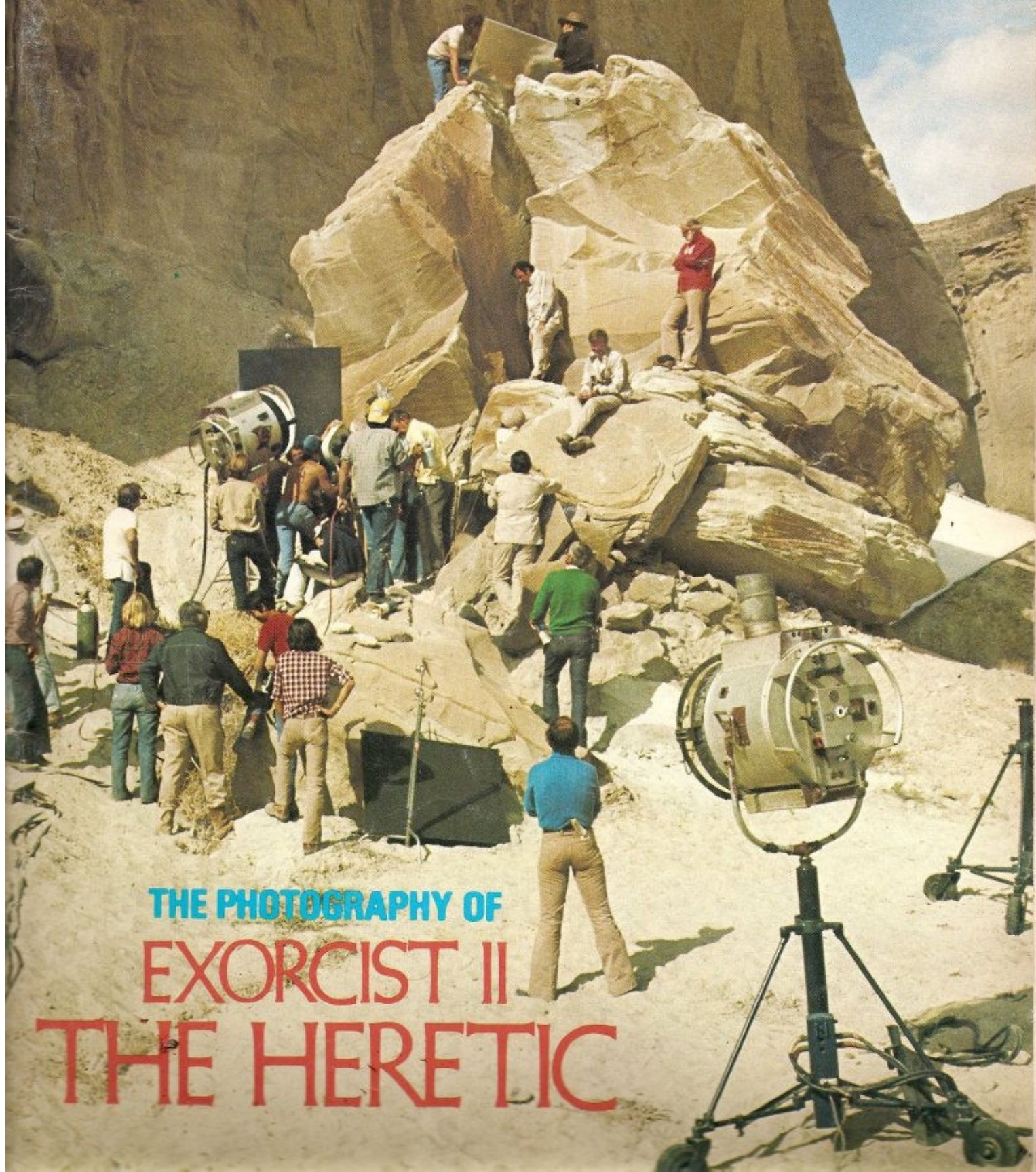


American Cinematographer

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AUGUST 1977 / ONE DOLLAR



THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF
EXORCIST II
THE HERETIC

Scene from Warner Brothers Features
production of "The Heretic—Exorcist II"



"I must say that the important factor in using Rosco material was the consistency of the material from order to order.

We used several thousand feet of Rosco material and it performed."

—William A. Fraker, A.S.C.



*William A. Fraker, A.S.C.,
Director of Photography*

...and then Fraker created the sun.

After three days of experimenting, William A. Fraker, A.S.C., Director of Photography literally created the sun for this scene in "The Heretic—Exorcist II." Using Rosco Dark Amber, a ten foot sun-spot reflector and a 10K quartz light, he achieved just the effect he wanted.

Bill Fraker and his gaffer, Doug Pentek, created some very special lighting techniques for this set. "I used double MT2 on the backing and the village and MT2 on Richard Burton," says Bill. "The final effect on this shot has to be one of my favorites. I must say that the important factor in using Rosco material was the consistency of the material from order to order. We

used several thousand feet of Rosco material and it performed."

In a recent interview in American Cinematographer, Bill is quoted as saying, "Film-making is a tremendous team effort." Rosco is proud to be part of the cinematographer's team, contributing our part to the success of a major motion picture. Rosco is here to serve the cinematographer and help meet his challenges.

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THE PHOTOGRAPHY OF EXORCIST II THE HERETIC

Location filming in New York and Arizona, plus the re-creation of a vast hunk of Ethiopian desert on a studio sound stage, add up to a series of stunning stylized images for this sequel to "THE EXORCIST"

All motion pictures, by definition, rely heavily upon cinematography for their impact. The cinema was exclusively a visual medium long before it found its voice — and it remains *primarily* visual, despite all the wondrous innovations of stereophonic, quadraphonic, quintaphonic and Dolby sound. However, there are a certain few films which depend to an extraordinary degree upon cinematography for viewer impact. Just such a film is "EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC".

In realizing the stunning images requisite to bringing this story to the screen, Director of Photography William Fraker, ASC, no stranger to the creation of horrifying visual mood ("ROSEMARY'S BABY"), found his artistry and technical skill challenged far beyond any demand to date. In the following interview for *American Cinematographer*, he goes into detail about some of the innovative techniques used on "EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC" and explains why he considers it the most difficult film he's ever done:

QUESTION: Would you begin by telling me some of the problems you faced in photographing "EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC", and how you went about coping with them?

FRAKER: There were so many facets to "THE HERETIC" that when you talk about the photography that's just one of 25 areas you might discuss. It was a huge, huge picture and probably the toughest picture, physically, that I've ever done in my life. For example, re-creating the Ethiopian desert on Stage 16 at The Burbank Studios. How do you do that?

QUESTION: Isn't it true that originally the picture was scheduled to be shot mainly on distant locations?

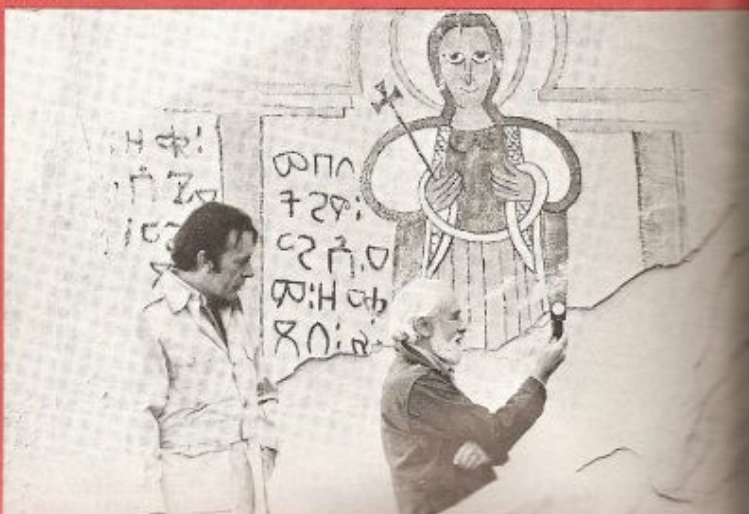
FRAKER: Yes, we were going to go to North Africa, Italy, Washington, D.C., Georgetown, the Arizona desert and then Hollywood. It sounded like a very exciting project, because we would be going all over the world to shoot it. We had to film the Ethiopian rock

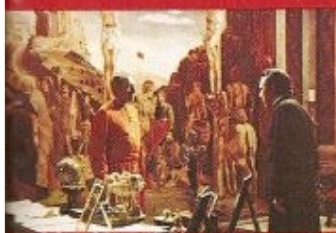
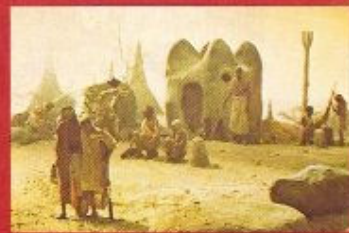
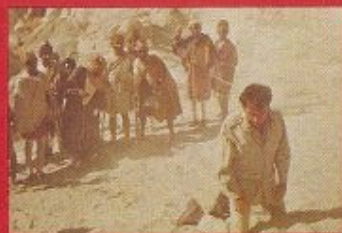
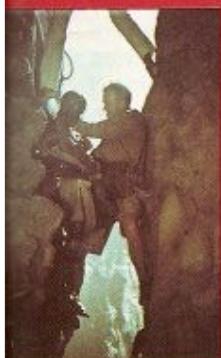
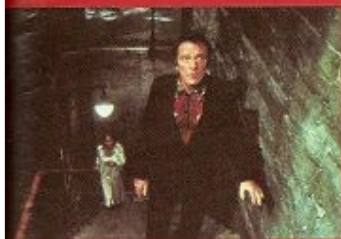
churches, those churches that are built on top of rock spires 300 to 400 feet in the air. We could get into Ethiopia alright, but the State Department couldn't guarantee us any way out. So the decision was made to shoot in the studio, and instead of globe-trotting, we eventually went only to New York City for two weeks and Page, Arizona, for a week. Everything else was shot on a sound stage in Hollywood. The director, John Boorman, asked all of us if we thought we could do the picture on a stage, and it became such a challenge that we all accepted it and said, "Let's go. Let's try to do it." It was difficult, but I think we did it. Everybody seems to be happy with the results.

QUESTION: Could you be a bit more specific about the problems of shooting vast outdoor areas indoors?

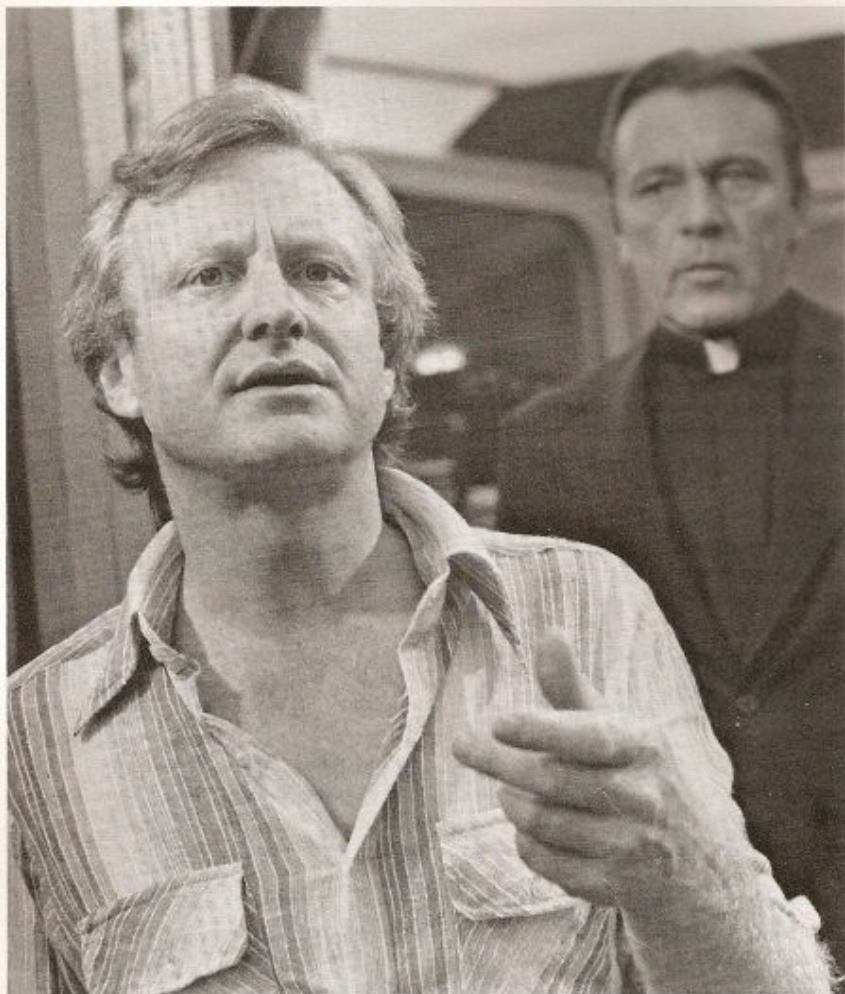
FRAKER: It was rather exciting, trying to shoot a basically exterior picture on the stage. It was a tremendous undertaking. People ask, "How do you shoot the Ethiopian desert on a stage?" I say, "The only way I know how to do it is the way I do it outside — by stopping down to f/8 or f/11." Of course, in order to be able to stop down that far, you must have enough light to allow you to do it. That means that instead of 20 arcs, you end up with 123 arcs — which is what we used on the stage. Okay — now, how do you put up 123 arcs and have 100 people on the set and only cast one shadow? It breaks down to taking eight hours to light one shot. That's the kind of stuff we did. Steve Spielberg was shooting "CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND" at the same time and, between the two of us, I think we had every arc in Hollywood. Especially the Titans; they were all gone.

(LEFT) In a trance, imposed by uncontrolled forces of evil, Linda Blair as Regan in John Boorman's film, "EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC" teeters on the edge of a New York highrise. The Richard Lederer Production for Warner Bros. also stars Richard Burton, Louise Fletcher and Max von Sydow. (RIGHT) Director of Photography William Fraker, ASC, takes a meter reading on a studio set representing an Ethiopian rock church, as Richard Burton observes.





A sampling of images from "EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC" provides examples of the stylized visual approach to the production which Cinematographer Fraker describes as "theatrical, yet realistic". A daring gamble from the standpoint of audience credibility, the approach works well in establishing mood and enhancing dramatic impact.



(ABOVE) John Boorman, shown here on the set with Richard Burton in the background, functioned as producer-director of "EXORCIST II" and his stamp is evident on the entire production. Best known for his direction of "DELIVERANCE", Boorman is an imaginative iconoclast who is not afraid to take chances. (BELOW) Cast and crew prepare to film a tense sequence on the terrace outside the 34th floor penthouse atop the Warner Communications building in New York

QUESTION: How successful do you feel you were in making this stage-enclosed desert look real on the screen?

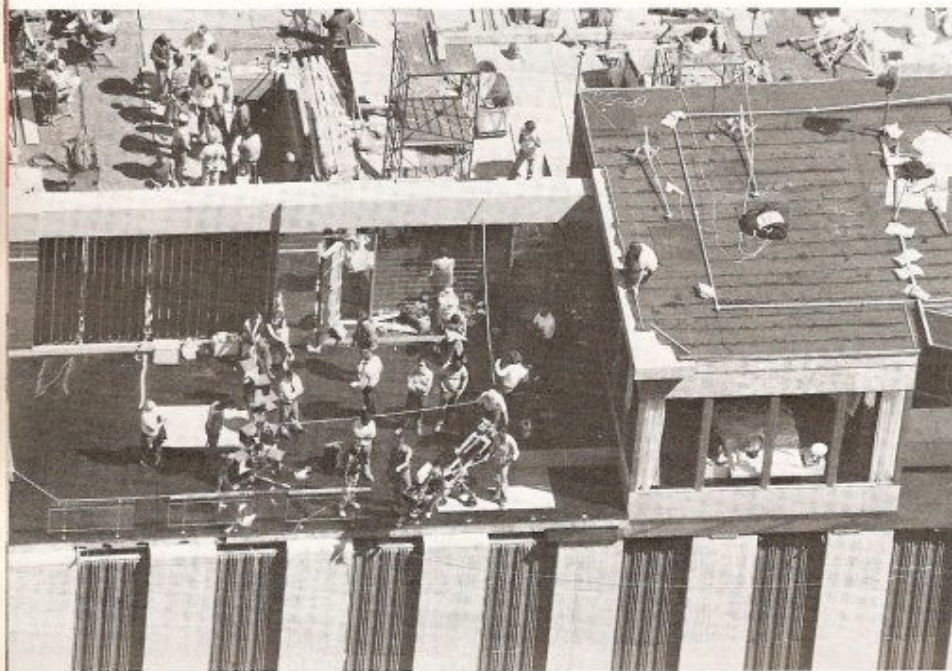
FRAKER: We're very happy with the effect we got. It's a very theatrical effect, but, at the same time, it's very realistic. John and I, in our discussions, had agreed that the more we could give the picture a definite style — and still stay within the area of realism — the better we could achieve what we set out to do, and I think we have.

QUESTION: I can't quite reconcile the terms "theatrical, yet realistic", as you've used them. Could you explain that in a bit more detail?

FRAKER: If you set out to copy nature in some fashion that isn't real, then you have to do something that is almost impossible to do. So, when I say "theatrical, yet realistic", I'm talking about stylizing a look that is basically believable, so that you accept it as real, while knowing that it's phenomenal. Speaking of the visual look, I think motion pictures should be done theatrically. I think that when you see moonlight coming through windows, it should be a theatrical-looking moonlight. I think it should be bluish; it should be different. The people who are making television films today are doing a fantastic job of achieving realism, considering the amount of time and budget they have to work with. Now, why should people leave their homes and go to a theater if they are going to see the same thing on the theater screen? That's what I'm talking about when I say that you theatricalize a look to make it a little different from what they are going to see on the tube at home — something to help pull them out of their homes and into the theater.

QUESTION: In terms of practical mechanics, how was that achieved in "EXORCIST II"?

FRAKER: We changed the colors on the backings so that they would be a little theatrical. For example, if a soft, pale yellow were called for, we would bring it up a little brighter. We used orange for sunrises and sunsets and black horizon lines and a lot of smoke and dust and a lot of color filters on the arcs. When an effect began to look very realistic, we would move it out beyond almost anything you have ever seen before. I'm not saying that what we did was revolutionary, but the look is just a bit different. The colors are just a little different. The result is due to a combination of what we put in front of the lens



and also what we did with gels on the arcs and 10Ks.

QUESTION: How were you able to stabilize this type of theatricality in terms of what was expected from the laboratory?

FRAKER: The backings were tested and painted a certain color so that the light would reproduce on them the way we wanted it to visually. This became a kind of constant for us. At the same time, we established a printing light at Technicolor and we never varied that printing light. The objective was also to maintain that same printing light when they got to making the CRIs.

QUESTION: Working on the edge of credibility in this way, so to speak, how did you feel when you saw the dailies?

FRAKER: Some dailies looked terrific, and others made us feel like we wanted to commit suicide. We did a lot of retakes. John Boorman was adamant about what it should look like, and if it didn't, he'd say, "Billy, reshoot." And I would, but it was very expensive to do. It also involved a lot of persistence and a willingness to keep trying for a desired effect. For example, we got incredible shots from the 34th floor of the Warner Communications building in New York City by sticking a camera and operator out over the edge and zooming in toward the windows to pick up Linda Blair. Everybody said we couldn't do it and that we wouldn't be allowed to do it, but we did it anyway. We got phenomenal shots of sunsets and sunrises at just the right moment. We would look at a shot and then go back and do it again when we did miss. At Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue, right around Rockefeller Plaza, we stopped traffic at five in the afternoon. It was horrendous. But John is like that. He's a fantastic man and really knows what he wants. He has exquisite taste and is very, very demanding of everyone — not just me, but everyone right down the line, including himself. The actors — Richard Burton, Louise Fletcher and Linda Blair — were magnificent. They got into the project and really felt that they were accomplishing something. We were all extending ourselves, exceeding our limitations, trying to do something that we had never done before.

QUESTION: Obviously, in order to make this desert-on-the-stage set work, you would have had to establish unusually close rapport with the production designer. Could you tell m,



(ABOVE) Daredevil camera operator hangs precariously in space off the edge of the 34th-floor of the Warner Communications Building in New York City to film a point-of-view shot for "EXORCIST II". (BELOW) In sharp contrast to the concrete canyons of New York is this canyon location near Page, Arizona, selected for its close resemblance to the Ethiopian desert, portions of which were re-created for the film on Burbank Studios sound stages.





Using a viewfinder, Director Boorman selects a camera angle. Part of what attracted him to this project was the fact that he considered it "an almost impossible cinematic challenge."

a bit about that?

FRAKER: Richard MacDonald, the production designer, is a phenomenal man with a marvelous mind. He worked very closely with us. There were hours of discussions about how we were going to accomplish certain shots. For example, there's a sequence in which one of the Ethiopian monks, climbing to one of those rock churches 400 feet in the air, slips and falls all the way to the bottom. How do you do that on a stage? We set the rocks up sideways, using the whole length of the stage. Then we turned the camera, wired the man on a pulley overhead and "flew" him through sideways, with a blue screen down at

the bottom. There was another sequence in which a man uses two rock spires, pushing between them with his back and legs in order to inch his way up to the church on top. We photographed almost all of that on the stage, then shot the bottom of the formation in Utah and tried to match the light. You do it with filters in front of the lens; you do it with arc lights; you do it with a lot of dust.

QUESTION: What about those churches on top of the spires? Were they all paintings?

FRAKER: All paintings and carvings. Richard MacDonald re-created those churches magnificently in the studio. It's very exciting footage. The picture has tremendous scope, because it starts in Buenos Aires and Ethiopia, then goes to Rome (the Vatican) then to Washington, Georgetown and New York City.

QUESTION: And the only major location trips were to New York and Arizona?

FRAKER: New York and Page, Arizona. We were trying to find a canyon that looked like the one in Ethiopia where the churches are located. So John James, the location manager, and I flew up to Las Vegas, rented a car and were gone for five days. We hit all of Monument Valley, Zion National Park, everything. We spent five days moving and covered what seemed like 7,000 miles. We just drove and drove and drove and finally found this one area that looked right. We became very excited over it and brought back the pictures to John Boorman. The next week we all went up, and that was it. The location really worked. It was something of a coup, because we could fly to the location and start to work that same day. It was just an hour-and-a-half trip.

QUESTION: What were the mechanics

of tying that in with the material shot on the sound stage?

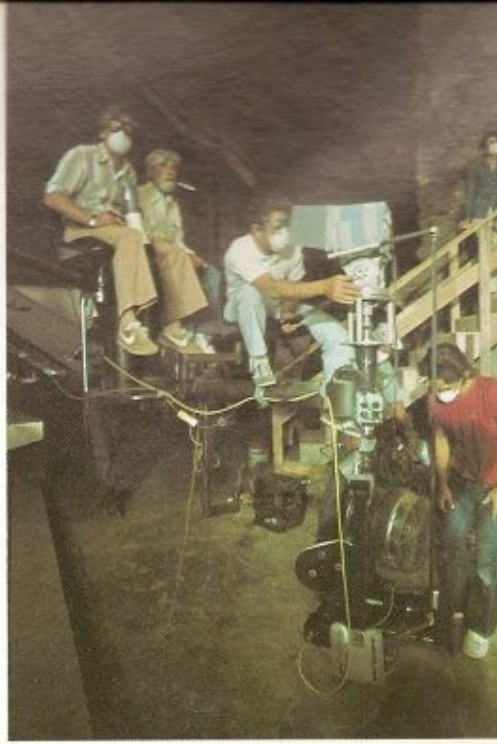
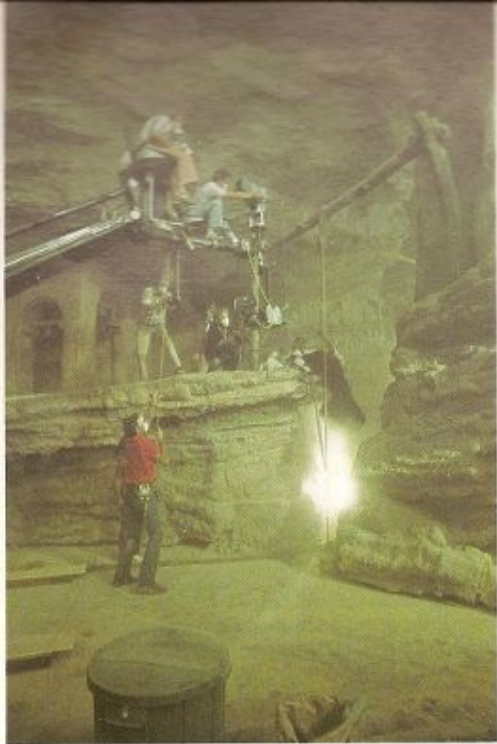
FRAKER: Once we knew we were going to use that location, Richard MacDonald designed the rest of the set (on the stage) to match it. We used all kinds of materials and devices to create our illusions — translights, backings, mirrors and a "ghost glass", which is like a 50% transmission mirror. We did complete light changes, dimming and lightning effects all in one shot. It wasn't a matter of doing this shot and then that shot; we had eight different effects working in one shot. For example, in one sequence, we start in the laboratory in New York, lose the laboratory and go to Georgetown, re-creating the exorcism from "THE EXORCIST" (but not using film from the original). We then go back to the laboratory in New York — all in one complete shot. No double-printing, no nothing. We created the whole thing. Such effects just take time, but the next day you look at the dailies and you are really gratified; it really works. All of this was John's idea. John's phenomenal — tough, but phenomenal.

QUESTION: What part did camera movement play in this picture?

FRAKER: Most of the really creative camera movement was done with the Steadicam, as operated by Garrett Brown. In fact, the Steadicam played a very, very important part in the filming of this picture. The stuff shot with the Steadicam in "ROCKY" and "MARATHON MAN" and "BOUND FOR GLORY" was all marvelous, but I think that this is the first time that it's really been put to a directorial use that works with the story. For example, in "THE HERETIC", our demon, so to speak, is called Pazuzu and he's a demon of the air. Therefore, he moves through things and around them and so forth. John put the Steadicam to use to suggest all this

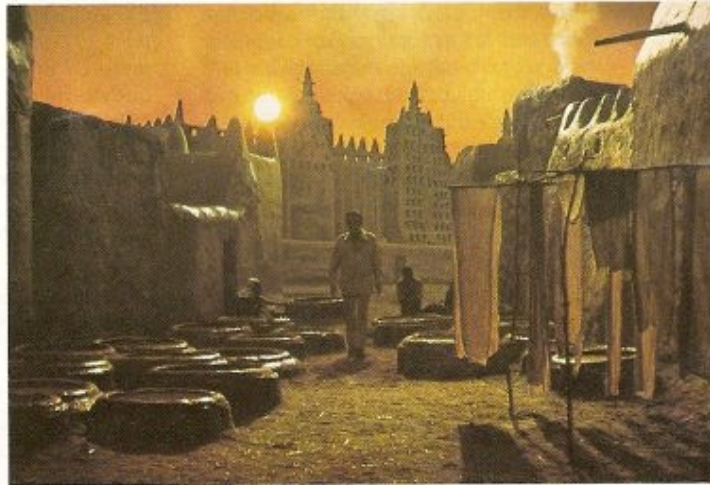
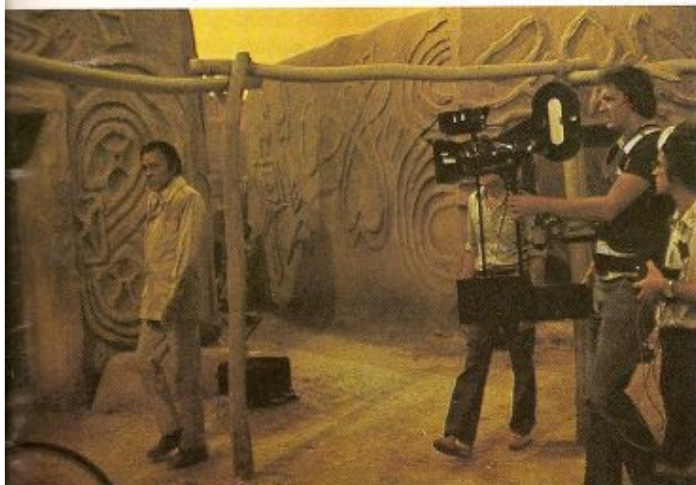
(LEFT) Authentic desert dwellings of Ethiopian tribesmen were painstakingly duplicated on Burbank Studios sound stages by Production Designer Richard MacDonald, whose previous credits included "MARATHON MAN" and "THE DAY OF THE LOCUST". He again found himself involved with locusts on "THE HERETIC". (RIGHT) Filming on the penthouse terrace in New York City.





The crew members often wore face masks to minimize effects of smoke and fumes generated on the set to create unusual special effects for the film. Studio-built sets for this production were carefully "color coordinated". John Boorman had a color key list of all the sets made, indicating that the colors to be used were black, brown, gray, cement, white, silver, yellow, amber, gold, burnt yellow, red and rust. All blues and greens (considered by Boorman to be "too comforting and reassuring") were to be eliminated.

(LEFT) Garrett Brown trails Richard Burton in an intricate follow shot, using his invention, the Steadicam, gyroscopically balanced stabilizing camera mount manufactured by Cinema Products Corporation. (RIGHT) Imaginative sets, including the complete Ethiopian village shown here, filled six sound stages at Burbank Studios. Evident in this scene is an example of the striking mood achieved by the lighting of Director of Photography William Fraker.



(LEFT) Linda Blair and Richard Burton are attacked by a storm of locusts as they revisit the bedroom in the Georgetown house where the original exorcism took place. Several thousand specially bred British locusts were imported into California for use in the film. (RIGHT) A "ghost glass mirror" shot, in which a scene from the past is superimposed over present action. The action took place on two adjacent sets, with the camera shooting through a semi-transparent mirror to record both images on the same strip of film.



movement. We have a marvelous sequence in New York in which the camera starts up high on them coming into Grand Central Station. Then it moves down and jumps aboard an Amtrak train on the way to Washington, D.C. All of this was done in one shot by Garrett Brown and it's absolutely wonderful.

QUESTION: What do you consider to be the single greatest challenge in making this picture?

FRAKER: The fact that there were so many unusual technical elements involved. It was monstrous to put together, and it was all held together by Boorman's conception of what he wanted to see, plus Richard MacDonald's skill as a production designer. He was really inventive, but he never brought up an idea for which he didn't have a solution. We made a lot of tests on this picture. Two or three times a week, at the end of the day, we would make a test. We tested transmission mirrors, rocks, blue screen, whatever — and we lived on tests. This was necessary because of the many elements involved in some of the scenes. There were a couple of times when we had so many elements going that I wanted to call Cal Tech and get them on the computer, so that they could figure out an exposure. For example, there were different mirrors with different degrees of transmission and you had to figure out how much you wanted to see through them and how much you'd have to build up the light back there to get an exposure at a normal key — then how much it would vary if

you started in one place and went to another. You would have to calculate a visual effect for the demon and decide whether you wanted to be four stops overexposed or 18. Then there were all those other elements working on a 200-foot-long studio set that you were lighting as an exterior. How to handle the effects in such a set when everything starts to happen — how much you would have to bring up the foreground in order to make it all balance with the rest. All those things kept working all the time. We had so much working in a couple of shots that I said, "Get me a computer, will you?" But instead, we'd all get together and plot out an f-stop. This kind of intricate shooting takes a lot of thought before you start, but if you get too mechanical, then the creativity goes. As an interesting side note, Geoffrey Unsworth shot an insert and some other stuff in Ireland, because John was cutting the picture there. I don't think there could be a better man helping you with the picture, so to speak, than Geoffrey.

QUESTION: What kinds of scenes did you use the "ghost glass" mirrors for?

FRAKER: Mainly for the re-creation of excerpts from the original film, "THE EXORCIST". You would have the presence of being in a certain situation and then, all of a sudden, through somebody's mind, this other thing would take place, after which you would return to the original situation. But it would all happen at once, on one piece of film, without going to CRIs or opticals or anything like that. For example, we

would be shooting an actual scene supposedly happening now. Then we would want to go back four years in time. To create that transition, Linda Blair and Max von Sydow would re-create on another set right next to ours the exorcism sequence from the original film. While Richard Burton and Louise Fletcher were acting out their scene on one set, Linda and Max would be acting out their scene on the other, with the lights dimming up and down on the two sets. At times the images would blend, with the camera shooting through the mirror for one image and picking up the other image reflected off the mirror. At other times, we would take the lights down on the present scene and the exorcism would just take over. That's nothing new actually. They've used such mirrors in special effects for a long, long time.

QUESTION: Can you tell me about your use of filters on this picture?

FRAKER: The new glass that they are using for lenses is so good that you don't simply get maximum sharpness; you get "optimum" sharpness, and I think it's too much. I have a theory — and I don't know whether anyone will agree with me — that the sharper the picture, the more build-up in contrast you get. That's a belief of mine. Therefore, if you want to control the contrast, you have to work with something in front of the lens. We made extensive tests and found that the combination we liked the best for this picture, using the Panavision super-speed lenses (magnificent glass!) would include a

(LEFT) The set of the psychiatric institute shown in the film resembles a modernistic jungle of supports and area dividers with photographic lamps clamped to them. (RIGHT) In the same set, Boorman gives direction to Richard Burton and Linda Blair. Mirrors were used prominently in the set design to externalize Regan's schizophrenic state and the reflections of a many-faceted reality.





(LEFT) In the film's climactic sequence, an intricate camera rig was used to get subjective angles, when taxicab careened wildly as it approached the exorcism house. (RIGHT) The aftermath of a fiery confrontation with a demon is one of relief in this scene from "EXORCIST II". Special effects of the house disintegrating prior to this scene are spectacular.



Low Contrast #3 filter, plus a Mitchell B diffusion, plus one of a series of corals. Our corals included 1/4, 1/2, 3/4, full, 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and we worked with them through the whole picture. This filter combination worked terrifically for the people and for the exteriors, as well. For the exteriors we went a step heavier; instead of the Low Contrast #3, we used a Fog #2. Instead of the Mitchell B, we would use a C or D. But we always used our corals, because Skip Nicholson at Technicolor told us there was no printer light that could reproduce that coral look on the film.

QUESTION: With all this tricky color work and experimentation going on, what kind of liaison were you able to

maintain with the lab?

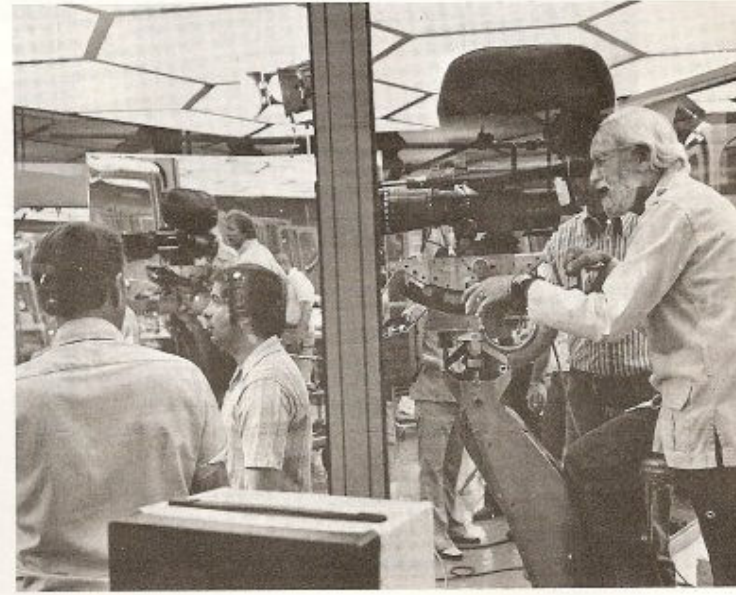
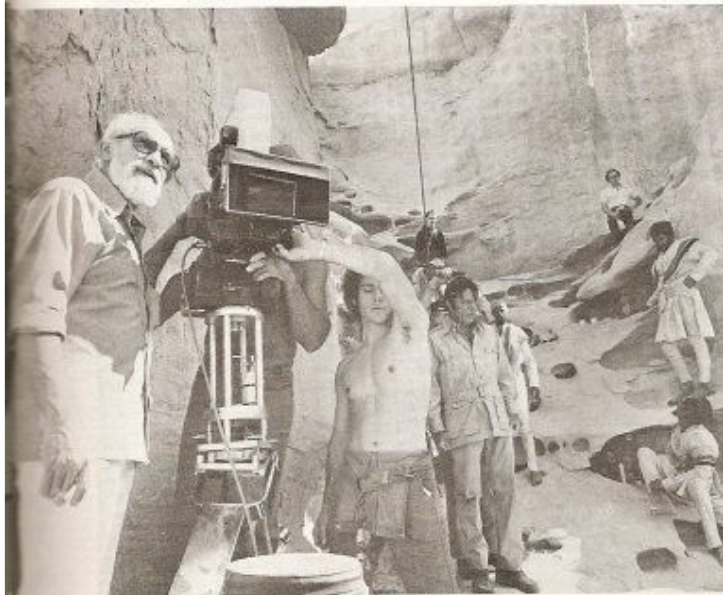
FRAKER: Every morning at 7:00, before I went in to work, I was at the lab looking at the dailies. Technicolor, through Skip Nicholson, was absolutely marvelous. At 7:00 a.m. when I walked in, they would shut off everything and run our stuff. Skip would make any corrections we wanted before it went to Warner Bros. That was a nice habit to get into. I loved it, and Technicolor's service and cooperation were wonderful.

QUESTION: You spoke earlier of a kind of theatricality in lighting the exteriors shot in the studio — actually almost a stylization, I would assume. How did you get the real exteriors to

match that stylization?

FRAKER: Well, outdoors I did just the opposite of what I did on the stage. Instead of stopping down like we did on the exterior sets in the studio, I opened up. I used N9s and Polascreens and everything else I could in order to open all the exteriors. There was a 1/22 to 1/25 light out there and we had white sand and white rock walls, but we tried to shoot at about 1/2.8 or 1/3.5. We saw the dailies and we were very, very happy. They were rich and beautiful. I think that when the CRIs go in for re-release printing, there will be deep black shadows, but they will have a little detail instead of going completely black. Continued on Page 842

(LEFT) Director of Photography Fraker supervises a camera set-up on the Arizona location. (RIGHT) He lines up the camera on studio set. Fraker, whose outstanding credits include "ROSEMARY'S BABY" and "BULLITT", is equally at home on location or in the studio, but favors studio shooting because of the discipline and control which it requires. "There is more creativity possible on the stage," says Fraker. "I like starting with black and going from there."



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