Highlander Photo: Copyright 1989 20th Century Fox



"I would love to do another one," Mulcahy notes of the possibility of a sequel. "The Shadow's a very interesting character."

Shadow: Trademark & Copyright 1994 Avance Magazine Publishers, Inc.

But *The Shadow* will stand or fall on the man in the black cloak and slouch hat, Alec Baldwin. "We always felt he was right for the part," Mulcahy says of Baldwin. "He has a great strength about him. He also has something burning behind those eyes in real life. The main thing is that he's such a terrific actor. He really embodies the character in many ways."

Equally important will be Lone's portrayal of Shivan Khan, the true master of the Mongol on-screen horde. Everyone involved is concerned that Lone's Khan avoid both the comic-book camp of *Batman's* Joker and the stereotype trap of a Fu Manchu.

"They're opposites to a point on the dif-

ferent sides of good and evil," Mulcahy says. "Khan tries to coax and draw out the evil in *The Shadow*. Apart from all the action and fantasy, there's a lot of psychological play going on. It's not a brawn-brawn battle. It's a battle of wits."

The film opens in Tibet, where an exiled Lamont Cranston lives a dissolute existence in the aftermath of World War I. When it jumps to 1933 Manhattan, Cranston, having rejoined society, discovers that the Orient—and his shady past—have followed him home. By that time, he has already taken up the dark mantle of *The Shadow*, and is prepared to fight Shivan Khan with his own weapon—the power of the mind.

"I hadn't done a fantasy film for a while," Mulcahy reflects, once more enmeshed in the comfort of his golf cart. "When I was a kid, *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad* was one of the films where I went, 'My God! How did they do that? I want to be able to do that.' It was one of the things that really inspired me. I've always liked the genre where worlds can be created."

The Masked Headsman

The subject of fantasy naturally brings the conversation around to the *Highlander* films, which starred Christopher Lambert and Sean Connery (STARLOG #104).

"*Highlander* was a real good experience," Mulcahy allows. "It was a good script—Gregory Widen and Larry Ferguson. Peter Bellwood came in and worked on it. I was involved at that stage. Greg Widen came up with the general premise, which was originally called *The Black Knight*. My agent was terrified. He sent me the script. I rang him up and he said, 'Don't tell me you like it.' 'Yeah,' I said. 'Oh my God, it's a story about people getting their heads cut off!' But that wasn't what the story was about to me. It has this great romantic quality about it. And we were lucky to get Connery. Oh, sure the action was fun too. And I was allowed to do really whatever I wanted as far as the action sequences."

Mention of the infamous sequel, *Highlander 2: The Quickening*, brings a marked

change in the director's demeanor. "*Highlander 2* was a complete disaster," Mulcahy says flatly. "It was done for totally the wrong reasons. I was tricked into doing it. No script, no screenwriter. Shot in Argentina to try and do it on the cheap. That backfired. By the time I left Argentina, there were whole scenes that hadn't been shot. The story wasn't even joined together. Then, a lot of FX and whole scenes were thrown out."

"I did a cut that was 110 minutes. The final film was 89 minutes. They cut 20 minutes, put rock & roll music in it and changed the order of scenes. I sat and watched 15 minutes of it at the Westwood premiere—and walked out. So, I've never sat through it. I hear it's shit. They're doing *Highlander 3* at the moment. Good luck to them."

Universal's hopes for *The Shadow* are that it will become a franchise, spinning off into multiple sequels, as well as toys, video games and books. Would Mulcahy, burned by his *Highlander* experience, nevertheless agree to helm a hypothetical *Shadow 2*?

"Absolutely," he says without hesitation. "I would love to do another one. *The Shadow's* a very interesting character. The villains who have already been set up in some of the comics and novels are really fascinating, too. There are many *Shadow* villains out there, fascinating ones."

Such as?

Mulcahy pauses in thought. "What was one called, the *Zombie King*? No, the *Voodoo Master*. He's very good. There's thought that the *Voodoo Master* will probably be in the second movie. That's unofficial, but there has been talk."

But a *Shadow* sequel is far in the future. In the meantime, Mulcahy is only 11 weeks into what will eventually become a four-month marathon shoot, thanks in part to the LA earthquake, and can only peer as far down the road as his next planned project.

"I hope to do another film after this," he concludes. "A much lower-budget film which I'll co-produce called *The Watcher*. And either shoot it in Australia or the East Coast here. Not sure yet. It's based on a book. It's a very, very scary story." ☆

"I love working with FX," states Mulcahy. "There are a lot of FX in this film, but it's not an FX film. It's a story-driven film."

