

Hey everyone. Welcome to this bonus episode of Imaginary Worlds.

The guests from my last episode had so many interesting things to say that couldn't fit into the broader theme of villains in 1984. And Shannon Shea had some great stories about working on Terminator 2.

As we heard in the episode, Shannon was trying to break into the industry in 1984. He went to see The Terminator in the theaters because he was a fan of Stan Winston, who did special effects for the movie. Years later Shannon found himself working on Terminator 2. He was excited to work with his hero, Stan Winston, but he also realized how much James Cameron had been involved in the design process. In fact, he actually saw Cameron's original designs for The Terminator. I asked him to describe what they looked like

SHANNON: They were, they were colored pencil drawings. There were colored pencils. And, and, and he, like yours truly, I mean, I love drawing on black paper with, with white pencils, especially when you're trying to do some moody and scary. But, you know, he had like a, like a, a, a graphite on white drawing of like the Schwarzenegger Terminator with part of his skin missing in his eye there. So, and they were his drawings, they were his designs, you know, and so it's the same thing with, uh, with sections of the robot, you know, like the legs and things, you know, he, he did that himself. And he also did that on aliens. I mean, I don't know if I'm, you know, letting the, the cat out of the bag here, but, you know, Stan had done some drawings of the Queen Alien, but Jim just kind of went, this is what I want, and did this drawing and it was spectacular <laugh>. It's like, wow, it's really cool. You know, he's really an amazing artist, you know, amazing illustrator.

So when you worked on T2, like what kind of conversations did you have with him about, about the character compared to, you know, the Terminator that everybody knew versus this newer Terminator we're going to, uh, show everybody?

SHANNON: Terminator 2 was the, was I think the first film that I worked on where the script was so secretive that when you were working on something that was script important, you literally got a page in, in some cases everything was blacked out except the description that you had to read. So I really didn't know much about the story of Terminator two until it was pre, I know that John Conner was in it. I knew of the T-1000. I knew there was going to be this nuclear holocaust scene, which I was pretty responsible for figuring out how we're going to do that. But as far as, you know, discussions about how things were going to change, even when Schwarzenegger came in for a life cast, he wouldn't, he wasn't talking about it. Like no one was talking about it much. I mean, we figured out that Arnold was going to be the good guy because, you

know, suddenly we had this new guy that was liquid metal, you know? So, I, I will say one thing, we, we did push the envelope on those Schwarzenegger terminator effects. I mean, not that they weren't good in the first film, but we really, we really pushed further, I think, on the second film. And I know that there was something that Jim wanted to do that we just didn't have the time to, to perfect. And that was for scenes where he's, half of his face is blown off, and he was going to have dialogue. He wanted it to be where from one camera angle it would be Schwarzenegger in a makeup doing his lines. And then from the other camera angle, like on, you know, past him onto, you know, Linda Hamilton, it would be a puppet that would lip sync. It was like a lip-syncing puppet. But even in 1990, we really, those things were, we were getting close, but we, we just weren't there yet. We just didn't have the time to do the, that development. But think about amazing, that would've been with what we had developed all the way through into Jurassic Park and Tales From The Crypt and Chucky and all that stuff. To have a lip-syncing Schwarzenegger puppet, like that would've been pretty cool. It's a shame we didn't get to do it.

And by puppet you mean that the, the side that's the puppet is like the totally exposed,

SHANNON: Totally exposed side. Yeah. But, but there'd still be elements of lips and stuff, but he wanted it to be able to, you know, talk and move his head and this and that, you know, so it's, you know, you, you, you'd think that that would be perfect because it's a mechanism anyway, but we just, like I said, we had so much to do on that show. I think people, one of the, the misinformation about Terminator two is how much of that is practical? I mean, people just assume that when the T-1000 is running and all of a sudden they're going, you know, and that, and all these things are appearing on this chest, they think those are all CGI. But if you think about what motion mapping was in 1990, the motion mapping that we did on Spy Kids was revolutionary. I mean, that back in, in 1990, you would've need a, a, uh, motion control camera, you know, capturing all the data. I mean, that wasn't that at all. That was literally physical foam rubber that had been, uh, vacuum metalized, that was like little flowers that were on his chest and were triggered, you know, mechanically triggered. So when he is getting shot, da da, da da, da da, those are foam rubber things blossoms opening up on his chest. And people just assumed it was all CGI, and that just isn't true. There were tons of physical effects in that film that I think people assume are CGI, and it's just not, they're physical. They're real. We really did it. We really did it.

So what were some ways that you did, you were talking about how he wanted to push the design of the Schwarzenegger Terminator, you know, there's that, that scene that sounds amazing that he, he was not able to do. What are some things that you did do that you're like, well, yeah, so they did this, the original 84 film, but we wanted to, to do this a little differently, and I'm proud, you know? Yeah.

SHANNON: I, I think, yeah. I think one of the, one of my favorite effects that we did for Terminator two was when, uh, John Connor says, show him and throws him the knife, and he cuts through his, his arm and rips his skin off of his endoskeleton. And I mean, if you watch that, I think there might be a cut. There might be a cut, but it was filmed, it was kind of filmed in a way where you see him start the cut with a bleeding knife. He lowers his hand out of frame, the mechanical arm comes up and he strips the skin off. You know, it's the old Texas Switch, you know, but it's, it's, it was so great. When we saw the dailies of that, it was really beautiful. And so that's what one of my favorite things. And that hand actually worked. And I remember we had to change. I mean, they're minute, aesthetic, minute things, so that the mechanism would actually work. There's another shot that I think is in like, uh, a long version of the film where they open up Schwarzenegger's head and pull out his, the chip in his head, and Linda Hamilton's about to destroy it. And it's so weird because it's, there is a puppet of Schwarzenegger on one side, and there is Schwarzenegger sitting on the other side. It's not a mirror. It is literally, I think, uh, in that, when I think it's Linda Hamilton and, and, and her sister, she has a twin sister. How, how coincidence, how weird is that? But that shot in the film, or that shot and the stuff that we did for that is really cool because they had designed, I think Steve Berg had designed this thing where there's like this, um, like corkscrew thing that comes out of his skull, and then you open that up and inside of it is this chip that they pull out. It's, it's, it was really neat. And, and it's a shame that, that, I think you can see it in like, extended versions of the film. It wasn't in what was released, uh, you know, in the, in the theater, certainly not to the extent of what we did. It's a beautiful fake head, by the way, sculpted by Greg Fagel. Just beautiful.

We'll hear more from Shannon Shea in a moment.

BREAK

I feel like 84, I don't know. Do you feel like there was something going on in the industry real, because Star Wars comes out in 77, and there's this sense of, oh my God, this is what we can do. And this sort of like, yeah, slow build, slow build, slow build. It's, it, do you feel like by the time you get to 84, you're starting to get towards like this industry coalescing, getting really excited about what it's capable of?

SHANNON: Yes. I think that, that, if I had to say what the arc was, you know, the, the actual arc, because I think we're on the downside of this now. It starts with movies like The Howling and, uh, scanners and an American Werewolf in London. And I think that what happened at Star Wars, because remember Star Wars, there's as much creature stuff in Star Wars as there is, you know, spaceships and flying. I mean, there's Chewbacca who is in the entire picture. I mean, there's a guy in a suit in the entire

picture with moving lips. And I mean, he's really well done. Stuart Freeborn an English, uh, makeup effects guy did him. So he's in the entire picture. People just assume, oh, Chewbacca, that's a makeup effect. He's walking around through, you know, most of the picture, you know, and then you have the, you know, the, the Jawas, which I know are more wardrobe, but I would even push a free pill into that category. He is a robot. It's a man in a suit. You know what I'm saying? So if you look at these things, which I think people took for granted in 1977, you see a very logical splitting off between optical effects, which are X-Wing fighters and all this stuff going this way. And you see creature effects, which is going from Chewbacca to American werewolf, and the howling going this way. And so you have this, this kind of bifurcation of technologies that just start building on each success that goes in front of it. And so it's like this acceleration that was happening in 1984. I agree with you. I think 1984 is a pivotal year. It's, it's just before things really hit, because the next year we're working on aliens at Stan Winston. So yes, it keeps building and building and building and building. It goes all the way up to Jurassic Park. You get to Jurassic Park, we are building 40 foot long puppets that people on set are moving, and there's big foam rubber. Animatronic is moving on set. And then digital comes in and we start going down, which is not to say that there haven't been some amazing animatronics and amazing makeups that have been done post Jurassic Park. I would be a liar if I said that. It's just that the demand starts going down. Those of us that were lucky to be part of that kind of gold rush, let's call it, it was like a gold rush. I mean, we, we got to see some of the best, you know, and then, and now things have just pared down. I mean, there's still people out there fighting the fight, doing great work. It's still impressive to see when people do things that are a little outside of the box. But someone I, and I'll for, for the sake of this person, I'm going to just say leave them their name off. But I was talking to someone recently, they had been on a, a big television show, really popular television show. I'll keep that under wraps. He said, oh, you'd hate to be on set. And I went, why? And he went, because there's very little yelling anymore, which was always a big part of working on set. We'd bring a puppet out, we'd set it up, get everything lit. We'd go through a take and a cable would break. And boy, the screaming would start, because everyone had to stop. We had to open up the puppet. We had to reroute the cable. We need to hook it back up again and start all over again. It would take sometimes 20 minutes. So 20 minutes on set of dead time would irritate people. He said, now you go out there. It's not perfect. The first time he said, no one gets angry. They just say, thank you. Could you please move everything out of the way, please? And they move it out of the way they shoot their plate and they move on. And then someone comes up and says, okay, we're done with you for the day. They sign you up, you go home

Because we'll fix it in post with CG.

SHANNON: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. So it's just, and again, it's just, it's the logical progression of things. I understand, you know, I'm, I'm, I feel like I'm a dinosaur myself,

but there's something about having something on camera on set in front, or to be more specific, having Robert England and a makeup acting. I mean, you do that, and you are setting yourself up for some real amazing stuff. I, I, I think there's something, there's something about trying to make terror less about, you know, this human scale, or you have these like weird stuff. Like I, I, I can't remember the name of the picture. I know my, my daughter made me watch it. And there's a lot of gore effects in there. Pretty horrific gore effects. And, and, and that's the other thing that I see a lot of too, is, is I see a lot of people doing very, very realistic gore stuff that sometimes is enhanced with CG, I, just to make it that much more horrible. But to me, that's not what intrigues me. The ones, the, the characters you picked, there are characters, you know, and I really like that. I mean, even the Jaw, the shark from Jaws in its own way, is a character. It has a theme. It's, you know, it's, it puts you in its point of view as it's going through the ocean and all that stuff. It's, it's not just some psycho, it's not just some crazy cult or someone wearing a plastic bunny mask. It's, it is a full character. And I think that that's, in my opinion, what's missing from a lot of things. And like, you know, I mean, there's so much that was happening back in those days, and, and it's, it's, I still say, this is okay, I'm going to leave you with this thought. And this is something that, you know, you can debate with another guest somewhere down the line. This is my prayer. I hope that AI explodes, I hope AI explodes all over the industry. And I hope what it does is generates a movement, a humanist movement where it comes to motion pictures and the, the production of them. I hope AI becomes so, so mundane, so huge and so mundane that people just get tired of looking at it. And then one day someone will do something like Scanners where it's just a bunch of air bladders under someone's face, you know, moving around. People go, what am I looking at? You know, because, you know, as Steve Johnson said, it better than me, Steve Johnson said, it used to be people would look at something and go, how'd they do that? He said, now people look at stuff and go, oh, it's computer. And I think that has taken something out of it all. So when you pick 1984, you're talking about when the ship is leaving the port, you know, not when it has come back and all the cargo has been distributed.

I also want to play an excerpt from my conversation with Neill Gorton. I asked Neill if Freddy Krueger feels dated now because there's been a movement away from depicting villains with physical deformities. He said yes. In fact, he recently found himself in the middle of a controversy around this issue.

Neill Gorton is a creature makeup designer on Doctor Who. Sometimes they produce mini episodes for a telethon Children in Need. And recently they did a mini episode about the Doctor Who villain Davros. Going all the way back to the 1970s, this villain Davros has been depicted as having a bulbous bald head with wires in it. He's blind and sees out of an artificial eye. And he moves around in a

kind of a motorized chair. But in this new mini episode, we see Davros at the beginning of his career as an evil genius looking very able bodied.

CASTAVILLAIN: Davros, an honor to work for you, sir.

DAVROS: Then allow me to show you the future of our beloved Kaled race.

A lot of fans were upset about this change and vented their frustration on social media. But Neill says even before he worked on the mini episode, he had given this subject a lot of thought.

NEILL: I wrote a piece for a magazine about, uh, the last Bond movie. There was a lot of notes about the fact that you weren't allowed to mention, no, it was about the makeup on Rami Malek that, um, Barry Gower did. And it was like, you can't mention scars. You can't say scars, you can't say this. It can't, because there'd been a lot of issues with, you know, a lot of pushback against those things that always putting a big scar on a villain or putting them in a wheelchair, you know? So, you know, a bit of simplistic psychology people sometimes, you know, going back, uh, away people would fear or not identify very easily with anybody with a disability or something like that. You know, I think that was sort of built into people to be less understanding of. And so, again, it was very easy to, to create a villain out of people who had those kind of problems, those issues, you know? And, and now we're more enlightened, you'd hope.

I mean, there is, I mean, again, there's always a reaction to everything online, especially with Doctor Who, but I know that some people are like, wait, Davros, you know, he was scary looking, and now he just looks like a Nazi. Like you've, you know, Davros has gone woke or whatever, <laugh>, you know.

NEILL: But it's, it had, and, and you've kind of, you know, you've got to see it from all sides, you know? And I think that's it. You will always have some things that it's easy to be angry at. It's easy to be upset at change, but at the same time, you've got to try and change some of these things, because some of those perceptions are, they do become ingrained. They do become the idea that someone in a, in a wheelchair is somehow, you know, that if you keep painting all these villains as scarred and in, you know, requiring wheelchairs and all these sort of things, that becomes the norm. That becomes ingrained in people. You know? I see the point, you know, there's sometimes, I mean, personally, I'm gutted. I love Davros <laugh>. I love the character. I love making Davros. I've done Davros a couple of times, and it pains me in one way because you just go, oh, that's it. It is, it's an established thing and everything. But at the same time, you go, well, no, they, they also want to, you know, you look at the new specials and we've got characters and wheelchairs who are heroic, uh, and very much part of the story. And actually, that just is more uncommon. So yes, maybe it's time to flip it around a bit and try and just take away the stigma from that, take away the connotations of the

evil genius in his, you know, layer with the cat and the wheelchair and the scars, and turn it into a different thing, you know?

Yeah. I mean, do you miss that or do you feel like it became too much of a crutch to designing a villain, being like scars, melted face.

NEILL: Exactly. I mean, that, you know, you go back into the '80s, and of course that was the, that was people's go-to let's make them burnt, let's make them this, you know, I mean, you'd look at, you look at those characters, you know, you look at Jason, you know, and he, he's a, a child with a deformity, a hydrocephalic head, and all that kind of thing. You know, you look at Freddy, it's all, he's been burnt and all that kind of, you know, they're, they're just easy things to do. You know, it's, it's like going the films that kind of went well, every time there was an action movie in the '80s, the villain was a terrorist, you know, and we had lots of, uh, Arabic actors being terrorists, and at some point, you've got to kind of move away from the stereotype, you know? So these things have got to evolve. It's just an evolution. You know, we're evolving a bit. You'd hope that we're all evolving a bit, and we've just got to work a bit harder to tell those stories in, in smarter thinking than lazy thinking.

That's it for our episode of bonus material. We'll be back next week with part two of our mini-series Class of '84.