



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

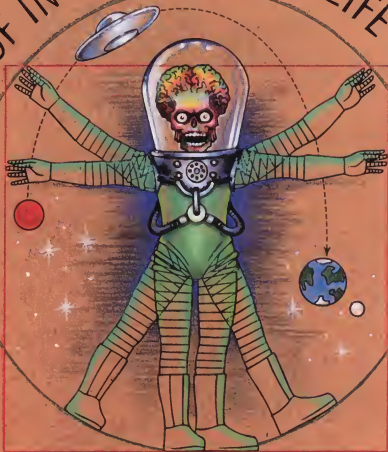
A Major  
Motion Picture  
from  
Warner Bros.

**Karen R. Jones**

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

EXISTENCE OF INTERPLANETARY LIFE CONFIRMED!



WE COME IN PEACE.



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

KAREN R. JONES



TITAN BOOKS • LONDON

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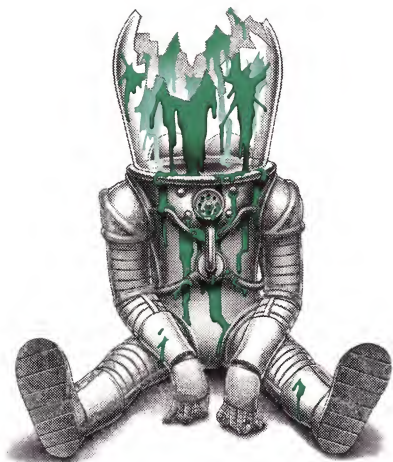
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Thanks to all those on the *Mars Attacks!* team who took the time to help me out when I know they had a zillion other things to do. This includes Wynn Thomas, who shared his designs, and his wonderful assistants Erik Knight and Chris Cummings, who actually had to dig up the stuff. Mark Miller, Jimmy Mitchell, and Ellen Pasternack at Industrial Light & Magic were great tour guides, as was Mike Fink at Warner Digital. Ian Mackinnon of Mackinnon & Saunders was also especially generous with information.

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My everlasting appreciation to family and friends for their steadfast support and encouragement when my spirits were low and my temper was short. To Mark, I don't think I could have done it without you.



## INTRODUCTION

The wonderful thing about working in film production is that every now and then, amid the long hours, the chronic job instability, and all those delicate egos, there comes a *moment*—an instant, a flash, a nanosecond of transcendence—when you find yourself witnessing something truly magical.

During the 14 weeks I spent as the unit publicist on the set of *Mars Attacks!*, I actually experienced quite a few of these moments. Film production has a way of sending you to places you would never have visited otherwise: watching a grid of lightning dance horizontally across a Kansas night sky, seeking cover behind a vintage Russian tank as helicopters swoop perilously close overhead, even standing on a soundstage watching a roomful of Hollywood's most notable talents sitting around, making casual chitchat.

I have been a film publicist for over five years, working on a variety of projects, some highly memorable, some best left off the resume. When I first heard I was being considered for *Mars Attacks!*, I was thrilled. Ever since *Beetlejuice*, I've been a fan of Tim Burton's whimsical visual style and wonderfully bizarre sense of humor.

It has been said that Tim Burton has a bit of the pied piper in him. His passion for film and filmmaking is truly infectious, an ardent faith in the power of make-believe that reminds us all why we got into this business in the first place.

This book is a celebration of the talents of all the artists who joined Tim in the marvelous flight of fancy that is *Mars Attacks!*, the many illustrators, model builders, painters, puppet makers, set designers, 3-D animators, textile artists, prop makers, and storyboard artists whose work fills these pages. A partial list includes: David Andrews, Charlie Bailey, Noel Baker, Colin Batty, Richard Berger, Jeff Branion, Mariko Braswell, James Carson,

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John Dexter, Jann Engel, Richard Fernandez, Nancy Haigh, James Hegedus, Tom Homshire, Michael Jackson, Darren Marshall, Mike McCracken, Mark Moore, Bill O'Brien, Robin Richesson, Brian Steiner, Wynn Thomas, Phyllis Thurber-Moffitt, Paul Vereaux, Pete Von Sholly, Chris Waegner, and Guy Williams.

Still photographer Bruce W. Talamon provided the unit photography of the film in progress.

Making a movie is often like taking a cross-country trip without a road map—you're not sure where you'll end up, but the ride is *always* an adventure. Or as Tim Burton once explained, "You just make a big mess of it and hope for the best."

Welcome to *Mars Attacks!: The Art of the Movie*, where the ride is more than half the fun.



# MARS ATTACKS!<sup>®</sup>

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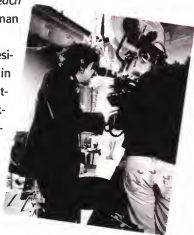


# A TALE OF TWO PLANETS

Starting with his 1985 feature film debut, *Pee-wee's Big Adventure*, Tim Burton established a signature style characterized by deft, dark humor and surreal visuals. He continued to leave his mark via a string of successes including the comedic ghost story *Beetlejuice*, the contemporary Gothic myths *Batman* and *Batman Returns*, the suburban fable *Edward Scissorhands*, and even Burton's comic biography *Ed Wood*. His style shone through when Tim Burton served as executive producer on the stop-motion animation film *James and the Giant Peach* and as a producer on the third installment of the *Batman* series, *Batman Forever*.

Thomas Lassally, Warner Bros. executive vice president of production, recalls meeting with Burton late in 1994. "We were discussing Tim's life and what he wanted to work on as a producer and director. He was talking about doing a series of smaller films—Friday-night-date-type movies."

Burton was seeking to return to the tradition of low-budget, double-feature fare. "I wanted to do something fun, the kind of movies I grew up watching," Burton himself explains.



(Right): Director Tim Burton selected *Mars Attacks!* for his latest directorial outing.

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Burton on the set:  
(top) with actor  
Michael J. Fox,  
(bottom, left) meticu-  
lously checking the  
camera angle, and  
(bottom, right) setting  
up a shot with direc-  
tor of photography  
Peter Suschitzky.



That conversation between Burton and Lassally drifted to a trading card series *Dinosaur Attacks* issued by the Topps Company in the late seventies. Warner Bros. had once owned the movie rights to the cards, which featured prehistoric monsters returned from extinction. But the option had expired.

Burton and Lassally turned instead to *Mars Attacks*, a similar card series issued nearly two decades earlier, which depicted a lurid, H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*-style Martian invasion. Burton remembered those cards, but his recollections were hazy: "Because *Mars Attacks* had come and gone so quickly, I didn't know if it was a dream or something I made up in my head.

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(Top): Burton films on a cliff side above Nevada's Lake Mead. (Bottom): Braving the heat and wind of the Arizona desert.



"And I've always loved science-fiction movies," Burton enthused. "Growing up on all those movies about Martians with big brains, it just sort of stays with you forever."

So an idea began to form, and, according to Lassally, the very next day, "Tim called me and said 'I can't stop thinking about Mars Attacks.' He just

decided *that* was the movie he wanted to make and that was it—he was off." Warner Bros. was eager to renew its relationship with Burton, whose 1989 release *Batman* has been their highest-grossing picture to date. Thus the studio quickly secured the rights for *Mars Attacks* from Topps (and re-optioned *Dinosaur Attacks* as well).

In early 1995, Burton, together with screenwriter Jonathan Gems, began to fashion a story line inspired by images from the original *Mars Attacks* cards and suggested by classic alien invasion films. Burton drew upon his training as a Disney animator. "I thought it would be nice to get in there and treat it like we used to do when we were making an animated film. You just kick around some ideas and thoughts and draft the screenplay that way."

He wanted to maintain the style of the cards that had raised a hue and cry at the time of their original 1962 publication.

# MARS ATTACKS!

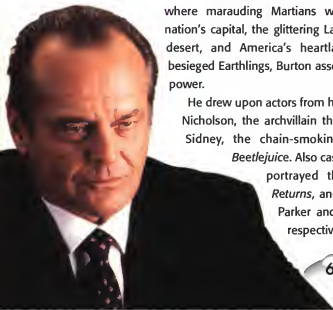
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Burton and Gems divided the story into three main locales where marauding Martians would ravage the planet: the nation's capital, the glittering Las Vegas Strip and surrounding desert, and America's heartland, Kansas. To portray the besieged Earthlings, Burton assembled a cast of incredible star power.

He drew upon actors from his previous films, including Jack Nicholson, the archvillain the Joker in *Batman*, and Sylvia Sidney, the chain-smoking afterlife caseworker from *Beetlejuice*. Also cast were Danny DeVito, who had portrayed the vile Penguin in *Batman Returns*, and from *Ed Wood* Sarah Jessica Parker and Lisa Marie, who had played, respectively, Wood's actress girlfriend

"It was kind of like a weird episode of *Fantasy Island*," remarked Tim Burton of his assembled cast, which included (top, left to right) Pierce Brosnan, Glenn Close, Natalie Portman, Lukas Haas, (center, left to right) Jim Brown, Janice Rivera, Joe Don Baker, O-lan Jones, Danny DeVito, Tom Jones, and (bottom) Jack Nicholson.



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Dolores Fuller and film seductress Vampira.

Joining Burton for the first time were principal cast members Annette Bening, Pierce Brosnan, Jim Brown, Glenn Close, Michael J. Fox, Pam Grier, Lukas Haas, Tom Jones, Natalie Portman, Barbet Schroeder, Martin Short, Rod Steiger, and Paul Winfield. Burton was thrilled to have such a talented cast to bring his film to life. "You start out trying to get the best people, and we were just lucky to get them all!"

Burton also assembled a team of superlative behind-the-scenes talent, including director of photography Peter Suschitzky, to whom he had been introduced by the late production designer Anton Furst (*Batman*). Burton was a big fan of

**(Top, left to right):**  
Annette Bening, Sarah Jessica Parker, Rod Steiger, Paul Winfield.  
**(Bottom, left to right):**  
Martin Short, Brandon Hammond, Ray J, Lisa Marie.

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the British cinematographer's work with director David Cronenberg on such films as *Dead Ringers* and *Naked Lunch*, and years earlier, he had even considered Suschitzky for *Batman*.

For the production design, Burton hired Wynn Thomas who designed the epic *Malcolm X* and several other films for director Spike Lee. He also called upon more of his past collaborators such as costume designer Colleen Atwood, who had created wardrobe for *Edward Scissorhands* and *Ed Wood*, and editor Chris Lebenzon, from the days of *Batman Returns* and *Ed Wood*. Composer Danny Elfman, who began his career with Pee-wee's *Big Adventure* and scored all but one of Burton's subsequent films, would create the score for *Mars Attacks!*

Producer Larry Franco recalls that his initial reaction to Burton's script was, "This is nuts!" Franco had co-produced *Batman Returns*, and he was certain that whatever he envisioned could

(Top): Burton was a big fan of screen legend Sylvia Sidney and had previously cast the actress in *Beetlejuice*, so he found a pivotal spot for her in *Mars Attacks!* (Bottom): As fashion-show host Nathalie West and the President's top scientific adviser Dr. Kessler, actors Sarah Jessica Parker and Pierce Brosnan wonder, "Who will save us from the alien attack?"



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never approach what Burton would create. He signed on anyhow.

"Tim does things in a way you can't quite anticipate. You talk about a scene in a living room with two people, and you conjure up in your mind what that is," Franco explains. "What you're *really* going to shoot is a living room the size of a football field, painted black, with no ceiling. The walls are eighteen feet high, and there's a red table in the corner with two people in white jumpsuits. That's Tim's version of two people in a living room talking. It's completely different from whatever you thought of, and it's always a surprise."

So the players began to assemble and the die was cast. Everyone now knew—*Mars Attacks!* was sure to have many surprises in store.



# MARS ATTACKS: THE TRADING CARDS

**R**ewind.

The year was 1962: John F. Kennedy was in the White House, the New York Yankees had beaten the San Francisco Giants to win the World Series, and “Monster Mash” was at the top of the music charts.

At the Brooklyn-based Topps Chewing Gum Company, the new product development department was eagerly at work on a special trading card series to follow the preceding year’s highly successful Civil War set, which had delighted young collectors with its gruesomely rendered battle scenes.

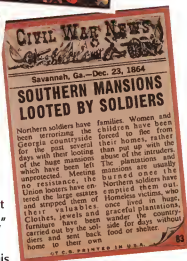
“We were talking about science-fiction concepts. In the

First introduced in 1962, Topps’s Mars Attacks trading card series featured bold images of Martian mayhem. (Right): The Civil War series, a big hit with young collectors, became the off-beat precursor to the Martian invasion.



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Each Civil War card featured a vivid battle scene with a semi-historical description on the back.

1950s, there was a very successful line of comic books called E.C. Comics that were almost banned because they were so gory," recalls Len Brown, today Topps's creative director.

Brown had joined the company just after his eighteenth birthday in 1959. The head of Topps's new product development at the time was Woody Gelman, a former Disney animator and an avid collector of pulp science fiction from the thirties and forties.

"One cover... showed some kids looking out from behind a rock at an open field, where a flying saucer had landed, and Martians were coming out of the saucer," Brown continues. "I remember showing the comic book to Woody and saying, 'Wouldn't a card set of a Martian space invasion be a natural?'" And the Mars Attacks assault was launched.

*Rewind.*

The Topps Chewing Gum Company had been founded in 1939 by the four Shorin brothers in Brooklyn, New York. Fueled

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by the success of Bazooka Bubble Gum, the company launched its first set of trading cards in 1950, based on the popular television show *Hopalong Cassidy*. The following year, Topps introduced its first set of baseball trading cards, and an American institution was born.

After buying out its only competitor in 1956, Topps held the distinction of being the sole producer of sports trading cards for the next 25 years, eventually adding basketball and hockey to complement the ever-popular baseball cards. Topps also regularly produced original card series that encompassed wide



Original Mars Attacks pencil drawings were created by veteran comic book artist Bob Powell.

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**Tim Burton loved the lurid flavor of Norm Saunders's original card artwork.**

varieties of subject matter—some historically based, others wildly fantastical.

In 1962, alongside baseball legends Mickey Mantle and Roger Maris, Topps released what would become its most notorious creation, the Mars Attacks series. Sold in wax paper packets, containing 5 cards and a stick of bubble gum (for a nickel), the original set featured 55 different cards, each a vivid

tableau of a Martian attack on Earth.

To design the Mars Attacks series, Topps called upon its Civil War-series artists, Bob Powell and Norm Saunders. A comic book veteran, Powell rendered detailed pencil drawings that were then transformed into full-size paintings by Saunders.

"Saunders was an old pulp cover artist from the thirties and forties. He was probably in his sixties when we met him," Len Brown recalls. "He had done hundreds of illustrations for the old pulp magazines—science fiction and true-crime stories. He was the perfect artist for Mars Attacks."

Also inspired by the science-fiction B-movies of the era, the illustrations offered color-saturated scenes starring green, bulging-eyed Martians destroying Earth and annihilating its inhabitants with gleeful abandon. True to their pulp heritage, the illustrations were equally vivid in their depictions of luscious damsels in distress. Brown reminisces: "Joel Shorin, the president of Topps during the sixties, was very concerned with the company's image. We had to retouch some of the illustrations of women—lower a few hemlines and such."

Despite these concessions to propriety, the cards were met with immediate outrage from parents and teachers alike, who deemed the cards too strong for children.

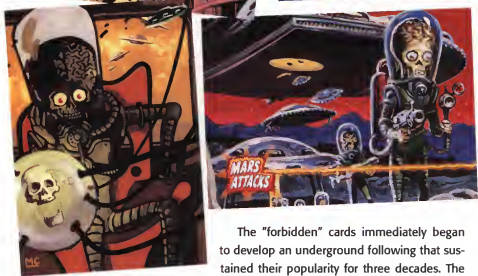
"We put them out in one territory—New England and upstate New York—and they sold pretty well. When we went a little wider, there were newspaper stories almost immediately, and we started getting bad press. Within six months, we were forced to withdraw the cards from the market," Brown explains. "They were never even distributed nationally—only on the East Coast."

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The 1994 re-edition of Mars Attacks included even weirder new cards created by leading contemporary artists.



The "forbidden" cards immediately began to develop an underground following that sustained their popularity for three decades. The cards currently have a high value in the collectibles market, with an original set valued from \$1,500 to \$2,000.

### *Fast forward.*

In the eighties, Topps licensed the property to an independent company that wanted to reprint the card set for the collectors' market. But the license expired and fans continued demanding, "Reissue the old Mars Attacks!"

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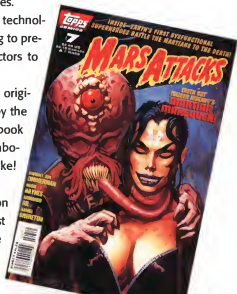
Finally responding to the uproar, Topps itself relaunched Mars Attacks in 1994. They enhanced the artwork via restored negatives from the 1962 set of 55 cards, and printed the cards on a higher-quality paper stock. Topps also contacted a number of top contemporary comic book artists—Earl Norem, Mike Mignola, Ken Steacy, Mark Schultz, and others—to produce an additional set of 35 cards with brand-new images.

The entire set featured the latest in printing technology, with foil stamping for effects and UV coating to preserve the cards for many generations of collectors to come.

At the same time, the Martians sailed into an original Mars Attacks comic book series, produced by the newly formed Topps Comics. Famed comic book writer Keith Giffen and artist Charles Adlard collaborated to produce the five-issue Counterstrike! series, released in the summer of 1994.

Topps Comics executive editor Dwight Jon Zimmerman oversaw the production of this first series and himself continued as a writer of the subsequent Mars Attacks comic book, which was relaunched as an ongoing series in 1996.

Topps launched a Mars Attacks comic book, debuting with the Counterstrike! series.



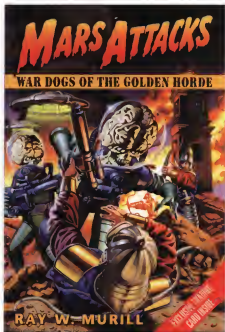
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"Keith Giffen plotted out the story line for the ongoing series, but due to prior commitments he wasn't able to script it, so I came on as scripter of the first post-Counterstrike! issue. Charles Adlard had to bow out as well—he was also our *X-Files* artist. Our new art team of Hugh Haynes and Armando Gil has done a fantastic job for us," Zimmerman notes.

In 1996, Topps licensed Del Rey Books to produce two original Mars Attacks novels, *Martian Deathtrap* by Nathan Archer and *War Dogs of the Golden Horde* by Ray W. Murill—both of which were met with eager anticipation from the ever-growing number of Mars Attacks fans, Zimmerman notes. "At science-fiction and comic book conventions, it was really exciting to see how passionate the fans of Mars Attacks can be—older fans, of course, and younger fans who have heard about it or picked it up.

"Looking at what was done in 1962, we can now say the gloves are off," he continues. "We don't have to hold back. The mandate was to keep in the spirit of the original set, and that spirit happens to be over the top."



The Martian invasion moved to bookstores through novels based on the original trading cards.

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In conjunction with the *Mars Attacks!* movie, Topps will produce a 64-page movie adaptation comic book and a set of movie edition trading cards. A whole new generation of fans is discovering the property, and the Martian tradition for chaos is sure to continue.

Thanks, in no small part, to a certain motion picture of the same name.





# LURID ROOTS: THE SCREENPLAY

**E**ven after Tim Burton and Warner Bros. secured the rights to the Mars Attacks cards, they faced the challenge of translating two-dimensional trading card images into three-dimensional film action. That task began with Burton and Jonathan Gems.

Gems had previously scripted, with director Michael Radford, the film adaptation of George Orwell's classic futuristic novel *1984*, which starred Richard Burton and John Hurt. He had also penned the screenplay for the 1988 mystery *White Mischief*, based on James Fox's World War II tale of British colonialists in Kenya.

The son of British playwright Pam Gems, he had also written several stage plays that were produced in England, including *Naked Robots*, *The Paranormalist*, and *Susan's Breasts*, which earned him the 1986 Critics Circle Award.

Burton and Gems met in 1989 on the set of *Batman*. Once that film was completed, they began work on an updated version of a mutual favorite, Roger Corman's 1960 film *The House of Usher*, adapted from the Poe story. Although the project never made it to the screen, a creative team had been formed.

"All those movies about Martians with big brains, it just sort of stays with you..."  
Original sketch by Tim Burton. (© 1996 Tim Burton.)

(Right, top): A series of storyboards depicts the Martian leader's live television broadcast.





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"Tim and I had very similar tastes in a lot of things. I grew up with all the same Saturday morning matinees in England. We're both big fans of Herschell Gordon Lewis," Gems explains, referring to the sixties director whose films include such colorful titles as *Blood Feast*, *Monster a Go-Go!*, and *The Wizard of Gore*. "Lewis made very low-budget horror movies—C-features that were very lurid and appealed to very basic instincts."

Then, in October 1994, Gems recalls, he and Burton were in a novelty gift shop on Los Angeles's trendy Melrose Avenue for that fateful moment when he first discovered *Mars Attacks*. Gems loved the outré illustrations. "You had these Martians that were destroying the Empire State Building and the White



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Early artists' renderings illustrate the merciless alien assault on America's cities.

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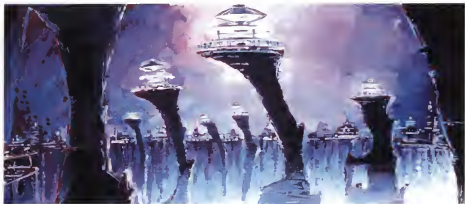


(This page and opposite): Views of the Angry Red Planet depict a stylized landscape and the civilization hidden beneath its surface.



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(Left): For the film's opening title sequence, model builders at Warner Digital re-created the surface of Mars in eerily realistic detail.

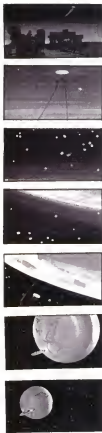
House—all the American monuments. Everything in the cards was so politically *incorrect*."

A couple of months later, Gems received a phone call from Burton. The director was obtaining the rights to adapt the Mars Attacks cards to the big screen and asked Gems if he would be interested in writing the screenplay. "Tim had a key idea for the basic construction of the film. He wanted to have a large cast in different locales—with the characters going through their own private dramas at the same time that the world is going through a very public drama. That was Tim's perception, and that's what I started with—that and the cards."

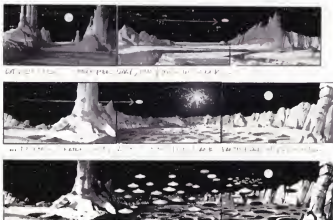
To capture the outrageous over-the-top flavor that was so appealing in the Mars Attacks cards and illustrations, Gems also

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Storyboards show the action as the swarm of Martian saucers departs, headed for an unsuspecting planet Earth.

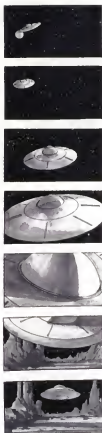


found inspiration in an eclectic group of films. He recalls having viewed with Burton *The Towering Inferno* and *Earthquake*, two landmark entrants from the disaster film trend of the seventies that both boasted star-studded casts. Looking back, Gems notes, "At the end of *The Towering Inferno*, I asked Tim what his favorite moment was. He thought about it for a second, and then he said, 'Robert Wagner in flames.' And I said, 'Wow, that was my favorite moment, too!'"

Gems explains why he particularly relished this scene: "Ever since the beginning, the tradition of Hollywood movies has been that the stars always defeat the monsters or the bad guys. You always know what's going to happen because the unknown actors always get blown away and the stars always win. So I thought: Let's turn that on its head—it will be *great*."

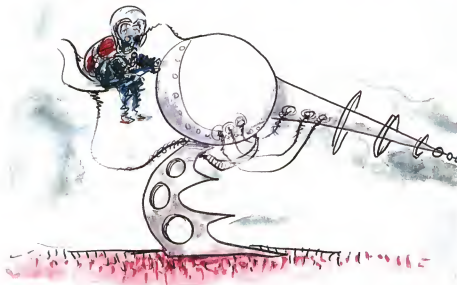
Gems also invokes the 1963 comedy *It's a Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad World*, which featured a veritable who's who of comic talent, including Milton Berle, Buddy Hackett, Jonathan Winters, Jimmy Durante, Sid Caesar, Phil Silvers, and many, many others. "I also wanted to do a satire of American society. I wanted characters that were funny and entertaining, but also accurate."

To further create a varied portrait of American society, Burton and Gems determined each setting to allow for a variety of colorful if not bizarre scenarios. "Tim decided that we should set it in Washington, D.C., because we had to see the President. And he said, 'Let's have a group in Las Vegas,' because Vegas



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



One of Burton's sketches of the large death-ray gun.  
(© 1996 Tim Burton.)

has that kind of sleaze appeal. At first I thought about New York City and Los Angeles, but it was getting too big. We decided we should have a contrast, so we chose the Midwest."

Working with these locations and the basic ensemble of characters, Gems turned out a first draft in three weeks during January 1995. In the process, he used a very pragmatic approach when crafting the American reaction to the alien invasion. "Suppose you were on your way home from work, and there was a radio broadcast. Suppose it was Bill Clinton saying, 'Look, guys, I *know* this sounds unbelievable, but there are some Martians out there and they're circling the planet.' At first you'd say, 'Wow, that's amazing!', which they do in the script. But the next question would be 'How is this going to affect *me*?'"

Given the quirky ensemble cast, reactions lead to comic results. At the White House, President Dale wonders how he can win more votes by exhibiting dazzling interplanetary diplomacy skills, while in Las Vegas, casino developer Art Land figures ways he can attract a bustling Martian clientele. Meanwhile, in Perkinsville, Kansas, slacker teen Richie Norris only hopes the alien landing will liven things up around the trailer park.

# MARS ATTACKS!

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The Martian fleet departs for their planet Earth. (Bottom): An early painting by the director (© 1996 Tim Burton), and (top) Warner Digital's computer-generated version.



Burton and Gems decided it would be fun to include some real-life figures caught up in the Martian drama. Gems thought it ideal, and wryly appropriate, to include legendary entertainer Tom Jones. "I had him giving a concert, singing 'It's Not Unusual.'"

Early in pre-production, both director and writer took a scouting trip to Las Vegas, and, Gems recalls, "As luck would have it, Tom Jones was performing. I was blown away by his presence—he's like an action hero. We went to see him after the show, and Tim pitched the film to Tom. He got very excited, so Tim and I decided to make his part more than a cameo."

The list grew to include major Hollywood talent, boasting, collectively, 3 Academy Award winners and 18 nominees. The original concept for the star-studded cast was to become an outrageous reality.



# PUPPETS FROM MARS

**W**orking screenplay in hand, Tim Burton proceeded to the next step of bringing the Martians to life in all their terrible glory. He had always envisioned the creatures being animated using the stop-motion techniques so artfully employed in his early film *Vincent*, and later in *Tim Burton's The Nightmare before Christmas* and *James and the Giant Peach*.

Early uses of stop-motion animation include the pioneering work of Willis H. O'Brien, a former marble cutter and cartoonist who in 1933 breathed terror into *King Kong*. And Burton has often cited the seminal influence he found in the work of O'Brien's protégé Ray Harryhausen, whose innovative special effects transformed such fantasy adventures as *The Seventh Voyage of Sinbad* (1958) and *Jason and the Argonauts* (1963) into classics.

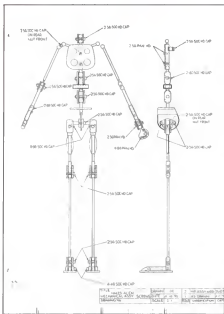
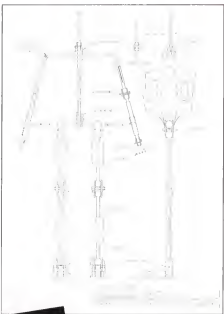
Seeking out the current top practitioners of the art form, Burton contacted Mackinnon & Saunders, based in Manchester, England. Ian Mackinnon and Peter Saunders had formed their partnership in 1992, and through many years of specialization in the field of animation puppet making, they had forged a team of award-winning craftspeople.

Burton explained to Mackinnon and Saunders that he envisioned *Mars Attacks!* as a radical departure from his previous

(Left): Using the original trading cards for inspiration, the artisans of England's Mackinnon & Saunders Limited crafted intricately detailed models of the Martian.



As seen in schematics and actual models, the puppets featured fully articulated armatures, allowing for a complete range of movement.



work in stop-motion. This project would present a tremendous challenge: how to convincingly combine stop-motion puppet animation with real world film footage and actors. "Tim wanted *Mars Attacks!* to have a flavor and craftsmanship reminiscent of the legendary skeleton fight in *Jason and the Argonauts*," Mackinnon explains. "It seemed a rather brave route to be taking, but Tim has been a great believer in the artistry of puppet animation and was very keen that all the Martian life-forms be created using traditional techniques. He also didn't want any cheesy cutaways to a man in a suit or a human hand in an alien glove. He wanted a purity in the movie that would

see all Martian life-forms created in this way. Even the hubcaplike flying saucers would be shot using stop-motion."

The puppeteers accepted the job of designing and building the Martian puppets and within a matter of weeks began to

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Two early prototypes; the bulky space suit concealed the emaciated physique inside.



# MARS ATTACKS!

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Each model, or maquette, was painstakingly hand-crafted.



mobilize a team of sculptors to begin the preliminary work. Both Ian Mackinnon and Peter Saunders relocated from their homes in England, moving to Los Angeles in order to be close to Burton during the early stages. Mackinnon recalls: "We were one of the first groups to start work on the film and arrived before there had been time to set up any facilities. Our first home was to be a large, dusty warehouse

# MARS ATTACKS!

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The many phases of development littered the Mackinnon & Saunders workshops, from drawings to models to completed full-size heads waiting for eyes.



# MARS ATTACKS!

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(Top): Sculptors created a series of heads to convey a range of emotions: anger, fear, a leer or cackle, and the “exploded-soufflé head.” (Bottom): As seen from this diagram, an autopsy provided many insights into the Martian anatomy.



# MARS ATTACKS!

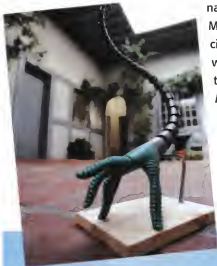
THE ART OF THE MOVIE

opposite the Warner Hollywood Studios lot—not ideal for intricate, highly detailed work.”

The Martian design and animation was originally intended to be a collaboration between Mackinnon & Saunders and the San Francisco-based Skellington Productions team. “We were excited by the prospect of working with the group responsible for *The Nightmare before Christmas*,” Mackinnon enthuses. “Having the world’s top animators, for whom we have the greatest respect, work with our puppets was to be a dream come true.”

Sadly, this collaboration would not come to fruition. For the Skellington group still had many months to go before their work on

(Top): This detachable appendage made by the movie prop department was dubbed “the scorpion hand.” (Bottom): The models had an amazing range of emotions.



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Martian maquettes posed for group publicity shots.



After a series of scale-relationship tests, the ideal height for the full-size Martian was set at just over five feet tall.

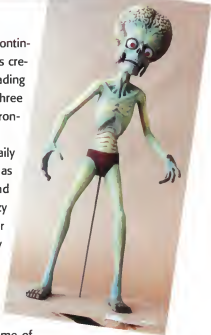


*James and the Giant Peach* would be completed.

Nonetheless, they forged ahead. Mackinnon continues: "The challenge was to translate the characters created by illustrator Norm Saunders for the Topps trading cards and refine them, not only to work in three dimensions but to be believable in a human environment as well."

Burton visited the puppet makers' workshop daily to give comments and direction to the sculptors as they fashioned macabre plasticine figures and heads. Says Mackinnon, "He would do his crazy little pencil sketches of the Martian girl with her huge beehive wig or the ambassador with this very theatrical, sweeping cape."

Burton wanted the distinctive look of Martians and their space suits in the film to maintain the integrity of the original 1962 design; they were not to be updated as even Topps had done in some of



the 1994 card reissues. "This was not to be an *Alien*- or *Predator*-style movie; these Martians had to be closely based on the Norm Saunders characters and have a very retro feel," Mackinnon notes.

Sculptors Colin Batty, Darren Marshall, and Noel Baker began building a series of small preliminary models, or maquettes, each of which measured approximately 15 inches tall.

"We had to design the emaciated skeletal body, barely capable of supporting the huge brain, and then realize in 3-D the space suit that had to have the look of an old-fashioned diving suit. Tim liked the idea and the humor of the restrictions put on the skinny Martians by a cumbersome suit. We looked at individual character maquettes for intelligent commander Martians with superlarge brains, and at others for the gruntlike soldiers." After viewing the different models, Burton decided that the creatures should

**Notes Tim Burton,**  
"Mackinnon & Saunders did a great job in creating the original puppets. They are real artists."



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all be identical—to better convey the sense of a sinister mass infestation, invincible due to the endless Martian ranks.

Once they had achieved the perfect design, the sculptors faced the practical nightmare of mass-producing hundreds of 15-inch puppets. Mackinnon remained in Los Angeles to oversee the design work that would emanate from the newly founded stop-motion facility, dubbed “Stickman,” while Saunders returned to the Manchester workshop where the prototypes would be built. Production supervisors Christine





Final details are added to the space-suit breathing apparatus of a life-size Martian model.



Walker in the U.K. and Barry Jones in Los Angeles were responsible for turning the nightmare of an intensive construction schedule into a finely tuned operation humming between workshops on two continents.

"A production line had to be designed to cope with the mammoth task of duplicating the puppets many times. To allow for large crowd scenes and multiple setups, and maintain ease

of maintenance during shooting, all the puppets had to be built to the same specifications and high standards—there would be no background puppets,” continues Mackinnon.

Every detail and texture of the miniatures had to be accurate in order for the characters to hold up when they were magnified and projected on a huge screen. Initial maquettes, attractive as small models, proved too cartoonish when enlarged. The puppets had to be effective as tools for special effects and had to be capable of giving believable performances in close-up opposite live actors.

“Each day we would photograph the maquettes and then rush down to a copy shop to have the pictures enlarged to different scales,” Mackinnon elaborates. “Tim would come to the warehouse where we were working, and we’d take turns standing next to the cardboard cutouts—like an identity parade. Correct scaling of the teeth, eyes, and hands became very important in making the characters convincing.

“One of the most important elements to the believability of any character is the eyes. The Martians’ eyes were bulbous and had to stick far out of their skull sockets. Yellowed and blood-shot with bright red corneas and tiny blood vessels, they had to look real.” The

(Bottom, left): Space suits in their molds.  
(Bottom, right): Actor Pierce Brosnan gets chummy with a Martian stand-in.



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London-based company Nissels, a manufacturer of medical artificial eyes, successfully produced the necessary parts. "Tim didn't want the eyes to ever blink," Mackinnon adds. "Even when they were shot dead, he wanted the Martians' milky eyes to be staring up at you. He thought it was far more sinister."

Mackinnon & Saunders also called upon their expertise in lip-synching and tiny-head mechanics, which would supply fully articulated expressions and give the animators access to a complete range of emotions. Three alternative "expression heads" were sculpted to be used in case extremes of expression were called for, and others were designed for a variety of exploding brain shots. Elaborate mechanical armatures gave other scantily clad Martians a wide range of body movements, even when they were out of uniform.



Actor Pierce Brosnan with the life-size naked Martian built for the autopsy scene.



In November 1995, just as the Stickman facility was gearing up to full speed, the team was dealt a crushing blow: Tim Burton had made the difficult decision to terminate his original plans to animate the Martians with stop-motion photography.

Faced with the incredibly demanding production schedule, the marriage of live action and animation proved too difficult. Due to the extremely time-consuming nature of stop-motion, Burton would have had to film the live-action plate shots—the background shots into which the animated puppets would be composited digitally—*months* before the other scene elements even could have been conceptualized, particularly those star-



The puppet makers also fabricated a macabre model of a woman's body with a dog's head attached, the result of experimentation aboard the Martian spaceship.



(Above): Mackinnon & Saunders's full-size Martian puppets were used in various scenes. Here, Martian casualties are scooped up after mayhem in Washington, D.C. (Below, right): This one found gainful employment as a stand-in for a pivotal congressional scene.

ring the live actors who would be filmed playing opposite the Martians.

So the decision was made: the Martians would instead be created as three-dimensional computer-generated characters, designed and animated by Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), famed for the groundbreaking techniques in character animation seen in films such as *Jurassic Park* and *Jumanji*.



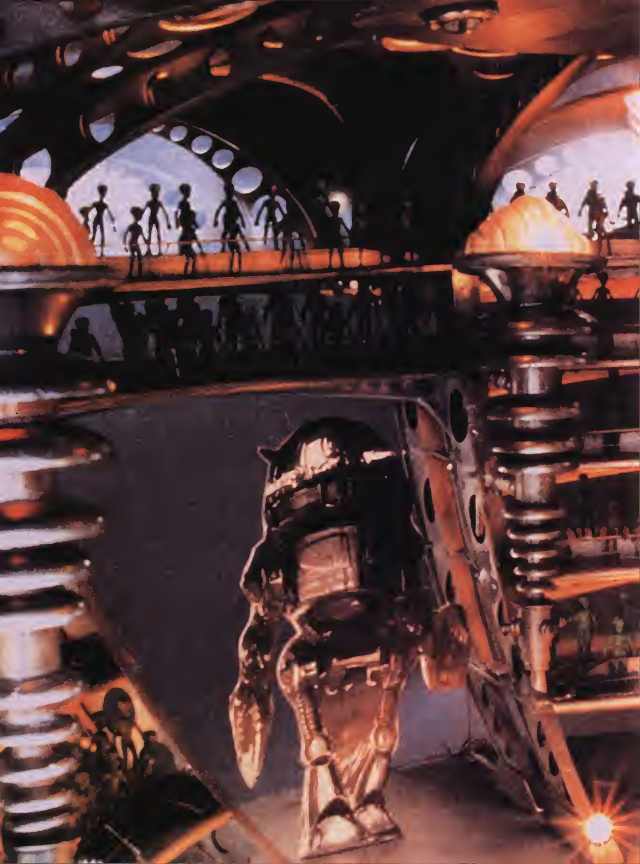
After the closure of the Stickman facility, producer Larry Franco asked Mackinnon & Saunders to produce 15 full-scale Martians. Since they had already been asked to provide the reference model for a life-size dead Martian to be used during an autopsy scene, this new task was a natural offshoot. The 15-inch small-scale master models were digitally scanned, and a head was cut in foam. Mold makers produced a clay press out, then sculptor Mike

McCracken added the final touches to match the small-scale model that originally had been created by sculptor Colin Batty.

The workshop in Manchester reassigned part of what was to have been the puppet-building crew and scaled down its operation to produce the dead Martians.

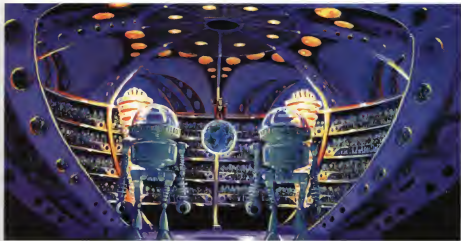
Additionally, their design work was passed on to the animators at ILM, providing invaluable information for the accurate replication of computer-generated Martians. Despite their initial disappointment, the team of artisans assembled by Mackinnon & Saunders contributed immeasurably to what would eventually be filmed.

And in early 1996, legendary stop-motion innovator Ray Harryhausen himself paid a visit to their Manchester workshop. He provided the best testament to the quality of their labors, recalls Mackinnon. "We showed him one of the Martian puppets. He carefully manipulated the facial mechanics and, posing the skeletal body, said, 'It makes me want to come out of retirement and start up animating again!'"



# A LOW-CONCEPT APPROACH TO DESIGN

**T**he herculean job of the production designer encompasses virtually every aspect of film decor, including set dressing, props, set design, and construction. To realize his highly stylized vision of Martian target Earth, Burton chose Wynn Thomas, the New York-based designer who created the outrageous world of *To Wong Foo, Thanks for Everything, Julie Newmar*; set the mood for the period drama *A Bronx Tale*; and designed seven features for director Spike Lee, including the

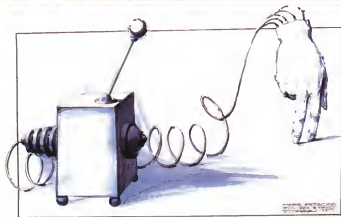


(Opposite and this page): An early version of the story featured the Martians gathered in a huge rally hall aboard the spaceship.

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

(Top): This pre-production illustration provided guidance in building the deadly Martian scorpion hand.



epic *Malcolm X*, *Mo' Better Blues*, *Do the Right Thing*, and Lee's debut, *She's Gotta Have It*.

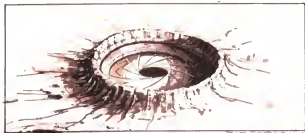
Early in his career, Thomas had apprenticed with production designer Patrizia von Brandenstein, who won an Academy Award for her work on *Amadeus*. Before moving into film, Thomas spent two years as resident designer for the Negro Ensemble Company and worked with the late Joseph Papp on New York Shakespeare Festival and New York Public Theatre productions.

Thomas recalled his first meeting with Burton in spring 1995 at New York City's Carlyle Hotel. Though recommended by

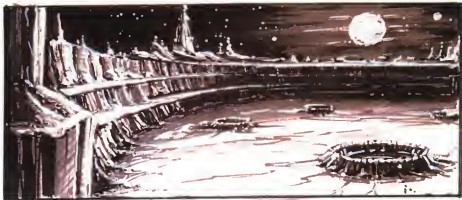


# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



(Top and middle): Conceptual drawings proposed irislike craters that would open to release marauding spaceships. (Bottom, right): Conventional Earth missiles couldn't hope to pierce Martian defenses.



a mutual colleague, Thomas had only a faint familiarity with *Mars Attacks!* "I had just finished *To Wong Foo*, and I brought in some pieces—little models—to show him. Tim didn't really talk too much about the subject of the film or the specifics of the script. He felt that the cards, which are very graphic and very colorful, best captured the spirit of the film that he was trying to create."

They later reviewed films Burton felt epitomized the flavor he wanted. "We began to look at a lot of fifties and sixties sci-fi movies, just going over them and looking at how those films were designed. Tim kept talking about how simple the scenery was, but when you go back and look at the films, the scenery is not simple at all!"

The two studied the 1951 classic *The Day the Earth Stood Still*, a cautionary tale about the threat of nuclear destruction; *This Island Earth* (1955), about a team of scientists kidnapped by aliens to defend their own war-torn planet; and *Forbidden Planet* (1956), a sci-fi retelling of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in

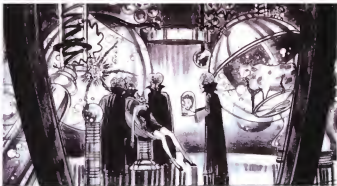
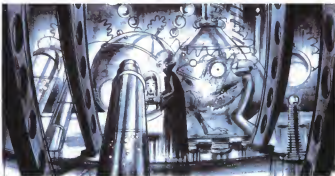


# MARS ATTACKS!

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addition to a number of obscure, smaller films. These all helped spark the creative spirit.

"Tim didn't want a lot of fuzziness or set decoration. If you look at *Mars Attacks!*, I think that's something you'll begin to see throughout. Normally, you dress the sets to make a statement about who that character is. We had to do that with very broad strokes in this film, as opposed to small, accumulating detail—we were reducing each set to the appropriate graphic image."

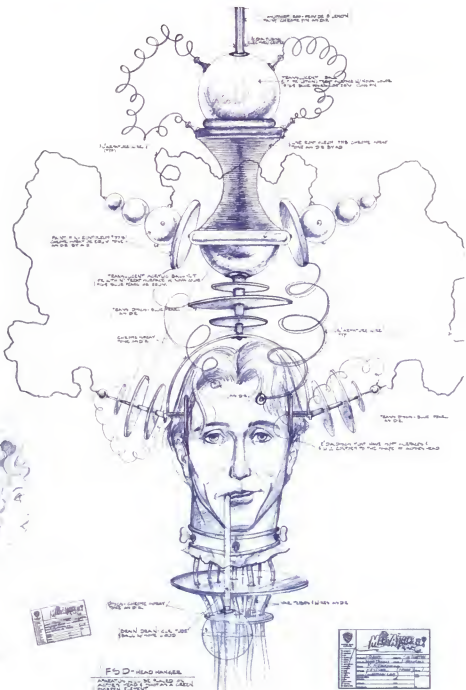


These storyboards would later be used by ILM to create sequences on the alien ship.

# MARS ATTACKS!

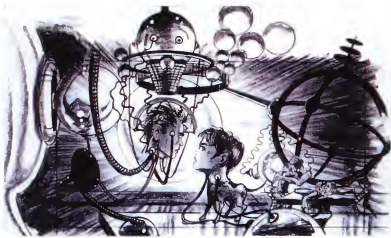
THE ART OF THE MOVIE

The many phases of development included storyboard sketches (opposite page, top left), detailed blueprints (this page), and scenes with actors Pierce Brosnan and Sarah Jessica Parker filmed against a blue-screen (opposite, middle and bottom).



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

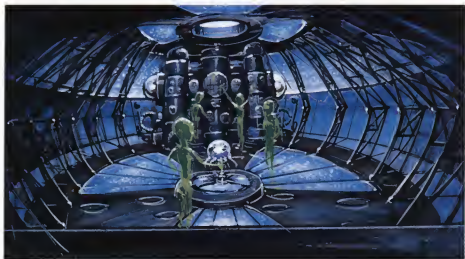


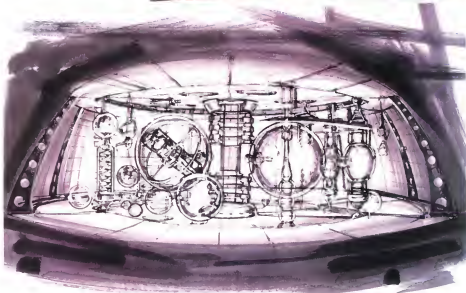
# MARS ATTACKS!

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(This page and opposite): Wynn Thomas described, and designed, the spaceship interiors as “clunky, low-concept scenery.”





In addition, Thomas notes, "Tim wanted to make the movie *retro*. He didn't want the props to be contemporary—he wanted them to have a sort of *non-period*. We were making a kind of period film without *emphasizing* that we were making a period film." He elaborates, "We didn't want to hit the audience over the head with 'isn't that a neat phone?' or 'isn't that a neat lamp?'"

Faced with these mandates, Thomas and his assistant, Erik Knight, began assembling a series of research folders for each set. There were more than 50 sets to be filmed, ranging from accurate reproductions of the White House Oval Office to the

# MARS ATTACKS!

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wildly fantastic interior of a Martian spaceship. "We'd go ahead and, for weeks, just hunt down every image that was related to the particular folder. It wasn't just visual images, it was color, texture, fabric—whatever I thought was appropriate.

"When the train starts running, there are several different facets that begin. There's the location scouting—to find all the different locales that are needed." Location manager Kokayi Ampah had already begun to scour the nation in search of practical representations for sites specified in the script.

Meanwhile, Thomas had other concerns to address. "The actual design process, for me, is like making a collage—you don't always know what you want when you're starting out. In this case, we had the cards to start with and all these images from earlier films. You're trying to put everything together, so that, like a good collage, all the pieces will make sense."

After mulling over the various research elements, including

**In pursuit of the ideal, model builders constructed these small-scale three-dimensional models as important tools in the creative process.**

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



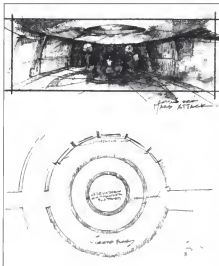
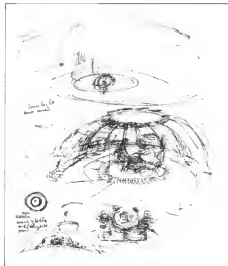
the early location choices, Thomas began drawing his first concept sketches. Since he was navigating the creative process with a new director, he found it useful to build small-scale models. "I felt that, initially, it would be easier for me to communicate with three-dimensional sets, so I did a lot of one-eighth-inch scale models."

Much of this early conceptual work focused on the design of the Martian manifestations. "I had drawn some initial rough sketches of flying saucer interiors, really rough black-and-white shape sketches. I would hand those to an illustrator along with all the research material we had used," Thomas explains. The artist would then render a full-color illustration of his preliminary drawings.

For the more stylized sets, Thomas found a wealth of inspi-

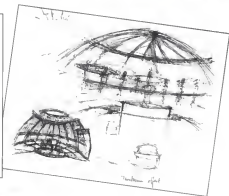
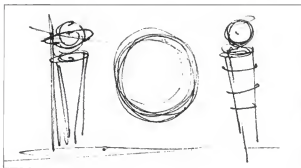
# MARS ATTACKS!

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(Top): One of Tim Burton's early sketches showed a Martian-eye view of the unsuspecting Earth. (© 1996 Tim Burton.)

(Below): Wynn Thomas's rough sketches show a simplicity born of early science-fiction films and a basic, circular approach.



ration in science-fiction adventure novels from the twenties and thirties. "At that time, the approach was to take realistic objects and just exaggerate them," he explains. "For example, a gigantic light tower would be based on the shape of a screw. You exaggerate it and put a bulb on top, and it becomes something else. They were taking objects that existed in their era and extending them.

"That became the time period from which I began drawing my ideas. So when you see the Martian spaceship, it's a version of what someone from another time thought a spaceship looked like—as opposed to the slick *Star Wars* style. It's a low-concept approach to designing a spaceship."

According to Thomas, his biggest design challenge was to create a sense of visual continuity that would connect the various locations, from the Martian control deck to a Kansas countryside, yet would still recall the movies from the fifties and sixties. "That was hard to do with so *many* different looks together in one picture," he explains. "A lot of the choices we made were meant to evoke our sense of memory of what those times were like and of those movies."

The results would lay the groundwork for all that was to follow.

## MARTIAN ERGONOMICS

Once a visual direction was established for each element of *Mars Attacks!*, the production art department swung into action with a team of set designers, storyboard artists, and draftspeople to bring the creative ideas to three-dimensional life. The design team included supervising art director James Hegedus, art director John Dexter, assistant art director Jann Engel, and set designer Richard Berger, all under production designer Wynn Thomas's guidance.

Thomas's initial drawings were reviewed and approved by Burton. Then, under the direction of Hegedus and Dexter, model builders began constructing small-scale three-dimensional replicas based on Thomas's rough designs.

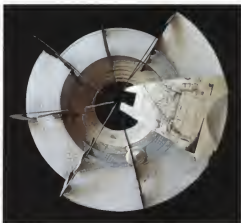
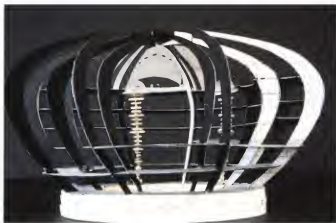
James Hegedus came to the project having served as visual effects art director for director Joel Schumacher on *Batman*

Forever and as art director on the fantasy adventure *Jumanji*. Earlier in his career, he had worked as an art director and designer for Apogee Productions, the company founded by visual effects maestro John Dykstra, who had supervised the groundbreaking imagery of *Star Wars*.

Hegedus's role was to ensure a smooth collaboration among all the individuals involved, including the stop-motion-animation team (during the early days), the computer-generated effects team, and the set lighting, construction, and traditional-special-effects crews responsible for pyrotechnics (led by award-winning special effects coordinator Michael Lantieri). "Because all visual aspects of the film fall under the design category, there has to be a strong understanding among all elements," Hegedus explains. "When designing the set, you have to know what your needs are going to be so you integrate whatever considerations might be necessary."

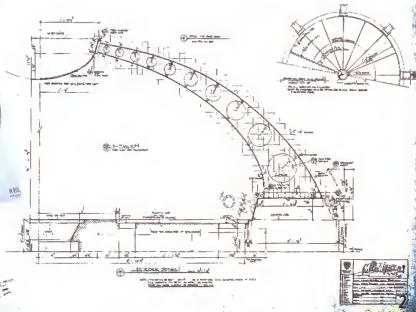
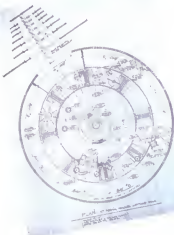
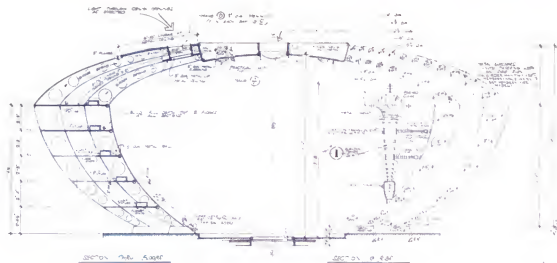
Even before Burton made the decision to change to computer-generated animation, the art department had already begun to address the physical requirements of the very labor-intensive design execution. Notes Hegedus, "The stop-motion work was a lot more complex and required a very close collaboration with the art department. We would have had to duplicate miniature versions of existing sets with the correct scale relationships. When you reduce the scale, it's not just the size of the

**Models (below) and blueprints (opposite) reveal the skeletal structure of the flying saucer and Thomas's circular, modular approach.**



# MARS ATTACKS!

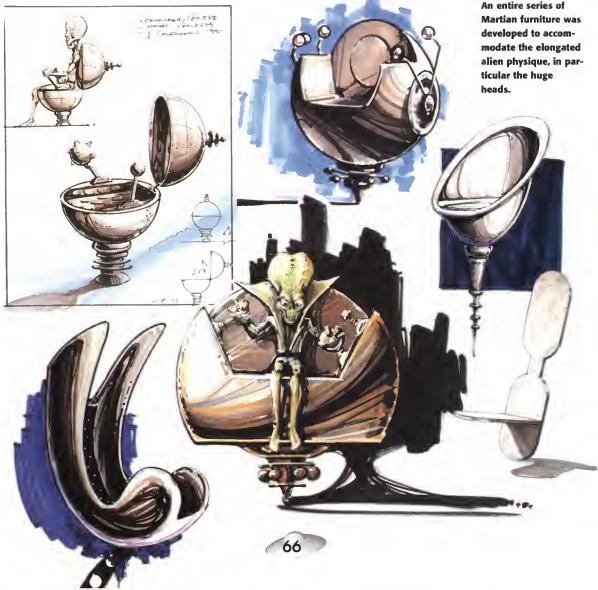
THE ART OF THE MOVIE



room, it's the textures, the spacing, everything—even the carpet has to be reduced. Everything has to be proportionate and lit in the same way." So the shift to computer visual effects simplified the work tremendously.

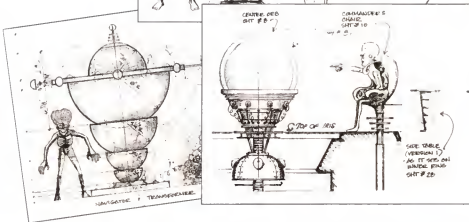
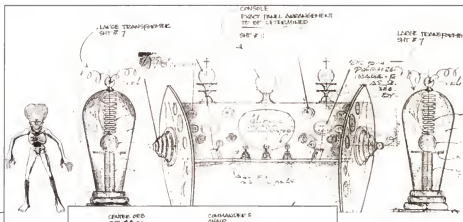
Wynn Thomas elaborates: "When we first started, working with stop-motion meant that whatever set we designed had to be modular. It had to be built so that a person could fit inside a piece of the set—a pie section—to reach the three-dimensional puppet. As a result, we began to work each time

**An entire series of Martian furniture was developed to accommodate the elongated alien physique, in particular the huge heads.**



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Blueprints and sketches alike depicted bizarre Martian technology and showed the relative size of the alien invaders.

with a circular shape with removable sections, so that the animators could move around the exterior of the set and get in, as well, to get closer to their puppets.

"Once stop-motion left and computer-generated images took its place, the physical requirements were no longer the same," Thomas notes. "But the use of the circle ended up becoming the image that we used throughout the picture—a circular world map in the War Room, the donut shop in Kansas, the globe in Art Land's Vegas office. The circular Earth shape became a visual image that we ended up using everywhere. In fact, I had to *stop* myself from designing any more round sets."

Hegedus describes how the size of the spaceship was initially determined using the Martian puppets. "We went through a lot of tests. The miniature character was made, but it was scaleless until you put something next to it."

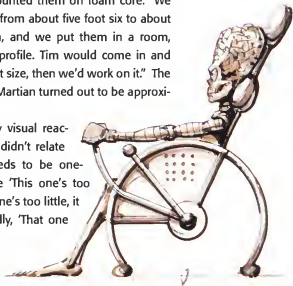


Because Burton recruited such a varied group of artists to work on the film, the artwork showed an amazing variety of creative approaches.

Following the same procedure the puppet makers had used to determine the correct scale of the Martians' anatomy, the art department enlarged photographs of the 15-inch models into full-size cutouts, then mounted them on foam core. "We had them range from about five foot six to about four foot eleven, and we put them in a room, front view and profile. Tim would come in and select what he felt was the right size, then we'd work on it." The optimum height for a full-size Martian turned out to be approximately five feet.

"It was based on a purely visual reaction," explains Hegedus. "Tim didn't relate in terms of 'This Martian needs to be one-eighth-scale.' It was more like 'This one's too big, too threatening,' or 'That one's too little, it wouldn't scare you,' until finally, 'That one is just right.'"

Once the optimum height for a Martian had



been established, then the interior of the spaceship could be designed. This led to a crash course in Martian ergonomics.

"Since the physiology of the creature is different from ours—an elongated body with a giant cerebellum—it had longer legs and longer arms and fingers," Hegedus says. "The design process for creating the spaceship furniture was exciting, because the control panels had to be built to their physique. You couldn't take a standard desk height and then reduce it to scale. We had to do it so their longer arms would look appropriate. In some early chair designs, we had humorously large head rests because their heads are so big, and the back of the chair had to be much narrower because they're so skinny."

When Industrial Light & Magic took over the animation of the Martian characters, the art department forwarded copies of all of their designs and blueprints for referencing by ILM's talented staff of miniature builders.

"The most exciting time is the initial conceptualization, when the first ideas are going around," adds Hegedus. "It's always a treat to try to intertwine design and visual effects to be seamless."

While the Martian spaceship was a critical element of the overall production design, it received a relatively small portion of actual screen time. Still, Wynn Thomas, James Hegedus, and the rest of the team faced equally daunting challenges when designing, drafting, and building the more than 30 additional sets that needed to be created for the live action sequences of the film.

No rest for the wicked.



# ALL THE PRESIDENT'S LITTLE GREEN MEN

**A**t 7:00 on the morning of February 26, 1996, principal photography began on Stage 6 at Warner Hollywood Studios, a Warner Bros. satellite facility located just the other side of the Hollywood Hills from the main lot in Burbank. *Mars Attacks!* construction crews had been laboring since mid-December to erect the sets designed by Wynn Thomas and his team. The production company had taken over all but one of the lot's seven soundstages for the first six weeks of filming.

Early on, Tim Burton had decided that the White House would figure as a primary locale. So several stages housed sets that re-created interiors of the White House, including the Oval Office, sitting room, and executive living quarters. To portray U.S. President James Dale, Burton needed an actor of impressive stature. He contacted Jack Nicholson.

But it wouldn't be

(Opposite): Wynn Thomas favored a minimalist style for the design of the War Room set. When illuminated from below, the floor reveals a circular world map. (Right): The President (Jack Nicholson), flanked by his press secretary (Martin Short), addresses a crowd of reporters.



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Storyboards depict camera angles on the Capitol, both before and after the alien assault.

enough to play the leader of the free world; Nicholson wanted to create a multirole tour de force. As Burton recalled from an early conversation, "I asked him if he'd read the script, and he said he thought it was funny. I asked, 'So, Jack, which part do you want to play?' and he replied, 'How 'bout *all* of them?'"

In actuality, Nicholson would portray two roles: the President and Las Vegas real estate hustler Art Land. Says Burton, "There's no better actor to go up against the Martians

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



The *Mars Attacks!* company on location in Washington, D.C. (Top): A military maneuver on the lawn of the Capitol. (Bottom): Director Tim Burton on the set with director of photography Peter Suschitzky.



than him. I was very lucky. Jack is the greatest, and to see him in *two* parts is amazing."

Oscar-winning actress Glenn Close signed on to star opposite Nicholson as First Lady Marsha Dale, who becomes obsessed with the idea of redecorating the White House. Fourteen-year-old actress Natalie Portman would play their angst-ridden teenage daughter, Taffy.

On screen, when the President first learns of the Martian landing, audiences meet his staff of closest confidants whom he

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



There was great mutual admiration among Burton's star-studded cast, including Glenn Close, Martin Short, and Jack Nicholson.



gathers to advise him on interplanetary policy. Pierce Brosnan is scientist Professor Donald Kessler, who recognizes that the aliens are of superior intelligence and wants to try to communicate with them. Press Secretary Jerry Ross, played by Martin Short, wants to parlay the invasion into a vote-getting windfall. Rod Steiger, as the pugnacious General Decker, wants to blow the Martians into oblivion, and this puts him at odds with Paul Winfield, the peace-minded General Casey, who argues that the occasion calls for an interplanetary summit.

Watching the assembled cast, Burton could not help but admire the conglomeration of talent. "All the actors are from

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Three-dimensional models of the War Room led to the completed set (bottom), which was constructed on a soundstage at Warner Hollywood.

(Top): President Dale poses in the full-size set for the War Room, as originally envisioned in an early model (bottom).



different genres, and it was very exciting and surreal. It was people you wouldn't normally see in a room together at the same time—kind of like a weird episode of *Fantasy Island*."

Glenn Close adds, "Everybody has such respect for one another. We were all there to have a good time, responding to what Tim wanted and cracking a lot of jokes." The crew and other cast members paid homage to Jack Nicholson as the nation's chief executive by playing "Hail to the Chief" over a loudspeaker every time he walked onto the set. A bow or

# MARS ATTACKS!

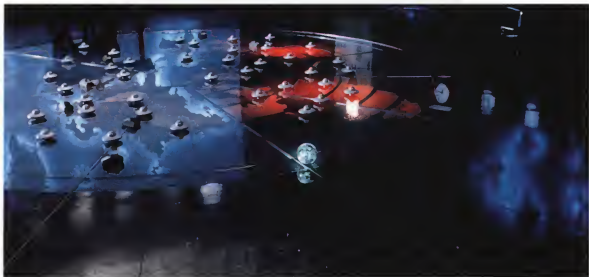
THE ART OF THE MOVIE

curtsy was optional—as Close noted, “Well, he *is* the king—of Hollywood!”

Many of the White House sets were designed to be historically accurate, right down to the hand-painted portraits of presidents that lined the walls of the foyer. One scene, in fact, called for a set that would re-create the President’s most sacred den of power—the War Room. After the Martian crisis has escalated to a full-blown onslaught, President Dale holds an emergency



(Top): Tim Burton sets up a shot with actor Rod Steiger in the role of General Decker. (Bottom): The tactical map shows the positions of the enemy spacecraft.



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

Tim Burton takes a moment between takes with actor Pierce Brosnan (left), producer Larry Franco (second from right), and producer's assistant Alec Kamp (far right).



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



The aliens unleash an attack on the members of Congress, leaving only charred skeletons in their wake and forever ending the debate over term limits.

meeting with General Decker and other surviving chiefs of staff.

According to production designer Wynn Thomas, "Part of the problem with designing a war room in any movie is that the best one ever done was probably in Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove*, so any designer who tries to design his or her own war room is going to be competing with that image. It was a model of simplicity. As a designer, I couldn't help but be intimidated by that."

Thomas maintained the ideal of simplicity, borrowing different elements of spartan design. "I found a whole series of futuristic architecture that had these wonderful blocky square stone shapes, and I had an idea to have a circular floor map that's lit from below," he explains. "I had shown Tim an image of an old war room that was just a huge map, and he really responded to that."

The resulting set was a study in minimalist design. The President would preside over the assembled war chiefs, gathered in a circle around a floor map of the world, with toy tanks used to illustrate the military's futile advances against the Martians.

War shows no mercy to man's best friend.



Burton felt he was entitled to take a bit of license with the design of this set, and at the same time took an opportunity for revenge. "I went to the White House to tour it once," says Burton, laughing. "We asked to see the War Room, but they wouldn't show it to us. So I just had to make it up."

## ASSAULT ON WASHINGTON

After a month and a half of filming on soundstages at Warner Hollywood, the production company then set off on the often erratic adventure known as *location filming*. The first stop on the *Mars Attacks!* road show was the District of Columbia, where the company would film exteriors for the assault on the nation's capital. A core group of approximately 70 production personnel from the various departments—including camera,

props, makeup, hair, wardrobe, and set decorating—was spirited from Los Angeles to join roughly 100 local crew people hired from the D.C. area.

Leaving the warm, dry, and relatively predictable environment of the soundstage is always a leap into the unknown. As if to drive the point home, the film crew was baptized on its first day on location with 45-degree temperatures and rain. Nonetheless, they captured establishing shots of all the Washington landmarks—including the White House, the Washington Monument, and the Mall. The story called for a massive scene to be staged in front of the Capitol as the Martian ambassador addresses Congress inside (interiors had already been filmed in Los Angeles), while General Decker and his troops stand watch outside. The production staff assembled an impressive display of military strength with 100 assorted army personnel—a sea of howitzers, Jeeps, and tanks—in addition to several hundred spectators all gathered at the foot of the lawn facing the Capitol.

Franco and Kokayi Ampah found themselves negotiating with three different branches of government—the department of parks and recreation, the local city police, and the federal police—each responsible for its own stretch of the territory that was to be included in the one scene. The result was a delicate navigation between the three jurisdictions, and, with only a few setbacks, the scene was filmed.

A part of the story also takes place in a working-class neighborhood of D.C., where single mom Louise Williams, played by Pam Grier, works as a city bus driver to support her two teenage sons, Cedric and Neville. “You can’t do much stylistically with the monuments in Washington, D.C.,” Wynn Thomas observes, but he *was* able to introduce a great deal of color and design into some of the other scenes filmed in the city.

“The choices that were made with the residential neighborhoods were important,” Thomas comments. “We scouted and scouted, and Tim kept rejecting one location after another.” He recalls the triumph of discovering a district in the city’s northwest region. “We finally found a whole row of houses that had

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



A condemned Washington, D.C., building shows three stages of motion picture development: (top) an artist's rendering, (middle and bottom) the original structure, and (opposite) the building dressed for filming.



the same weird, quirky look. Throughout the film, we were trying to use broad, bright colors where we could, and Louise lived in a red house with red walls on the inside—a red, red house with gables—it was very Tim Burtonish. When I saw this neighborhood, I knew."

Thomas was also able to infuse an amazing degree of color into a condemned building located on the corner of 4th and Massachusetts. A fire had destroyed the facade of the building, and despite its obvious state of ruin, the building's status as a historical structure had



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



protected it from demolition. Burton selected the location for a postapocalyptic scene where the inhabitants would go about clearing the rubble left in the wake of the alien attack. The set was painted with bright hues, and vivid articles of set dressing were scattered, creating a whimsical image akin to an open-faced dollhouse.

And where there are dollhouses, there are dolls....



# THE MARTIAN GIRL

**I**ronically, Tim Burton developed one of the film's most memorable characters from a new card that was included in the 1994 reissue. Originally illustrated by artist John Pound as cover art for an issue of the comic book series, card 76 featured a Martian lifting off its disguise—that of an attractive human female—to reveal its alien visage.

Fascinated by the juxtaposition of two images—a blond beauty, and a bulging green brain and bloodshot eyes—Burton created a similar character for the film. “This was very much in the spirit of the sixties kind of sci-fi movies I was trying to re-create. I remember always liking those movies where there was some sort of weird alien girl, and I just redesigned it from the card a little bit so it had a slightly different feel.”

In the story, the Martian leader would dispatch an agent to infiltrate the White House. The alien would be assigned to gain access to the private quarters of the President and First Lady by seducing the President's womanizing press secretary, Jerry Ross (Martin Short). Ross wouldn't stand a chance against the Martian-manufactured femme fatale, whose physical statistics were

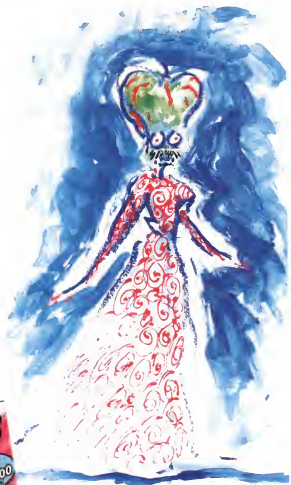


As early sketches reveal, Burton's concept for the Martian girl proved whimsical, voluptuous, and macabre. (© 1996 Tim Burton.)

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

The director's original artwork was inspired in part by a Mars Attacks comic book cover. (Sketch © 1996 Tim Burton, comic art by John Pound.)



lifted straight from a *Playboy* centerfold. When Ross tries to take advantage of the seemingly docile beauty, she quickly disposes of him.

With all the other aliens being created via computer-generated imagery, the Martian girl would hold the distinction of being the only Martian played by a live actor. Burton cast actress and former model Lisa Marie, who had appeared in *Ed Wood* as horror film seductress Vampira.

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

Actress Lisa Marie's dramatic look required over seven hours of hair and makeup transformation each day before she was ready for the set.



Lured by the Martian spy's obvious attributes, press secretary Jerry Ross (Martin Short) was moved to woo her—with dire consequences.



After collaborating with Lisa Marie to develop the look of the character, Burton began sketching their concept of a voluptuous blonde with an elaborate beehive hairdo and a form-fitting gown, a sort of Marilyn Monroe meets *The Bride of Frankenstein*. He created a series of drawings and paintings of the character in her tight dress with red-sequined cosmic swirls.



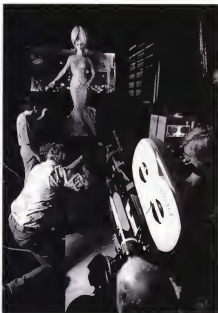
As costume designer Colleen Atwood recalls, the design and fabrication of the Martian girl's dress was one of her first efforts on the project. "Because it was a character created by Tim, based on his drawings, the first step was to figure out how to make the costume." Atwood, who received an Oscar nomination for her work on *Little Women*, had previously collaborated with Burton on *Edward Scissorhands* and *Ed Wood*.

Burton and Lisa Marie wanted the gown to be reminiscent of the work of artist Alberto Vargas, whose trademark "Vargas Girl" for many years exemplified the American ideal of statuesque beauty. His early paintings were World War II pinups, and later ones appeared in the pages of *Esquire* and *Playboy*.

Working with textile artisans, Atwood created the completely hand-painted and hand-stitched gown. To bring the character to life in all her buxom glory, Atwood also had to design and build

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Lisa Marie's gown was so form fitting, the actress was required to rest on a slant board between takes.



a foundation that would amplify the actress's endowments to *extreme* proportions. It was a particular challenge to conceal this foundation under the semitransparent fabric.

Lisa Marie's chiseled features were heightened with dramatic makeup created by makeup artist Paul Starr: her eyelids, colored a celestial blue, hovered above candy-apple red-painted



lips. The formidable beehive wig, teased to impossible heights by hair designer Danilo, completed her striking appearance.

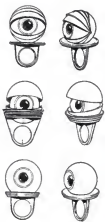
No Martian would go out without her own handy firearm. So property master Jerry Moss outfitted the character with the Martian equivalent of a pearl-handled .22-caliber pistol. Moss, whose previous credits include *Jurassic Park* and *Congo*, had already designed full-size ray guns. When director Burton broached the idea of a feminine version, Moss recalls, "It was a total Tim Burton design. He drew three circles on a piece of paper and said, 'Something like this.'" The result was a simple piece made of three spheres of increasing size, dubbed "the ball gun."

Moss took the concept one step further to create a matching handbag, perfectly contoured to conceal the ray gun. "We decided to design a little hard-shell bag to go around the gun. Our prop builder, Tom Homshire, designed the gun so that the handle would collapse and fit in the case. Colleen Atwood put a gold chain on it and red sequins to match the dress."

Unable to conceal Martian breathing apparatus in her scanty disguise, the Martian girl chews a special gum that enables her to survive in Earth's atmosphere. Although it would only be seen for a moment on screen, Jerry Moss and the property department invested a significant amount of time and effort into getting it just right. According to Moss, "It needed to look like a standard stick of gum, only Tim wanted it to be bright

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



(Right): Special effects makeup artist Shane Mahan designed the prosthetic face piece that simulated a part of the Martian girl's human disguise being ripped away. (Top): The spy ring offered the Martians in the space ship a bird's-eye view.



blue—which doesn't exist. We actually manufactured sticks of blue gum, using dyes that wouldn't stain the actress's mouth when she chewed it."

Moss continues, "Then I realized she's got to pull the gum from somewhere, so we designed a gum wrapper with some weird foil that's got a holographic pattern on it."

Another prop created specifically for this character was an

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



**Industrial Light & Magic** composited a computer-generated Martian head on top of a live actress's body.

eyeball ring with a hidden camera that transmits images back to her superiors. Explains Moss, "It was a massive effort, this nickel-size globe on top of a thin, delicate ring." The eyeball had to have complete mobility to take in a full range of images, and the challenge was in hiding the elaborate wiring that was required to work the movement of the eye. "We taped the wires to her arm, down the inside of her dress, so that we could hide down at her feet—one of us to watch the motion of the iris, another to operate the controls," Moss recalls.

Finally, Burton wanted the female Martian to have a distinc-



tive *motion*—an otherworldly air that would tip the audience to the fact that this was no ordinary girl. Lisa Marie worked with movement coach Dan Kamin to help her develop a quirky, almost reptilian motion. Kamin had previously worked with actor Robert Downey, Jr., to perfect his Academy Award-nominated performance as Charlie Chaplin in the biographical film *Chaplin*.

And when the need arose for her to mimic the otherworldly glide that propels the computer-generated Martians, the actress was pulled on a small dolly. This yielded the effect of a floating movement.

With the character of the Martian girl, Burton gave a wink to the tradition of the sixties sci-fi films that always provided a little feminine titillation amid the spaceships and action-packed excitement. Says Burton, “I remember the younger kids in line were going to see the Martians, and the older kids were going to see the girls—a little something for everybody!”



DONUT  
WORLD

# THE HEARTLAND ABLAZE

**A**fter completing filming in Washington, D.C., the *Mars Attacks!* crew relocated to the tall grass plains of Kansas—the land where the buffalo once roamed.

The screenplay was very specific in its description of Perkinsville, Kansas, a small town that would contrast sharply with the urban settings of Washington, D.C., and Las Vegas. On a scouting trip to the region, Wynn Thomas fell in love with the town of Burns, Kansas, located approximately 40 miles northeast of Wichita, with an official population of 225 (although Mayor Jack Bruner notes that the number is actually closer to 280).

For Thomas, the Burns location evoked the strong emotions that the *Mars Attacks* cards initially inspired in him. “One of the things that struck me about the trading cards was that the Martians were always destroying images that we are very familiar with—the White House, the Golden Gate Bridge, and all the other landmarks,” he explains. “We tried to choose locations that were very *iconic*. The clearest example is the Kansas location.

“When you think of the heartland of this country, you think of a very flat terrain with a grain elevator,” Thomas continues. “We lucked out because there also happened to be a cemetery nearby, which served our purposes for the picture.”

Perkinsville, Kansas, is the home of the Norris family. As

The production team transformed the skyline of Burns, Kansas, with the addition of a 26-foot custom-built donut.

Richie Norris's parents, Glenn and Sue-Ann, were portrayed by veteran actor Joe Don Baker and O-lan Jones.



news of the Martian landing hits Perkinsville, we meet Richie Norris (played by Lukas Haas), a teenage slacker suffering from chronic boredom. Richie's only distractions from life in the family's trailer park home are his part-time job at the local donut shop and visits to his senile grandmother (Sylvia Sidney) at the Lawrence Welk Retirement Home.

Richie feels intensely isolated from his parents Glenn (Joe Don Baker) and Sue-Ann Norris (O-lan Jones), who seem better suited for a survivalist militia group than the PTA. The Norrises beam with pride when Richie's older brother, Billy-Glenn (Jack Black), rushes to join the army's effort to repel the Martian attack.

Thomas integrated his overall design concepts with the true look of Burns, to tie it in with the rest of the film. "As a designer, you're finding all these locations that have to work together with all your space stuff. So that's the challenge. One of the ways in which we tried to achieve that was the use of strong color.

"Look at the donut shop in Burns. It was orange, and the interior of the Norrises' home is all kinds of bright oranges and yellows. We even went in and painted the propane tanks in vivid colors so the palette would be appropriate for the film."

The most elaborate set built for the Burns location was the town's donut shop. Inspired by a famous Los Angeles donut

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Richie (Lukas Haas) dreams of a world outside of the family's trailer park home and his job in the donut shop.



shop of a similar design, Burton conceived Donut World as a modest-size bungalow with a two-story-tall chocolate donut on the roof.

The construction crew built the donut in pieces and transported it from Los Angeles on wide-load flatbed trailers. When assembled, the donut measured 26 feet in diameter and 10 feet thick with a 6-foot donut hole. To withstand the constant prairie winds, the donut was constructed of steel covered with urethane foam with a resin (not chocolate) coating.



(Top): An artist's rendering of Richie's hometown, Perkinsville. (Bottom): Pyrotechnics abound as Martians wreak havoc on the local trailer park.



Thomas notes, "Burns had all the classic American images that we think of when we think of the heartland. Then you put this L.A.-style donut shop in the middle of all that, and as a result, there's a kind of clash. It becomes a *Tim Burton* movie because there's a clash of these two very distinct images coexisting on screen."

The absurdity of this oversize confection was not lost on the inhabitants of Burns and its neighboring towns. Popular conversation among citizens of the area turned toward "blowing

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



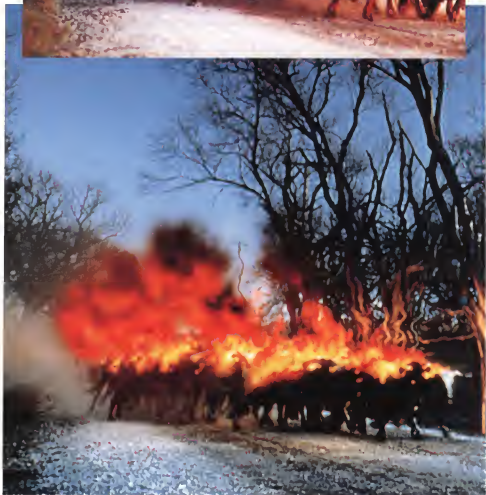
the donut,” referring to the detonation of the donut for a climactic scene.

During the alien attack on Perkinsville, a Martian flying saucer fires on the huge pastry, exploding it into a mass of flames. The scene was scheduled for a Saturday night, and shortly after sundown the population of Burns began to double, as sightseers from the area gathered to watch the highly anticipated detonation. Light rain and thunderstorms had been forecast for a couple of days, as special effects coordinator Michael

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

With the help of the film's conceptual art team, a Kansas camera crew, and the wizards at ILM, Tim Burton brought to life Topps trading card 22, "Burning Cattle."



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

Grandma Norris (Sylvia Sidney) listens to her phonograph in her room at the retirement home.



Lantieri and his pyrotechnics crew worked furiously to prepare the structure.

They had nearly completed their work, rigging the building with a full array of explosive devices, with multiple cameras strategically placed to film the explosion from several different angles. As the scheduled hour approached, the rain arrived with a vengeance, sending many of the sightseers running for shelter. The producers decided to wait, hoping the sky would clear. The building was already “hot” with explosive devices, and a delay in filming the explosion meant keeping the production company in Burns for an extra day. But the *Mars Attacks!* crew was out of luck.

An electrical storm moved in, illuminating the sky with a grid of lightning. Filming under sporadic rain is a nuisance, but a two-story TNT-laced metal structure on an otherwise open plain was a *serious* safety hazard. The company was forced to take cover, and eventually, after hours of waiting for the storm to pass, they had to scrap the evening’s shoot. After some scrambling and rearranging of the shooting schedule, they returned to the donut the following Monday, and on a clear but frigid night, blew up the gigantic pastry without a hitch.

Burton also filmed the opening scene of *Mars Attacks!* in the neighboring town of Lawrence, Kansas. Inspired by Topps

trading card 22, "Burning Cattle," the scene depicts a Kentucky farmer and his family watching as a flaming herd of cattle stampedes past.

The crew then moved to Wichita to film scenes at Grandma Norris's retirement home, where she spends her days listening to her favorite music.

Las Vegas, Nevada, was the next stop on the *Mars Attacks!* ride, and the weary crew was quite anxious to leave the windswept plains of Kansas for the place better known to many as Sin City.



STARDUST

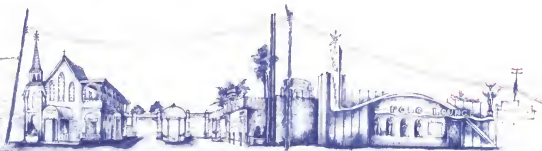
Enter the World

# VIVA LAS VEGAS!

(Opposite): The special effects crew led by Academy Award-winner Michael Lantieri set the Las Vegas Strip ablaze with a dazzling display of pyrotechnics. (Bottom): Wynn Thomas's team visualized this wedding chapel and the fictional Polo Lounge.

**F**rom the days of the earliest drafts of the screenplay, Tim Burton knew in his heart of hearts that his story had to include a Martian attack on Las Vegas. "Las Vegas is constantly being redone—this is a constantly evolving fantasy land," he notes enthusiastically. Besides, Burton adds with a wink to the tradition of the sixties, "These movies *always* have deserts."

Producer Franco explains the source of Burton's kitschy Vegas. "Tim sees Las Vegas like it was in the sixties, when he used to travel there on weekends when he was in school. His version of Vegas is bright colors, polyester leisure suits, and noisy, flashing lights."





# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Flying saucers unleash their death rays on the group escaping from a Vegas casino.



Ex-boxing champion Byron Williams (Jim Brown) is working the floor of the casino as a professional greeter as he tries to find a way to reunite with his estranged wife and kids, who live in Washington, D.C. The amply proportioned barmaid Cindy (Janice Rivera) spends much of her shift defending herself from the lewd advances of a rude gambler (Danny DeVito). Singer Tom Jones is the headline act on the casino stage.

As the aliens launch their strike on Las Vegas, these characters form an unlikely troop, combining their efforts to escape annihilation.

Tim Burton chose to film in a real-life casino, the Luxor. Its Egyptian motif was appropriately baroque for the film, but the production company had to endure many restrictions while filming on location in an operating establishment. During the week and a half of shooting in the casino's interior, the crew worked from eleven o'clock in the evening until eight o'clock in the morning, hours the casino determined were their *off* period.

According to Wynn Thomas, filming in a casino was also difficult from a design standpoint. "There's not much you can do to change the images that are already there." Thomas gives

A neon-sign graveyard provided a colorful backdrop for the Earthlings' escape.



credit to director of photography Peter Suschitzky for transforming the existing interiors. "Peter really performed magic there with all the lighting that he did. He gave the space a density, adding layers that it simply didn't have."

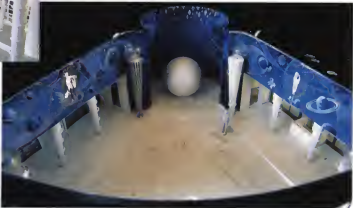
To film the Martian attack on the streets of Las Vegas, the production company had to withstand more monumental negotiations in order to secure permission to shut down traffic on the main thoroughfare, Las Vegas Boulevard. From midnight to six o'clock in the morning, the crew closed a stretch of the famed Strip to stage their Martian massacre. Crowds of extras and stunt personnel fled through the streets as the pyrotechnics team launched flames and explosions in their path.

Wynn Thomas and James Hegedus worked closely with the special effects crew to incorporate the film's overall mood into the destruction sequences. Says Thomas, "The initial drawings for these scenes came out of my department, because I felt that we needed to determine in advance where there was going to be a fire, smoke, or an explosion. This gave every department an opportunity to see what was going to happen, so that decisions didn't have to be made on the spot." Advance planning—combined with computer-graphic effects, special effects, and stunts—brought the scenario to frenetic life.

Other Vegas locales included the Yesco Sign Yard, an old neon graveyard that is the final resting place for the dead

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Art Land's office, representing the epitome of Las Vegas kitsch, occupied the circular observation deck of his Galaxy Hotel.

*Art Land's*  
**GALAXY HOTEL**  
*"The only one of its kind!"*

- OVER 18,000 LUXURY SUITES
- PROFESSIONAL SIZE SPORTS FACILITY AND SPA
- TOP-OF-THE-WORLD FIVE-STAR RESTAURANT
- ROTATING DINING ROOM
- BEST VIEW IN LAS VEGAS... IN EVERY ROOM!

*Landmark* **OPENING SOON!**

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

Erected on a soundstage, the Art Land office set featured an ornate celestial decor highlighted by a glimmering hand-painted mural of the heavens.

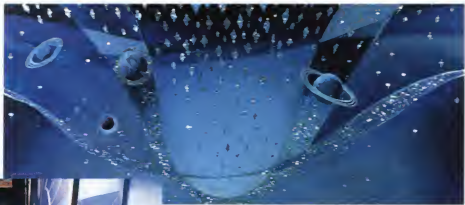


# MARS ATTACKS!

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monuments of Vegas's past, and a Las Vegas residence that would serve as the home of Art and Barbara Land. Wynn Thomas recalls the search for this location. "We were originally looking for a newer, upscale home. During one of our scouts, the location manager pointed out an area that was where the nouveau riche would have lived back in the fifties. When Tim saw that, it took us in a completely different direction."

The house fit perfectly with Burton's visual motif. "The man who originally lived in the house had moved out sometime



around 1980 and had just left everything as it had originally been," explains Thomas. "It was a bonus for us that the house had a swimming pool inside the living room."

## THE LANDMARK IMPLOSION

In the movie, Art Land dreams of opening his state-of-the-art Galaxy Hotel, dreams that are rudely thwarted by the Martian invasion.

Burton wanted to use a real-life hotel, the former Landmark Hotel, shut down and scheduled for demolition. With its round observation deck perched atop a narrow stem, the hotel's retro-futuristic architectural style nicely coincided with Burton's visual concept for the film.

The Landmark was opened in 1969 by reclusive billionaire Howard Hughes, and at 365-feet high and 31 stories, the structure was once touted as the tallest building in Nevada. Constantly beleaguered by financial difficulties, it closed in 1990 and was scheduled to be razed—to make way for convention center parking.

Larry Franco recalls, "When I came on to the project, one of the things that Tim was most concerned about was the Landmark implosion. Burton had stayed at the hotel on a few occasions and felt a genuine sadness at its destruction."

Burton elaborates nostalgically: "I had seen pictures of buildings go before, but there was something about seeing *this* that was really shocking. There's just no sense of history in this



# MARS ATTACKS!

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The legendary Landmark Hotel was reduced to rubble in a matter of seconds, but luckily the *Mars Attacks!* camera crew was there to record it.

country, and if I could have saved it, I would have." Unfortunately, he notes wryly, "Those parking lots must go up."

The next best thing, Burton decided, was to record the implosion on film. With 120 pounds of strategically placed dynamite, a professional demolition company flattened the building in a matter of seconds. Burton recalls, "We were there all night, and when it finally happened, it was so depressing. It was like seeing an animal die."

The exterior footage from the Landmark implosion would be edited together with interior scenes that had been shot in Los Angeles. To create a smooth and realistic edit, the manner in which the building crumbled actually dictated the design of the set that was built on an L.A. soundstage. Supervising art director James Hegedus recalls: "We established Art Land's office on the bottom tier of the two-tiered donut shape, with the saucer shooting it out at the base." When the implosion occurred, he continues, "We thought it would fall like a tree being chopped down, straight over. Instead, it sheared right down the center, and then the whole thing collapsed probably seventy-five feet before it began to fall over."

Thomas and staff had to devise a way to achieve the same feeling with the Art Land set, using a 40-foot background photo of the Vegas skyline to hang outside the windows of the L.A. set. "Instead of moving the entire set, which would be very expensive, I would move elements *outside* the set and explode the windows. That way, it would look as though the building was collapsing. Tim wanted the destruction to be bigger, at which point we designed the floor so that it could rise and sink and then fall."

The decor of the room itself was quite stunning. "In the script, it's described as an office, but I decided that it was an opportunity to do something a little more stylistic—which I think was appropriate for the character," Thomas explains.

He describes his concept for Art Land's office as that of an ornately designed room, decorated with celestial blues and glittering orbs. The over-the-top style of this set fully represents Thomas's philosophy of production design: "Good design will only support an actor's character. Between Art Land's office and

the location that was chosen as his home, I think you get a *definite* sense of who this character is."

## VEGAS FASHION FILE

The flash and attitude of Las Vegas served as a perfect backdrop for some of the film's most outlandish costumes, as designer Colleen Atwood explains. The ultra-retro look of her costume design evolved quickly through early discussions with the director. "With Tim, it's all there in his mind, so you just show him things, get his reactions, and run with it. Because I've

(Left): Art Land, Las Vegas king of kitsch. (Right): Byron Williams, casino greeter. (All costume sketches in this section by Robin Richesson.)



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

The ladies...

(Top): Barbara Land favors New Age relaxed style. (Below): First Lady Marsha Dale, conservative at all times of the day.



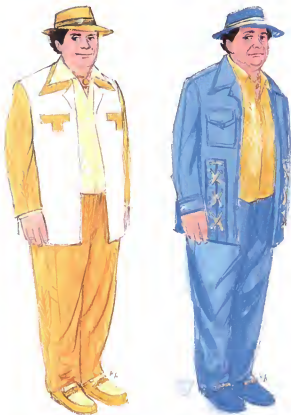
# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

TV fashion host  
Nathalie West shows  
off styles that turn  
heads...even in  
scientific circles.



The rude gambler: a fashion nightmare.



worked with him before, that process goes rather quickly. Then, it was just a matter of waiting for each person to be cast and figuring out how they worked within the parameters of that look. We started out organizing different color palettes for different faces, and as the movie went on, certain base colors carried through because of the cards.

"It's mostly a late fifties, early sixties concept for visual design—embellished with regionalities," Atwood continues. "Vegas is a fantasy place, and it was definitely the place to push the envelope as far as we could with color and design."

**ART LAND:** "In his discussions with Tim about playing the dual role of Art Land and the President, Jack said he thought Art Land should be sort of Western. Tim and I started talking about Nudie's, a famous Las Vegas Western-

wear designer that created really ornate stuff, like Roy Rogers's clothes in the fifties. We had the guys that used to sew for the store Nudie's make all of Jack's clothes. We used some of their classic Western patterns and mixed in our own stuff like flying saucers."

**BARBARA LAND:** "Before Annette Bening was cast, I had a pretty good vibe on who Barbara Land was. She was an ex-showgirl gone a little blowsy, and I wanted her clothes to be vulnerable, very soft, and feminine. I always liked the idea of a bit of Eastern influence in her wardrobe, with a lot of Indian fabrics and mandarin collars."

**RUDE GAMBLER:** "When Danny DeVito became the rude gambler, I knew I could really go for it. He's so great to dress—there were no holds barred. He was a doll because he really *worked* his costume."

**CINDY** (barmaid) and **BYRON WILLIAMS:** "Cindy was a one-costume gal, which was determined by the casino location where she worked. We were creating our own Egyptian thing, so I looked at old, cheesy movies set in Rome and Egypt."

"The colors of her costume played off what Jim Brown wore as the casino greeter, because they were both working in the same place."

**TOM JONES:** "Tom Jones was tricky, because he's such an icon. He normally wears black, but I was able to get him into a little bit of color, and then we tailored it. I ended up completely dressing his band, so that worked well."

**BACKGROUND EXTRAS:** "The hair and makeup people are very much a part of the costume design, even though they're a separate department. They really contributed to the whole look of the movie."



# MARTIAN BYTES: COMPUTER ANIMATION TAKES THE STAGE

## **E**ENTER INDUSTRIAL LIGHT & MAGIC

Prior to joining Tim Burton on *Mars Attacks!*, producer Larry Franco had just completed post-production on the fantasy adventure *Jumanji*, which made extensive use of computer-generated wizardry and character animation done by Industrial Light & Magic (ILM). "When I saw some of the *Mars Attacks!* stop-motion tests, I thought, That's not too different from some of the early stages of the animal animation in *Jumanji*. Before the computer animators add the motion blur, it kind of looks like stop-motion."

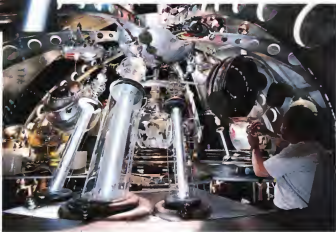
So Franco decided to take a chance and asked Burton if he would be willing to consider this medium. Burton agreed, and Franco quickly contacted his colleagues at ILM, including *Jumanji* visual effects producer Mark Miller and computer graphics supervisor Jim Mitchell.

The ILM creative team was wildly enthusiastic about the opportunity to collaborate with Tim Burton. Mark Miller, who would serve as visual effects producer, recalls: "Larry Franco asked us to put together something to show Tim what the possibilities were, using 3-D computer graphics. Tim had apparently seen *Toy Story*, and although he was impressed by the technology, he didn't like the plastic look of the toys. We

As proved in this scene starring the alien ambassador, ILM expanded their state-of-the-art mastery in three-dimensional character animation via the creation of all the Martian characters in the film.

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



(This page and opposite): Following Wynn Thomas's original designs, ILM model builders completed construction of a variety of bizarre Martian artifacts, including a spaceship that would be used for filming background plate shots. Puppets were frequently used as "stand-ins" for the computer-generated characters slated to be added later. (Left): Model project supervisor Charlie Bailey.

brought him up to ILM and showed him a lot of footage from *Jumanji* and *Jurassic Park* that showed what kinds of textures and naturalistic feel we could achieve."

They took a month to create a higher-resolution test with a more detailed Martian placed in a real background. Some sound was added for polish. Miller continues, "We took an old background plate from another movie that had some action going on in it and threw some Martians in there. We even added a flying saucer."

Burton explains the process by which he came to approve the new direction. "Originally, I wanted to do the film with stop-

# MARS ATTACKS!

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motion animation because I love it. Because I grew up with Ray Harryhausen movies, and I'd worked with it on *Nightmare before Christmas*, my original thought was to do it that way." But Burton was open to viewing ILM's proposal, and he describes his reaction at his first viewing of the computer-generated Martians. "When I first saw it, I was amazed. Every type of animation has a different vibe, and it's not something that you can really analyze or verbalize. But there was some-



ILM personnel include (above) Charlie Bailey, (above right) Chief modelmaker Steve Gawley with model maker Eben Stromquist.

(Right): Gawley compares the model to its original blueprint.

# MARS ATTACKS!

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In addition to their animation team, ILM's crew included a talented group of sculptors, illustrators, and model makers. The results of their work covered a broad range of subject matter, human and otherwise.



thing about the computer medium that seemed to work with these characters, because they were all the same, because they had a certain quality in their movement.

"Also, because we needed so many of them," adds Burton, "that would have been much more difficult with stop-motion. To animate ten of them in a room would have been a much more difficult task." Upon viewing ILM's animation demonstration, Burton immedi-



# MARS ATTACKS!

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**The ILM modelmakers.**  
(Top, left to right):  
Chief modelmaker  
Richard Miller, Chuck  
Wiley, Steve Walton.  
(Middle): Charlie  
Baker, Danny Wagner,  
Miller, Chief model  
maker Jon Foreman,  
Eben Stromquist.  
(Bottom): Lisa Smith.

ately became convinced that this was the right medium to pursue.

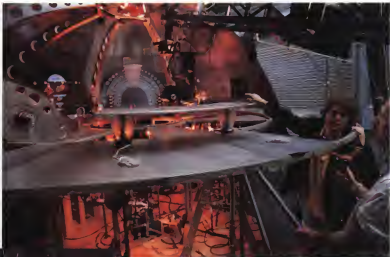
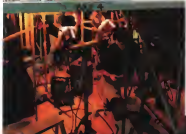
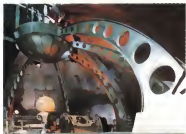
As a tremendous bonus, the switch to computer animation would permit more realistic interactivity between the Martians and the live-action elements surrounding them. It also enabled Burton to film in the wide-screen format known as anamorphic, which better highlighted the large-scale action.

The team at ILM was thrilled to learn they had landed the job of animating the Martians. Jim Mitchell would serve as visual effects supervisor for the project, responsible for the creative content of all work generated at ILM. Mitchell most recently was visual effects co-supervisor on the Arnold Schwarzenegger film



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



(Above): Visual effects director of photography (D.P.) Pat Sweeney.



(Top): Visual effects supervisor Jim Mitchell (left) and Pat Sweeney (right). (Above, left to right): Pat Sweeney, Chuck Wiley, art director John Dexter, and production designer Wynn Thomas view the saucer. (Left): Model project designer Charlie Bailey literally gets into his work.



(Above): Dexter, Bailey, Thomas, and Wiley examine every detail of the Martian craft. (Above right, left to right): Modelmaker Rodney Moran, Mitchell, Wiley, Thomas, and Bailey. (Right): No detail went unnoticed as model makers pursued their craft. (Pictured, left to right): Modelmaker Richard Miller, visual effects director Mark Moore, Wynn Thomas, John Dexter, Charlie Bailey, and Jim Mitchell.



Eraser and previously played an integral role in the creation of the computer graphics imagery in *Jurassic Park*, *Death Becomes Her*, and *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, each of which received Academy Awards for Best Achievement in Visual Effects.

Says Mitchell, "Originally, we thought we'd just get the exterior shots and the Martians would still be stop-motion for the interiors. I was hoping all along that we'd get this. We were really excited about the opportunity to work with Tim, with his animation background."

Mitchell continues enthusiastically, "We've come very far in the past few years, in being able to build and animate any character we want. We've been doing a lot of dinosaurs and other animals, and I was really ready to get into something a little more *strange*. With the Martians, we got to have fun."

# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

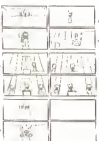


Burton described the Martians as having the attitude of “bad, hyperactive teens.” ILM brought that attitude to life on screen.



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



ILM produced its own storyboards for much of the action involving the invaders.



# MARS ATTACKS!

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**Martian soldiers storm the White House and open fire.**

ILM went to work on the project as soon as the decree came down, and with only little more than a year until the film's scheduled release—December 1996. Explains Mitchell, "As with stop-motion or any other kind of animation, we had to start *long* before filming began. We have to have the characters and the design before we could even think about animating.

"We build a model, start painting it, design a special program where we can paint the 3-D model, paint the front of its head, the back of its head. We create the look, whether its sur-

# MARS ATTACKS!

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face is wet looking on just the brain portion or the rest of the face. We build the armature, the joints for moving an arm or bending over, and then we have to put that armature into the model we're building. At that point, we can start animating."

Mark Miller describes the conceptual phases: "We discussed with Tim how these characters should move and did movement tests. We asked, were they reptilian, birdlike? We told him we could do shots without motion blur to make it more reminis-

**ILM's visual effects team completed the animation of more than 200 highly detailed effects shots under a very tight production timetable.**



# MARS ATTACKS!

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cent of stop-motion. Tim decided that if we had the capability to make them real, that's what we should do. He still wanted to pay homage to stop-motion, but he didn't want to put in intentional errors."

ILM's team included nearly 60 individuals at their Northern California-based facility. Twenty animators created the overall action and emotion of the animated images, 27 technical directors generated all the details of lighting and texture in the frame, and 10 match movers were responsible for re-creating the geography of the frame, matching the camera's perspective within the three-dimensional computer environment.

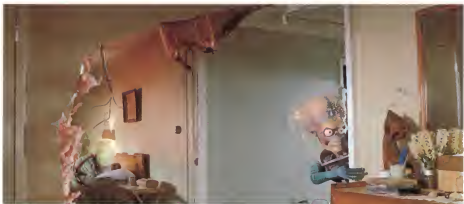
The move to computer graphics even gave Burton an opportunity to return to some of the design elements he had originally wanted. In the process of building—constructing the Martians as three-dimensional objects within the computer—the computer animators would be able to incorporate things that had been incompatible with the stop-motion puppet design.

The animation of the Martian leader's glittering red robe was a challenging technical hurdle for Jim Mitchell and his crew.



# MARS ATTACKS!

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While Grandma Norris (Sylvia Sidney) sits listening to her phonograph, the Martians assemble their giant ray gun to blow her to bits.





Burton's own sketch of Grandma and the giant ray gun. (© 1996 Tim Burton.)

Jim Mitchell recalls, "We were able to remodel our Martians a little. They were originally five foot two, but we cheated to five feet to make them a little smaller, a little skinnier. We designed our own version of the space suit, making it more contoured to their skinny shape." The ILM animators were also able to go back to the teardrop-shape space suit helmet that Burton originally wanted. The bulbous-brained puppets had required a dome-shape helmet that could be removed easily to adjust nuances of facial expression. With computer-generated Martians, there were no such limits.

ILM's animation supervisor on the project, David Andrews, created a series of storyboards for use by the rest of the team, illustrating with simple stick figures the placement of the Martians in the frame. As in traditional animation, Mitchell notes, "It helped to be on location and see the flavor of the movie, how Tim was directing the actors and everything. Tim really knows what he wants out of the characters, and Dave, Mark, and I went down to Los Angeles several times to discuss his ideas."

After the brainstorming sessions with Burton, the challenge arose to communicate the director's vision to the various animators. "The hardest thing about animation is to translate someone's words into an image," observes Andrews, who

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describes the overall look as “completely stylized animation with a photoreal look.”

“Tim likes to comment on the performance issues, and it’s very interesting to work with a director who’s from an animation background,” Andrews continues. “He concerns himself

with animation issues like tempos and textures.”

Burton elaborates: “At the root of it, animation is animation. Each form requires its own special set of circumstances and expertise.”

## MARTIAN SPACESHIP REVISITED

ILM’s art director on the project, Mark Moore, was responsible for completing the designs begun by Wynn Thomas and art director John Dexter, taking into account any new elements necessitated by the change to computer graphics. Mark Miller explains, “We had twelve to fifteen model builders working at one time to get us up to speed. From the production art department, we received the shell of the spaceship and other half-finished pieces. We had John Dexter come up here and go over it with our model supervisor, Charlie Bailey, so we could unpack and decipher everything.”

When they joined the project, ILM received a partially com-

A ring’s-eye-view  
of Martin Short.



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

The model-shop crew poses with the completed space ship. (Front row, left to right): Danny Wagner, Charlie Bailey, Kevin Wallace. (Second row): Chuck Wiley, John Foreman, Richard Miller, Alan Peterson, Annie Polland. (Third row): Steve Gawley, Eben Stromquist, Rodney Morgan, Kate O'Neill. (Back): Pat Sweeney, Michael Olague.



pleted model of the Martian spaceship, originally designed for the stop-motion puppets. The model would instead be used to film the background plate shots to which computer-generated Martians would be added. Fully assembled, it measured approximately 25 feet in diameter, not exactly the usual concept of a *miniature*.

One of the first decisions facing the ILM crew was the scale of the model spaceship that, at approximately one-quarter scale, was originally designed to accommodate the stop-motion

puppets. Adds Miller, "If we didn't already have the shell and some of the beams and other big parts built, we might have attempted to build it in a smaller scale. It would have been easier to deal with and slightly less expensive to build."

Despite the extra effort dictated by the larger scale model, it turned out that it worked to their advantage. "The bigger the model, the better the production values can be. It makes it much easier to light the set to make it look real," Miller notes. "The fact that part of the spaceship had already been built forced our hand a little bit, but the end result is that it will look nicer."

So *Mars Attacks!* was ready to fly...or nearly so.



# WARNER DIGITAL JOINS THE TEAM

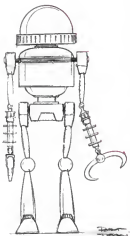
**A**mong the benefits the filmmakers enjoyed once they switched to computer-animated Martians was that they could now develop many visual effects sequences simultaneously. Since computer-generated animation is not a real-time process, certain sections of *Mars Attacks!* could be completed at ILM while others were being created elsewhere.

This gave Tim Burton and Larry Franco the opportunity to once again work with Michael Fink, a gifted visual effects supervisor who had collaborated with Burton and Franco on *Batman Returns*. Fink had supervised the creation of the first computer-graphic creatures in a feature film that would faithfully replicate existing, living beings—penguins and bats. This feat earned him an Academy Award nomination for Best Visual Effects.

Since the completion of *Batman Returns*, Fink had joined Warner Bros.' own visual effects division, Warner Digital Studios, as vice president and senior visual effects supervisor, and was available and excited about once again working with Burton and Franco, this time on *Mars Attacks!*. The filmmakers were able to make full use of this situation by assigning the creation and animation of the Martians to ILM, and giving the remaining shots, approximately 130 in all, to Warner Digital Studios.

For Fink, challenges abounded. "Unlike other films, where

(Opposite): An early computer-generated image of Warner Digital's Martian robot. (Left): One of the schematics used for "building" the robot in cyberspace.



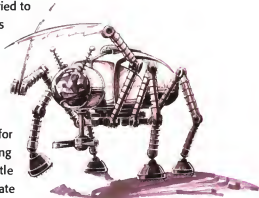


(Top and right): The invaders' towering robot evolved gradually from early painted concepts to the computer-built models. (Bottom): Martian machines come in many bizarre shapes and sizes.



the effects you create are entirely photorealistic and completely modern, *Mars Attacks!* has a very different kind of production design. What we tried to do was re-create the *feel* of the fifties science-fiction invasion-from-Mars kind of movies, but make it contemporary and modern, and completely photorealistic. It's a very fine line to walk."

Warner Digital was responsible for designing and animating all the flying saucers in the film. For the title sequence alone, they had to generate



# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE



Very early conceptual composites depicted a worldwide assault. (Above): Martians attacking the Taj Mahal. (© 1996 Tim Burton.)

two and a half minutes worth of saucer animation, as the legions of Martian spaceships depart the mother planet for Earth. Tim Burton notes, "They animated the flying saucers, which was very hard to do because they didn't have that much in terms of scale or detail. To take something like that and give it a texture, especially when you're creating it out of nothing, is difficult." To say the least.

The effects house also created the various scenes of worldwide destruction. Different effects techniques were used to complete these shots, including demolishing the scale models of France's Eiffel Tower and England's Big Ben. An in-house model shop built exact replicas that were exploded on film, and digital enhancements were added later. And even more challenging was the fact that, "In *Mars Attacks!*, there are no model



Warner Digital's flying saucer re-created the classic streamline design illustrated in the original trading cards.



(Top): Computer-generated fighter jets would be destroyed in midair by alien warships. (Bottom): Even Las Vegas would be rebuilt, byte by byte, by the computer architects.

shots that stand alone by themselves. They are all elements in shots that require computer-graphic additions, like flying saucers and death rays," Fink observes.

To help with the overall *appearance* of their animation, Fink and his animation team studied their own collection of sci-fi films of the fifties and sixties and reviewed the ever-present Topps trading cards. "We also looked very hard at quite a few of Tim's movies," Fink explains. "Tim is very consistent, and there are characters and motifs that have carried through from one film to another. We animated a Martian robot, and I had our animators look at the characters Edward Scissorhands and Jack

Skellington from *Nightmare before Christmas*, because there are things in the way those characters move and in their design that carry through into the robot."

The scene in question features a Martian in a robot chasing Richie Norris in his pickup truck down the streets of Perkinsville, Kansas. The robot, which Fink describes as "a two-legged army tank," was transported directly from the page to the screen. "We had the reference from the trading card [32, "Robot Terror"], and we also had a reference from Wynn Thomas, who had an illustrator draw a proposal for a robot. Based on these, we actually created a robot in our computer. Quite often, we'll actually sculpt a creature in three dimensions and then digitize it, but in this case, we started from scratch on the computer."

By the time they had built and designed a robot model, the production company was already in Burns, Kansas, to shoot the robot sequence. There, they filmed all the background footage, or plates. Through computer-generated prestidigitation, these would eventually include the robot running down the road chasing Richie, demolishing the trailer park, getting caught in the power lines, and, finally, crashing to the ground.

"We photographed all those plate shots and, as carefully as possible, measured the road, the camera position, and any other things we thought we would need to know in order to re-

Computer artists joined with pyrotechnic professionals to visit destruction on the cities of Earth, including Las Vegas and Washington, D.C.

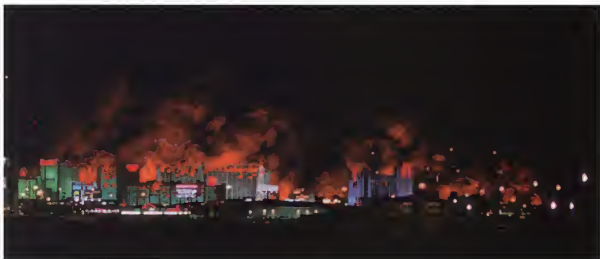


# MARS ATTACKS!

THE ART OF THE MOVIE

create that world in the computer. We re-created—with computer graphics—the power lines that the robot gets tangled in and the structures that tear down or that bend as he falls, so we had to decide where those things went,” Fink details.

“We took all the data and the background plates and brought them into our computers to re-create the environment.



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The desert landing sequence filmed outside of Kingman, Arizona. Actor Paul Winfield rehearses with an actor in a Martian suit, providing a visual marker for the computer-generated image to be added later by ILM.



Parallel with that, texture-map artists were working on developing the proper textures and contours that were painted on the surface of the robot."

The animators themselves accommodated details like shadows cast by the robot and the clouds of dust that erupt as the machine runs down the road. "The robot weighs about one hundred tons, so when its foot hits, it *must* shake the ground. We jiggle the camera a little bit and add the dust it would raise and the dents it would make in the concrete," Fink adds.

He concludes, "When we had all these elements fully integrated into the scene, then we called it a final and showed it to Tim." A sequence such as this, which lasts approximately 30 seconds on screen, required over three months of effort.

Warner Digital also created many of the effects featured in the desert landing sequence, in which the Martians first descend



The special effects crew detonated a series of fiery explosions.

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(Top): More fireworks from the pyrotechnics team. (Right): "Would someone please pass the sunscreen?!" (Bottom): Tim Burton discusses a scene with actor Jack Black.



upon Earth. Designated in the film as the desert of Pahrump, Nevada, the scene was actually shot in a dry lake bed 20 miles outside Kingman, Arizona. This was without a doubt the most logistically challenging portion of the shoot, with over 1,200 cast members, crew, and background extras shuttled to this remote location, braving extreme conditions of heat and wind.

It was a collaboration between the two visual effects houses. Warner Digital designed and animated the spaceship from which the Martian ambassador emerges. But the ambassador was animated by Industrial Light & Magic.

As the scene unfolds, the Martians are welcomed by assembled dignitaries, the military, and a mass of onlookers. A full-scale Martian offensive erupts as alien storm troopers spring from the flying saucer and open fire. Real helicopters were used in the scene, plus Warner Digital created computer-animated helicopters that would be destroyed by the Martian spaceship's death rays—sending them crashing into the terror-stricken crowd.

Scenes such as this required a finely orchestrated team effort with careful communication between the two houses. The situation also provided a highly sporting atmosphere, each team vying to dazzle the other with displays of their digital prowess. Tim Burton, of course, reaped the rewards of this spirited competition.

And so it was that, ironically, the Martians who started it all were the last to join the cast—once Warner Digital and ILM had added their brand of artistry to the mix. At that point, the visual effects specialists joined the legion of talented individuals who breathed life into Tim Burton's vision of *Mars Attacks!*

The invasion was truly begun.



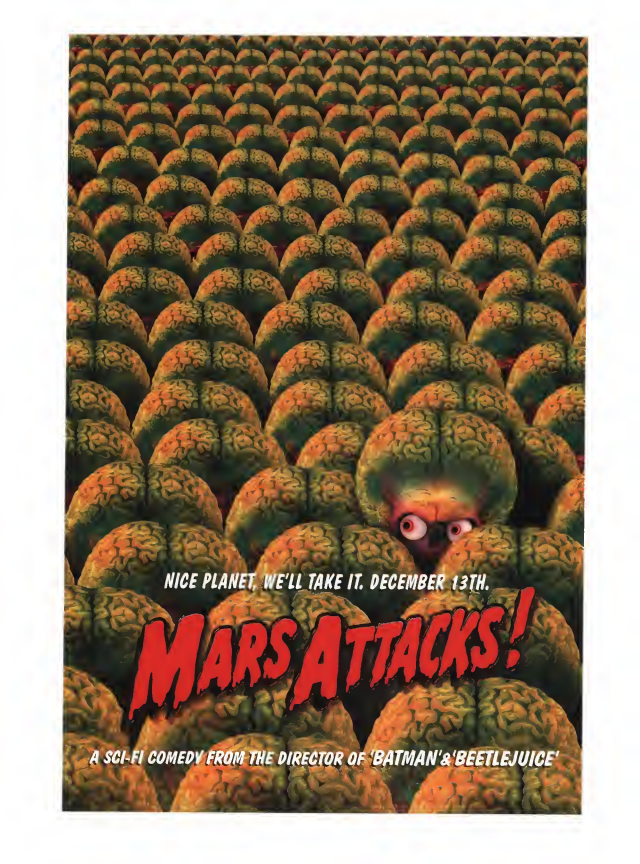
## AFTERWORD

Often, the whole is definitely greater than the sum of its parts, and nowhere is that more apparent than in the art of filmmaking.

For the creation of a motion picture cannot be accomplished by one person alone, no matter how multifaceted that one person may be. At every stage, there must be artists, leaders in their crafts, with a creative style they can bring to the table. And those styles must fit together smoothly if the end product is to achieve its full potential.

In the case of *Mars Attacks!*, the unique vision of Tim Burton would act as the catalyst and provide the base on which a legion of talented persons would layer their efforts. Because Burton had chosen such an amazing team of individuals, the result would turn out to be seamless, exciting, and extraordinarily imaginative.

Thanks to Tim Burton and his team, audiences will be treated to a macabre theatrical experience, and the art of the movie will never again be quite the same.

The image is a movie poster for 'Mars Attacks!'. It features a vast, repeating pattern of green, brain-like alien creatures. Each creature has a textured, brain-like surface with orange and yellow highlights. In the center of the lower half, one creature's face is visible, showing two large, white, staring eyes with black pupils. The overall color palette is dominated by greens, oranges, and yellows, with a dark background behind the creatures.

*NICE PLANET, WE'LL TAKE IT. DECEMBER 13TH.*

# **MARS ATTACKS!**

*A SCI-FI COMEDY FROM THE DIRECTOR OF 'BATMAN' & 'BEETLEJUICE'*

## TIM BURTON FILMOGRAPHY

(AS DIRECTOR, UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.)

ALL FILMS IN COLOR UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.)

VINCENT (1982); Walt Disney Pictures; black and white

HANSEL AND GRETEL (1982); Walt Disney Pictures

FRANKENWEENIE (1982); Walt Disney Pictures;  
black and white

ALADDIN AND HIS WONDERFUL LAMP (1984);  
Walt Disney Pictures

PEE-WEE'S BIG ADVENTURE (1985); Warner Bros.

BEETLEJUICE (1988); Warner Bros.

BATMAN (1989); Warner Bros.

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS (1990); 20th Century Fox;  
also producer

BATMAN RETURNS (1992); Warner Bros.;  
also producer (with Denise DiNovi)

TIM BURTON'S THE NIGHTMARE BEFORE CHRISTMAS  
(1993); Touchstone Pictures; producer only

CABIN BOY (1993); Walt Disney Pictures; producer only

ED WOOD (1994); Touchstone Pictures;  
black and white; also producer

BATMAN FOREVER (1995); Warner Bros.;  
producer (with Peter MacGregor-Scott) only

JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH (1996); Walt Disney  
Pictures; executive producer only



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR...**

Since 1991, Karen R. Jones has worked as a freelance film publicist, with feature credits including *Mars Attacks!*, *Virtuosity*, *Devil in a Blue Dress*, *Clockers*, *Menace II Society*, and *Geronimo: An American Legend*. A second-generation Los Angeles native, she studied French literature at Amherst College and New York University before pursuing her career in film.





***Cattle in flames!  
Las Vegas in ruins!  
A nation in panic!***

# **THE MARTIANS HAVE ARRIVED!**

When director Tim Burton turned his eye to the red planet, no one suspected. When he began to transport the gory, cult classic *Mars Attacks* from trading cards to silver screen, no one knew. But *Mars Attacks!* has proved to be one of Burton's most outrageous productions.

He wasn't alone. His coconspirators included illustrators, costumers, computer artists, model builders, a stellar cast of actors, and many other extraordinarily talented people. *MARS ATTACKS! The Art of the Movie* reveals the bizarre fruits of their labors, including

- Tim Burton's own initial concept sketches
- Production models and blueprints
- Storyboards outlining the movie mayhem
- Photos taken on the set and behind the scenes
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