As we celebrate this Summer of Savini (cover story of FANGORIA #304; directorial comeback THE THEATRE BIZARRE debuting at Fantasia this month), I decided to share with you my first-ever professional interview, which I conducted with the King of Splatter as a 17-year-old high school student in 1980. Part one appeared here .

"The Great Savini" or How a "Famous Monsters of Filmland" Reader Made Good

By Anthony Timpone

(Continued)

TONY TIMPONE: When did you first officially work for Romero, and how did it turn out?

TOM SAVINI: I was later hired to do makeup for MARTIN, which I also had a part in. Then I was hired for George's next picture, DAWN OF THE DEAD, which helped my career enormously. I got tons of scripts because of the success of DAWN OF THE DEAD and later on FRIDAY THE 13TH.

TIMPONE: What was your involvement like on DAWN OF THE DEAD?

SAVINI: Oh, it was all so much fun! I had a crew of eight people just to paint people gray (the zombies), while I had to do all the mutilated stuff.

TIMPONE: What was one of the more complicated makeup effects in DAWN OF THE DEAD?

SAVINI: A complicated one was chopping off the top of that zombie's head with a helicopter blade. The effect involved four people. The actor we used had to have an especially short forehead. The problem was, even with his false appliance forehead on, the actor's head was absolutely round, very abnormal looking. This wasn't noticeable on screen though, because the false hair bunched up for some reason and made him look like Frankenstein's Monster. The top of his head looks square when in actuality it was completely round.

TIMPONE: FRIDAY THE 13TH had some of your most elaborate special makeup FX. Which effect did you find most difficult and how was it accomplished?

SAVINI: There were two of them: the beheading of Betsy Palmer, and the arrow worming its way out of the guy's neck effect. Now, I don't like to give away the secrets to my effects, but there's a book coming out from Doubleday called FILM TRICKS, and in it Rick Baker, Dick

Smith and I discuss our makeup effects. I explain those from FRIDAY THE 13TH in it.

TIMPONE: How was Sean Cunningham as a director on FRIDAY THE 13TH?

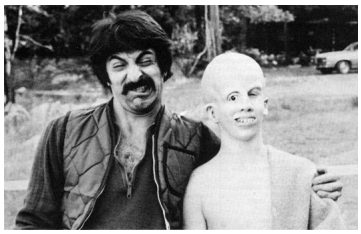
SAVINI: Excellent! He made the film work and was very organized. He knew exactly what he was after: scaring the wits out of the audience.

TIMPONE: Has he approached you about doing a sequel?

SAVINI: Yes, he asked me to do it, but I turned it down to do THE BURNING. Sean finished directing the sequel, and it will be called JASON: FRIDAY THE 13TH, PART 2.

TIMPONE: After seeing the completed products, what were your impressions of DAWN OF THE DEAD and FRIDAY THE 13TH and their contributions to the horror genre?

SAVINI: Well, it's really hard to be objective about my films. Though I think DAWN OF THE DEAD is a classic. FRIDAY THE 13TH was a blatant ripoff of a lot of films, which even Sean Cunningham agrees with. It was a lot of different films: PSYCHO, HALLOWEEN and even a little of ALIEN. I really liked the film, although a lot of people told me that they only liked the effects.



TIMPONE: What is you opinion of the latest horror trend: killer-on-the loose, gross-out-the-audience movies?

SAVINI: Well, some of them are just poorly made, like PROM NIGHT. The audiences today want to see everything in a horror film; DAWN OF THE DEAD started all that. I'm just riding the crest of these new horror films, work-wise. But, it's only a trend.

TIMPONE: Horror films are always going through trends. In the 1930s-'40s there were the monster films; in the 1950s there were the giant atomic monster movies; in the 1960s there were the Poe films; in the 1970s the demon-possession films; and now we have the mad-slasher movies.

SAVINI: I think it's time for the monsters again.

TIMPONE: From the clips I have seen, your makeup FX in MANIAC look like you have reached new heights in realistic human slaughter. What were some of the more difficult FX in the film?

SAVINI: Besides the scalping effects, my unique death in the film was complicated. In the scene, I play a victim whose head is blown off by the maniac [Joe Spinell]. The effect involved first making a life mask of myself, taken from a mold of my head. I scored the latex mask in several places so that when the blast hit it, it would blow apart easier. I put in a plastic skull lining, filled it up with fake brains, contraceptives filled with blood, and on the outside, I placed in glass eyes, a mustache, hair, the whole bit. In the scene, the maniac jumps up on top of the hood of my car and blows me away. Before the blasts from the shotgun go off, it is actually me, in the maniac's costume, firing both shots into myself [the dummy]. Since I have to execute my own effects, it was a weird feeling killing myself!

[redacted]