



# MUTANTS ON THE MOVE

We visit the set of *American Horror Story*

By Chris Koseluk

It's 7 a.m., and *American Horror Story* is setting up shop at Los Angeles' Griffith Park. It seems a little early in the morning to find pizza boxes piled up in front of the make-up trailer. But these boxes are filled with boils, scabs and other bits of prosthetic skin—call it the silicone special from Tinsley Studio. Instead of feeding hungry crew members, these boxes will feed the creation of Raspers, the series' newest scream-inducers.

*American Horror Story*, now in its second season, is the hugely popular horror-drama from Ryan Murphy and Brad Falchuk. It resembles a miniseries more than an episodic: each season offers a totally different story and set of characters from the one before.

*American Horror Story: Asylum* takes place in 1964 at Briarcliff, which houses and treats institutionalized criminals. Running it is Sister Jude (Jessica Lange), Sister Mary Eunice (Lily Rabe) and Monsignor Timothy Howard (Joseph Fiennes). Other key staffers include psychiatrist Dr. Oliver Thredson (Zachary Quinto) and Dr. Arthur Arden (James Cromwell), who oversees medical treatment. As the story unfolds, Dr. Arden is experimenting on his patients in an attempt to create a race impervious to disease, which is turning his subjects into grossly mutated creatures known as Raspers.

"Ryan was really specific about the Raspers," says make-up department head Eryn Krueger Mekash. "Tinsley Studio submitted about 70 designs for the Raspers. We didn't want to do anything that looked like a zombie. We didn't want a rotting look. Ryan wanted them to look like humans who've been subjected to lots of disease and hormone injections. We finally came to a bulbous kind of growth look."

Just how deadly and dangerous the Raspers are remains to be seen—show reps are keeping close-lipped about the storyline. We do know that Dr. Arden and Sister Mary Eunice will encounter four of them in a forested section of Griffith Park that is being transformed into a snowy Massachusetts day. And these creatures need to be sufficiently scary by their 11 a.m. call.

In the first trailer, Christopher Nelson and Mike Mekash (Krueger Mekash's husband and the show's liaison to Tinsley) are transforming Mark Consuelos into the character Spivey. Consuelos' tattoo is camouflaged, and he is fitted with three principal prosthetic pieces. Soon, his left eye disappears under a mountain of mutated flesh. Another attachment makes his spine bulge out at the base of his neck. Nelson cracks open a pizza box and starts grabbing silicone



Photos by Simeon Muller



pieces. Consuelos' legs, arms, chest and back all get pieces—20-plus, by Mekash's estimate.

Nearby are plastic storage bags filled with blotchy red and purple tattoo transfers. Whipped up at Tinsley, these will be spread over all four Raspsers. The effect is a mixture of severe bruising and an extreme case of rosacea. Being a human guinea pig isn't pretty.

At the middle chair, Steve Prouty and Bart Mixon are smoothing down a bald cap on the head of Justin Eaton. The show's go-to stunt guy, Eaton is playing Rasper #1 today. He ends up with his right ear missing and boils running up and down both arms. This is Prouty's first gig with the show and Mixon's second—evidence of how much more demanding the make-up effects have grown from the first season.

"We're doing 300 percent more than we did last year," says Mekash, the show's key prosthetic make-up artist, regarding the number of make-up effects. "Last year we slit one throat. This year we're up to at least five."

"We feel so fortunate, because Ryan loves practical effects," adds Krueger Mekash. "He always goes for prosthetics over visual effects. There's tons of make-up for us to do on the show."

In the trailer's final chair sits Mandy Morgan, whose makeover is courtesy of Thom Floutz and Scott Wheeler, two more hired guns for the day. As Rasper #3, Morgan gets a mutated left eye and a grossly enlarged bottom lip. "I've





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and Melanie Verkins—took home a Primetime Creative Arts Emmy for Outstanding Hairstyling for a Miniseries or a Movie for *American Horror*’s first season. (Both Krueger Mekash’s make-up crew and her husband’s prosthetic team were nominated.) “Whenever the prosthetics go into the hairlines, we have to supply a wig that hides that so it doesn’t look too harsh.”

In the final hour before showtime, Mekash and Nelson dab their brushes over Consuelos’ upper torso as Ayers dots the actor’s legs with transfers. Brush in hand, another of the show’s make-up artists, Silvina Knight, works in tandem with Ayers, smoothing make-up over the huge red and purple areas on Consuelos’ legs. Next door, Garbarino has fired up an airbrush to make Toney’s scabs, scars, and boils more realistically repulsive.

In the home stretch, each Rasper is coated with caramel food coloring and Ultra Wet to give their wounds a pus-like sheen. This is followed by a liberal sprinkling of mud (a mixture of Kaolin clay powder, Gafquat and water) to give the creatures that ‘lived in the woods’ look. Lastly, each receives a mouthful of rotting teeth and specialty lenses that turn their eyes an eerie black.

And just when they are supposed to, everyone piles into two vans—Raspers, Dr. Arden, and Sister Mary Eunice in one; the make-up teams in the other—and heads up to the woods to create some scares. And me? I’m off to lunch—anything but pizza. **MA**

never looked so hideous in my life,” exclaims the stuntwoman. Floutz and Wheeler take this as a compliment.

In the trailer next door, make-up artists Jason Hamer and Mark Garbarino are attending to Aaron Toney. A Tinsley employee, Hamer usually stays in the shop. But both he and Garbarino were called to turn Toney into Rasper #2. This involves a full prosthetic headpiece, complete with ears and hand-laid hair. He’ll also be fitted with a mutated arm.

Kim Ayers, the show’s key make-up artist, preps the silicone pieces and tattoo transfers. Krueger Mekash drifts among stations, making sure each team has what it needs and is on schedule.

Once skin has reached peak mutation, it’s time for hair department head Monte Haught to plant tufts of long, scraggly hair extensions strategically over Eaton’s bald head and tease Morgan’s flowing blonde mane into a frightful mess.

“With the Raspers, my main project is covering make-up edges,” says Haught, who, along with the hair team—Natalie Driscoll, Michelle Ceglia, Samantha Wade

