

# GUYVER

**Japan's comic book and merchandising hero is poised to strike the U.S. market.**

*By Dan Cziraky*

GUYVER is a \$3 million feature film version of the six volume Japanese graphic novel by Yoshika Takaya, which served as the directing debut of makeup effects artists Screaming Mad George and Steve Wang. STUDENT BODIES heartthrob Jack Armstrong plays a college student thrust into superherodom *a la* THE ROCKETEER when he finds "the Guyver," an alien device that transforms him into an invincibly armored fighting machine. Mark Hamill (STAR WARS) is featured as a CIA agent out to keep the device from falling into the wrong hands. Produced by Brian Yuzna (RE-ANIMATOR), the film opened in Japan last September, with U.S. theatrical and video rights still up for sale.

George, the Japanese makeup artist best known for the female body-builder-turned-cockroach effect of A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4, was originally sought by the Japanese rights owners, Bandai Toy Company and Hero Communications, to do the film's makeup

Co-director/effects designer Screaming Mad George, on set with the GUYVER, a college student thrust into superherodom when he finds an alien device.



Zonoids (l to r) Spice Williams, Michael Berryman, Jimmy Walker and Peter Speller, kidnap the GUYVER's girlfriend, THE LAST EMPEROR's Vivian Wu.

effects. "One of my conditions was that I would direct," said George, who brought in Yuzna, with whom he had worked on BRIDE OF RE-ANIMATOR, as producer, and Wang, an effects colleague, as co-director.

The Japanese comic book series, already the inspiration for toys and an animated version in Japan, was translated into English by George, who roughed out the film's outline—scripted by John Purdy—with Yuzna and Wang. "The animated version of GUYVER is a lot more serious and meant for adults," said George. "It had a lot of gory violence and adult themes. As we got into script development, we realized that with the budget and schedule we had to shoot the movie, we'd probably be better off making it for a broader audience, like a PG-13."

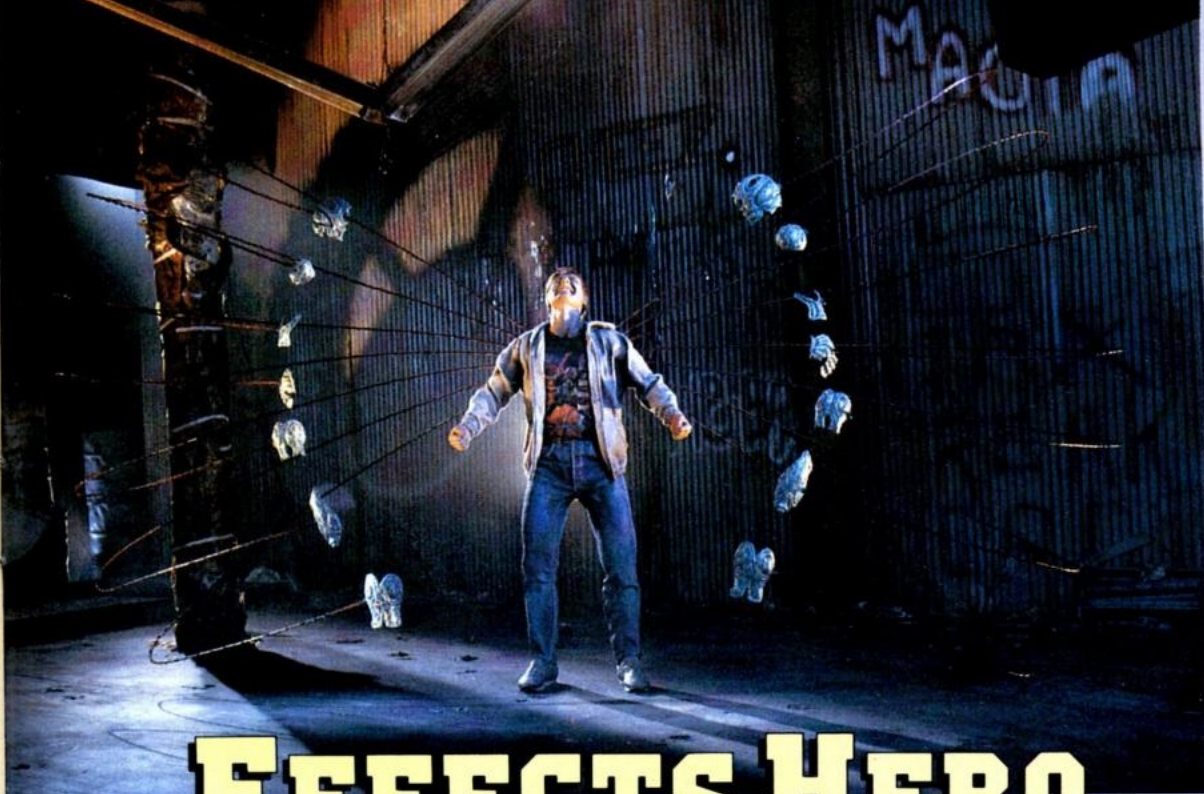
First-time directors George and Wang completed the movie's principal photography in five weeks, beginning in October 1990, shooting on locations in Simi Valley and Los Angeles. At first directing side by side, the co-directors soon split up into separate units with Wang, a Taiwan native heavily influenced by ULTRAMAN, handling the bulk of the film's action scenes.

Wang and George had met while working in the makeup department of Boss

Films, and Wang, a self-taught makeup artist, was later hired by Stan Winston to work on PREDATOR. "It was the first film to really feature my painting style," said Wang, "with all the spots and patterns." The creature effects for GUYVER, supervised by Wang and George include the Zonoids, alien-induced human mutations genetically designed as organic weapons, capable of transforming into monstrous soldiers. The film's climax pits the GUYVER against a huge, eight-legged Zonoid mutation, filmed both live and with puppetry as a one-fifth scale miniature.

David Gale, the evil scientist of Yuzna's RE-ANIMATOR series, plays the film's Zonoid leader, out to retrieve the Guyver. Featured as Armstrong's love interest is Vivian Wu, seen as the second wife of Bernardo Bertolucci's THE LAST EMPEROR. Genre luminaries featured in the cast include Michael Berryman (THE HILLS HAVE EYES) and Spice Williams (STAR TREK V) as Zonoid henchmen, Jeffrey Coombs as Dr. East, with a cameo by scream queen Linnea Quigley. And in an off-beat casting touch suggested by Wang, GOOD-TIMES star Jimmy "J.J." Walker plays a Zonoid rapper whose anthem is "Dy-no-mite!" Wang thought of Walker because one of the Zonoid monsters designed for the film by Jim Kagel reminded him of the lanky, black actor. "We were just joking around about who could play these monsters," said Wang. "We laughed about it, then thought, 'Why not?'"

George, who plans to direct his own script called ANIMUS, likens GUYVER to "ROBOCOP versus PREDATOR by way of TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES. This isn't stupid comedy but real, legitimate, funny moments that don't get in the way of being played as a straight action-adventure." □



# EFFECTS HERO

*A jaw-dropping transformation by Ted Rae.*

*By Chip Merriwether*

To insure the believability of actor Jack Armstrong's metamorphosis from young teen to the space armored GUYVER, visual effects man Ted Rae was called upon by co-director Steve Wang to devise a startling display of matched-move stop-motion control work which emulated the gestalt of Japanese animation films long admired by both men. The shot has drawn applause at preview screenings.

With the assistance of Asao Goto, Rae's first order of business was the crafting of a detailed one-third scale puppet of the actor and a miniature set

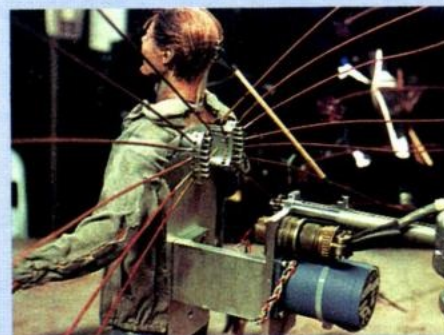
to match the live action. Unlike most stop-motion puppets, the armature was designed specifically to *not* move from the chest down since it needed to be sturdy enough to hold fourteen four-to-five-foot tentacles. The rigid body was fashioned in Sculpey by Wyatt Weed and topped with a rigid grimacing visage of Armstrong. A tiny foam rubber neck appliance allowed the two rigid sections of the body to move naturally in relation to each other. Costumer Lynette Johnson supplied the 22-inch puppet's pint-sized wardrobe, including scaled down bluejeans and sweatshirt, which along with the stylized T-shirt artwork of

the rock band "The Cult," were meticulously hand-painted and airbrushed to camera by Goto.

For their miniature set, Rae and Goto sculpted one-third scale barrels and vacuformed scale versions of the corrugated sheet metal backdrop complete with airbrushed rust, graffiti, and trash glued rigidly to the set floor. To anchor the set for animation it was firmly attached to a four by twelve foot platform which was bolted and chained to the floor along with the motion control camera track to insure solidity. "You could walk up and literally kick the set as hard as you wanted and it wouldn't budge,"



College student Jack Armstrong (left) undergoes his transformation into the GUYVER (above), an alien-armored, ultimate fighting machine. Armstrong is actually a detailed puppet on a one third-scale miniature set. Below: The puppet's tentacle support and motion-control rigging attached to the head.

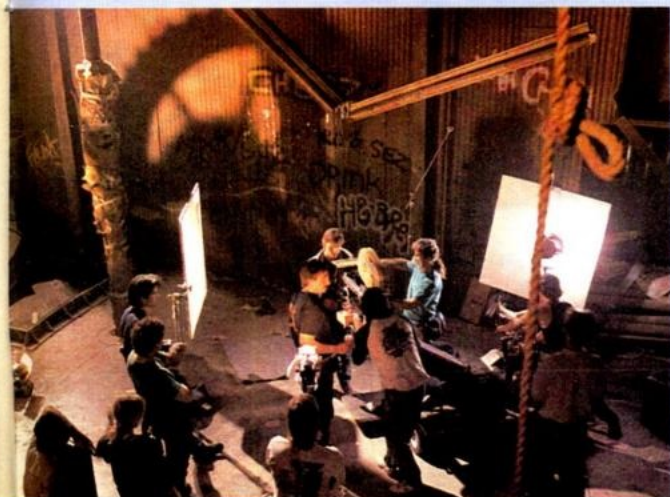


recalled Rae. "That was essential because we crawled on, off, and all over the set animating the tentacles." Though the moving camera stop-motion control element of the shot accounts for only 25% of the eight-second transformation scene, it required eight arduous weeks of preparation.

The shot begins with a close-up of the real Armstrong and then rapidly pulls back to reveal the puppet Armstrong transforming into the GUYVER. Rae noted that the shot's biggest challenge was matching the camera moves to blend the two set-ups, a process of countless hours. "It was difficult because the perspective had to match in three dimensions since the camera was moving," said Rae. The live

continued on page 60

Left: Filming the live-action shot of Armstrong, duplicated in miniature, that sets up the puppet transformation shot. Right: Steve Wang (l), the film's co-director, and visual effects supervisor Ted Rae, setting up the configuration of armor-bearing tentacles.



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## GUYVER EFFECTS

continued from page 47

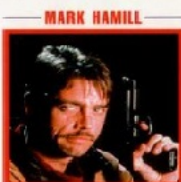
action was filmed at six frames per second with Armstrong lip-syncing to a prerecorded dialogue track run at one-quarter speed. The change-over frames between live and puppet footage were streaked and dissolved optically. "If you know that the effect is coming, it is by no means perfect," said Rae, "but Steve designed such a dynamic shot that you're too busy picking your jaw off the floor to worry about how it was done."

Lighting the miniature for animation proved to be a challenge even with the meticulous notation of light positions and filters during the live-action shoot. "You can't miniaturize light," said Rae, "only its effect on objects. Where seven lights were used for the live action set-up, I had to use twenty-three different lighting units to duplicate the same effect in miniature. Since my shooting area was only nineteen feet wide, it didn't leave much room to put lights where they needed to be in scale to the live-action. For instance, if a light was sitting five feet from the actor, that equivalent would only be a foot and a half from the puppet, meaning that once the camera pulls back a scaled equivalent of 18 feet, it would be in the shot. In some cases it actually took three lights on the miniature to

do what one unit accomplished on the set because the units had to be set farther back and their beams narrowed and overlapped to get them to read like the live-action."

Goto sculpted the fourteen pieces of miniature body armor based on the full-size suit designed and sculpted by co-director Steve Wang. The miniature pieces were vacuumformed out of paper-thin styrene to facilitate near weightlessness and painted to duplicate Wang's stylized paint designs.

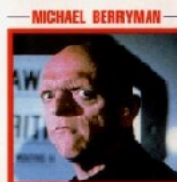
"Steve had a specific pattern he wanted the tentacles to emulate in the extended position, sort of like a butterfly's outstretched wings," said Rae. "I thought the best way to accomplish this was to place them in the end position and animate backwards, which I had done for a couple of shots in BEETLEJUICE." After testing various solutions, Rae finally settled on using lengths of brass rod anchored into a machined, fan-shaped collar behind the puppet. With each frame of animation, Goto's body armor was animated backward along a pre-calibrated path described by the tentacle shape, and the protruding rods snapped off. "In all it took only ten hours with the help of another animator to record the animation," said Rae. "We got it on the first take. So all the homework really paid off." □



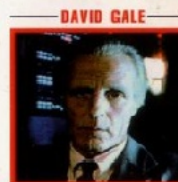
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