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SEEDY CHARACTERS GETTING THEIR HANDS  
DIRTY IN FRANK MILLER'S UNDERWORLD



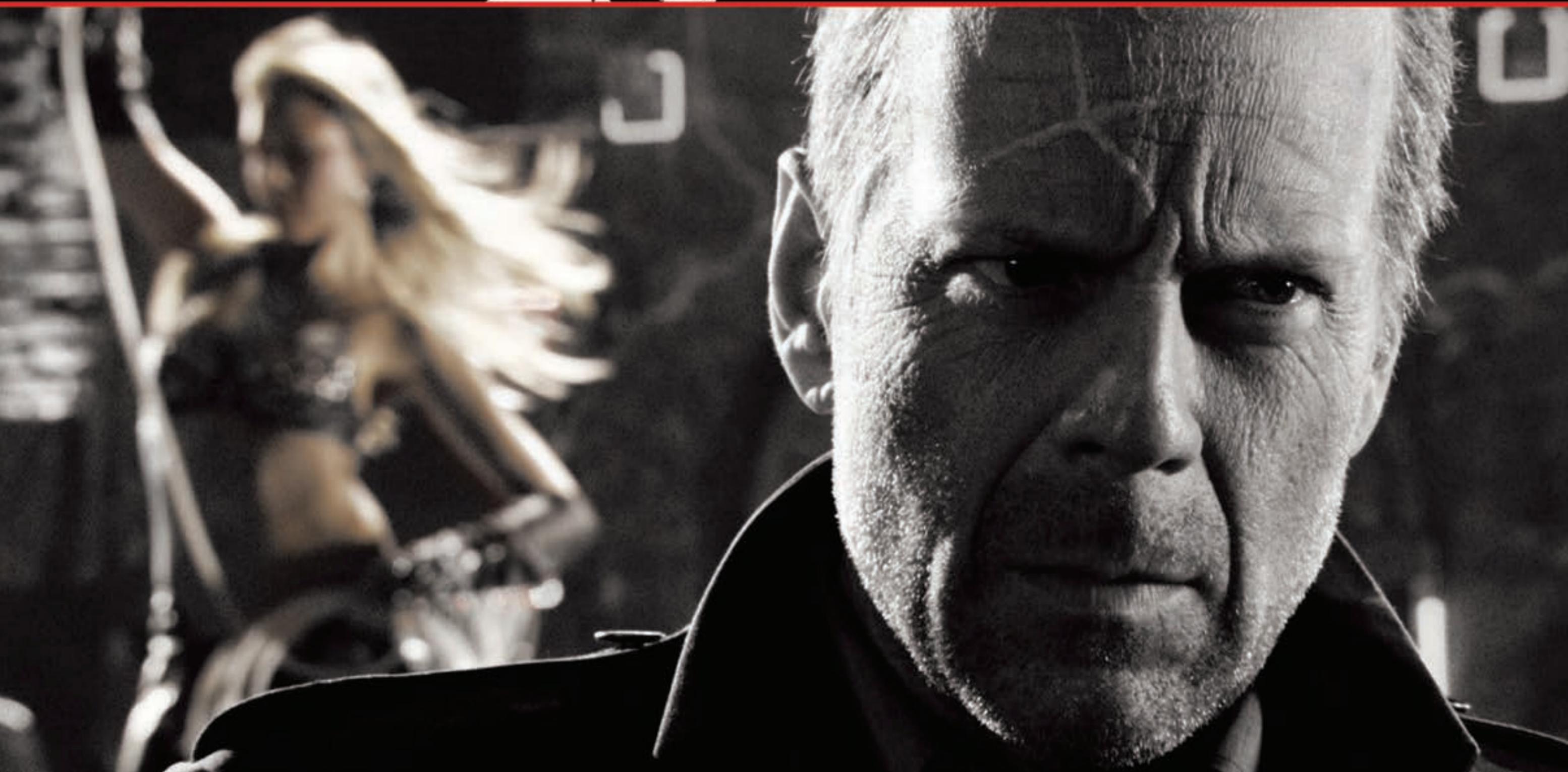
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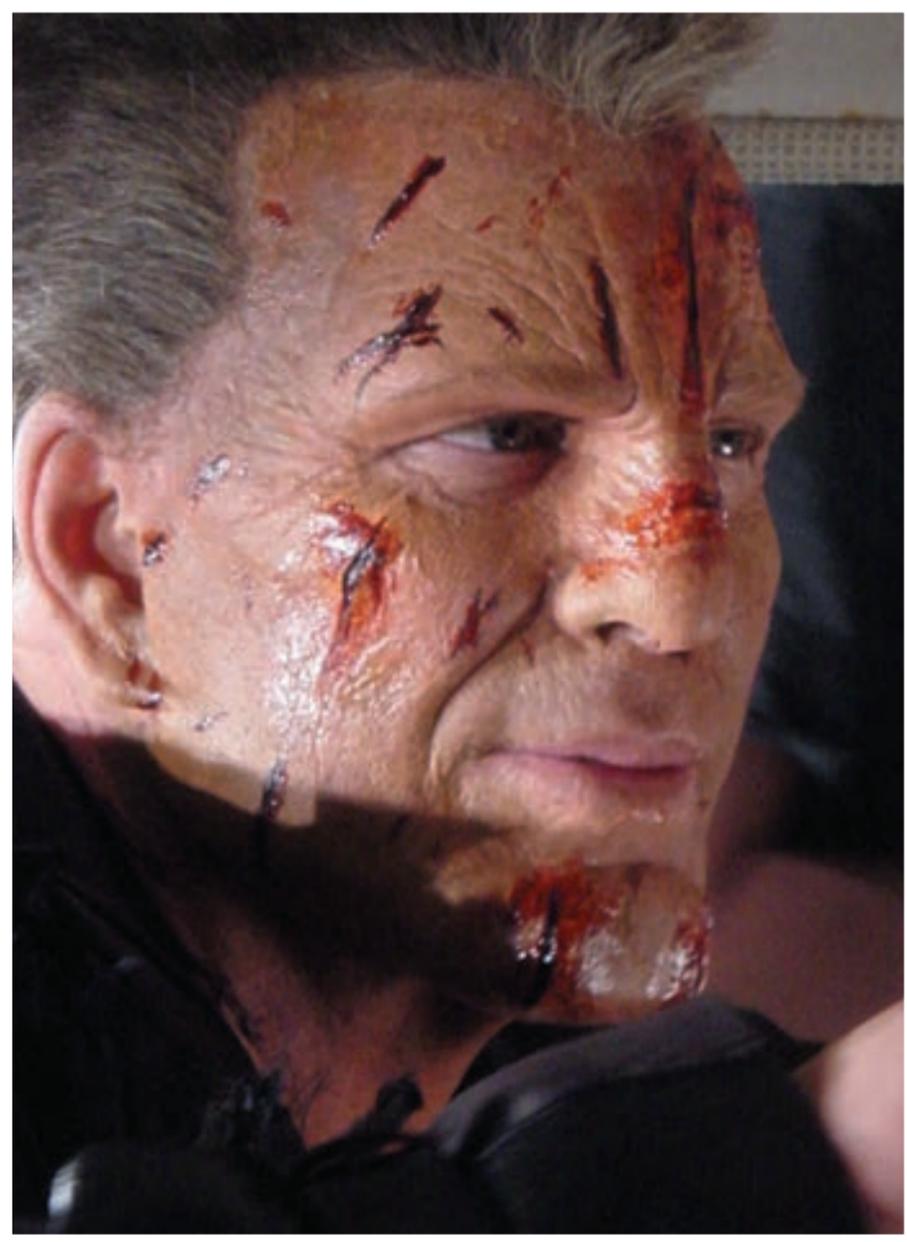
FRANK MILLER'S

# SIN CITY



TORN STRAIGHT FROM THE PAGES OF  
THE ACCLAIMED GRAPHIC NOVELS—  
SIN CITY'S PHENOMENAL MAKE-UP TEAM  
HELPS TO BRING THIS COMIC BOOK  
MASTERPIECE TO FILM.



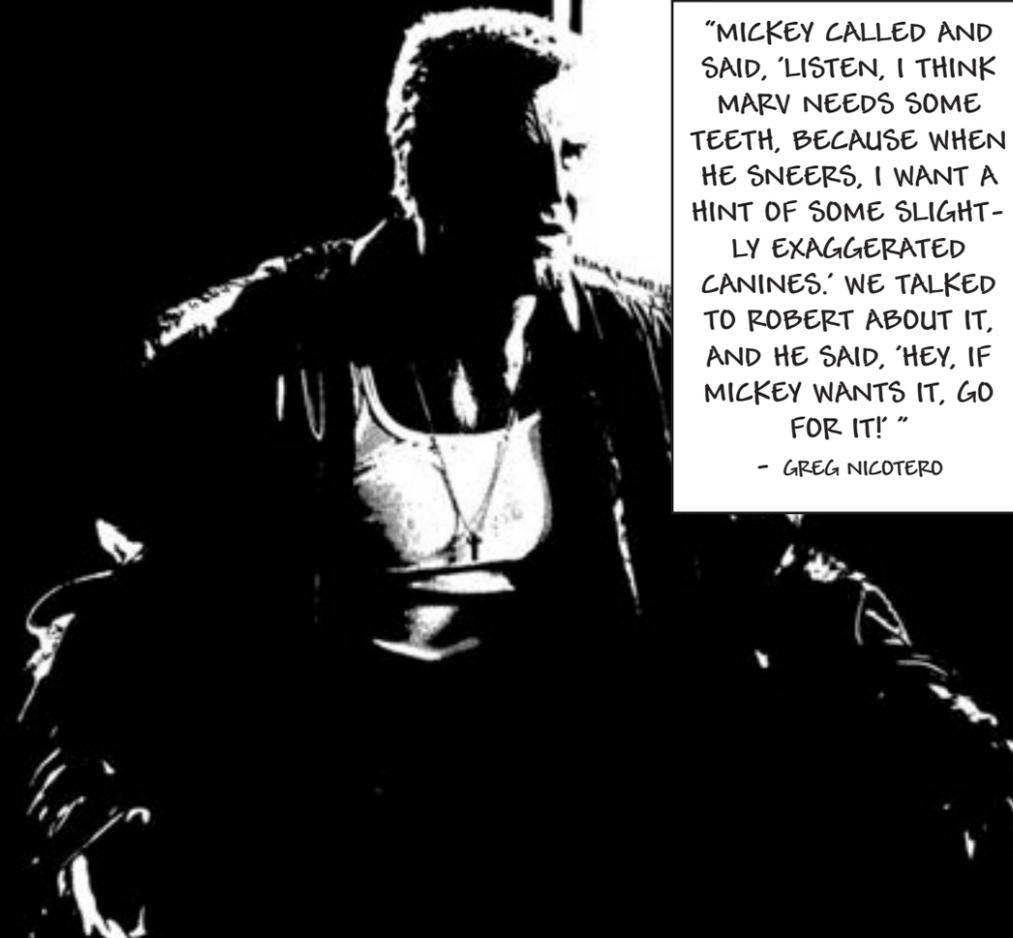


BY JOE NAZZARO

**B**AD COPS. HARD-BOILED DETECTIVES. MOBSTERS, MERCENARIES AND A MOB OF PISTOL-PACKING PROSTITUTES.

THEY'RE ALL PART OF SIN CITY, THE STYLISH PULP THRILLER BY WRITER/DIRECTOR ROBERT RODRIGUEZ. ADAPTED FROM THE SERIES OF NOIR GRAPHIC NOVELS BY FRANK MILLER, THE FILM FEATURES A HEAVYWEIGHT CAST INCLUDING BRUCE WILLIS, MICKEY ROURKE, JESSICA ALBA, BENICIO DEL TORO, JOSH HARTNETT, ROSARIO DAWSON AND CLIVE OWEN.

IN ORDER TO LITERALLY BRING THE COMICS TO LIFE, RODRIGUEZ NOT ONLY SHOT SIN CITY AS A COLOR-ACCENTED BLACK AND WHITE PRODUCTION, HE EVEN BROUGHT MILLER HIMSELF DOWN TO THE AUSTIN STUDIOS TO ACT AS CO-DIRECTOR AND FULL-TIME COLLABORATOR.



"MICKEY CALLED AND SAID, 'LISTEN, I THINK MARV NEEDS SOME TEETH, BECAUSE WHEN HE SNEERS, I WANT A HINT OF SOME SLIGHTLY EXAGGERATED CANINES.' WE TALKED TO ROBERT ABOUT IT, AND HE SAID, 'HEY, IF MICKEY WANTS IT, GO FOR IT!'"

- GREG NICOTERO

(Alba) from the villain (Nick Stahl) who tried to kill Nancy eight years earlier and framed Hartigan for a crime he didn't commit.

*Sin City* (a.k.a. *The Hard Goodbye*) features Rourke as Marv, a tough guy driven to vengeance when his lover (Jaime King, who plays Goldie and twin sister, Wendy) is murdered in their bed. And in *The Big Fat Kill*, Owen plays Dwight, who teams up with ex-girlfriend Gail (Dawson) and the lethal prostitutes of Old Town to battle Jack Rafferty (Del Toro), a thug with some high-powered connections.

Rodriguez relied heavily on the team he put together on his previous films, including make-up department head Ermahn Ospina, and KNB FX, who tackled the film's complex make-up FX. "I was one of the first people that Robert called (on)," recalls KNB's Greg Nicotero, "when

he sent me a cryptic e-mail saying, 'I need you to start thinking about *Sin City*, because we've got to do Marv!'

"My first question was 'Who's playing him?' And when he said Mickey Rourke, my initial feeling was not only that he was perfect for the part, but he's also kind of notorious for not being the biggest fan of make-up.

"Anyway, Mickey came in and we did a lifecast and a cyber-scan and started designing the look. Robert was very insistent about wanting to keep it realistic, so we ultimately created five different looks to choose from, because we didn't have a lot of time to test stuff. We did some with bigger chin and jaw line prosthetics, others with a more pronounced bridge of the nose, and when we got to Texas, we had all five make-ups applied to heads of Mickey. We met



Opposite page: Marv, Mickey Rourke's character, takes a beating. This page, clockwise from top left: Illustration of Marv character; Marv holding a fake head of Elijah Wood's character, Kevin; appliances for the Marv character head; Illustration of the Marv character in an electric chair.





"QUENTIN TARANTINO WAS DIRECTING TWO DAYS FOR THAT SEGMENT, AND HE CAME INTO THE TRAILER AND SAID, 'IF I EVER DO A MOVIE WITH BENICIO DEL TORO, HE HAS TO HAVE THAT NOSE AND THAT CHIN.' "

- GREG NICOTERO



just one assistant on most days. "They scheduled the actors in such a way that I could do everybody without having to bring in personals. It was also the atmosphere that Robert created to make them all feel comfortable without making a big spectacle of bringing in an entourage of assistants and make-up and hair people."

Designing characters that would eventually be turned into black and white wasn't always simple, as Ospina discovered with Jaimie King who plays the dual role of Goldie and her twin sister Wendy.

"In the beginning, I was insistent about making her lips really dark because I said, 'If it's going to be black and white, the lips are not going to be deep enough.' For the very first make-up test, I put this plum lipstick on her, thinking it would look really dark and beautiful in black and white, but they hated it. The funny thing is, they didn't appreciate the eyes or anything else; they just hated the whole thing, so I took the lipstick off and put on a lighter shade and they were happy. They said, 'That's a completely different person!' But all I did was change the lipstick, so that was funny."

With the first segment finished, the production moved on to part two, better known as *That Yellow Bastard*. As Nicotero explains, "The character is this really creepy old guy, with a big, distended belly and this weird bald head. The reason he's gotten there is that Bruce Willis' character catches him and keeps him from raping and murdering a little girl, and shoots him in the head and groin."



Opposite page, top to bottom: Jack, Benicio Del Toro's character; illustration of Jack. This page, clockwise from top left: Del Toro, before and after make-up test; Del Toro with a gun appliance; Del Toro with make-up crew from left: Gino Crognale, Jake Carber, Greg Nicotero, Mike McCarty; appliances for the Jack character.

with Robert and Frank and agreed on a specific nose and forehead piece and a specific chin piece, and those were the ones we tested.

"We had three different sculptors working here in the shop: Nick Marra, Scott Stoddard and Jeremy Aiello, with Scott Patton assisting in the design phase. And then we had Jack Bricker, Mark Boley and Ron Pipes building the wigs, because Marv has a very severe military cut. At one point, Mickey even called and said, 'Listen, I think Marv needs some teeth, because when he sneers, I want a hint of some slightly exaggerated canines.' We talked to Robert about it, and he said, 'Hey, if Mickey wants it, go for it!'"

Meanwhile, Ospina was dealing with the challenge of creating make-ups for other key characters in the film. "I'm very color-oriented," he explains, "and whenever I'm working with actors, I go with different colors depending on what the character is and how they feel."

"Because *Sin City* was in black and white, I talked to Robert and Frank Miller about every single character in terms of the intensity of the eyes and so forth. Frank is very specific, but you really have to talk to him directly because it's in his mind."

Because Rodriguez shot most of the characters separately against green screen, Ospina was able to apply most of the make-ups himself with





This and opposite page: Bruce Willis' character, John, and illustrations of John.

"WE WENT TO CHRISTIAN TINSLEY WHO DID A THREE-DIMENSIONAL TRANSFER OF THE SCAR. IT THEN HAD TO BE PAINTED WITH WILDFIRE FLORESCENT MAKE-UP, BECAUSE THEY WANTED ENOUGH LIGHT TO KICK OFF THE SCAR SO THEY COULD DIGITALLY ENHANCE IT AND MAKE IT GLOW."

- GREG NICOTERO

Then Bruce Willis is framed for the molestation and thrown in jail. The idea is that Roark's family in *Sin City* is so wealthy that they had surgeon try to put Nick Stahl's character Junior back together, but it never took. Finally, his skin starts turning yellow and he turns into this weird, creepy character.

"When we did Nick's make-up, he had a full bald head, a nose prosthetic, cheeks and a chin, and I had the guys sculpt the ears separately, because I wanted to cheat the position of the ears lower to make the top of his head look more bulbous.

"And when you see the character in the comics, Junior is drawn nude so his shoulders are thrown back and his arms are dangling to the side, but his belly juts out. So we not only created the prosthetics for his face, but we also did a full chest and back prosthetic that was glued on for the scenes where he was wearing his boxer shorts, and it really looked amazing. The make-up process for that segment was about four hours, with myself, Garrett Immel and Gino Crognale applying the make-up."

Paradoxically, even though the character was supposed to be mustard yellow, he had to be painted a different color in order to be shot in front of green screen. "We couldn't paint him yellow," notes Nicotero, "because of the kick from the green, so we ended up painting him blue instead. We then accentuated the highlights and shadows of everything and went in with a flocker and put beard stubble and a little bit of hair on the crown of his head. We felt that the extra texture and that extra little bit of realism would make it not feel so make-upy."

Some make-ups were less overt, such as Bruce Willis' Hartigan, who had an X-shaped scar on his forehead. "Gerry Quist did Bruce's make-up," says Nicotero, "and we went to Christian Tinsley who did a three-dimensional transfer of the scar. It then had to be painted with Wildfire florescent make-up, because they wanted enough light to kick off the scar





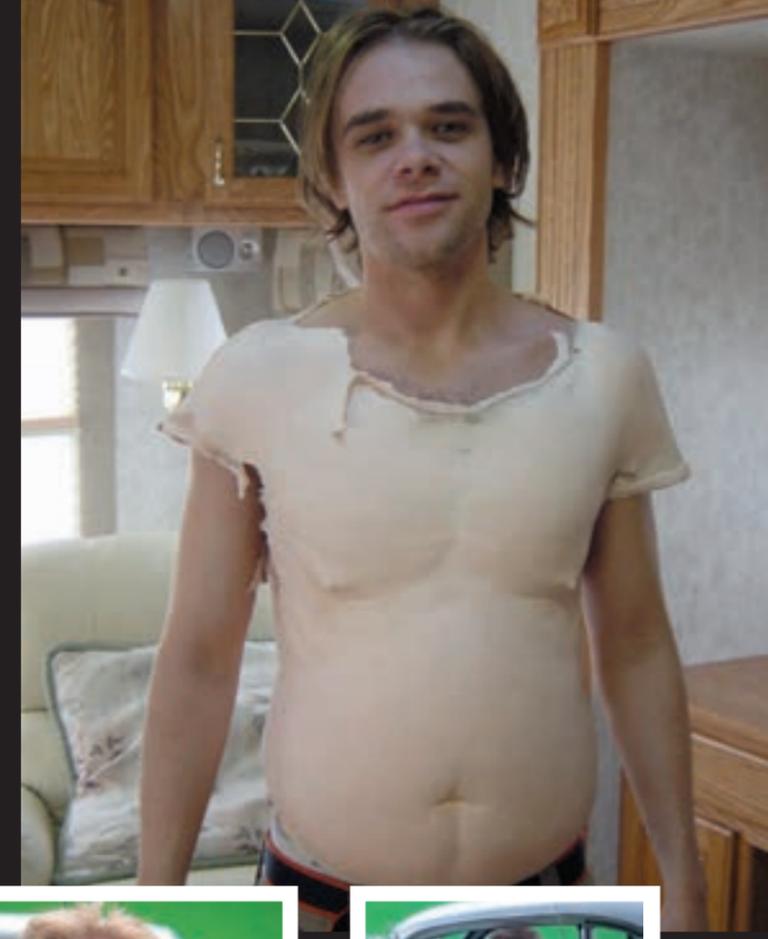
so they could digitally enhance it and make it glow.

"Gerry also did some stretch and stipple on Bruce to age him, because Hartigan had aged eight years. Robert really wasn't interested in putting Bruce in a lot of prosthetics, so I said, 'Why don't you do a little bit of stretch and stipple on him?' So Gerry did that, too."

For the final segment of *Sin City*, the KNB team had to create a decapitated head of Del Toro's character, as well as changing the actor's appearance with subtle prosthetics. As Nicotero recalls, "I got a call from Benicio, who said, 'I think I should wear appliances, because I want to look more like the guy in the comic book.' I e-mailed Robert, who said, 'I trust you; you know what I want,' so we gave Benicio a bit of a chin, just to lengthen his face, and gave him a thinner nose like in the book, and it was amazing how much it changed his face. Suddenly he looked like a rock star. Quentin Tarantino was directing two days for that segment, and he came into the trailer and said, 'If I ever do a movie with Benicio Del Toro, he has to have that nose and that chin.'"



"WE COULDN'T PAINT HIM YELLOW," NOTES NICOTERO, "BECAUSE OF THE KICK FROM THE GREEN, SO WE ENDED UP PAINTING HIM BLUE INSTEAD."

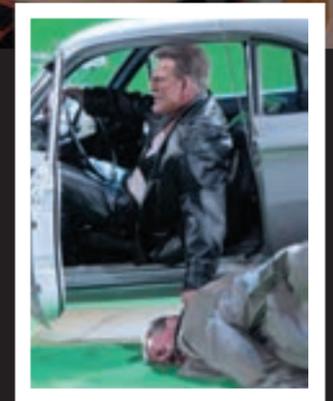


Top to bottom: Yellow Bastard illustration; Garret Immel and Gino Crognale with the Yellow Bastard; Yellow Bastard post-production, after a color treatment was used to turn him from blue to yellow.

Ospina also had his hands full with the final segment, creating looks for Gail (Dawson) and the rest of the Old Town prostitutes. "That was a lot of fun," he remembers. "Some of them were professional actors, but for others, it was their first time acting, so standing around in make-up for ten hours isn't as much fun as it sounds."

"I also had to differentiate between the characters they were playing in the same scene and the stars because the stars had had to stand out. I tried to compare the eye shadows and lipstick and even the brand of make-up I was using for each character, so if I caught myself using the same blush or lipstick on two of the characters, I had the responsibility of making them look different. So if you see Alexis Bledel in the same scene with Rosario Dawson or Jaimie King, yes, the make-up is heavy. But it's done in a very different way."

"With Alexis, I applied the eyelashes one by one every single day, and that gave me a really intense effect for her eyes. The rest of her make-up could be soft, so I went really soft on her lips, making them pinkish and very sexy and very insinuating. For Rosario Dawson, I did a really harsh make-up, really dark eyes and lipstick, but that was also her character. Even though we had all these women in the background that were prostitutes, they all had very different make-ups."



Looking back at their work on *Sin City*, the film's make-up supervisors are justifiably proud of the work they were able to accomplish within a relatively modest amount of time and budget. "For me, it always goes back to the personal level," says Ospina. "I have a great time working with actors, but for the first time in 15 years that I've been doing make-up for film, I think *Sin City* is really special. We were trying to bring these books to life, and in that sense, we were very successful. I got to apply beauty make-up, which I love doing, and combining that with character make-ups."

"It was an amazing experience," agrees Nicotero, "getting a chance to create these characters out of Robert and Frank's mind and seeing them come to life. I think it's some of the best stuff we've ever done. I feel we've provided an integral role, and I'll be really intrigued to see how all of that stuff plays, knowing that most of it was shot on green screen, and half of these actors weren't shot together."

"But looking at *Sin City* in its totality, it's stuff that I'm really proud of." **MA**

Clockwise from top left: Yellow Bastard character against green screen; Nick Stahl test-fitting a torso appliance for the Yellow Bastard. Marv dragging an informant; informant after dragging; dummy of Elijah Wood; informant after beating.

