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Mask of the White Death

Brian De Palma's latest thriller showcases a new face of mystery.

By CHRIS ALEXANDER

While the greatest special effect in Brian De Palma's upcoming *Passion* is the director's inimitable technique, there are some genuine—albeit subtle—practical prosthetic FX at play. Chief among them is the surreal hybrid-face mask worn during sex and, later, murder—an alabaster visage that recalls everything from Georges Franju's *Eyes Without a Face* to Alejandro Amenábar's *Open Your Eyes* and, in a sense, De Palma's own past work (*Phantom of the Paradise*, the murder mask worn in *Body Double*, the disguises in *Mission: Impossible*).

And while at first glance, the mask looks like any generic off-the-rack Mardi Gras cowl, the piece was the result of much planning and artistry. It was designed by Jörn Seifert and Tamar Aviv of the prolific German FX shop Twilight Creations (*Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters*, the FANGORIA Frightfest title *Grimm Love*), and sculpted by Göran Lundström (*Clash of the Titans*, *The Wolfman*). FANGORIA chatted with Seifert about their pivotal role in the *Passionate* world of De Palma.

FANGORIA: Both of you had separate careers before forming Twilight Creations. What brought you together?

JÖRN SEIFERT: We met for the first time in 2003, in the freshly founded workshop of our close friend and colleague Dennis Penkov, who was Tamar's teacher. He and my mentor Barney Nikolic had gotten together, thinking about how to establish the field of makeup effects in Germany as a natural and common part of the industry. We were brought together with the same idea: trying to get the fear out of production people that makeup effects were too expensive and didn't really enhance a project.

No one really trusted German artists; we don't have a makeup-related genre there as compared to the United States or England, even if we have the fans. So we

started doing small shows and commercials, and were looking from the very beginning for artists from other countries who might be in the same situation. Over the years, we established contacts and very nice and lasting friendships all over Europe, always guided by the thought that



we could work together, share our experiences and try to give every project the best quality possible. After collaborating for two years, we founded Twilight Creations in 2005. Two years later, we set up an on-line Shop and Rentals site for makeup artists who, for example, are doing small shows and don't have the budget for labor-intensive prosthetic builds, or just need something very quick on set, like a bruised eye or a deep cut, but don't want to use old-school wax buildups on their actors.

FANG: How did your relationship with De Palma come about?

SEIFERT: It all started with a phone call

from *Passion* assistant director Sebastian Fahr-Brix, introducing the idea for the mask and asking if we would be available to realize the job. We had worked with Sebastian on Tom Tykwer's *3* in 2009, and he had us in mind when the topic came on the table. Of course, we were excited to contribute to one of de Palma's movies, and absolutely wanted to do it. The design was in a very rough stage at this point, and could have gone in any direction, so it was a bit difficult to plan and think through. Besides that, we were very busy with preproduction on a German TV serial, for which we were preparing for 45 shooting days with a silicone fat makeup in Vienna.

There was no way around that, so we got a nice crew together, and were very happy to get Göran Lundström on board to do the delicate sculpting process of building Rachel McAdams' face on Noomi Rapace's face. Brian soon had a very clear image of what the mask should look like and how he wanted it to fit. We had a few meetings where we introduced our ideas too, to make it wearable and stay within the given budget, and soon came to a conclusion that satisfied him. Of course, we always checked in with pictures of our building steps to assure this was the way to go, and Brian always pointed out the direction.

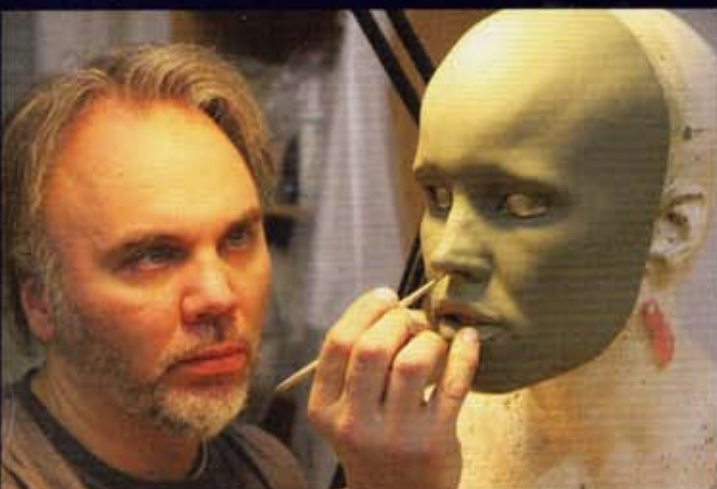
We had the lifecasts of Rachel and Noomi in the shop. After Brian decided not to use a realistic-looking mask, but rather an artificial one with the basic shapes of Rachel's face, Göran started sculpting on a bust of Noomi. It was very difficult to find the right proportions, so that Noomi's head did not appear too big in the end. Also, the eyes were difficult to match and position at the right height. But finally, we produced a mask that fit well, and that Brian liked.

FANG: De Palma can be a taskmaster; was he easy to work with?

SEIFERT: Absolutely. Brian knew what he wanted very early on, which was a great help on the tight schedule we had to realize the mask. He was very detailed in overseeing the work, and it was nice to collaborate with someone who had a strong idea in mind. Brian was happy with the look of the mask—and as you can see in the trailer, he shows it quite a lot!



Rachel McAdams' features formed the basis of a mask that had plenty of *Passion* poured into its creation.



Göran Lundström had the unusual task of making one beautiful woman's face look like another's.

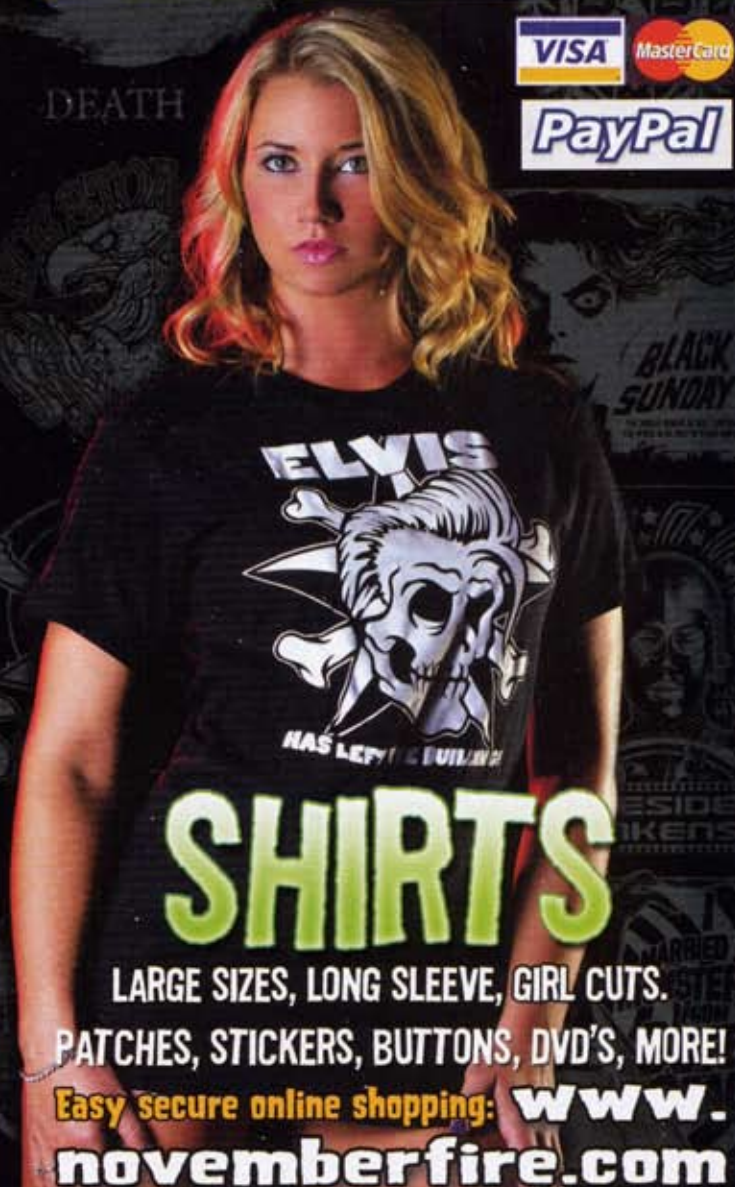


Under the final mask and wig, you'd never know that's Noomi Rapace.



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