

REMO MAN

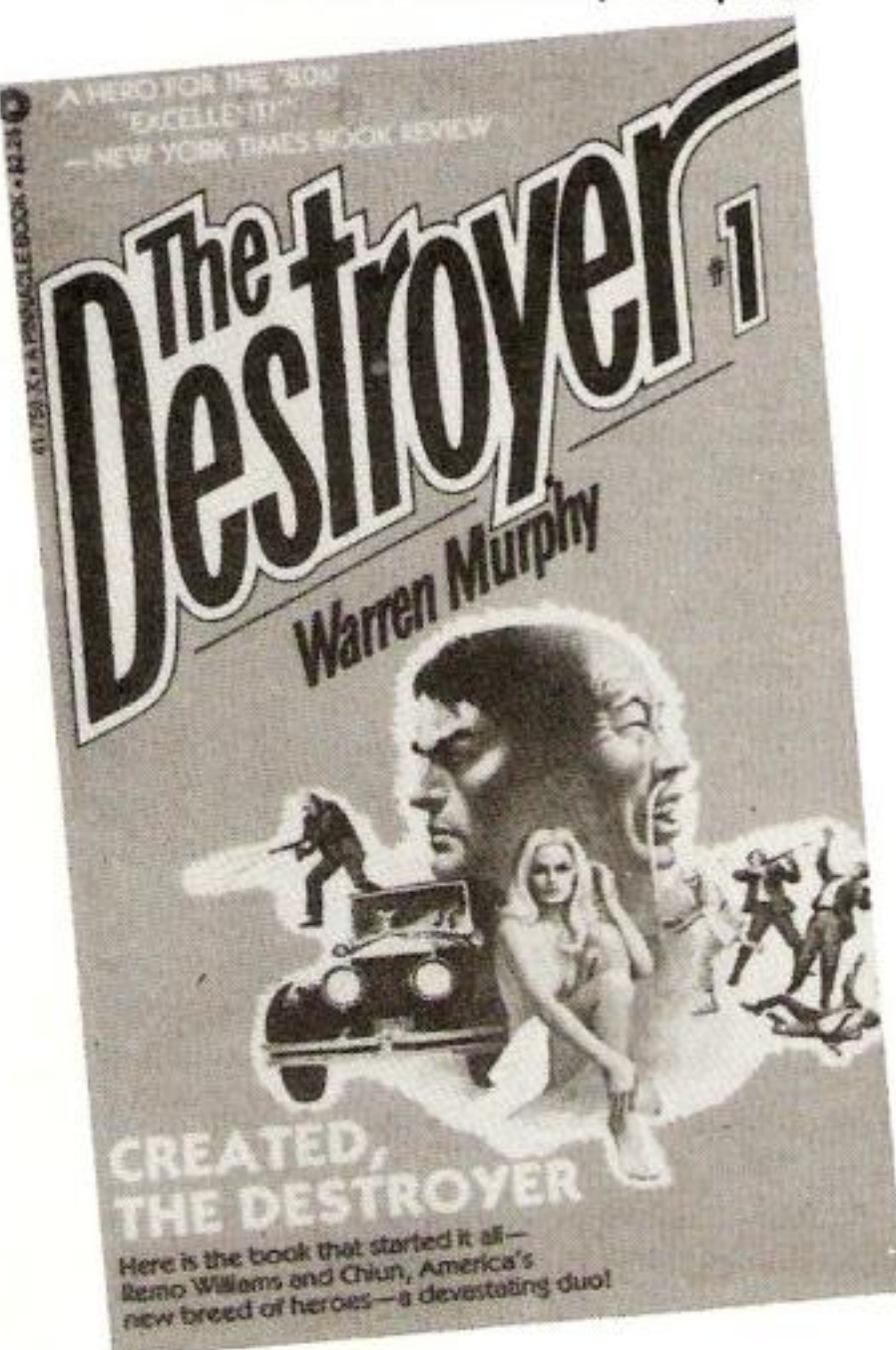
REMO: THE FIRST ADVENTURE marks the film debut of assassin Remo Williams, *The Destroyer*.

by Dan Scapperotti

An eight-foot fence, topped with barbed wire rings an incongruous sight just outside Mexico City, for rising inside the fence is the Statue of Liberty. The reconstruction is an exact replica of the original from mid-chest to the tip of the torch seventy feet above. The back of the statue, however, lies open to allow access to the interior by actors and technicians on the set of Orion Pictures' *REMO: THE FIRST ADVENTURE*.

Lanky director Guy Hamilton, veteran of several James Bond epics, looking much like a British

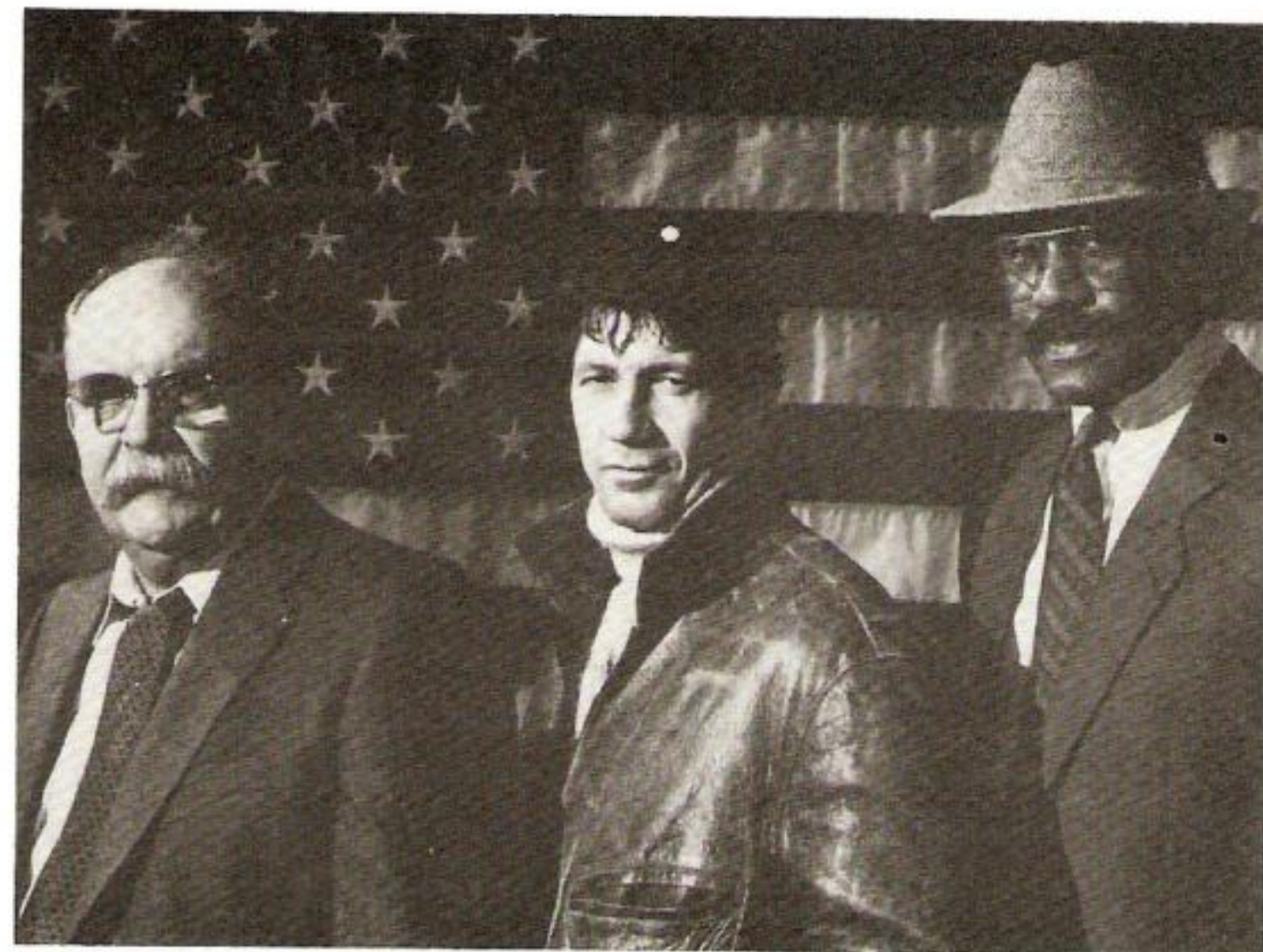
The first book in the 61 book series published by Pinnacle Books, currently with over 20 million copies in print.



version of Ichabod Crane, walks over to a camera pit about five feet deep in front of the statue. A wizened-looking oriental arrives at the site and slowly walks over and bows to Hamilton. The director acknowledges the salute with his own bow. The man is actually actor Joel Grey in makeup for his role as Chuin the reigning master of Sinanju.

The film, which will be released October 11, is the first in what the producers hope will be a successful series of motion pictures based on "The Destroyer" books by Warren Murphy and Richard Sapir, the 61st volume of which, *Lord of the Earth*, has just been issued. Christopher Wood's screenplay adapts the opening chapters of the first book in the series, *CREATED: THE DESTROYER* for the introduction of Remo Williams, but makes dramatic and narratively sound changes to Murphy and Sapir's original. The title character is now a New York City cop who is ambushed in his patrol car and dumped into the East River. Awakening, he finds himself with a new name, face, and identity—that of Remo Williams—and is recruited into C. U. R. E., a government organization that works outside the Constitution in order to save the country from the ravages of foreign and domestic foes who can't be combatted through legal methods. Williams is played by Fred Ward, who starred as Gus Grisson in *THE RIGHT STUFF*.

Remo's first mission is to eliminate a "vicious killer," but when Remo arrives at the assigned penthouse he discovers that his intended victim, an elderly Korean, is more than he can handle. Chuin,



Agents for C. U. R. E., chief Harold W. Smith (Wilford Brimley), Remo Williams (Fred Ward) and McClearey (J. A. Preston), the agent who recruits Williams.

the reigning Master of the mythical Korean martial art form, Sinanju, avoids Remo's lame attempts on his life, easily dodging the bullets from Remo's gun. Chuin has been hired by C. U. R. E. to train Remo in the art of assassination.

When director Guy Hamilton took his cast and crew on location to the real Statue of Liberty for the first day of shooting, he found that extensive planking had been erected for the safety of workmen doing restoration. "To my horror the scaffolding goes right under her nose and out her left nostril," said Hamilton. "You could hold a barmitzvah up there for a hundred people. There was no sense of danger at all. We shot all the exteriors in New York and came down to Mexico to complete filming."

Hamilton shifted the scaffolding back on the Mexico statue to permit the staging of some suspenseful action scenes. "You're not allowed to have anybody on the actual statue because it's paper thin," he said. At one point Remo finds himself hanging from the statue's thumb, which gives the audience a sense of scale, while thugs beat him with chains.

Although an action picture, the aspect of *REMO: THE FIRST ADVENTURE* that sets it apart from similar films is the characterization. Wise guy Remo and his long-suffering tutor, Chuin, develop a rapport that sees them evolve from grudging respect for each other to a father-and-son love which accounts for much of the popularity of the novels. "I see a little of Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid in the relationship," said producer Larry Spiegel, sitting in a director's chair not far from the mock statue. "Whenever Butch Cassidy and Sundance were on screen they were always bickering, but you knew that these

two men really loved each other. That's how I felt about Chuin and Remo." The analogy wasn't lost on prospective backers of the film when financing was being sought.

The selection of an actor to play Chuin was the most critical choice facing the project according to Spiegel. "We needed an actor who had a sense of grace, a twinkling sense of humor," he said. "An actor who had the ability to dance, although he doesn't dance in the picture, because his movements had to be fluid." Spiegel was cleaning out a desk drawer when he came across an audio cassette of the soundtrack for *CABARET*. He realized that Joel Grey "was an actor who embodied all the requirements."

Grey was redirecting the theatrical version of *ZORBA* for the national tour with Anthony Quinn when he received a phone call from Guy Hamilton, and saw a script. "I didn't see why they weren't hiring an Asian actor," said Grey. "They told me they'd seen actors on both coasts and the Orient and hadn't found the right combination."

There is something very down-to-earth about Chuin, but there is also something nether-worldly about him," Grey continued. "He's not like Yoda, but there are some of those qualities that seem to be there. To be quite honest when I read the scene about Chuin escaping by walking on water I thought, 'I want to do that.'" Grey met with Hamilton and the producers who were armed with a photo of the actor's face touched-up by makeup artist Carl Fullerton to demonstrate what Grey would look like as an Oriental. Grey was hooked.

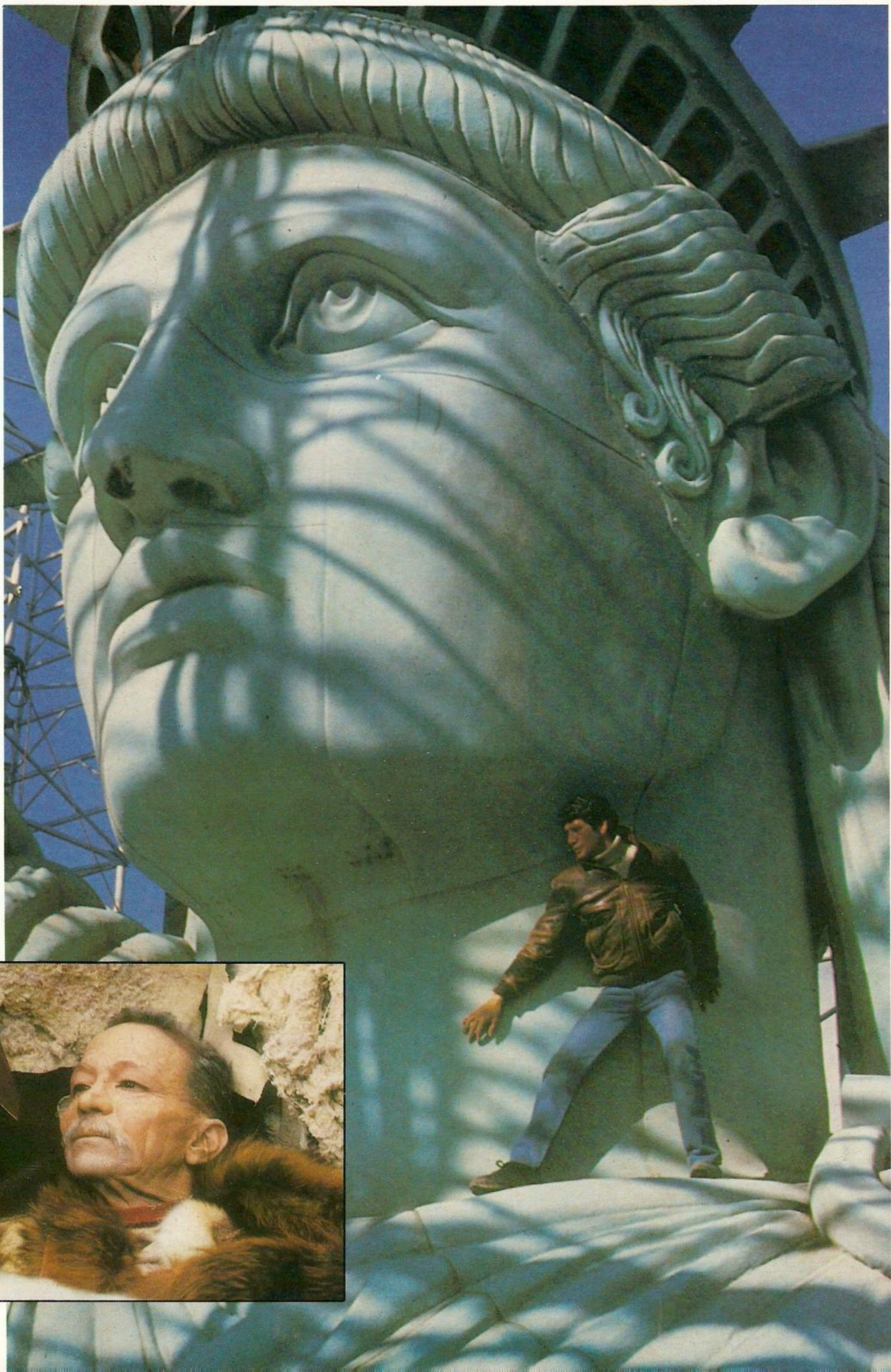
The major problem confronting the production was changing Grey physically into the Asian. Carl

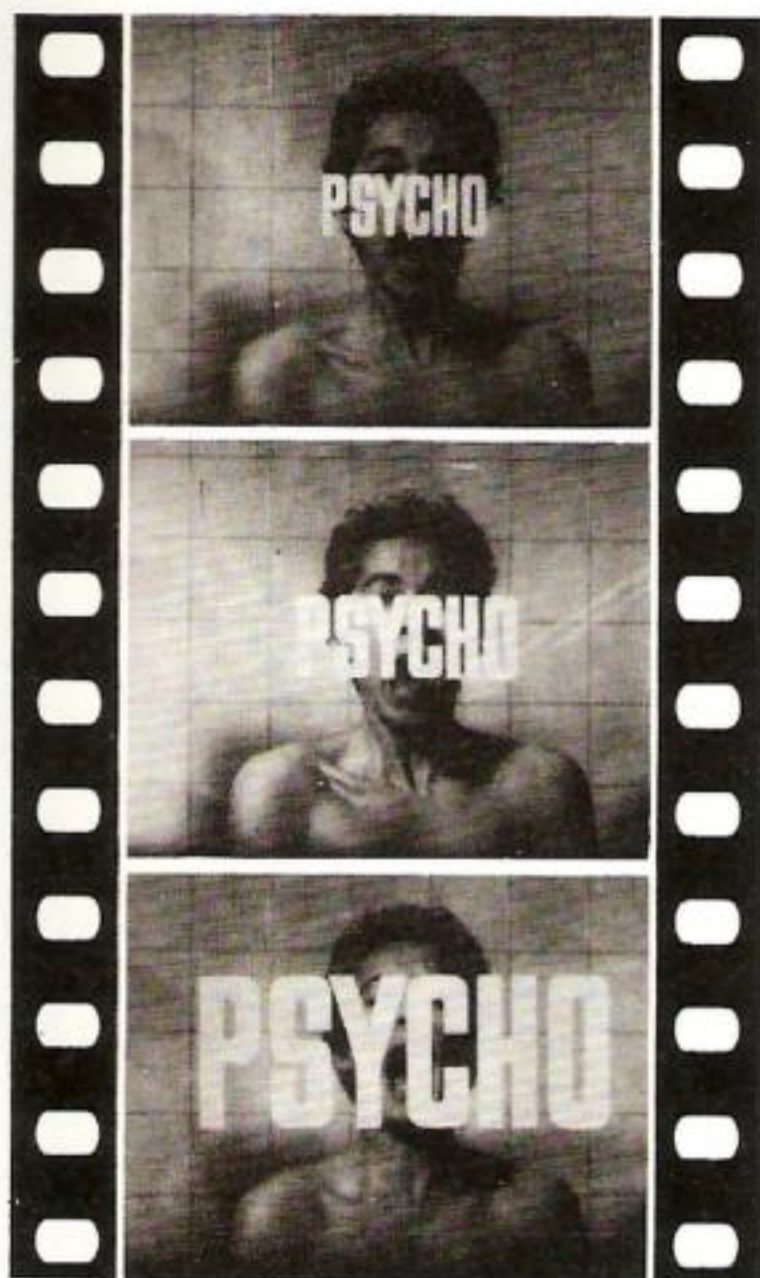
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FILMING REMO AND THE STATUE OF LIBERTY

Remo Williams (Fred Ward) clings to the face of a mockup of the statue built outside of Mexico's Churubusco Studios for an action sequence where Remo faces-off against thugs sent to kill him. The mock structure was built using a wood base covered with sculptured styrofoam and coated with fiberglass for strength and stability. Lighting and camera angles will match footage shot on location at the real monument.

Joel Grey, who played the M.C. in *CABARET*, as Chuin, the aged Korean master of the martial art of Sinanju and Remo's mentor and good friend. Grey plays the role in makeup designed by Dick Smith protegee Carl Fullerton.





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Moon, This Island Earth, The Invisible Ray, Forbidden Planet, Godzilla, King of the Monsters

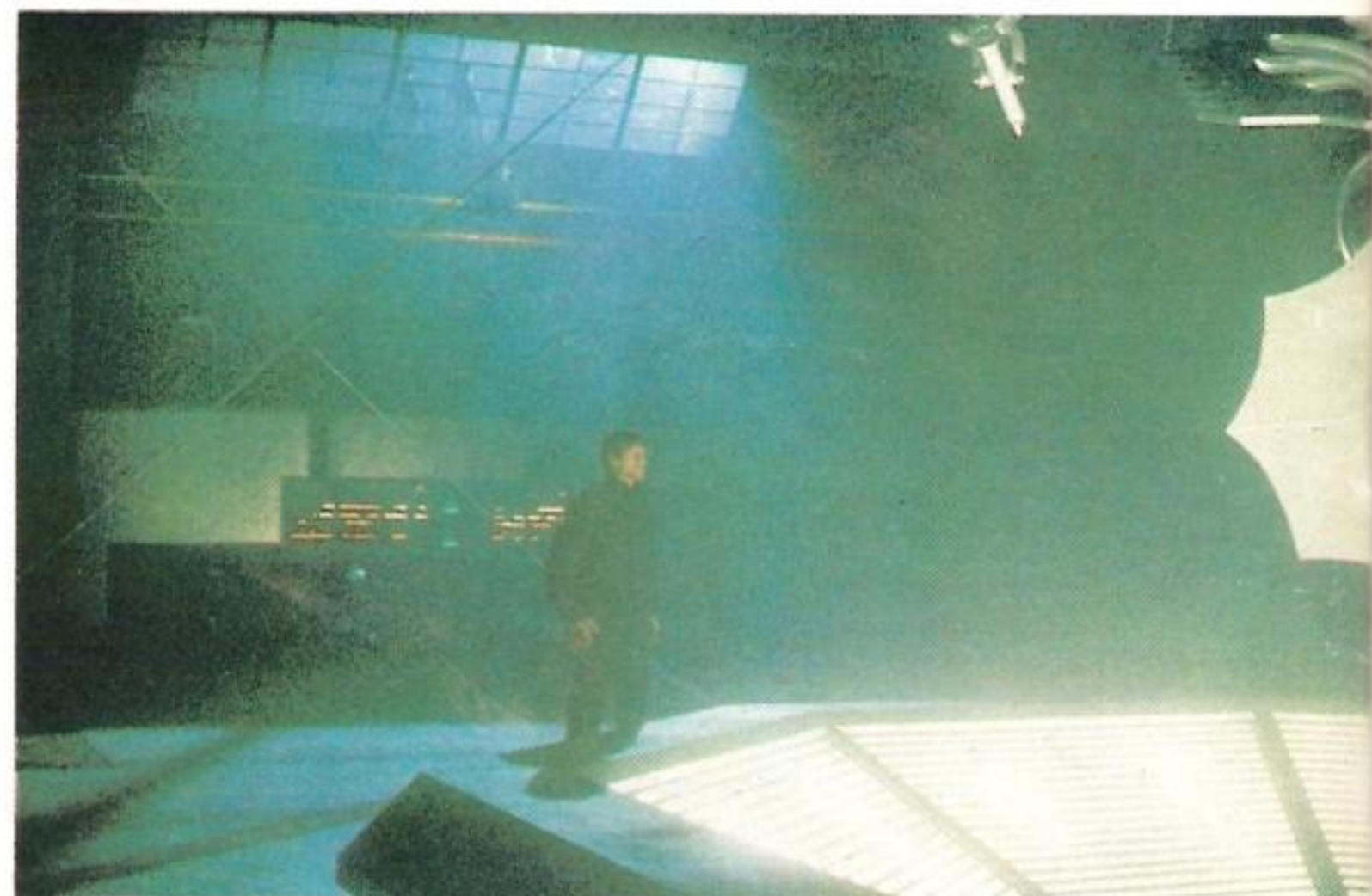
HORROR/SF III

Werewolf in a Girls Dormitory, Corridors of Blood, Attack of the Killer Shrews, Eegah!, Creature From the Haunted Sea, Creature Walks Among Us, Horror of Party Beach, The Old Dark House (Bill Castle), The Mysterious Island (original '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, The Haunted Strangler, Curse of the Demon, The Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas, The Little Shop of Horrors, The Fearless Vampire Killers, The Phantom of the Opera ('42), The Devil Dolls (Tod Browning), The Climax (Karloff)

AMERICAN INTERNATIONAL

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

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Remo Williams (Fred Ward) encounters H. A. R. P. (High Altitude Reconnaissance Probe), an awesome strategic defense system that is in danger of being sabotaged.

REMO MAN

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Fullerton accomplished the job each day, taking four hours, using foam latex appliances and a set of false, moveable eyelids. "The moveable eyelids add a great deal of credibility to the makeup," said Fullerton. "I don't think that has ever been done for an Asian makeup before. I tried to avoid the stereotypes, the Peter Sellers look."

The lengthy makeup sessions were a hindrance to the production, but Joel Grey was the one who had to endure the regimen. "I'm not aware of the makeup at all when Guy Hamilton says 'Action,'" said Grey. "Thank God. When we first started to work out the makeup I thought that in doing it every day it would eventually go faster. Not so. Not on your life. Each time it's like reinventing. It's not at all like I thought it would be. It's tougher."

The complexity of the makeup prompted Larry Spiegel to request that Carl Fullerton improve the makeup process for any sequels. "Fullerton is not overly optimistic that he can do that," said Spiegel. "He thinks the process he has developed will be the process for ensuing pictures. I think Joel Grey would croak if he heard that right now. We really have to make it easier for him and for the whole production."

Guy Hamilton enjoys the Chuin character and there is an easy, relaxed rapport between director and star. Chuin's statements in the film on the subject of assassins are so far out that they're funny because he utterly believes them. "Chuín will say that assassins bring peace and good humor to the community," said Hamilton. "The audience won't believe what they're hearing. He'll tell you that Sinanju assassinations have gone on for centuries. Napoleon. You think he died in bed. Oh no. Sinanju, and that brought peace to Europe for a hundred years."

The last character to round out the trio that is the heart and soul of C. U. R. E. is Dr. Harold W. Smith, the head of the special branch. Smith

is an honest man, incorruptible, who was hand-picked by a dead President in a desperate move to fight the forces aligned against our country.

Associate producer Judy Goldstein suggested Wilford Brimley for the part—the stout actor currently making a splash in COCOON. Brimley fleshed-out the dry, humorlessly drawn one-note characterization used in the novels.

Interiors for the film were shot at Mexico's Churubusco Studios. The production was based there to cut costs, but it didn't turn out that way, according to Spiegel. "Doing REMO in Mexico was not a money saving idea at all," he lamented. "I believe that if we added it all up we could have made the picture a little less expensively and certainly easier in the U. S." Technologically advanced equipment was not available in Mexico and had to be brought into the country. No easy task when confronted by bureaucratic and security-sensitive customs officials.

Both Goldstein and Spiegel are enthusiastic about a follow-up adventure for Remo Williams since both feel they have only scratched the surface possibilities with the first film. Fred Ward and Joel Grey have been signed for future stints as Remo and Chuín and Guy Hamilton would be brought back behind the cameras.

"Since we've already dealt with Remo's background, in REMO II we can broaden the action," said Spiegel. "I'd like to introduce him to some more women in that picture." But Goldstein is quick to point out that they couldn't match the books' treatment of women. "Remo goes to bed with women in the book and sometimes kills them with his special skills," she said. "We can't put that on the screen. When you get into the books you can accept some of the black humor, but if you hit someone who isn't familiar with it, they'll think you're sick. We've discussed the next picture and we can start where we leave off—walking on water—and go deeper into the humor." □