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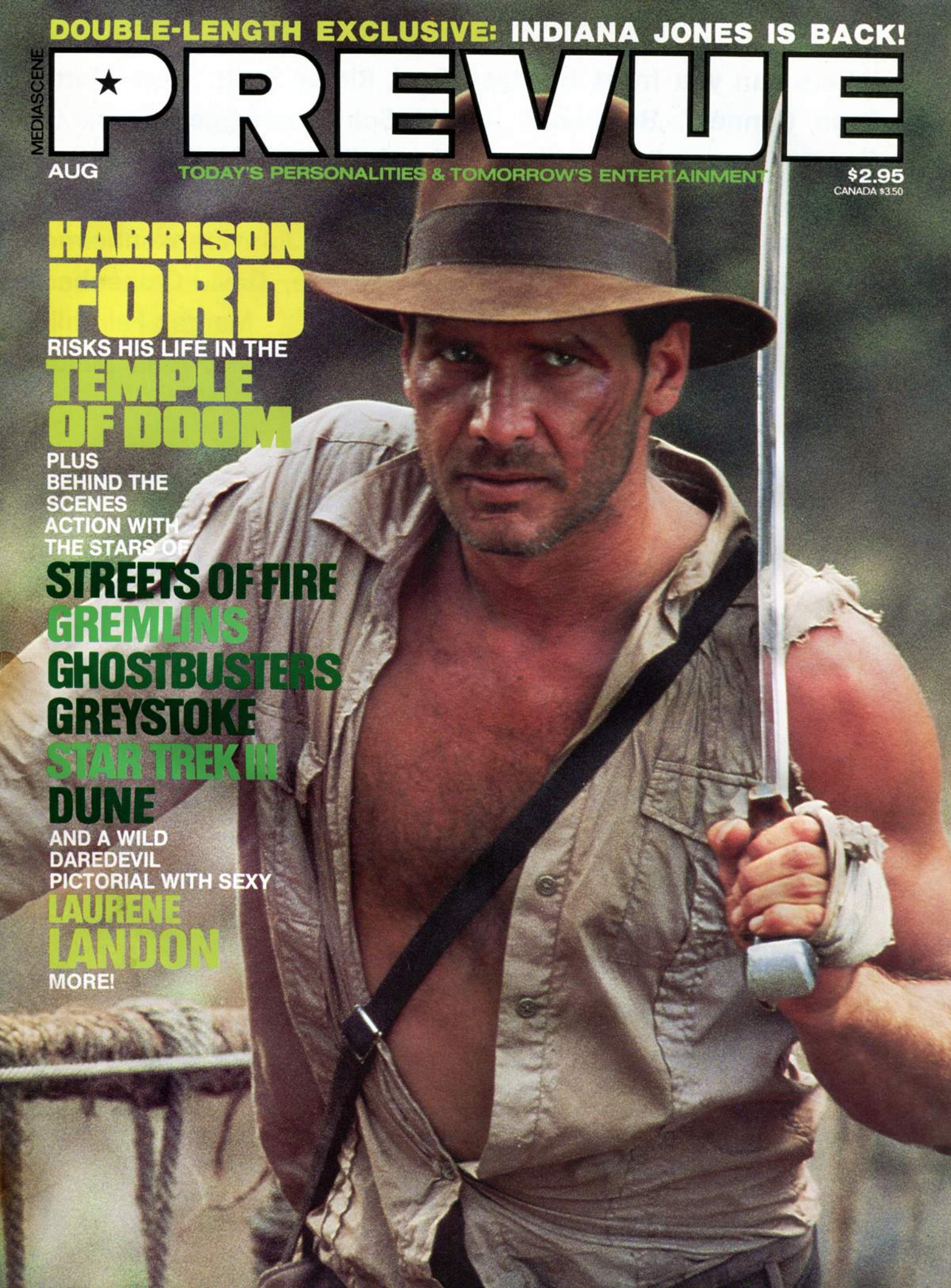
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**BLACK MAGIC  
OR BANSHEES...  
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HORRORS...  
BEFORE ALL  
HELL BREAKS  
LOOSE,  
CALL  
THE...**

# GHOSTBUSTERS

*Dana (Sigourney Weaver) and Louis (Rick Moranis) are victims of the nightmarish invasion of Manhattan.*

**DAN AYKROYD,  
BILL MURRAY,  
SIGOURNEY  
WEAVER AND  
HAROLD RAMIS  
STAR IN THE  
SUMMER'S  
SPOOKIEST  
COMEDY  
CHILLER!**

## FILM FEATURE BY BRIAN LOWRY

Sigourney Weaver sits in an armchair and laughs nervously.

No, wait a second, that's *not* Weaver, but her stand-in—who, oddly enough, looks just like her. This spook show may be getting a bit too supernatural. The real Weaver watches intently, standing a few feet away in comfortable-looking sweats and worn, old tennis shoes, entranced by a rather special problem.

Suddenly, three hairy, demonic arms shoot out of the chair, one between the stand-in's legs, waywardly clutching her thigh. Another springs out to grasp her face, and a third, from the other side, seizes her heaving bosom. The trajectories solved, the director calls for the real Weaver.

This time, *she* laughs nervously!

The action takes place on the set of

**Ghostbusters**, a \$30 million comedy of terrors starring Weaver, Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd, Harold Ramis, Rick Moranis and Annie Potts. Though created as a monstrously big-budget laff riot, special fx are the film's lucky charm. They are very much in evidence as Weaver examines the seat as cautiously as if it were an electric chair.

After a few practice rounds with the apparatus, she rudely discovers the mechanical arms are difficult to handle—as if possessed with a mind of their own. They frequently grab the statuesque actress in places not described in the script—much to the embarrassment of the technicians controlling them. The scene requires that she be thrown against the chair back, but the appendage operators, afraid they will seriously hurt her, keep pulling their punches. Only the director's repeated appeals and the star's continuous reas-





surance convince them to do it *harder*. Although the tedious rehearsal is exhausting, Weaver retains her sense of humor. After one miscued run, she looks down at the big, hairy arm between her legs and says, "Go ahead! Make . . . my . . . day!"

**W**riter/director Dan Aykroyd's original idea for *Ghostbusters* was generated by his family's long history of close encounters of the weird kind. After completing the screenplay, he approached Bill Murray, with whom he had not worked since *Saturday Night Live*. Several years ago, he might have asked another *SNL* alumnus. "John Belushi wouldn't have been cast as the lead," associate producer Michael Gross asserts. "It's really Bill's role—like the part he played in *Stripes*. Still, Belushi would have fit right in as one of the other guys."

PREVUE



Spengler (Harold Ramis), Stantz (Dan Aykroyd), Venkman (Bill Murray) and Zeddemore (Ernie Hudson).



The ornate but ominous door to the spirit world.



The spirits' Temple access to New York City.



The Temple atop Dana's apartment building.

Aykroyd subsequently submitted the script to director Ivan Reitman, who immediately realized *Ghostbusters*' devilishly delightful potential. Then, Harold Ramis joined the cast as the third spook hunter, reuniting the winning trio of *Meatballs* and of *Stripes*. Additionally, he helped rewrite and tighten the script.

The pivotal female role, however, remained uncast. As the director and producer developed a list of available actresses, Weaver's name was mentioned—although her track record suggested they had only a ghost of a chance.

"We weren't sure what Sigourney's attitude would be, but, fortunately for us, she felt her recent films were *too serious*," Gross reveals. "She wanted to do something lighter, so we never considered anyone else. She said, 'Yes!'"

Nevertheless, the comedic role was

somewhat different than she anticipated: the part cast her as the trio's "straight man." While the comics kept the crew in stitches with their macabre humor, Weaver and the other actors played "second bananas" to enhance contrast between the characters.

When the crew heard who had been inked for the cast, they predicted the shoot would be a cross between *Saturday Night Live* pandemonium and outtakes from *Poltergeist*. Although Murray delivered a continuous barrage of on-set ad-libs, Aykroyd made most of his revisions off-camera, which generated a surprisingly controlled atmosphere. At one point, the *Ghostbusters* are faced with an incredibly ghastly sight, horrifying enough to scare the pants off a virgin. "Now, *there's* something you don't see every day!" Murray quipped. The crew howled, the cast broke up laughing





Dana (Sigourney Weaver) is attacked by a nightmarish demon in her apartment.

and a line was born.

Unlike Aykroyd's previous roles, which have drawn heavily from his repository of characterizations, **Ghostbusters** is as close to the *real* man as the screen has yet seen. "Many people *only* associate Aykroyd with the characters they've seen him portray," says Gross. "In this film, both the script and the direction keep him from going behind the *shtick*. Dan put a lot of himself into the role. He is a wonderfully optimistic hero, very warm and likable, without even the slightest hint of cynicism." If Murray is the muscle and Ramis the brain of the Ghostbusters, then Aykroyd must surely be the heart.

The spectre that could have haunted the **Ghostbusters** script was eliminated by incisive, well-developed characters. Although all three are college professors, researchers and parapsychologists who walk the fine line between genius and

lunacy, each has a deliberately distinctive personality to prevent confusion in viewers' minds.

Aykroyd plays Stantz, a naive, clumsy and lovable scientist who tries to thwart a supernatural invasion of New York. He is assisted by Ramis as the Einsteinish, absent-minded mathematician, Spengler, who is so absorbed by the bogey-busting process that he is blind to the world around him. Murray is Venkman, the cynical disbeliever who eventually becomes the driving force behind the team. The three are forced from the hallowed halls of academia because of their off-the-wall theory about the nature and composition of ghosts. They form their company to earn a living—and, possibly, a Nobel prize. Faster than you can say, "Beelzebub!", the banshee business takes an upswing.

Weaver plays Dana, who comes to the Ghostbusters for aid when she experiences

a series of bizarre, supernatural phenomena. They agree to help, discovering, in the process, that her problems are linked to other paranormal occurrences in New York. As they get more involved in the war of wraiths, Murray falls in love with the be-deviled beauty. The terrifying manifestations escalate in intensity, and, eventually, the trio becomes Manhattan's only hope.

The film also stars Rick Moranis, the writer/director/actor of **Strange Brew**, as Weaver's nerdish accountant neighbor, Louis, who is possessed by demonic animal spirits. Annie (Heartaches) Potts is Janine, the streetwise, I've-seen-it-all-before secretary who is *never* surprised by her bosses' accomplishments.

**T**he film's climactic scene takes place at "Spook Central," Weaver's cathedral-like apartment building, the main focus of phantom activity. Capped by an ancient



The Ghostbusters' plans are suddenly upset by the supernatural forces converging on Manhattan.



An unexpected development blitzes the Ghostbusters as they prepare for the eerie onslaught.

Babylonian temple decorated with unearthly, nightmarish creatures, her residence has somehow become a portal into the netherworld through which the hellish spectres enter New York.

As the Ghostbusters arrive in their Ecto-mobile to perform what begins as a simple exorcism, a deafening crack of thunder signals more hell-spawned peril. The street in front of the building buckles and heaves, splitting open under their feet. Aykroyd, Murray, Ramis and a police car tumble into the gaping maw. It is, as Aykroyd says, "of Biblical proportions, real Wrath of God time!"

Although the street, rubble and building seen in the movie's climax were in New York, the actual hole into which the Ghostbusters fall was a special effect created in L.A. The sequence took three days to shoot in the Big Apple, plus another afternoon on the California lot at a total cost of

\$200,000—a figure which struck financial terror in the hearts of producers. On screen, it will last seven minutes.

Filming the scene required the cooperation of Manhattan residents. On location for three-and-a-half weeks, the company had the streets around Central Park and Columbus Circle tied in knots. Two-lane traffic was stopped and restarted for every shot. To further complicate matters, commuters slowed to check out the action, keeping the local police up to their badges in commotion. The officers used their years of experience and diplomacy (and perhaps a bit of dabbling in the Black Arts) to keep the situation under control, hauling away one unhappy, ranting and raving driver, who was determined to make a left turn into the set *against* orders.

While *Ghostbusters* created more havoc in the streets than the spectres in the script, New Yorkers were not spooked by



Spengler (Harold Ramis) checks for phantom visitors.



Spengler and Stantz are spooked by a spectre.

the weird outfits actors wore during their Times Square appearance. During the scene, several ghosts get loose in a 3-D movie house. The audience in the *real* theater thinks the apparitions are a part of the special fx. Bystanders on the *real* street never gave them a second glance.

To keep to the spirit of the script, that scene and several others involving supernatural visitors were cut from the final print. One of them developed Aykroyd's love interest—a phantom *femme fatale*. Another of the exorcised clips involved a shot of a spectral multitude in a holding bin—like an old drunk tank—in the Ghostbusters' basement.

**T**he shoot, which began in New York on Halloween, 1983, lost only one day to inclement weather. Although the filmmakers had their share of nightmares with the police, spectators and the logistics of





Chaos erupts on the street as the Ghostbusters arrive to exorcise the spirit menace.



Rick Moranis flanked by two of the spook chasers.



The Ghostbusters' fantastic Ectomobile.



Stantz (Dan Aykroyd) confronts a demonic spirit.



Spengler (Harold Ramis), Stantz (Dan Aykroyd) and

working in the Big Apple, they compensated by becoming extraordinarily adept at propaganda and subterfuge. One night, in a bar a few blocks from the location, several crew members were accosted by an irritated commuter. "Two-and-a-half hours to drive from downtown!" he growled. "You guys wouldn't know who's making that mess, wouldja?" The technicians casually folded their lapels over their Columbia Pictures ID badges and glanced at each other with innocent shrugs. Without an instant's hesitation, one of them looked the irate New Yorker in the eye and said, "Must be Coppola—you *know* how crazy he is!"

The city film commission and the police were so anxious to get the Ghostbusters and their spirit adversaries out of town that, when the company requested an extra day to complete the filming, the answer was a

resounding, "NO!" that echoed from the Bowery to Washington Heights. Because there were still scenes to shoot, refusal created a serious operational problem. But, with a \$30 million budget, the mountain—or, in this case, the Apple—came to Mohammed.

The location was duplicated on Hollywood's biggest soundstage—Burbank's famous Stage 16—using giant black-and-white photographs which were hand-painted and backlit to create the startling illusion of New York's skyline. Lighting the large, intricate set required 50,000 amps—enough electricity to supply a city of 5,000 people. Agreements were made with other companies on the lot to make enough power available on critical days. Additionally, the huge lights generated a tremendous amount of heat, causing the set to resemble Hades in more than one

respect, and necessitating the shutdown of the building's sprinkler system, putting firemen on standby around the clock.

Surrounded by the skyline panorama, the church/apartment complex was constructed at a cost of \$1 million. The 65' structure features 30' doors and huge, styrofoam beasts (dubbed "Terror Dogs" by the crew) guarding the entrance. For long shots, an intricate model of the temple was matted over the real New York building. The eerie, grey edifice, requiring 3,000 man-hours to build, with shifts working 24-hours-a-day to finish, looks like a place Vincent Price or Christopher Lee would call home.

"The Hollywood set was a monster," Gross reveals. "In Manhattan, with 700 extras on city streets, we were doing 10 or 12 camera set-ups a day, sometimes as many as 26 shots. We came back to LA two





Venkman (Bill Murray) prepare their battle plan.

days early. The first day on the set, we got one shot!! Suddenly, we were seven days behind schedule."

The climactic scene was created by using hydraulics on the LA soundstage. With five camera set-ups to catch the action, the street was collapsed, creating a 30' pit. It was then elevated back to its original position for three more takes.

As hazardous as the final minutes of the film appear, most of the real danger in the studio came from freakish accidents rather than special fx explosions. While working high in the rafters of the 65' soundstage, an electrician, who had left his rabbit's foot at home, dropped a 400-pound spotlight onto the set. Anyone beneath him would have been killed instantly. Fortunately, not even the light was damaged.

**F**ilming the special fx sequences became



One of the Temple's stone terror dogs comes to malevolent life.

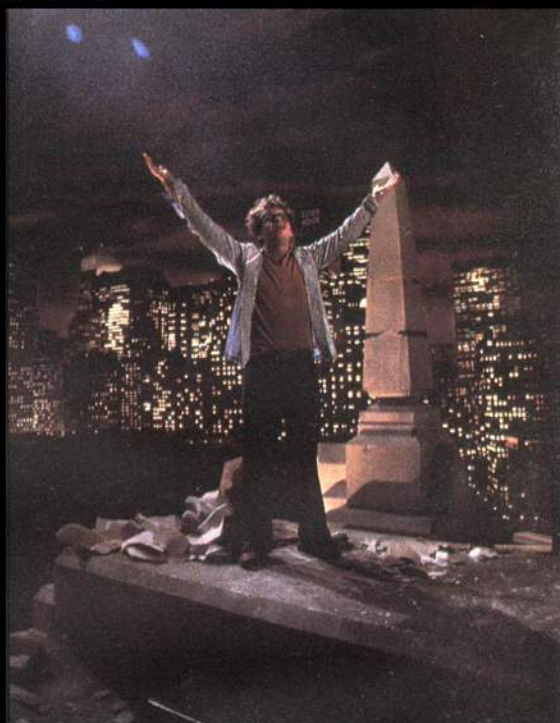


Sigourney Weaver faces an unearthly threat.

second nature to the *Ghostbusters*' crew. Richard Edlund, formerly one of George Lucas' Industrial Light and Magic wizards, is inaugurating his own company (tentatively tagged Boss Films) with the project.

Like the spook-busting trio in the film, the special fx sorcerers had plenty of spells to conjure. In almost 200 miniatures, opticals and matte shots, the producers insisted on only one guideline: that the various ghosts, goblins and ghoulies be within the supernatural—rather than the science fictional—realm. With the aid of production designer John (Cleopatra) De Cuir and a deck of tarot cards, the filmmakers puzzled through 250 conceptual drawings to find the magic elements.

Among the weirdest of the bestiary were the "Terror Dogs," ornamental statuary of the eerie "Spook Central" temple. Each of the spider-like, skeletal hellhounds



Louis (Rick Moranis) atop a haunted building.

was brought to life by eleven men. The diabolic doggies underwent numerous diabolical transformations during production. "The early concept was abandoned," Gross explains, "because we wanted the *really scary* parts of the movie to be more fun." Even more strange and surprising is the 112'6" horror unleashed on the Big Apple at the film's climax. As terrifying as 22 tons of peanut butter running amok, it is guaranteed to scare the yell out of audiences.

The Ectomobile—the unusual car driven by the Ghostbusters—is actually two redressed 1959 Cadillac ambulances. The vehicles, with their huge tailfins, flashing lights and detailed interiors, were purchased for about \$2,000 each. The dramatic resurrection of the ancient autos cost \$5,000 apiece—a very small chunk of the

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## GHOSTBUSTERS

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\$5 million special fx budget.

The Ghostbusters' unusual paraphernalia was another bugaboo for the technicians. The trio carries "Unlicensed Nuclear Drivers"—large guns attached by tubes to their backpacks—to capture ghosts. The weapons emit a broad band of electrical energy used to shock spirits.

Unexpected results occur, however, when the team hunts down a harmless spirit in the Sedgewick Hotel with the untested equipment. Not realizing their destructive potential, they incinerate walls, destroy tables, explode the bar and crash the chandelier, completely demolishing the hotel banquet room. After five days of shooting at the Biltmore, hotel staffers became what might be termed **Ghostbuster-busters**.

"They weren't too happy about it," Gross says with a unique gift for understatement. "I think they were glad when we left."

**W**eaver peels off her sweats down to pink stockings on the cold set, and drops into the armchair. Moranis stands next to her, barely reaching her chin.

With more than 40 people crammed into the equivalent of a one-room apartment—something not unusual in New York City or on Hollywood soundstages—there is no room for loitering. A crew member apologizes for bumping into Moranis while trying to line up the shot.

"No, no, you have genuine work to do," Moranis says, smiling. "Me, I'm just an actor."

A different chair has been substituted, one of several built over a period of months for a scene that will last only a few seconds on screen. The first chair was mechanically elevated—no, not levitated—to allow three puppeteers under it to manipulate the arms. The second chair has only hollow, styrofoam arms, which are, nevertheless, grotesquely realistic.

Weaver settles into the chair, and the special fx crew adjusts the arms, while she practices grappling and screaming, emitting banshee wails that echo across the soundstage. Powered by springs, the arms cling to their respective targets—thigh, face and chest—none of which look like bad places to be on the constrained actress. Because the production is slightly behind schedule, sets are being constructed elsewhere in the soundstage, and the pounding must stop so the scene can be filmed. One arm does not adhere to Weaver's body as tightly as it should, so the shoot is delayed for further technical adjustment. The pounding begins again.

"We spent money putting an elaborate spring in that arm," explains Gross, who supervises special fx, "but, half the time, with something like that, we still end up jerry-rigging it." The arm is invisibly wired

to Weaver's thigh—looks like good work if one can get it.

With Weaver secured, the action requires the chair to abruptly swivel 90 degrees, then shoot across the living room floor through an ominous, steam-filled doorway. Lit by eerie pink lights, the mist obscures several technicians scurrying frantically to stay out of camera range.

The chair, set on an invisible track—like the one which slid the little girl across the kitchen floor in *Poltergeist*—makes a loud pneumatic hiss as it jolts Weaver into place, similar to the sound of the sliding doors on *Star Trek*. One quickly discovers that nothing is quite what it seems on this set, as the door Weaver faces begins to bulge and undulate, as though pressed by huge fingers on the other side.



*Sigourney Weaver in the demon chair.*

The door, however, is rubber, and a group of bored-looking technicians prod it with sticks from the back to produce the impressive bulging effect. Veteran cinematographer Laszlo (*Close Encounters of the Third Kind*) Kovacs informs Reitman that the shot is lined up and ready, the lighting satisfactory. They are set for a take.

"Struggle!" shouts Reitman; Weaver grapples with the arms.

"Scream!" he calls; she does.

"Swivel!" The chair snaps into place, with enough force to give anyone a vicious case of whiplash.

"Bulge!" The door begins to stretch and balloon out—a very strange thing for a door to do.

"Door!" yells Reitman. Slowly, the door swings open; smoke billows out.

"Chair!" The armchair shoots across the floor with shocking speed, but the left side smashes into the doorway. Weaver—whose hair, fortunately, is supposed to be disheveled in the scene—gets another healthy jolt.

"The chair has only a fraction of an inch clearance on either side," Gross confides.

Reitman chuckles. "Okay, let's adjust it and try it again."

All is not fun and games on the set; the chair is still having difficulty clearing the wall. On the fifth take, with cast and crew crossing fingers, it shoots smoothly through the doorway. Reitman breathes a sigh of relief, checks his slightly frazzled star and debates breaking for lunch. They decide to try it one more time. Stomachs rumble a bit, but no one complains. After all, when the spirits of technology are hard at work, it's a shame to break the spell.

By the day's end, the scene has been completed, and the filmmakers look forward to the wrap party, which is only a few days away. The real spirit of the **Ghostbusters** production is not from some subterranean hell, but from the heart of Hollywood. Sigourney Weaver said it best when she presented the cast and crew with a poem written especially for the occasion:

### SLIME POEM

I am a little Ghostbuster,  
Sigourney is my name.  
This picture cost a lot of bread,  
Let's hope it makes the same.

I played the damsel in distress,  
We know what that entails.  
An icebox put the moves on me,  
I woke up in a dog's entrails.

I was attacked by leaping eggs,  
Molested by a chair,  
Levitated more than once,  
Laz, Bob, Joe—it's OK.

Blown away and barbecued,  
Devoured by a terror pooch,  
I crawled out of his haunches and  
Pete Venkman gave me such a smooch.

I think in every dangerous scene,  
I had some part to play.  
My thanks and affection to special fx,  
You really blow me away.

I've always felt so much support  
And humor in this crew.  
To each and every single one,  
I'd like to say, "Thank You."

Our cast is an ensemble;  
Ernie's nice and Anne's a honey.  
Ivan is always quick to laugh,  
Bill Atherton and I are never funny.

I have a crush on Harold,  
And Danny is a dream,  
Moranis is my demon,  
And Ivan makes me scream.

He has me growl and pant and snarl  
And roll my eyes and more.  
Perhaps this is the break I need  
To move into hard core.

I've spent so much time laughing  
In all my scenes with Bill.  
He's teased me off the method,  
Now my preparation's nil.

I think I'm very lucky  
Movies like this are far and few.  
I've had a really wonderful time.  
I'll miss it all... and you. ★



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