

# IN PROGRESS...

## Train To Terror

d. Roger Spottiswoode asst. d. Ray Sage: David Macleod, Paul Gravel sc. Tom Drake ph. John Alcott cam. op. Jimmy Davis, Jonathan Goodwill ed. Ann Henderson key grip Don Caufield cont. Brigitte Germain uniform man. Paul Wisenthal sd. rec. Bo Harwood boom op. Jean-Marc Magnan gaf. Lou Bogun p. designer Glenn Bydwell a.d. Guy Comto set dress./props Jenepher Hooper make-up Joan Isaacson stills photog. Alan Carruthers cost. design. Penny Hadfield ward. Susan Hall l.p. Ben Johnson, Jamie Lee Curtis, Hart Bochner, David Copperfield, Derek MacKinnon, Howard Busgang, Sandee L. Currie, Timothy Webber, Anthony Sherwood exec. Sandy Howard, Lamar Card p. Harold Greenberg p. sec. Cathy Flynn p. manager William Zborowsky p.c. Triple-T Productions Astoria, Ore. (1980).



Timothy Webber and Joy Boushel in a ticklish scene from *Train to Terror*

"Rock!"

"Rock more slowly!"

"Cut!"

On-set choreography for the late disco-rock slock?

Don't bet your Travolta poster! The man is on the command end of a 15 ft, 4x8 wooden lever. He's rocking a vintage rail car containing one Academy Award winning actor, Ben Johnson (*The Last Picture Show*), and one Academy Award winning Director of Photography, John Alcott (*Barry Lyndon*).

It's somewhat ironic that the success of Harold Greenberg's latest, *Train To Terror*, budgeted at \$2.7 million, could hinge, so to speak, on such primitive technology.

"But we tried hydraulic devices and they just didn't work," explains veteran executive producer, Lamar Card. A potentially big production problem was solved by inexpensive ingenuity. But there were others requiring more than resourcefulness. For instance, where do you find heated, inside parking for a 6-car, 425 ft. train, complete with steam locomotive and 1948 CPR tender?

How about the mammoth All-Pak warehouse in the Montreal suburb of Ville St. Pierre — a sprawling industrial area of factories, warehouses and acres of unpaved parking lots that rate five stars for urban blight. Even then the rail spur had to be upgraded and the space between the rails dug out.

Next problem, the warehouse sounded

like it was accommodating several steel foundries. The solution? To shoot off-hours, roughly 6 p.m. to 4 a.m., when noise was reduced. Even then many sound takes were found unusable. So, on one rail car a completely soundproofed recording studio was installed, where noise-ruined lines can be immediately re-recorded while the actors "... still have the mood and intonation in mind."

The train was leased for \$100,000 from Steamtown, Vermont, and brought to Montreal with much fanfare — and many Customs problems — by its 80-year-old engineer.

The interiors, found to be too shabby, called for a complete re-decoration in what's billed as 1930's "Art Deco," complete with Wurlitzer, DC-3 standing ashtrays, walls painted muted Bauhaus blues and maroons, and a parquet floor. Cost: \$100,000.

"We're giving it back to them in better shape than we got it," says Card. (The sleeping car has been fondly dubbed "The Zoo," where, we're told, sex will only "be alluded to." Perhaps in the guise of a bunch of furry little animals?).

Shooting inside the train is cramped, calling for small, well-disciplined crews and few visitors. Lighting posed a major problem, so, under the f-stop sharp eyes of John Alcott, the train was completely re-wired. All lights are rheostat controlled to achieve the right kind of shadowy, expressionistic images needed for a suspense-horror flick, which this purportedly will be: "... in the tradition of Hitchcock," claims unit PR girl, Holly Levine, whose eyes could easily rate her a spot in the cast, which includes many young rising stars.

Besides veteran Johnson, who got his 1947 start with John Ford, the cast most notably includes Jamie Lee Curtis (*Halloween*, *The Fog*, *Prom Night*), Hart Bochner (*Islands in the Stream*, *Breaking Away*) and David Copperfield, who has had three TV specials.

From a script by Canadian Tom Drake, *Train To Terror* is the tale of a group of contemporary pre-med students who book an excursion train for a New Year's Eve masquerade outing. One of the group, who has become deranged following an initiation joke several years before,

begins to kill the four responsible, one-by-one suspenseful-one. In a potentially effective psychological touch, he successively dons the costume of each victim.

It is the proverbial, patriarchal male figure, Johnson, who figures out what's going on, but not until a few severed hands and a head are found. (The head, specially constructed in Hollywood for a mere \$3,000, will only be flashed on screen for a "tasteful" second or two.) Being pre-med students, ample opportunities will arise for other macabre jokes, and a skeleton is part of the decor.

Interior shooting began Nov. 22 and is due to wrap Dec. 22: a rapid pace calling for a shooting ratio of anywhere from 3:1 to 5:1. Outdoor sequences will be filmed in January at an un-disclosed location north of Montreal.

**Train To Terror** is director Roger Spottiswoode's first feature, although he has had extensive experience as editor of **Straw Dogs**, **The Get Away** and **Pat Garret and Billy the Kid**. Is this a risk on Greenberg's part? It would seem not, since Ben Johnson, whose opinion must be respected, only agreed to work on **Train** when he heard Spottiswoode was directing.

When the venerable actor is asked where things are going, Johnson replies, referring to the late hours to which all the actors have had to adjust, "Work all night, sleep all day." Then with a grin that creases his weathered, wrinkled face even more, he dons his conductor's cap, and mounts the baggage car ladder. Cut...

Doug Isaac

## Anatomy of a Horror

p.c. The Horror Picture Film Production Inc. p. Harry Less assist. to p. Victor Gamble p. man. Chris Bird d. Mario Azzopardi a.d. Robert Apelbe sc. Dick Olyxiak, Mario Azzopardi art. d. Peter Kanter cast. Karen Hazard Ltd. d.o.p. Fred Guthe.

A decapitated mannequin dressed in monk's garb rests in one corner of the crowded set. Director Mario Azzopardi playfully squeezes the end of a rubber tube protruding from the mannequin's neck, causing the headless form to bob and weave. A bucket of 'blood' sits nearby. Someone has been playing with that too,

as a trail of red smudges leads from the floor of the set to the carpeted reception area of these production offices belonging to Henry Less and Associates. Add some flesh-devouring nuns, a little old lady who gets nailed to a cross, and you have the classical "non-horror" film — according to Azzopardi.

Despite his candid admission that the film is loaded with gore, that its tentative title is **Anatomy of a Horror** and that it's a production of The Horror Picture Film Production Inc., Azzopardi adamantly defends **Anatomy of a Horror** against

being labelled just another crass, commercial chiller.

The story centers on Steven Lessey (played by Stephen Young), a grade B screenwriter who's pet topic is — you guessed it — horror.

In a slump, but under pressure from his editor and his wife, Elizabeth (played by Sharon Masters) to produce, Lessey embarks on a search for the ultimate horror to write about. "What Steven Lessey doesn't realize until it's too late is that he's living it," says Azzopardi. "That is the horror, not the obvious blood and guts spread throughout the film." First, one of Lessey's scripts is critically mangled by students during a lecture presentation of it. Marital discord is fast on the heels of professional strife, rapidly followed by entire family disharmony. Lessey's son takes to swearing at him and, with his brother, decides to reenact a scene from one of his father's horror movies. Unfortunately, the attempted restaging is all too successful and, unlike in the movies, very real and irreversible. As if death as a writer, at the hands of his critics, isn't enough torment for Lessey, his work literally comes back to haunt him.

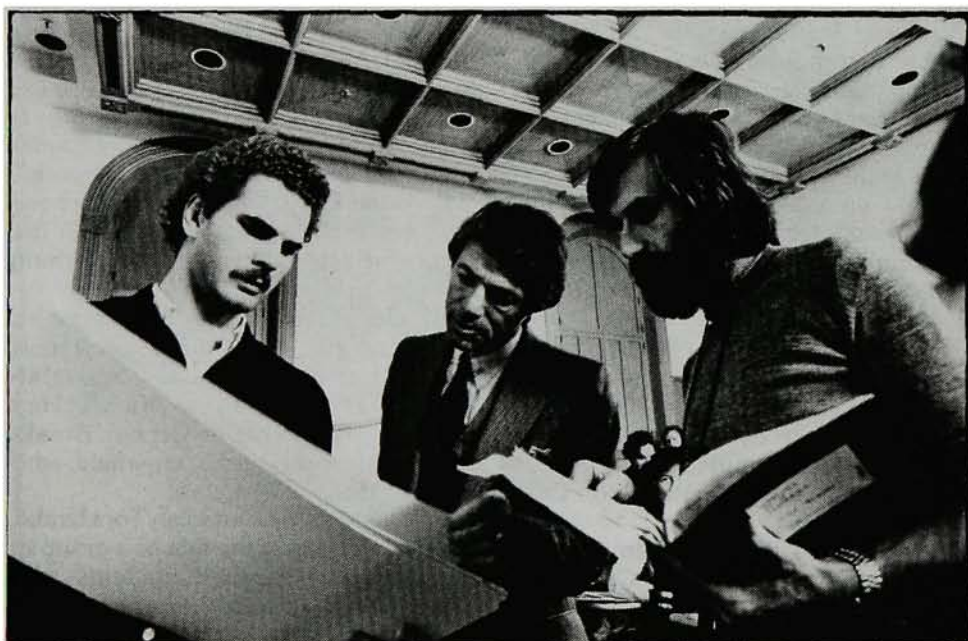
Azzopardi is making a conscious effort to down-play the film's gorier aspects, because he finds society's preference for blatant horror "nonsensical." For him, the film's real horrors are the subtle atrocities of marriage breakdown, family disintegration and career crisis. Still, he is realistic enough to recognize the need for conventional, horror film techniques: their money-making potential. Understandably, he wants to be in the financial position to "make good films."

He believes that the audience won't find the real horror in **Anatomy** until they see Lessey discover that he no longer believes in what he is doing.

A brief pause is followed by a thump on the table. "Yes, that is the real horror. Doing what we hate," Azzopardi declares.

**Anatomy of a Horror** began production November 21, and wrapped December 22. It is scheduled for an April release. The film, shot entirely in Toronto, boasts an all-Canadian cast and crew, and absolutely no financing from the CFDC. The \$491,000 budget was raised through private investors and Henry Less & Associates Production Company. It is Azzopardi's first feature film. His most recent work was the "Gino Vannelli Special," aired on the CBC in December.

He calls his crew "phenomenal," but is more than a little ruffled by the general "unprofessionalism" in the Canadian filmmaking industry. While I'm on the set, Azzopardi is told that one of the actresses won't attend an upcoming shoot because she has accepted another assignment



**Anatomy of a Horror** screenwriter Dick Olyxiak (left), conferring with star Stephen Young, and director/co-writer Mario Azzopardi (right)