

GREMLINS ★ STAR TREK ★ DUNE ★ RED DAWN ★ GHOSTBUSTERS ★ STARMAN ★ E.T.

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Reveals

**THE SPFX OF
GHOSTBUSTERS**

Making

GREMLINS

A Talk With
CHRIS WALAS

PLUS INTERVIEWS WITH:

**DREW BARRYMORE
HENRY THOMAS
DEFORREST KELLEY
CHRISTOPHER MANLEY**



An Interview with
**LILY TOMLIN
STEVE MARTIN**



GHOSTBUSTERS

"It's more a fun film, like the forties. There's no blood. There's no people turning inside out. We didn't want to put things on the screen that people can't look at."



ASSOCIATE PRODUCER:

By Randy and Jean-Marc L'Officier

MICHAEL GROSS

The world is on the brink of chaos. People are possessed by creatures from another dimension. Terror dogs stalk their victims. Ghosts transform into monsters. And it's all in fun!

Ghostbusters is the horror comedy hit featuring Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis and Sigourney Weaver in a romp which climaxes in a do or die confrontation to save the world.

Acting as Associate Producer, along with long time Ivan Reitman associate Joe Medjuk, was Michael Gross. As art

director for the *National Lampoon* magazine in its early years, Michael Gross became acquainted with Billy Murray, Dan Aykroyd and the rest of the *Saturday Night Live* gang long before SNL became the late Seventies king of comedy. It was inevitable that they would work together again.

BRINGING GHOSTBUSTERS TO LIFE

In the beginning was the script. The director saw it and knew that it was

good.

"Dan Aykroyd came to Ivan Reitman and said that he had a story which would be a perfect vehicle for him and Bill Murray," Gross recalled. "They both wanted Ivan to direct it. Ivan saw it as a concept that was fantastic. Most of the big scenes and the basic concepts from the original are still in the movie. But it has metamorphosized quite a bit from there.

"In less than two weeks of further conversations with Dan, they involved Harold Ramis to come in as a writer



(Left) Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis may be covered with marshmallow but they are the heroes of the hour. (Right) A ferocious devil dog. © Columbia Pictures



and third character in the film. Of course, they've all worked together before and they all work together very well. Harold has been a writer on almost all of Ivan's recent films. In less than three weeks, the team got together and was in full gear with a deal basically agreed to by Columbia.

"They started talking in the middle of May and by June 1st I was contracted and working," Gross recalled.

The picture had to go into high gear right from the start as they had barely a year to complete it. Columbia Pictures not only wanted it for the summer of '84, but they wanted to be able to release it *before* the Olympics were underway.

An associate producer's duties are defined differently from film to film. Since there were two associate producers on this film, they separated their duties for Ivan. "Mine were almost exclusively in the area of design and special effects," Gross explained.

"Once an art director is on, he has the responsibility for sets and the look of the movie on a large scale. Production designer John De Cuir is a great man and had no problems understanding that I'd also have a lot of input on the design of the creatures, etc.

"It all comes to what Ivan and I both

call a kind of contemporary, science fiction, indoor humor sensibility. This is something very hard to find if you just plug into people already in the film business. There's a contemporary thing going on that was reflected in *Heavy Metal*, in the *National Lampoon* and in other places which doesn't involve an entire industry. It's a sensibility. Ivan and I share that sensibility and he trusts me."

What Michael Gross is referring to is the concept of bringing fresh, new ideas to what would seem to be tired out concepts. Looking at things with a sharp new angle.

"If you were to take a lot of people in the film business and ask them to design ghosts, you could be a long time getting there. So what I immediately did was to put together a number of designers. We had some design work that had been done out of the country, in Canada, and we just started putting concepts together. What do the ghosts look like? What does a terror dog look like? What is this creature we're talking about? And of course the script was changing even as fast as we could work on it. But it was just to try and conceptualize what all this was about."

WANTED: EXPERIENCED GHOST MAKER

"Then," Gross continued, "we had to start storyboarding the film immediately." On top of everything else, they knew that they had a wide and extraordinary range of special effects and a very limited amount of time to bring

them off.

"The problem was," said Gross, "where were we going to go with it? I.L.M. couldn't take us. At that time, *Dune* was at Apogee, and not only that but it looked like *Dune* was going to spread itself all over town. We could have gone to people like Dreamquest, for whom I have a great deal of respect, but they really weren't big enough to take on a project of this scale. Plus, they recognized that there were effects in the film which, although they could have done them, it would have been their first time for that type. We also didn't know how much research and development there was going to be and we just didn't have the time."

It was at that point that word came through that Richard Edlund was leaving Industrial Light and Magic and taking a sizeable team with him. "So I talked to him, gave him a script and it all fell right into place. What happened then is that the shop that Edlund set up here is being financed by Columbia and MGM/UA jointly to do *Ghostbusters* and *2010*.

"But if that hadn't happened, where would we have gone? Frankly I don't know. There's a good chance that otherwise we would not have been able to make the film, at least on time.

"We then had the added benefit that a lot of the people that work for Edlund had worked for him in the past on other films, including *Poltergeist*. The advantage of having people like John Bruno (Visual Effects Art Director), for example, who has literally handled ghosts before, was a great benefit.



(Left) Harold Ramis, Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray and Ernie Hudson prepare for their greatest battle. (Above) Sigourney Weaver and Rick Moranis await the coming of Gozer. ©Columbia Pictures

Ironically, now, in the final cut of the picture, we have removed most of the ghosts."

VISUALIZING THE UNINVITED

While the script was metamorphosing, they had to continually be imagining what all of the 'things' would look like.

"It's easy to talk about a ghost, but then when you say that you want an original ghost... For example, in the film we have this thing called Onion Head (since cut from the movie). This is not a guy running around with a big onion for a head, but is a ghost. We had to decide on what he would look like.

"Another example is the terror dogs. At one point they were something running from Gozer's dimension. They were big, buffoon-like, silly, almost loveable animals. Not really loveable, because they were monsters, but stupid and drooling. Like demented dogs! Then at another point they became something that was kind of from after the dead. They were almost skeletal. But it wasn't until we reached the point in the script when we realized that these dogs were coming here with a purpose—to devour these people—that the concept solidified.

"But it solidified in the midst of a schedule that was so difficult that we were actually putting together the effects people to construct it while we were still trying to decide what it was. That kind of race was constant."

CREATING UNDER THE GUN: SCENE BY SCENE

Just to get the scenes locked down, the storyboarding had to begin much earlier than normal. "We were storyboarding even before we got the effects people on," Gross revealed, "which is not a great thing to do! It helps the director and everybody else to see just what the scene might be. But actually the effects people have to do the storyboarding. This is because what they in effect do is storyboard what they know they can produce."

When John Bruon, the Visual Effects Art Director, was brought on they had half the film boarded already. They had wanted to secure his services much earlier but he had been in France working on Cheech and Chong's *Coriscan Brothers* film.

"So John Bruno had to nearly start over and go reboard ninety percent of what we'd already done. Plus he had to board some original stuff that hadn't yet been done.

"There was some advantage to this, however. For instance, he was given a scene that played in a way that we liked already, so it didn't have to be totally conceived and thought of from scratch. It was just a matter of fixing it to make it work. So we didn't really lose by starting early. We did in fact gain because it enabled us to lay a scene down in front of Ivan so that he could see it. He cut some things because he looked at it and decided that he didn't really need them."

A lot of the special effects work that had been in the first draft of the script remained unchanged in the last two drafts. But some sequences were rearranged a bit.

"A character was added," Gross explained, "and other characters were changed. But the effects scenes, a lot of them, isolated as they were, remained in the film unchanged. So a lot of that boarding, even with the changes, wasn't lost."

A HORROR COMEDY

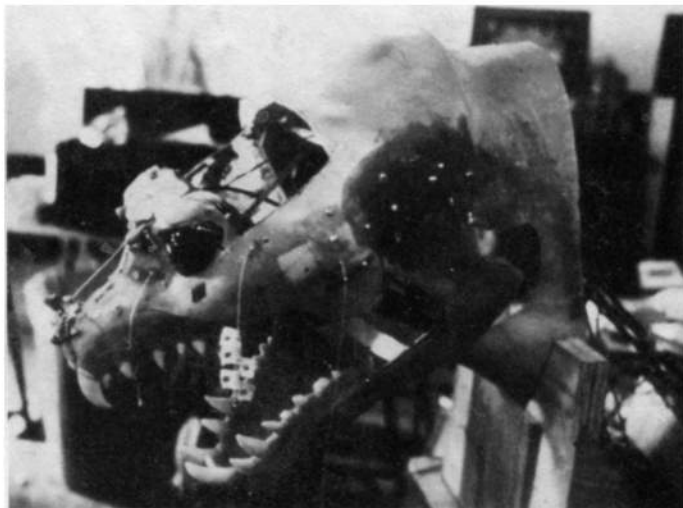
Conceptually, the single hardest problem of the whole film was dealing with the fact that humor and horror are an odd combination of elements to deal with.

"It's scary-silly. I can only think of twice having to deal with that in a film. As a genre, sometime in the Thirties and Forties, you had *Hold That Ghost*, *Ghostbreakers* and all the rest of it. In those films you relied on the horror movie cliché for the scary part and then you played the humor against it.

"That kind of thinking died away, certainly in the late Fifties, and didn't exist at all in the Sixties. Then John Landis came back with *An American Werewolf in London* in an entirely different way. It's certainly a drier, wrier, bizarre humor and horror that was truly scary, to the point where either it was brilliant and you loved it or you hated it. I sat with audiences that were confused as to whether they should be laughing or screaming. And maybe that was his point as well.



It takes a lot of minute maneuvering to bring a Devil Dog to life. ©Columbia Pictures



"We don't have that problem with *Ghostbusters*. We've clearly made up our mind with this film. It's a comedy—broad, big and bold. This is much closer to the Forties way of thinking about it. But it has contemporary sensibilities, humor, talents and a contemporary way of looking at horror. The only exception to the contemporary approach is that we don't repulse you. It's more a fun film, like the Forties. There's no blood. There's no people turning inside out. We don't want to put things on the screen that people can't look at."

PLAYING IT STRAIGHT

"When I was at *National Lampoon*," Gross recalled, "one of the problems that we had was that a writer would do a very dry piece of satire. Thus the graphic visualization of it would have to be very straightforward. It's like *Saturday Night Live*. The strength of the parody lies in how accurately you present the reality of what you're watching. Then you put the jokes in. With the *Lampoon*, the problem was that we'd call in some straight illustrator who would think it was his first chance to do a cartoon. So he would give us a cartoon back, which was precisely what we didn't want! It had to be straight."

"Well this film had the same problem. I'd go to the guys and give them a picture and they'd give me their first funny ghost. Their first funny horror picture! I'd tell them, 'No, you can't do that. It's got to be straight. And yet don't go over the line where you've created something so horrible that it's



jolting people out of the film.' So that was the line that we continually had to walk."

One exception to this was the Onion Head ghost, which is probably why it, too, was finally cut from the film. "We decided to make him a funny ghost from the start. And even then, we certainly didn't want to make him like Casper. We had to make him something else which would work within the sensibility of the film."

THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MARSHMALLOW MAN

The climax of the film involves the demon god Gozer taking on a form it plucks from the mind of one of the *Ghostbusters*. The form it chooses is of a towering Stay-Puft Marshmallow man.

"That concept was in Dan's original script. All the way along we kept asking people, 'Do you think this is over the edge?' As we got closer and closer to it, I finally decided that it's

brilliant. I think it's just the perfect touch to end the whole movie. It would have been so embarrassing to walk any kind of real monster up that street. You would have had Godzilla, which you can't take seriously anyway.

"But at the same time, it walks a line because it has to be threatening in a kind of ironic sort of way. So you can't have a Thanksgiving Day parade balloon come up the street. It just walks a very strange, fine line. It does work conceptually in the script and I think it does visually, the way we've produced it."

"The Stay-Puft Man would have been ruined entirely, in my opinion, if he ever did a funny take. Or if somebody did something silly with him. He has to maintain a very straight, purposeful path through this. One of the problems that we're having at the effects end is that a lot of the puppeteers, having had the flood gates opened with the Onion Head ghost, were just overdoing him. It came out a little too buffoonish. Too broad and too silly. So we've had to go back and calm it down a little."

A MILLION DOLLAR VIEW

Many problems were faced when it was decided to build a full-sized indoor set to represent the top of the building for the demanding climax sequences.

"We were very fortunate," Gross explained, "because we had a genius of a production designer. John De Cuir is the kind of production designer who's not just an artistic talent. His experience is phenomenal. He worked on *Cleopatra* and *Hello Dolly*. He can



Much time was spent on the detail work of the devil dogs. ©Columbia Pictures

build anything. He's been working on films since the Forties. He's just a wonderful man. He went in and put that set up in, I think, ten weeks. He conceived and designed it. A lot of the concepts I had for the Gozer temple and what might be on top of the building were no good. They weren't working at all. John could see that and did a beautiful job. He knew how he was going to build it. It went up with incredible speed and manpower."

They were faced with an early decision-making problem on the film involving this set and others. John De Cuir believes that you should build everything whereas Richard Edlund believes that you don't have to build anything—that you can just put it all together with special effects.

"Ivan had to look at that whole ending sequence and decide if we should build the set or if we were going to do it all with opticals, miniatures and paintings. Then we examined the ways in which Ivan really had to shoot the scenes in order to have the freedom to shoot and make the shots work dramatically. To be able to work with actors on a real stage, in real time, in a very difficult sequence, we opted for a combination of both.

"This involved the presence of the set

most of the time. The optical work there is to mostly add an effect to the set or to extend it either higher or lower than it exists. Or to back it up to put it in New York City. So we did decide after all that we needed that set despite the fact that it cost a million dollars!"

There was some difficulty over the fact that it was so large and a little unmanageable. "For example, when we were in New York, despite blowing up the streets and having three hundred extras and crew members running around, we got out of New York two and a half days ahead of schedule! Then we went right on to Stage 16 where the big set was. And it immediately ground us to a halt.

"The record number of setups in New York was twenty-six. When we got on to Stage 16, we got one shot the first day there. That was it! The next day we got three shots. I don't think we ever got it to much better than eight shots a day."

They figured that they were on the safety of a set and that it would be simple to shoot. But the set was so big... "We had a 360 degree background that had to be lit from behind. There was so much power for that stage, 50,000 amps, that we actually had to shut down other stages

when we shot. It presented heating problems, fire problems and tremendous lighting problems. We had steam and tremendous physical effects. Just because of the number of people it took to manage the set while we were shooting made it more difficult to move around.

"That set put us behind about four or five days and we never did manage to catch them up. Everything else, wherever else we went, went smoothly. In libraries, on location, etc. Just that one set was difficult."

HOW TO WRECK HAVOC AND DESTRUCTION

One of the more amazing feats accomplished in this film was a "stunt" put together by Chuck Gaspar (who does the physical effects) and by John De Cuir, who designed it.

"They worked out something that's really spectacular," Gross explained. "But it made working in New York quite difficult. The 'stunt' deals with a scene in which the boys fall into a hole in the ground in front of the Gozer building in New York City. Obviously we couldn't dig a hole in the streets of New York, although John De Cuir wanted to! So for a couple hundred



thousand dollars we worked out a great stunt.

"When the guys rise up out of the hole, as well as when there are people screaming in the streets, what you actually see is tremendous rubble in front of the building. The asphalt is torn up at extreme angles. There is half a police car in the hole, steam pipes are coming out, etc. Well, we couldn't go into the street to shoot this, so all that was built on top of the real street! The street is still there, of course. There are fake pieces of it all cut at strategic angles to cover the fact that there is no hole in it. The automobile is cut in half and tilted at that angle."

At one point we see the ground open up, we see the hole and the Ghostbusters are seen falling in. "That was all a recreation of the front of the building and the street built over here on the Columbia Ranch. It could only be shot in a limited number of ways. We dug a hole in the ground and Chuck Gaspar rigged a street that is hydraulically controlled to collapse. So the pieces just split and collapse. Everything falls right into it: stunt car, stunt men, etc. The steam pipes pop up. When you intercut it with the stuff we shot in New York, you can't tell that it's not there."

WE LOVED HAVING YOU, GOODBYE!!

Shooting in New York's Central Park couldn't help but create some problems. But the Ghostbusters crew managed to create more than their share.

Bringing the Devil Dogs to life took meticulous stop-animation work. ©Columbia Pictures



"New York is a city that is already congested to the limit. When you take Central Park West and you close down everything but one lane, it leaves only 65th Street. This is a transverse street that runs through the park. With that already slowed down to a halt—you've tied up a third of Manhattan all the while you're shooting. We even shot through Friday rush hour once.

"The hotel where we were staying was down the street from where we were shooting. I remember walking down at the end of one shooting day and hearing car horns beeping from as far away as the low fifties. I went into the bar of the hotel and sat down to have a beer. I had a button on my coat which was one of our crew buttons so that we could be identified in the masses. This guy came in and said, 'Jesus Christ! Two and a half hours to get from thirtieth street to here! What the hell is going on up there!?' Some other guy jumps up at the bar and says, 'A bunch of **** are making a movie! They're screwing up half the town making a goddamn movie!' So I took my button off, stuck it in my pocket and hid it.

"Normally you'd be in a place like that kind of proud that you're making a film, but not us! I wasn't going to say a word! At one point, some guy asked me what I do and I said that I worked for a subsidiary of Coca Cola!"



(NOTE: Columbia, who produced *Ghostbusters*, is a subsidiary of the Coca-Cola company.)

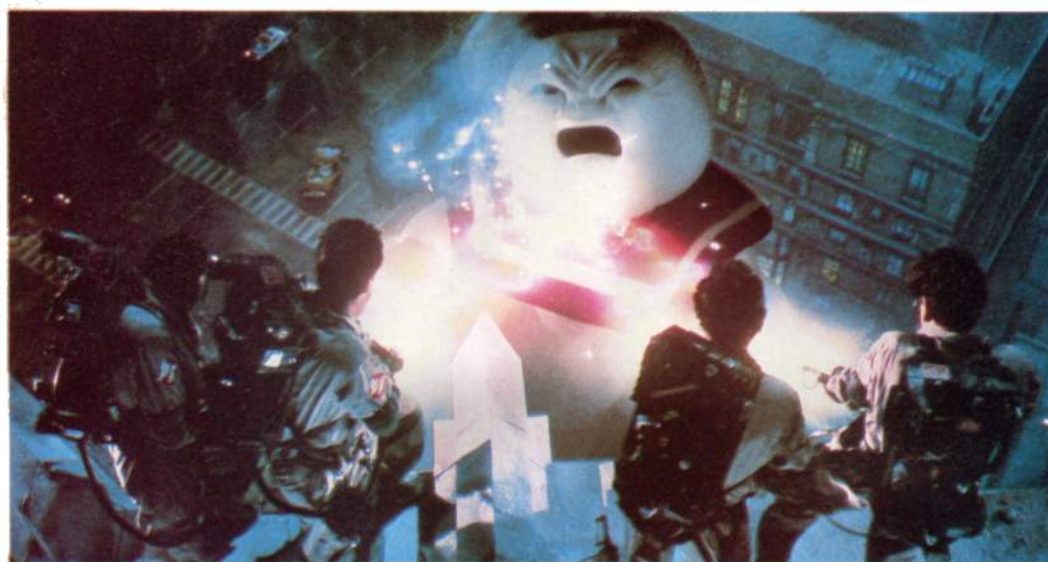
"But the press there treated us very well and most people had a really good time. People do like to see a movie shot and the New York extras were fabulous. It was difficult only because we were on the streets the whole time. I can't think of a single outrageous anecdote, however. We only shot there about three and a half weeks. We had Central Park closed off for a week. There was a point, when we were coming to our last day, when we went to one of the cops who headed the group of patrolmen that we had on the film. We said, 'We may need to shoot another half day. A Saturday.' He said, 'No, you're not. It's over. You're wrapping at 11:30 tonight.'

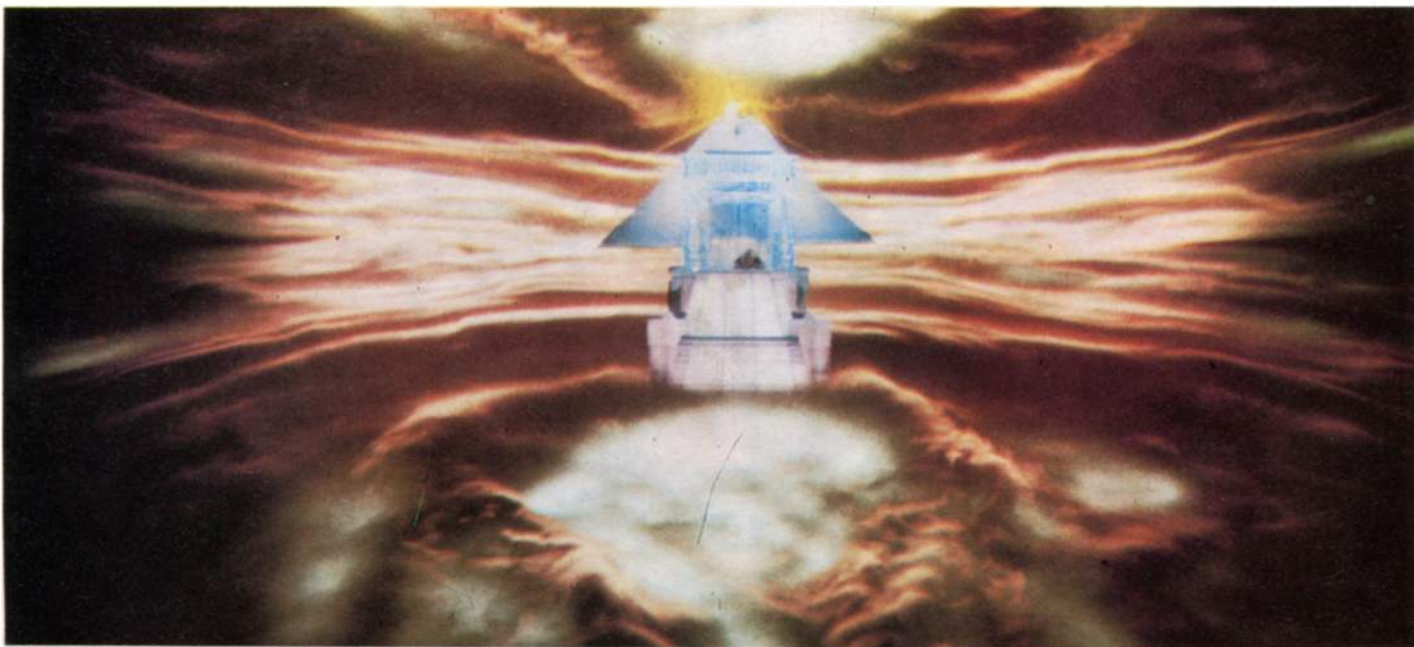
"They were great but it was tough on everybody."

The final result was worth it.



(Top Right) The Potato Ghost chows down. (Middle Left) The Sta-Puft Man prepares to destroy the Ghostbusters. (Middle Right) The top of the apartment building becomes the focal point of natural and supernatural activity. (Bottom) The Sta-Puft Man is attacked by the Ghostbuster ray.

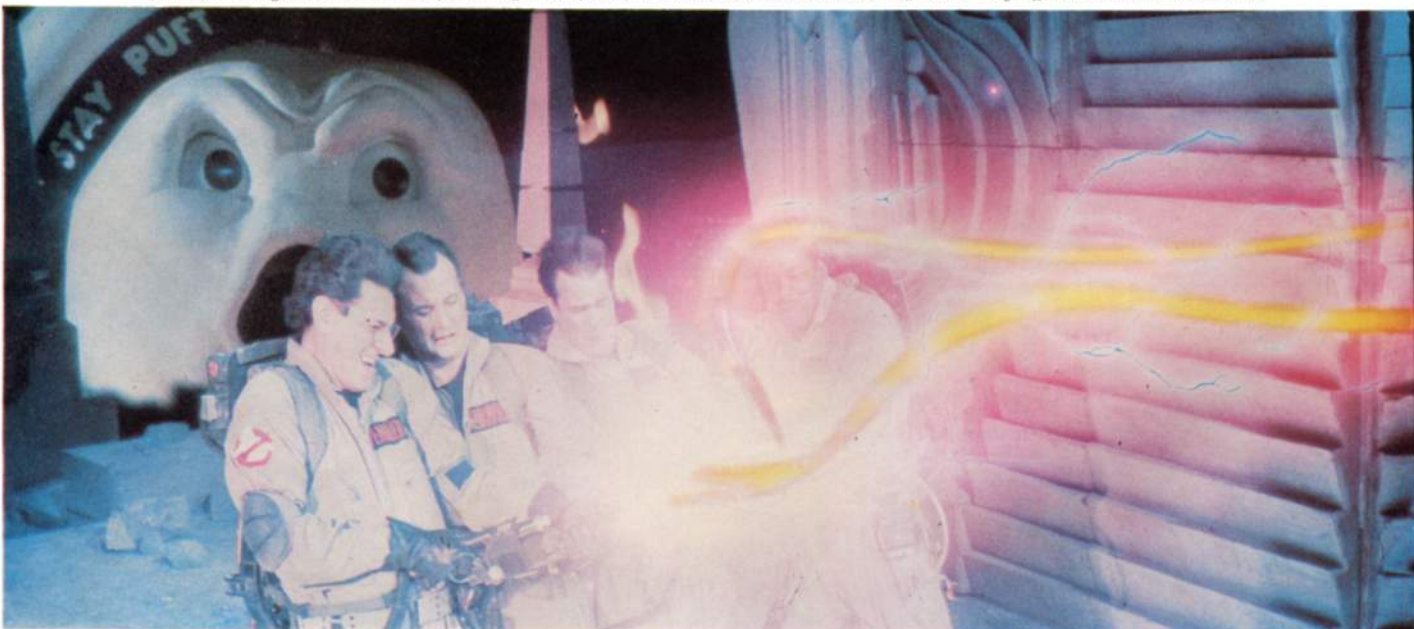




The Temple of Gozer arises. ©Columbia Pictures



(Above) Devil Dogs take over the Gatekeeper and Keymaster. (Below) The Ghostbusters cross beams to destroy Gozer—they might survive. ©Columbia Pictures.



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