

Get To Know: "AMERICAN HORROR STORY" Makeup FX Designer, Christien Tinsley

Written by Dave McKendry
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FANGORIA took a trip to Tinsley Studios, the FX house behind FX Network's acclaimed horror series AMERICAN HORROR STORY, and after touring the space, we sat down with the show's makeup FX designer, Christien Tinsley.

FANGORIA: How did you get into the FX business?

CHRISTIEN TINSLEY: I first got into the FX business just by being a child in love with movies. Not knowing how films were made, I think I just fell in love with filmmaking and developed an understanding about how films were divided up into different departments. After that, it was obvious that my passion lie in the illusion of the monsters and the make-up. From that point—I was seven or eight years-old—I started to sculpt, paint, and create Halloween masks.



FANG: Did you ever have formal training?

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TINSLEY: No, I was self-taught. FANGORIA was a big influence on me at the time. It was the only source of information I had growing up in Seattle. There were no school, I think Joe Blasko had one, but there wasn't really anything at the time. Dick Smith had his course, but Fango was the only source for anything remotely like I wanted to do. Eventually Fango came out with a magazine called GOREZONE, and GOREZONE was dedicated to more behind the scenes. They used to have these makeup lab sections, and I remember Mark Schostrom had an article on how he made Henrietta for EVIL DEAD II. I remember those pages were worn out, I would constantly read that one. Essentially, what I would do was mimic the photos that I saw. Then, when I finally made the trip down to California when I was 21, I sent out my portfolio and got hired immediately as a sculptor; which is a job I never thought I'd have. I thought I would be a mold maker like everyone else in this business. From that point, I never left Los Angeles, and I've been here for the last 18 years.

FANG: What are some of the horror movies that influenced you?

TINSLEY: John Carpenter's THE THING, AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON, I even enjoyed SWORD AND THE SORCERER. Those were the three movies that had the most influence on wanting to be a makeup artist.



FANG: What FX do you enjoy applying the most?

TINSLEY: I enjoy character makeup. I enjoy noses over monsters, changing someone's appearance realistically over creating five headed beasts. So Dick Smith's Amadeus makeup on F. Murray Abraham was tremendous for me.

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FANG: Besides the second season of AMERICAN HORROR STORY, what other projects do you have coming up?

TINSLEY: We have some really cool effects in KILLING THEM SOFTLY, which is Brad Pitt's new project. We also have the new RIDDICK movie coming out next year.

AMERICAN HORROR STORY premieres October 17th on FX.