Written by Abbie Bernstein
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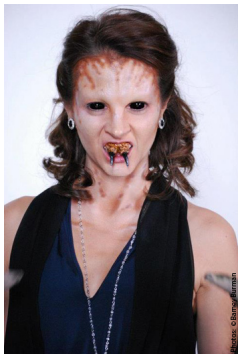
Many people are aware that the so-called “fairy tales” by the Brothers Grimm, in their original forms, are arguably more for horror fans than for small children: The stories are full of monsters, murders and dismemberment. NBC’s series GRIMM—whose first season hit DVD and Blu-ray this week and which begins its second season next Monday, August 13—maintains this tradition with the help of makeup designer/creator Barney Burman.

The show’s hero, Portland, Oregon detective Nick Burkhardt (David Giuntoli), learns that he is a hereditary Grimm, one of a rare breed of people born to see the true nature of “Wesen,” creatures of various supernatural species that can take on human form (like the Mauvais Dentes pictured below, from the new season’s premiere episode). Like Portland’s truly human residents, the Wesen sometimes commit or are the victims of crime. The audience sees what Nick sees, so the episodes are full of monsters—and often, they’re messy killers, so we all witness badly mauled, skinned and/or chewed corpses.

In charge of these shocking sights is Burman, one of the Burman makeup dynasty: “My dad’s dad made the prosthetic nose and the cane for THE WOLF MAN with Lon Chaney Jr., and made the pieces for Jack Pierce.” Although it’s where he wound up, Burman says he didn’t initially plan to enter the family business. “When I was a kid, I wanted to be Lon Chaney; I wanted to do the makeups on myself and then perform in them. I pushed acting a lot for many years, so makeup was just my fallback, a way to make money. Then at some point, I said, ‘Hey, I’m actually doing well with this and making money and enjoying it, and the pursuit of acting is not so enjoyable,’ so I just decided to switch my focus and do this as well as I could. And hopefully, it’s being appreciated, which makes me happy.”

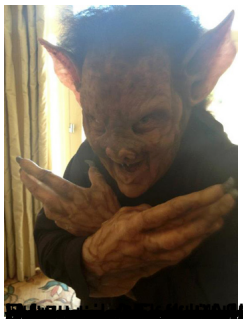
Burman joined GRIMM during preparation for its third episode. Before his arrival, Burman explains, “Andrew Clement [who created the new Freddy for the NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET remake] did the pilot, and he did an excellent job and I respect his art greatly. And then, for whatever reason—I have no idea why—they decided to go a different way for the run of the series and went to somebody else for episode two, and let’s just say that didn’t work out so well. Then they came to me, so I started as of episode three.”



Fango is speaking to Burman next to a GRIMM makeup FX demo booth set up in the corner of an elegant Pasadena hotel, where NBC is having an all-day press event. There are prosthetics for creatures in various stages of completion, plus a body missing its skin. The corpse is from the “Tarantella” episode, which features a Spinnetod (played by ANGEL’s Amy Acker, pictured left), a spiderlike Wesen who is compelled to mate with human males in order to suspend her rapid aging process. “This is the aftermath of what happens to somebody once she’s drained them of their liquefied innards,” Burman explains.

Regarding the look of the predatory Spinnetod, Burman says, “Happily, for that episode, they kept it minimal. We just did a little bit of patterning on her face, black eyes and some teeth, and it played really well—more than just trying to give somebody a spider face, which would be almost impossible to pull off. And then she had these very long, creepy, kind of spider-y arms. Basically, like a spider, she mates and then kills her mate.”

Then there are the remains of the unfortunate victim. “That’s silicone,” Burman explains. “It’s actually a store-bought plastic skeleton; we have precious little time to make these, so we got a skeleton, cut it all up and rigged it so it was floppy the way we wanted it. We constructed muscles out of mattress foam, made big sheets of silicone skins and wrapped it over the armature we made.”



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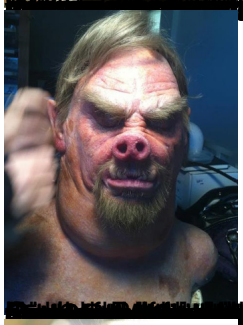

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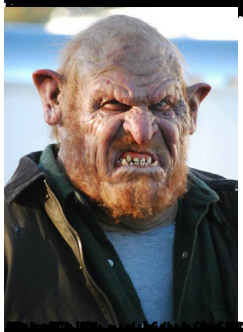

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