

STEVE JOYNER: We have Naveen Andrews from *Lost* playing Abby. One of his character traits is that he collects his enemies balls in a jar—all the enemies that he's vanquished. He has the complete set: ball clippers, ball knife and a jar to keep his specimens in.

JEFF POSS: I kept thinking, "It's a ball jar. You have to be able to carry it around, so it can't be too big." And Steve kept kicking me in the head saying, "No. Bigger, bigger, bigger." I actually have a picture of him saying, "See, it needs to be this big."

STEVE JOYNER: Marcia in costumes came through for us by making a beautiful military carrying case for the ball jar and all its accessories.

JEFF POSS: Mark McCord and I worked the ball knife

back and forth for a little while. We were really happy with the result—it was figurative, a complete sculpture in terms of balance and form. So we were both really pleased with ourselves when Steve walked in said that we needed a second weapon. It would be something that served the same purpose, but did so in a completely different way—something with a snipping action. Something really horrible.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: The guys definitely reacted to this one.

JEFF POSS: The shark knife is so figurative, it was important to make the ball snips in the same way. We based it on the double serrated pincers of a scorpion, while at the same time giving it hip bones and legs. It basically creates the area that you're about to snip.

NEW HIGHS IN HORROR

THE PROPS OF PLANET TERROR



OPPOSITE (FROM LEFT): Abby's "Shark Knife", ball snips and storage jar; **ABOVE:** Dakota's syringes and launcher.

STEVE JOYNER: And you have double cutting action, which is kind of unique. You've got a double cutter because you have two objects that you're trying to sever.

STEVE JOYNER: There was a lot of statement in the ball clippers.

JEFF POSS: One of my favorite props of all time.

STEVE JOYNER: Because *Planet Terror* was a night shoot, we had to design the ball jar to have very bright L.E.D. (light-emitting diode) panels in the top and bottom.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: The L.E.Ds made it look really cool. If you have a jar full of objects just sitting there in the dark, it just doesn't mean shit. You can't see a thing.

STEVE JOYNER: Because of the night shoot, almost everything we made needed to be light in color or light up from the inside.

STEVE JOYNER: Dakota's syringe is based on a dental aspirating syringe. There are rings on either side that allow the dentist to push and pull the anesthetic in and out of your gums. Even though it looks antique, this tool is still in use today. We were able to locate these from a surgical supply, then we modified them and Kit gold-plated them.

JEFF POSS: They even have a viewing area for the glass vials, so you can see our orange, killer juice.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: For the syringe gun, we were thinking about old surgical tools. The curved quality of them. Stainless. The lines are very specific. When we first started, all the guys were doing renderings of a syringe gun that was very gun-like, and I kept drawing this curved thing. I think Robert actually said "less gun like," which was a benefit to me. The syringe gun went through several revisions, you know we had to really look at the thickness of it. Troy Engel did a great job rendering out the design.

JEFF POSS: In the end, we ended up shortening it quite a bit, so that there wasn't a handle at all. It took a lot of kicking from Caylah to convince us to lose the handle altogether. We finally did and it worked beautifully.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: I'm a good kicker.

JEFF POSS: There's a scene where Dakota spins her syringe gun like a revolver, old west style. We kept working on the balance of it to make it easier to spin and Kit came up with the idea of putting ball bearings in the trigger. They ended up being the perfect size. We then made an insert that fit on her finger like a ring and gave it to Marley [Shelton] to practice with. The scene turned out very cool, she was really able to spin it.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: Anytime you can make something work for an actor in that manner, it definitely makes your day.



JEFF POSS: We wanted the syringes to be as visible as possible, while being easily removable from the holster. We ended up planeting itty-bitty magnets in the syringes and gold-plated the whole thing. It made it very easy to attach. You could just get within an inch of it, and the syringe would click right into place. It even made a nice clicking sound.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: That's another thing about cool action, you want to create a prop that has a good sound cue. You don't want cumbersome little hooks that the syringe has to seat into. They need to feel cool to the actor when they're using it.

JEFF POSS: I had trouble figuring out how this big, bulky weapon with two big syringes was going to be holstered under Dakota's skirt without looking like an extra thigh. I worked out this elaborate plastic

holster—basically a gun holster wrapped in leather. Caylah looked at it and said, no, here's a loop attached to a garter belt. It was beautiful. Much better.

STEVE JOYNER: It was more sexy for Marley

JEFF POSS: Sometimes you keep it simple in design and it works very well

STEVE JOYNER: One of the first things that Caylah and I saw when we came onto Planet Terror was [Troublemaker Digital artist] Alex Toader's designs for what we call the Doom Device—the device that contains the gas that creates our zombies. When Robert was conceptualizing the story, he had Alex working on pre-visualization for it.

OPPOSITE (FROM TOP): CG concept designs of the Doom Device by Troublemaker Digital Artist Alex Toader. Notice the "German Gray" coloring at the bottom left. • Prop Fabricator Kit Casati creating a doom device pedestal as Head Prop Fabricator Jeff Poss observes. • Blank Blank airbrushing the final touches to a Doom Device; **ABOVE:** (from left) Construction Coordinator Joe McCusker, Camera Operator Jimmy Lindsey, Production Designer Steve Joyner and Special Effects Tech Mike Reedy check out the final, "hero" Doom Device just prior to shooting.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: Robert keyed in right away on some of the color schemes. I guess it comes from German military equipment, snow camouflage. Since our entire shoot was at night, it definitely worked to have this lighter color scheme. It allowed the devices to really pop when the soldiers were carrying the tanks around. We also had to work out a good schematic for actors to be able to carry them. To have light-weight versions for actors to be able to carry them, have light weight versions, have hero versions with working parts. One of the things we also did right out of the gate, was to kind of work out our size and scale,

JEFF POSS: There are three different stages to the Doom Device. First, it had a dormant stage, where it needed a certain ominous presence, a kind of statuesque appearance. It needed to be a little bit higher, a little bit taller than anybody around it. That made it feel a little bit more dangerous. Then it had to be carried. We had to keep in mind that, if need be, two guys could carry this thing. It needed to be portable and to be able to go through all the actions with the stunt people. Then finally it had an open stage. We had to consider the overall height of the set since this thing almost doubles in size when it's open. We angled the top of the Doom Device pack into a leaned-back stance, so that when it opened it

created a pretty aggressive action.

STEVE JOYNER: Mike Reedy from the special effects department mechanized the whole apparatus, which was quite a project.

JEFF POSS: Yeah, in the end we went ahead and modeled all the individual pieces, cut them out and made individual molds. We had four "hero" devices that were up front and center and wanted all the relief to be there all the detail to be there because of the digital world and how detailed it is, how you can catch every single nook and cranny now

STEVE JOYNER: The script grew from one Doom Device to 25 or 26 Doom Devices, so to manufacture those in time, we had to simplify a lot of the components.

JEFF POSS: I don't think, we didn't change a whole lot on the four hero ones but we did have to take one of those and we made basically a repeatable vacuum plug for all the background ones, the paintjob is the same but there are basically 3 parts to ones in the background and 30 parts to the hero ones. And only one actual working one, LED components, the actual digital screens on them, there are a lot of little parts to them. But we had to have a lot out on the tarmac for the destruction scene, we really had to crank them out.

STEVE JOYNER: The number grew, each couple of weeks that went by it was like “hey can we have six more, hey can we have four more”

JEFF POSS: Along the way, we were trying to figure out a way to tie the personal gas packs in with the Doom Device. We all worked to make the two props work together as one. When the soldiers run out of gas, they walk up to the Doom Device, push the button and it opens up. Then there are two removable cylinders that pop out that go in your personal pack.

STEVE JOYNER: After the doom device came the soldiers portable gas packs. It became clear that we needed color control in the movie. That’s a pretty big hot button for most production designers. I think I was first exposed to it working with David and Sandy Wasco on Jackie Brown. They do a really good job of establishing color and color themes, which really helps tell the story. In our case—because we were shooting at night—we discovered that we really needed to avoid khaki and camouflage. The traditional military green does a really good job of turning black at night. So fortunately, our country went to war in the desert and now there’s a lot of great sand-colored camouflaged stuff out there. All of our color choices became about being visible at night.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: Steve had the idea to make the gas packs operate like weapons, to have a lock and



load capability. Your actor can push a button, the tank slips out, they lock in another and it makes a really cool, heroic action. To me that makes a good prop. One of the things I learned from watching Antonio Banderas and Robert work together was that a well choreographed scene is in good musical beats. And Robert is definitely all about good beats.

We really wanted the device to have a single tank. We put it on a sling, it hangs over the shoulder just like a weapon. The handle is based right off an M16.



OPPOSITE (FROM TOP): Blank Blank models a custom “face hugger” gas mask. • Blank Blank assembles portable gas packs; **ABOVE:** An assembled “hero” gas pack and mask.



JEFF POSS: And some of the venting as well is patterned off of military guns.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: Again, Troy Engel was so good to work with on this. He sat down and worked it out and just wouldn’t quit. He came up with a number of versions, we did a few prototypes and got one that we were really happy with.

Another challenge was the gas mask. Anything that covers your actor’s face is a potential problem. You want it to be as unobtrusive as possible.

STEVE JOYNER: We worked for quite awhile to make the masks look military but didn’t give them this huge great dane snout.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: I think also I remember Robert referencing the mask Tom Hanks wore in Castaway. I think we tried to get them through France or something, but they were too expensive. So we ended up using

surgical tubing as our anchors.

STEVE JOYNER: Which is a little homage to Alien when John Hurt gets the face hugger.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: Exactly. Steve came up with this cool idea that was in keeping with the color scheme. Instead of having classic green we used orange lights in the masks. It really made them pop.

JEFF POSS: The masks were as involved as the packs themselves really, because they had four five custom elements to them that had to be assembled and then all of those had light packs in them. I think we ended up having more masks than packs since you didn’t always see a pack but you always saw if they had a gas mask on.

CAYLAH EDDLEBLUTE: And those little hits of light in the night are just so great.