

DINOSAURS—LIVE!

Monster master Stan Winston has every reason to be proud of his stunning animatronic creations in "Jurassic Park."

By CHUCK CRISAFULLI

It didn't just shock its audiences—it shocked everyone who made it. We had no idea it was going to be as wonderful, awesome and historic as it turned out. Every human being has to be thrilled with what we did in this film." Those may sound like big words, but they come from a big talent talking about some big creatures in a very big film. To be specific, they're FX master Stan Winston's comments on the dinosaurs of *Jurassic Park*.

"The fallacy about this film was that the only things that made it work were the dinosaurs."

As any warm-blooded dinophile is now aware, the rampaging reptiles of Steven Spielberg's thriller are the most powerfully lifelike dinosaurs ever committed to film. And, to be sure, there was a collaborative effort in bringing such creatures as the Brachiosaurus, Gallimimus, Triceratops, Velociraptor, Dilophosaurus and Tyrannosaurus rex to life. Under Spielberg's direction, the preliminary stop-motion work of Phil Tippett, the mechanical FX of Michael Lantieri and the computer animation of Industrial Light & Magic all added to the illusion of flesh-and-blood dinos. But perhaps most impressive were the full-size,

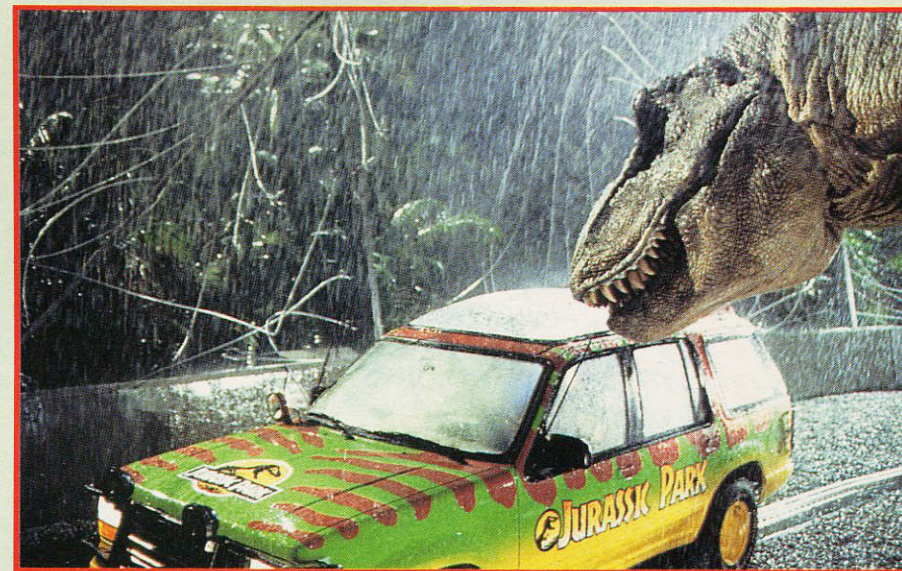


A raptor in the rafters gets a rise out of Ariana Richards.

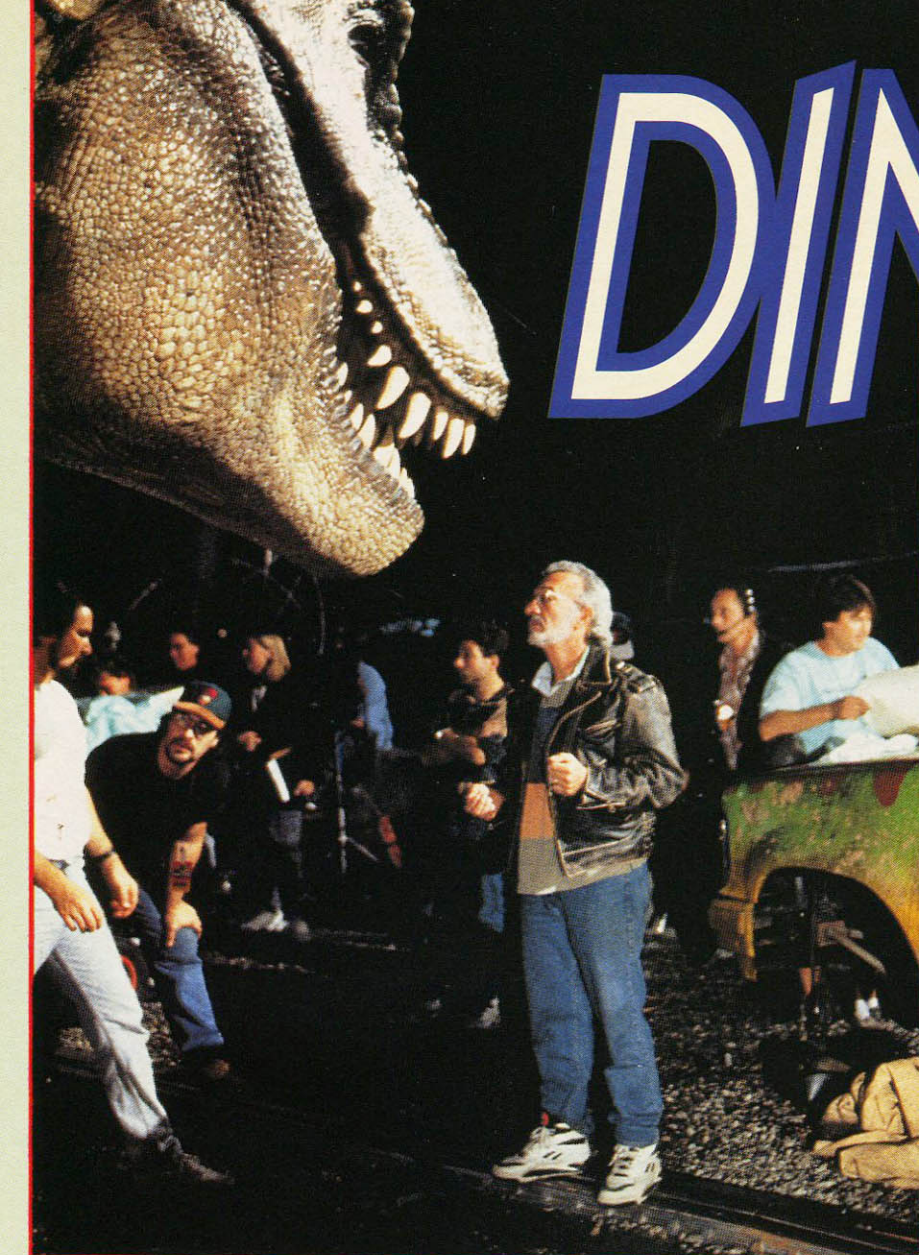
live-action animatronic and robotic creatures Winston developed, which ranged in size from a tiny, hand-held raptor hatchling to a 9,000-pound, 40-foot T. rex capable of swallowing a goat on cue.

It's been months since the Academy Award-winning, 47-year-old FX master had the crew of thunder lizards at his command, but he still beams with pride in discussing his contributions to the film. "I spent over two years on the design, development and creation of what went into that movie, and even being that close to it, it's still hard for me to believe how wonderful the finished film looks," he says. "I still actually sit there and say, 'How did we do that?' I've never been so happy in all my career as when I first saw the final cut of *Jurassic Park*."

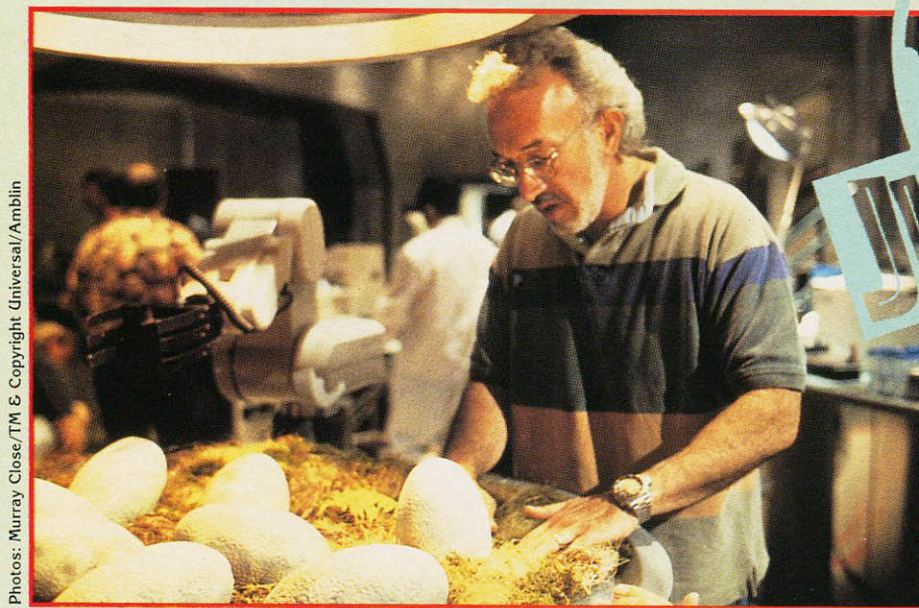
Winston is particularly happy with the way his work was matched



All full-scale props were used in *Jurassic Park*—but to the T. rex, everything's a miniature.



Only the man who gave life to the Aliens and the Predator would dare tell the Tyrannosaurus rex what to do.

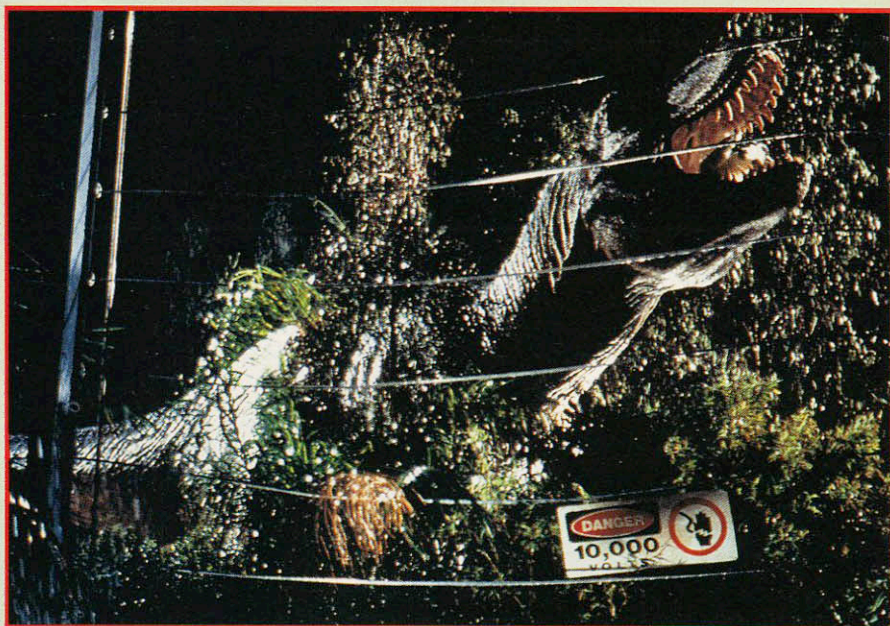


In addition to creating the FX, Winston enjoyed preparing breakfast for the cast and crew.

with ILM's contributions, and he feels that a new standard for FX has been achieved in the scenes where live-action and digital FX were mixed. "The seamless blend between the live and the computer animation is incredible," he raves. "I only know which is which because I was there during the shooting, and I know what cuts were made. But you can't tell just from looking at the screen. The animation is amazing, but I will say that of the 14 minutes of dinosaur footage in the film, over 10 of those are live-action—right there in front of you. It's mind-boggling."

Winston's involvement in the project began with a phone call from producer Kathleen Kennedy at the earliest stages of development. She was interested in Winston's availability, and wanted to know what he thought could be done with full-size, live-action FX. "It wasn't a 'go' movie at that point; Steven was just considering it," Winston recalls. "But I jumped at the idea. I wasn't actually offered anything, but it was still an absolute yes on my part. What we could actually do, I didn't know."

As preproduction rolled along and Winston's involvement remained unconfirmed, the concept artists at his studio began to work on designs for the T. rex. "I wanted to show Steven that we understood what dinosaurs should look like, and I wanted to sell him on the idea of us doing it," Winston says. "He was interested in what we had done with the Queen Alien in *Aliens*; she was 14 feet tall and live-action. But dinosaurs created an entirely different set of problems. The Queen had a light endoskeleton, whereas the dinosaurs had flesh and blood and weight, and a lot of muscle move-



Now that we know about Winston's dino work, we're still wondering if he created the goat remains in the T. rex's mouth.

ment. And they were part of reality, rather than being aliens.

"I didn't present any of those negatives to Steven," the artist clarifies. "I just allowed him to think positive thoughts about what we could do, because we really wanted to do it. I think he finally realized that we were probably the only people who had done a full-size live-action piece that big for a film, but I still wanted him to know that we could bring a lot to the table artistically. He was very happy when he saw the sketches done by my concept artist, 'Crash' McCreery, and from then on we were part of the design team."

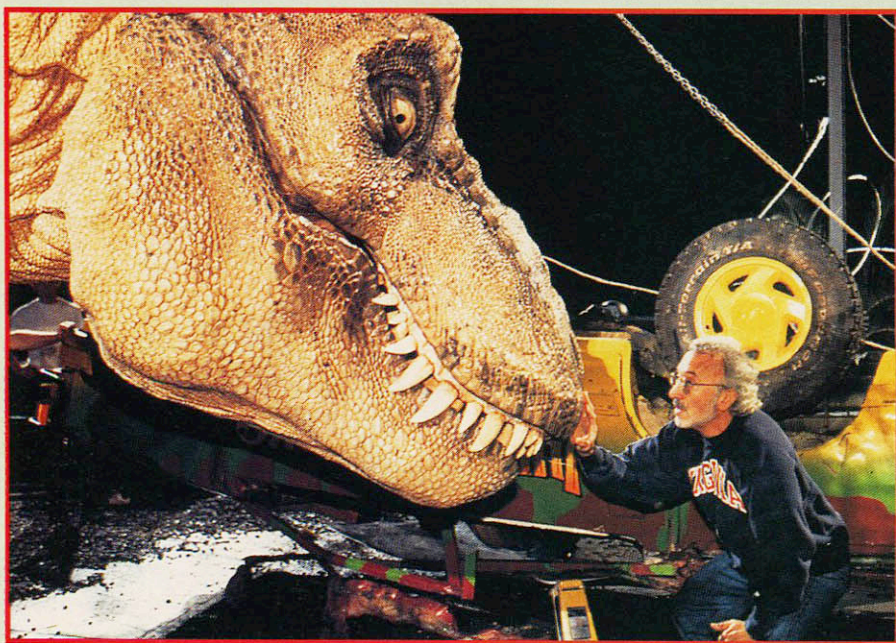
According to Winston, the most important phase of creation for any character or monster is the design

period. For *Jurassic Park*, he and his crew set out to develop the most lifelike dinosaurs possible. Research and experimentation continued for many months, and designs were produced in the form of sketches, renderings and miniature sculptures. Color designs and patterns, as well as skin textures, were developed until they met both Winston's standards and Spielberg's approval.

"I expected *Jurassic* to be the best dinosaur representation that anybody had ever seen," the FX man explains. "That was a challenge I took on immediately, and Steven accepted it as well. I knew he was the right director for this film—he really 'got it.' So I knew we'd top everything that had been done in the past."

Spielberg wanted to use as many live-action FX as possible, and planned to employ stop-motion only when full-scale work would be absolutely impossible, as in head-to-toe shots of the walking T. rex. "That's basically the same formula they used back on *King Kong*, except that in 1933 the only things they were able to do full-size were a big hand and a few shots of the head. On this film, we pushed animatronics and robotics to a place they've never been, and we've done more live action than anyone's ever seen on film. One of the reasons audiences say, 'My God, the dinosaurs look like they're right there' is because they were right there."

Initially, Tippett's stop-motion animation was going to fill out the live-action shots, but during preproduction, ILM decided to run some tests to see if they could create the look of flesh-and-blood reptiles with a computer. The results were so



Look, Ma, no cavities!

impressive that digital animation replaced all plans for stop-motion or go-motion. Though some press reports after the film's release indicated friction between the creative teams over who was or wasn't getting credit for their work, Winston is gracious about sharing the limelight.

"I'm a major fan of Phil Tippett," he states. "His designs really helped us achieve the reality of dinosaur action, movement and performance. And I'm a big fan of ILM. Not only were the live-action and the animation technically beyond anything that's been done, but the blend of the two was absolutely perfect. And I think we also need to be grateful to Steven Spielberg and to the cast, because the dinosaurs weren't detracted from by poor direction or performances. This was not a movie with some dinosaurs in it; it was a movie *about* dinosaurs, and everyone worked in service to that idea."

Though Winston remains impressed with the quality of the computer/live-action blends, he is also quite proud of the scenes where his live-action creatures were enough by themselves. "The spitter—the one with the killer lugie—was all live-action," he points out. "And that

"In *Jurassic*, we gave you 'real' dinosaurs, and [in *Interview*] we will give you 'real' vampires for the first time."

animal is there—he's alive. The raptor hatchling and the sick Triceratops are obviously right there, and they were done without any computer animation. My crew actually did use computers to help us design the mechanics, and to help with the performance, but in those scenes it's the work of the puppeteers that allows you to believe the reality of these animals. You can't just push a button and have a machine do it. The sick Triceratops had nine people coordinating every minor and subtle movement to bring it to life. It's a perfect performance."

The scenes that were completely computer-animated include the first scene of a 50-foot-tall brachiosaur and the charging herd of Gallimimus. But the sequences Winston is most excited about discussing are those in which his crew and the ILM technicians became a dinosaur tag team. "The T. rex is first seen in what we called 'the main road

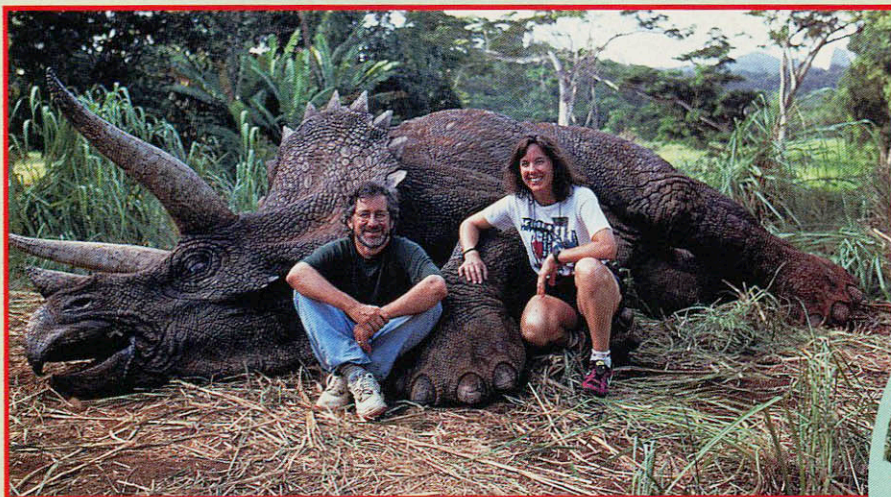
sequence,' where it attacks the Land Rovers," Winston explains. "That scene is bookended by eating frenzies. In the very first shot, the T. rex has the goat in its mouth and swallows it. That's full-size, live-action goat-eating. At the end, it eats the lawyer, and that's computer-generated. Cut to cut in between those moments, you're going between live and computer, and the audience just isn't aware of that."

Winston points out that the live action and computer animation complemented each other so well because they each made the other more believable. The intense, exacting detail of the on-set dinos and the full-bodied motion of the animation combined in the audience's mind to become one convincing creature. "Each technique sells the other so

well that you're not aware of any technique at all," he says. "The other scene that's equally wonderful is the Velociraptor kitchen sequence. I believe there are 33 shots in that one, 25 of which are live-action. When the first raptor is sniffing at the door and nudging it with its head, it's real puppets. When we see it standing on its haunches in the doorway and hooting, it's a guy in a raptor suit. Then when the other one comes over and bites at it, it's an animated shot. When they start walking down behind the counter, it's live-action again, and when one of them knocks stuff down with its tail, that's a full-size animatronic raptor. When one suddenly jumps up on the counter, it's animated. It's a constant combination of techniques. The audience may think they know what they're

***Jurassic Park's* FX are sure to take an Academy Award, but this raptor hopes to be named Best Devouring Actor.**





Steven Spielberg and producer Kathleen Kennedy relax with the sick Triceratops—the film's first major glimpse of Winston's magic.

seeing, but they don't. That's one of the scenes that says, 'Sorry, you don't know what you're looking at.'"

Winston never felt threatened by the inclusion of computers on the project. In fact, he has recently become part of a digital FX company with director James Cameron and former ILMer Scott Ross. "I've seen in my work on T2 and *Jurassic* that we can now accomplish effects through animation or robotics that don't make you aware of any technique," he says. "We can really do

anything now, in terms of bringing any kind of creature to life. The computer is definitely an amazing tool for us, but if the animatronics and robotics on *Jurassic* were this good, there's no reason to think that they're going to stop getting better. I think it's always going to be true that if you can do something live, then that's the way you do it. There is always going to be room for both approaches, and various combinations of live action and computers. After all, we've created robotics and

puppets that you can't tell aren't real, but they haven't managed to replace the Muppets. It all depends on the story you're telling."

Critical reactions to *Jurassic Park* often pointed out holes in the plot, or dramatic shortcomings, but almost always heaped praise on the cast of dinosaurs. Winston accepts the compliment, but he's uncomfortable with that kind of praise.

"It's a constant combination of techniques. The audience may think they know what they're seeing, but they don't."

"The fallacy about this film was that the only things that made it work were the dinosaurs," he says. "Yes, the 14 minutes of dinosaurs are unlike anything you've seen before, but it's important to remember that we're talking about a film that runs over two hours. You're involved with it because of the way Steven Spielberg put it together. From the start,

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When coke was life...

The Jurassic Generation

William Stout first won acclaim as an underground comic and record cover illustrator. In 1977 he held his first one man show on prehistoric life. The show was a success and William Stout has been illustrating dinosaurs ever since. His work has been commissioned by well known directors George Lucas and John Millus.

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DESIGNS

(continued from page 40)

set," jokes Cletus. "But getting to rig the blade and the pendulum for the 'Black Cat' segment was worth any difficulties beforehand. We filmed in this cavernous basement of the Westin William Penn hotel in downtown Pittsburgh. I based the pendulum on some of the classic drawings, and it was fun taking something that was two-dimensional and making it three. The blade itself was part bronze and part polished steel. The whole rig that the blade hung from was kind of like a clock pendulum. And the superstructure that held it from the ceiling was connected to the hotel underbelly. The entire set had a great feel to it."

Barbara, meanwhile, put most of her energy into Romero's segment, "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar." "There needed to be these mysterious shapes at the end, the evil souls from the underworld, who would be see-through and flash in and out," Barbara recalls. "To achieve this, we put the actors in unitards with gray cheesecloth over their faces. They needed to have a semihuman form that was nebulous enough to seem menacing. Also, Valdemar [Bingo O'Malley] was reanimated after being in a freezer, so we had to make him look like he'd been frozen. We coated him with a gel substance, along with that stuff you spray on your window at Christmas to make it look like it's been snowing. Then we used stiffeners to create that just-thawing-out look."

After four films in a row with Romero, the Andersons returned to the stage and full-time teaching. But you can be sure that when the phone rings again, they'll be asking Romero the standard questions. "For George's movies, the first thing we ask is: How much are the actors going to bleed?" laughs Barbara. "Then: How much are they going to get torn apart? But it's fun."

STAN

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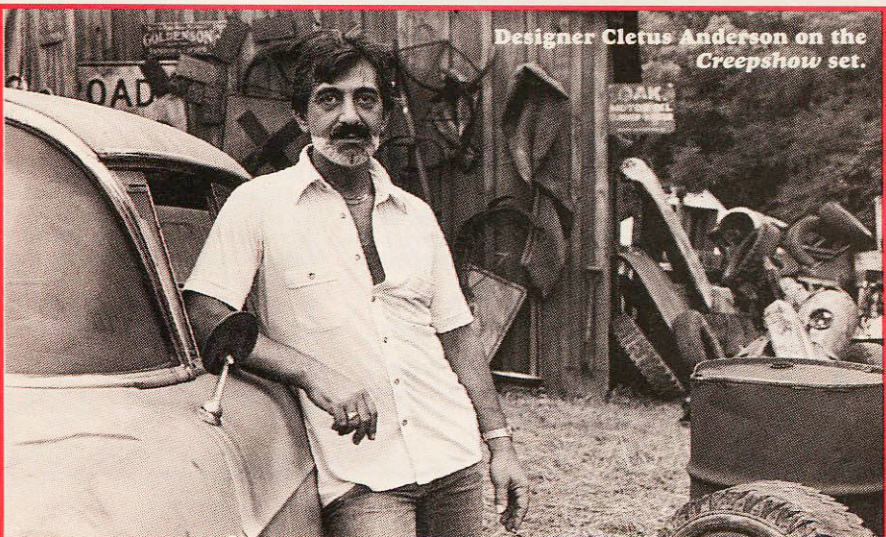
he envisioned what he wanted from the dinosaurs, and he took it to a fantastic level. People find mistakes and then say, 'But we love the dinosaurs.' Well, you love the dinosaurs because they were packed into this particular movie. They're a wonderful main course, but they're served up extremely well."

Though there are no definite plans for a *Jurassic* sequel, Winston says he would love to be a part of one if it were to happen. "There's a pride of ownership when you design characters," he says. "I would hate for someone else to work with our animals. We'll see what happens, but it would certainly be a great pleasure to do even more with the dinosaurs."

Currently, Winston is working on the film version of Anne Rice's *Interview With the Vampire*, directed by *The Crying Game*'s Neil Jordan. The FX man describes the project as "an elegant horror film," but points out that there is a parallel between his work on the dinosaurs and his current bloodsucker assignment. "In *Jurassic*, we gave you 'real' dinosaurs, and this time we will give you 'real' vampires for the first time," he promises. "If you saw these guys on the street, you'd know something was off, and you'd figure out pretty fast that you were looking at something that wanted to kill you."

Winston has achieved a high level of fame and fortune at his craft, attested to by the Oscars on a shelf in his office. But looking back at *Jurassic*, this top creaturemeister finally feels vindicated. "This film was a gift and a dream," he says. "I feel so fortunate to have been a part of it, because I've been a dinosaur fan since I was a kid. I always loved the fact that dinosaurs aren't fantasy characters. They're not monsters; they were very real, powerful animals who lived here much longer than we have."

"But as a kid, you get the feeling that grownups don't give dinosaurs the significance and importance that you do," he concludes. "I think paleontologists and special effects people probably both hear a lot of 'Yeah, but what kind of 'real job' do you want?' as they're growing up. Well, this film makes both of us more legitimate. As a kid, I didn't think anyone else understood why I thought dinosaurs were so great, so it's nice to be able to bring them to the screen with care and respect and say, 'Look—do you finally see what I'm talking about? This isn't make-believe anymore.'"



Designer Cletus Anderson on the Creepshow set.