

ADAPTING *RESIDENT EVIL: EXTINCTION*

The third and final installment of the \$100 million *Resident Evil* trilogy, *Resident Evil: Extinction* is again based on the wildly popular video game series. The first film established the world of the *Resident Evil* film franchise; the second film, *Resident Evil: Apocalypse*, found Alice (Milla Jovovich), L.J. (Mike Epps) and a renegade Umbrella officer named Carlos Olivera (Oded Fehr) escaping Raccoon City and Umbrella's plot to extinguish them. *Resident Evil: Extinction* finds them loose in the Las Vegas desert, moving from place to place in an armored convoy, outrunning and outgunning the throngs of Undead that lurk in the wide, empty spaces that can no longer be called civilization.

"I think the strength of the *Resident Evil* movies is that they're not just zombie movies," says writer/producer Paul W.S. Anderson, the creative force behind the *Resident Evil* trilogy. "There are creatures in these films, more than just the Undead. There are also a lot of science fiction concepts in the movies, as well, so they're bigger than just a zombie movie."

Constantin's Bernd Eichinger, Robert Kulzer and Martin Moszkowicz, who first envisioned the *Resident Evil* movie franchise, are once again reunited with Davis Films' Samuel and Victor Hadida and Impact Pictures' Jeremy Bolt and Paul W.S. Anderson. "Paul has done something which is very unusual for a genre movie," says producer Robert Kulzer. "It feels like a very epic movie, with story arcs that go across several movies and combine again and get separated again. All of these characters have taken on lives of their own. He's so connected with this franchise, and these characters and the world of the game. I think this world really inspires his imagination."

Taking the director reins this time is Russell Mulcahy, who started his career as a music video director before helming such seminal films as *Highlander* and its sequel, as well as *The Shadow* and *Ricochet*. "For my generation of filmmakers, *Highlander* was a big thing," says Anderson. "Russell pioneered a very distinct visual style, a lot of moving camera and crane work, lots of very fast cutting. He's got a very cool eye and

sees great ways to shoot. His work certainly had a big influence on me as a filmmaker and that's why I was very excited to work with him on this movie.”

“When we had our first meeting with Russell, he literally came in with a book,” recalls Kulzer. “He had storyboarded the entire movie, and he took us through it – shot by shot, scene by scene. We were just blown away by this.”

“Horror films have always been a great passion of mine, so it's great to get my hands on such a fantastic script,” says Mulcahy. “Visually, *Resident Evil: Extinction* is different from the previous two films. The first one was quite claustrophobic; the next one was outside on wet night streets, and now, we take them out into the desert. It has a very western feel but is futuristic, crazy and creepy.”

“We took a lot of inspiration from another genre of films that I grew up with, which is the post-apocalyptic movie, of course, *Mad Max* and *The Road Warrior* being the best of them,” Anderson adds. “There's a whole audience of people who don't know how cool seeing armored trucks blast through these desert landscapes can be.”

Where the first two films unfolded in tight, contained spaces, the third film's large scale action sequences take place amid post-apocalyptic landscapes in broad daylight. “What's terrifying is not necessarily that which goes bump in the night, but that which whispers at mid-day,” says Mulcahy. “In some ways it's even more terrifying. We do have our dark, spooky scenes, but we have a wonderful visual contrast of this blasted sand and stormy desert landscape, such as Las Vegas covered in sand. And then you go underground to the Umbrella Corporation, which is all blue and cold and steel. It's quite a refreshing and surprising look, a very visceral look, without taking away any elements of the game, which is very important. We've been very adamant about keeping true to the spirit of the game.”

As with the previous *Resident Evil* films, *Extinction* resonates with the contemporary zeitgeist. “In this movie it's very much about the shortage of oil, the shortage of supplies, and how the desert has taken over civilized land,” notes Kulzer. “Even though it's a science fiction action film, there are nuances about it that reflect the world we know, the one we live in right now.”

Resident Evil: Extinction is an original story, but one that unfolds in a world that fans of the game will recognize. “It’s all part of trying to deliver a movie going experience that satisfies the fans of the game but also provides a fun cinematic experience for a broader audience that has never played a *Resident Evil* game,” says Anderson.

At the heart of the terror in *Resident Evil* are the ever-present zombies unleashed through T-Virus mutation. While the concept of the Undead remains the same, the stakes have once again been raised. “The game has progressed and broadened out, and we thought we should change as well,” explains Anderson. “So, we’ve introduced the Super Undead, which are a result of Umbrella experimenting with the Undead and attempting to give them back some of their reasoning power, some of their intelligence and a little of their humanity. Unfortunately, these experiments don’t quite work and the side effect is the Super Undead, which are Undead that are faster, stronger and more cunning... a really fearsome foe.”

But mindless flesh-eaters aren’t the only predators the characters have to fend off. “We’ve also included the Tyrant, which is a big favorite of a lot of fans of the game,” says Anderson. “It’s certainly one of my favorite creatures from the game. And we’ve brought back some old favorites, like the dogs. We’re using the crows properly for the very first time – there’s an amazing sequence that has these mutated crows in it.”

While sticking to the spirit of the games, Anderson has injected the story with fresh concepts and Mulcahy has brought the whole enterprise into the light. “To simply copy the games would not be a good movie going experience because you would know exactly what’s going to happen and which characters would live and die,” Anderson notes. “That’s one of the big challenges: to stay true to the games but also break the rules a little bit.”

HUMANS VS. UNDEAD: ABOUT THE STORY

Resident Evil: Extinction picks up three years after the second film ended. “It’s set in the desert, so there are very few buildings, very few people,” comments producer Jeremy Bolt. “It has an atmosphere of isolation and desolation. What’s most striking

about these landscapes is that there's just nothing there three years after the apocalypse, apart from our band of survivors, and the evil Umbrella Corporation.”

“The third movie is set pretty much after the end of the world,” says Anderson. “The world has been wiped out by the T-Virus and only a small microcosm of humanity is left. It's kind of the proto-family of the future – this band of survivors who are part of an armored convoy that stays on the move continually, to try to stay out of trouble and stay ahead of the Undead.”

Some of the survivors have now formed a group of roughly thirty people, including adults and children, transported by a convoy of vehicles, “which includes a school bus, an ambulance, a news truck and a gas tanker,” Mulcahy describes. “They basically go from town to destroyed town trying to find food and water, and just to keep surviving. But they're getting desperate.”

Acclaimed actress and one of cinema's foremost female action stars, Milla Jovovich once again reprises the role of Alice, an experiment of the Umbrella Corporation whose DNA bonded with the T-Virus, giving her unprecedented power and independence. Since her escape from The Hive and Raccoon City, Alice now answers only to her will to survive and protect the last vestiges of humanity. “They're desperate, and Alice hears radio broadcasts of people in distress, but she keeps her distance. Her thought is that whenever she's near people, people die. So, she's got this standoffish quality about her.”

“Alice, since the last film, has definitely changed,” Jovovich explains. “She's a loner now. She doesn't really know what is going on with these new powers and weird things keep happening to her. If she falls asleep and has a nightmare, things start exploding. It's pretty crazy.”

Afraid that her mutations and genetic link to Umbrella will be a liability to the human survivors she wants to protect, Alice shadows them undetected through the desert. “It's a pretty lonely position,” says Jovovich. “She doesn't have anybody to lean on; she's very much by herself. She's definitely a bit sad, but at the same time, she's got a mission and her priority is to make sure that these people are safe, and hopefully try and take down Umbrella at the same time.”

“Umbrella is using her and she knows it,” adds Anderson. “She knows that Umbrella has been tracking her and can potentially see through her eyes, and use her as a spy. So, she has isolated herself and stayed away from the others. She also knows that she’s infected with the T-Virus and it’s causing mutations within her. She’s developing new powers, which we saw at the end of the second movie, but they have become much greater now and are out of her control, so she’s terrified of what she can do. She stays away from the others because she’s scared that she may cause them harm.”

Jovovich’s evolution in the skin of the Alice character has formed the heart of all the movies. “We put Milla through an awful lot in these films,” says Anderson, “and she always has a good sense of humor about it and always delivers. One of the things that makes the action scenes good in *Resident Evil* is her intention; you see it in her face, she believes everything. That’s really important in a movie like this because you can only believe the horror, and you can only believe the action if the actor does. If she’s terrified, so is the audience. And that’s what Milla gives these movies – she gives a hundred and ten percent commitment.”

The convoy is a family, led by Claire Redfield, a character from the game. “She’s basically the general, leading the pack,” says Mulcahy.

At the core of the *Resident Evil* films are strong female action heroes, and Claire is no exception. To embody a figure that would have the strength and compassion to lead a pack of survivors, the filmmaker brought in Ali Larter, the central figure in the blockbuster *Final Destination* series and one of the human superheroes in the hit TV series, *Heroes*. “She’s a very committed actress,” says Anderson. “She gives a great performance and knows how to handle a gun. I’ve really enjoyed working with her.”

“Claire Redfield is the leader of the convoy making its way across the Nevada desert,” describes Larter. “They travel in a chain of trucks – an ambulance, a Hummer, a gas truck, a bus where people sleep. Everybody’s just holding on. You can’t stop for too long. The only things that matter are the basic things you need to survive: food, gas, water, weapons. So, they’re just in a constant state of motion, trying to stay alive.”

In addition to being the leader, Claire assumes different roles for the survivors in her convoy, all of whom have lost family, friends and the lives they knew. “She’ll be a mother to someone, a best friend, a buddy, anything that her people need,” Larter

explains. “We’re at the end of the earth and she’s just trying to be a guiding force to these people.”

When Alice is driven to join Claire’s convoy, she steps into a world in which Claire is the leader and Alice is only a spectator. “At first people are apprehensive,” says Anderson. “There are scenes where people like take one look at Alice, when she’s wandering in the camp, and start wondering whether she’s this devil woman. A line in the script says, ‘The kids talk about you like you’re Dracula or something.’ Everyone takes a step back at first.”

Returning from the second film is Carlos Olivera, played by Oded Fehr. “Carlos was very much a corporate guy,” explains Kulzer. “He was part of the Umbrella Corporation, but at one point, he realized that Umbrella is not as good a place as he thought it was. I think he became doubtful of the morality of it when he realized that Umbrella was ultimately responsible for the demise of civilization.”

“Carlos used to work for the Umbrella Corporation as a hired gun,” says Fehr. “In the last movie, he realized what he’d been caught up in and joined forces with the good guys. So, he’s a soldier and a bit of a loner, and he’s very much in love with Alice.”

Though when the film begins, Alice and Carlos are separate, their reunion brings hidden feelings to the surface. “They have a lot of respect for each another, and this attraction,” says Jovovich. “So, when they meet again on this film, it’s a big relief for Alice. She’s so strong and so independent, but he’s the only one that understands what she’s been through. He’s not scared or intimidated by her. She doesn’t have anybody like Carlos in her life, and there is a great connection between the two of them. It was fun to play with the boundaries between these two characters.”

“The *Resident Evil* films, certainly the first two, are very female-driven movies,” comments Anderson. “In the second film, Oded made a big impression when he was on screen. The third movie brings him even more to the foreground, so I think for the very first time, there’s a really strong central male character in a *Resident Evil* movie. And Oded brings real strength and wisdom to the role.”

Also returning is L.J., played by Mike Epps, whose nature is to bring light to even the direst situation. “L.J. started out as just this fun character who knows his way around

the place,” describes producer Kulzer. “Now, we pick him up again and he’s become an intricate part of this survival machine. People rely on him. He’s still a funny guy, but he’s clearly reached a point where he’s a much more responsible member of this team.”

For Epps, the opportunity to bring some realness and humanity to his character was one the actor relished. “This film is much more than your typical horror movie,” says Epps. “The characters are a lot closer in this film. There’s more emotion, and you connect with them.”

Knowing Epps helped Anderson craft an arc in the third film that would harness the actor’s natural comic abilities. “Mike Epps is really funny,” describes Anderson. “He does a lot of improv on-set. No two takes are the same with him. Having worked with him on the second movie, I really got a chance to write his character with his voice in my mind, as opposed to casting him in the role as I did on the first film. So, I think he’s really going to shine in this movie.”

Anderson also wrote a character specifically for an actor whom he had worked with on his first American film, *Mortal Kombat*. Linden Ashby plays Chase. “Linden Ashby was the lead in *Mortal Kombat*, and I’ve wanted to work with him again ever since,” says Anderson. “He’s a cowboy – he lives on a ranch and has horses, so when I was writing this movie I brought him in as a foil for L.J., because Mike Epps is so urban, and to put him alongside Linden was perfect. The character of Chase has been a real revelation in the movie. It’s just been really fun to work with Johnny Cage again.”

The convoy also bears two young women in its ranks – Nurse Betty, played by musical artist and actress Ashanti, and a 14 year-old tough kid named K-Mart, played by up-and-coming actress Spencer Locke.

Ashanti, a fan of genre films, jumped at the chance to step into the environment of the film. “*Resident Evil* is about survival,” she says. “Our group is stationed in Las Vegas, which is where the survival of the fittest ended up. They’re running low on food, and they’ve picked up a lot of kids along the way. Nurse Betty is there to help anyone who gets hurt, especially if they get bit by one of the Undead. She’s definitely tough, and walks around with her bullets and her pack and band-aids. She’s all about business.”

K-Mart, says Locke, contributes a sense of hope to the people of the convoy. “K-Mart makes wire bracelets, which are like her good luck charm,” says the 14-year-old. “I got to pick what bracelets she makes, which was cool.”

While the survivors fight to stay alive on the surface, they must always stay on the move, searching for fuel and supplies while fending off everything from the Undead to a virulent breed of crows who have mutated by eating the infected Undead. “You go through barren landscapes to strange TV stations where they find people who are not zombies or Undeads; but they’re backwards and frightening,” describes Mulcahy. “And we have a very potent attack by the crows that is like Hitchcock notched up ten times.”

But beneath the blasted desert surface is a completely different world. “The only place that is still up and running are these underground hives of Umbrella,” says Jovovich.

“You’re outside the old, beaten-down weather station, which is all caged with ten thousand Undead trying to get in,” describes Mulcahy. “And you come down to the Umbrella Corporation, which is the metal blue, where these scientists are living. So, there’s this great contrast visually of going up and down between these two worlds that exist parallel to each other.”

Running the Nevada station but subject to the authority of the Umbrella Chairman is Dr. Isaacs, a returning character once again played by Iain Glen. Dr. Isaacs is obsessed with recreating Alice from a series of clones farmed in glass tubes within the complex. “He is responsible for trying to recover the situation because the T-Virus has wrecked the human population,” says Glen. “And he thinks he knows how to find the key to unraveling it using Alice’s blood to form an antidote. Dr. Isaacs is a very arrogant man, and when he is overruled by the powers above him, he doesn’t much like it, so he decides to go off on his own to find Alice, whom they all believe is dead.”

So, while Alice has the Undead above-ground to contend with, her most formidable foe is underground in the lab. “She’s dealing with quite a keen intelligence and he has a certain power over her,” says Glen. “He knows her well - in some ways, he created her -- so it’s a different sort of enemy.”

Dodging the ever-watchful eye of the Umbrella satellites, Alice pledges her help to the convoy when they find a diary which points to a possible safe haven far north of

them, in Alaska. With most of the gas stations in the desert dry as a bone, they realize their best hope lies within the sand-covered remains of Las Vegas.

But when Dr. Isaacs spots Alice among the convoy, they find themselves hopelessly in Umbrella's sightlines and must fight their way through a new breed of Super Undead to stay alive.

"We try and play with the conventions of the genre and set up a scene that everyone's familiar with and then pull the rug from underneath them a little bit," Anderson explains. "I think then you can take people by surprise and deliver some really satisfying and exciting action scenes. People will be shocked at how this story plays out, and what happens to the characters they have gotten to know in these films. We wanted to keep things in the realm of the unexpected, and I think this film really delivers in turning some genre conventions upside down."

TERROR IN BROAD DAYLIGHT: ABOUT THE PRODUCTION

To realize the expansive vision of *Resident Evil: Extinction*, production ventured south of the border to Mexicali, Mexico, where long stretches of empty desert provided the ideal canvas for the daylight-set terror in the film. "We wanted to take it out into the desert, have these awesome desert landscapes and create a Las Vegas that's buried in the desert sands," Anderson describes.

Acclaimed production designer Eugenio Caballero, who earned an Oscar® for his work on *Pan's Labyrinth*, was charged with creating a number of weathered, sun-and-sand-blasted environments in the desert that would contrast the sleek inner workings of Umbrella's underground labs.

"For me, it was a very new thing to make a zombie movie in the daylight," says Caballero. "That's a huge opportunity for design because you can play with textures and colors you don't usually see in this kind of film."

Working in Mexicali, where temperatures soared to over 130 degrees Fahrenheit, Caballero supervised a crew that would need to take precautions to offset the effects of such extreme heat and winds not only on his crew but on the sets themselves. The

construction crew was required to carry emergency kits for dehydration and heat effects, and also worked very early mornings and late afternoons to avoid the hottest hours of the day. “In Mexicali, we had great locations, and we wanted to incorporate the elements of those landscapes into our designs,” he comments. “But working there, the sun and the temperatures were amazing. We also faced the challenge of keeping those sets in place against the wind, so we made huge scaffolding structures to hold the sets in place.”

One of the most exciting sets for the production was the post-apocalyptic Las Vegas that the desert sands had reclaimed, which they set in Algodonez. “You’ve got a bit of the Statue of Liberty sticking out; you’ve got abandoned casinos sticking out of the desert,” Anderson describes. “Eugenio he has done an extraordinary job on the sets.”

“We physically built part of a Realto Ponte, a beautiful architecture piece,” Caballero says. “Also, part of the Eiffel Tower and some exteriors of casinos, so these are all the images you see on the Strip emerging from the sand.”

“Seeing something like Las Vegas destroyed and half-buried in sand, it’s just so epic,” comments Milla Jovovich. “It’s bigger than life. The crew worked so hard to make it real, so it was pretty inspiring.”

This very real practical location was further enhanced through visual effects. “Everywhere you look you want to see a casino,” comments visual effects supervisor Evan Jacobs. “You’re in the middle of this canyon of buildings. So, using the ‘hero’ structures built on-set we were able to add to that using the natural ‘blue screen’ of the desert sky, which was always blue. So, we were able to put casinos at the tops of these sand dunes.”

An 80 X 40 foot miniature of the post-apocalyptic Las Vegas Strip was created by New Deal Studios in Los Angeles. “Then we did a big motion control pullback on that set and ultimately used it for backgrounds for other pieces of the scenes,” Jacobs adds.

Another sequence involved a motel in the middle of the desert with a gas pump in the front. “We built everything because to give the sense that these huge sand dunes were moving little by little to cover our sets,” says Caballero.

The third important set involved the weather station that is constantly swarmed just outside the reinforced fence by Undead. Caballero set his sights on a natural dry lake bed called La Pintata. “It’s a beautiful black mountain with a flat line of sand along the

bottom,” Caballero describes. “It’s a very magical, almost lunar landscape. It was like being on Mars.”

To create the interiors for the underground Umbrella facility, production found an ideal home at Mexico City’s sprawling Churubusco Studios. The underground complex as designed by Caballero is bigger and more complex than *The Hive* depicted in the first *Resident Evil* film. “They’re some of the biggest soundstages I’ve ever seen in the world,” says Russell Mulcahy, “so I’m really pleased that we’re shooting here because it has allowed us to build these very big, very elaborate sets.”

In designing the labs, Caballero took some references from the first two films but worked with the filmmakers to integrate a new aesthetic into the design to represent the progression of the corporation underground. “We decided to go with concrete walls to look like a bunker,” he describes. “They’re protecting themselves from what’s happening on the surface in this bunker. And we played with a lot of shiny surfaces, with glass, with aluminum and incorporated light into the architecture. The idea was to make this interior world high tech but soulless.”

Because of its origins, Caballero worked with the filmmakers to integrate “easter eggs” for fans of the game and the previous films into the design for the labs. “For example, instead of having jars full of fluids, we put things like red herbs and green herbs in the set dressing of the laboratory,” comments Caballero.

A fun aspect of the production design was creating the vehicles themselves, which would need to function together like a moving fortress for the band of survivors. “We had a lot of fun making the cars,” Caballero remembers. “It’s one thing to draw them, but when we were making them, we really enjoyed it.”

The first consideration would be what the convoy would need – water, protection from the weather, defenses from the Undead, etc. “From the extreme rusty decadence of the exterior to the high tech materials on the interiors, we wanted to give the idea that these vehicles belong to this world but are patched together from different aspects of it,” he says.

Referencing the script, Caballero created designs which he supplied to the transportation coordinator. “He did a great job getting cars that were similar to the ones I designed,” says the production designer. “So, in a very short time, I had a very good

team working really hard to custom-make those cars. It was like being in a huge warehouse with lots of toys to play with.”

With the commencement of production, cast and crew got a taste of the extreme conditions experienced by the construction crew in Mexicali. “You’re taking a bunch of people on an adventure, to achieve a certain goal, and therefore, the harder the environment, the more adventures you’re likely to have,” says producer Bolt. “So, it’s more interesting. We have the greatest respect for the Mexican crew who shoot in this environment regularly. We have an international crew on this film, and they all definitely became closer and bonded because of the harshness of the shooting environment.”

Everyone in the company participated in poolside barbecues and bonded as a result of the difficult conditions. “In the film, you’ve got people that have more of a connection to each other because they support each other and love each other,” comments Jovovich. “All of us in the cast and crew experienced some form of that kind of bonding. It was a tough shoot, but we all believed so much in what we were doing. I think our experience off-set really found its way into the performances.”

“It’s one of the hottest places in the world,” says Ali Larter. “And people gave one hundred and ten percent. I think it helped me as an actor because you don’t have to pretend. You’re totally feeling it.”

“During pre-production, I was always wary of how the chemistry was going to work off-camera, but everyone seemed to get along as a team and just bunker down and get on with it,” says Mulcahy. “They’ve been very good at that. I had a fantastic cast and crew, who just worked their tails off. As soon as we arrived, we were shooting within fifteen minutes and we just blast.”

In a film with heavy, non-stop action and a naturalistic aesthetic, the challenge of stunt coordinator Rick Forsayeth was to build stunts that would be believable in the sci-fi setting of the film yet reflect tangible, visceral reality. “There’s a lot of wire work,” says Mulcahy. “There’s crashing and bashing and bullets through heads and heads chopping off. Rick has been terrific. He’s an actor as well as being a stunt guy, and we used him to play three different characters in this film.”

Forsayeth, and his associate David Harcourt, dreamed up sequences that would benefit from wirework – to reflect the superhuman capabilities of Alice and some of the

Super Undead she would combat. Working with an actress like Jovovich, with so much stunt experience already under her belt, was a pleasure. “What was amazing to all of us was how quickly she could pick up and adapt to each thing,” comments Forsayeth, “while also throwing in her own ideas, which you also have to implement. It just makes the whole experience so much smoother because it’s always best to use the actor as much as possible.”

“Rick was awesome to work with,” comments Jovovich. “He gave me the opportunity to do some really great wirework and really cool stunts that are believable. There is a bit of realism to this; you can imagine that it’s really happening. It’s very vicious fighting.”

“Rick said to me, ‘You know what? Milla stops being an actor and can become a stuntwoman any time she wants,’” adds Anderson. “He loves blocking fight scenes with her because for him it’s just like working with a stunt performer, and that really helps the scenes. It makes them very convincing because obviously if you have to use too many stunt doubles, you get locked into using tight close-ups of the actor, wide shots of the stunt double and you can tell the difference. Even when it’s not important, even when we could get away with using a stunt performer, it’s quite often Milla because she insists on doing it.”

In this film, Alice wields a pair of highly sharp blades called Kukris that would require a separate training regimen for her to learn how to handle them. Kukris are the national knife of Nepal, an ancient, superior blade that can be used both as a combat weapon and as a tool.

“These are real weapons that were used by the Nepalese Gurkhas against the British at the turn of the century,” enthuses Jovovich, “but they only used one, where I use two, which is pretty cool because they’re big weapons and very vicious-looking. I had done some training in the past with weapons, so it wasn’t that difficult for me to assimilate these knives.”

A number of sequences in the film, most challengingly in the Weather Station assault, scores of extras would be required to be made up like zombies surging from every direction through the blowing sands. “The characters are living right on the edge of survival,” says Anderson. “It’s a really difficult life for them. And I think filming in

really difficult conditions has helped that. It's been tough making this movie but the life of these survivors is tough, and I think that realism has found its way onto the screen.”

One of the most challenging elements for special makeup effects designer Patrick Tatopoulos – the acclaimed veteran of such large-scale productions as *I, Robot*, *Independence Day* and *Pitch Black* – was designing and creating prosthetics for the desert Undead, desiccated creatures subsisting on very little in the unforgiving wastes of the desert. Multiply that by 300 extras and a picture of a highly trained and productive makeup crew emerges. To maintain continuity, Tatopoulos and his team kept an album full of Polaroid photos of the creatures which the filmmakers could constantly refer back to. “Bruce [Spaulding Fuller] and Richard [Redlefsen], my two key makeup artists on-set, had to deal with sometimes hundreds of desert Undead, and we used every traditional technique,” comments Tatopoulos. “You actually create maybe half-dozen different faces, chest pieces, and parts of the body that give you a patchwork of elements that you can play with. It allows the director on set to come up with some creative take on whichever Undead he wants to see at a given moment.”

Working with Mulcahy and Anderson, Tatopoulos sought to design creatures that would keep with the general vision of the first two films but deviate in strange and exciting ways. “There are two types of Undead in this film,” he explains. “The desert Undead and the Super Undead. The desert Undead were very shriveled, more like mummies. And the Super Undead are extremely powerful and very fast. They are the new generation of Undead, if you will, and are more defined, glistening creatures. So, it was fun to create these two classes of Undead.”

For physically embody the desert Undead, Tatopoulos worked with a crew of stunt people, dancers and actors to achieve the specific movement styles and looks they required. “You have to create a look of someone that's truly emaciated,” Tatopoulos explains. “So, you'd start by having an actor that's as thin as you can get, you emphasize all the bone structure and create a look that gives you a sense that the skin has been tightened against the body. Beyond that, obviously you can use CG effects to enhance it even more.”

Some sequences involved only a handful of Undead, but for the huge Weather Station sequence, involving 300 dressed extras, filmed in extreme heat, Tatopoulos and his team had their work cut out for them.

“People sweat, and after a couple of hours of shooting, the sweat disconnected the glue from the appliances,” he remarks. “So, we were constantly touching them up and making sure the director was getting what he wanted.”

To magnify this sequence in terms of sheer numbers, visual effects supervisor Jacobs worked with Tatopoulos and Mulcahy to map out the digital enhancement these mass-Undead sequences would need. “We have thousands and thousands of CG Undead outside the rim of that compound,” says Jacobs. “So, on top of the 300 practical Undead, it would be that much more overwhelming.”

The same technique applied for the sequences involving murderous, infected crows. On-set, the production had four live, trained crows, and Tatopoulos created a number of artificial crows using taxidermy birds that were either mechanized or fitted with rods which his team of puppeteers could manipulate as they interacted with the actors. “What you see in extreme close-up were done practically,” he says. “But in the foreground and background you have this overwhelming image of thousands of flying birds, so our mechanical birds became excellent lighting and movement references for the CG birds that were added later.”

Once again using the natural blue screen of the desert sky, Jacobs and his team at the Canadian effects house Mr. X, were able to black out the skies with birds on practically shot plates. “We shot a lot of crows out on location in the sky, so we got as many elements as we could that way,” Jacobs explains. “And then we went to our computer-generated crows to create these huge flocks just filling up the sky. And we used artificial intelligence simulations to give them some individuality in their actions.”

One of the *Resident Evil* franchise’s most memorable and menacing foes are the Undead dogs, which have been present in each installment in the trilogy. For *Extinction*, the filmmakers deviated from the Doberman Pinschers of films past and brought in the highly trainable breed of Belgian Malinois. “They’re a whole new breed this time,” comments Jacobs. “Belgian Malinois are great, aggressive dogs that are extremely

trainable. They'd sit there like the nicest puppies you'd ever met. Snap your fingers and they would just go really hard."

Tatopoulos created special prosthetics that would give the dogs the Undead look without affecting their natural comfort or equilibrium. "The suits were leggings and chest pieces," he describes. "And we had the dogs wear them for a month prior to shooting so they could get used to it. Most of the big mass of the body was created as a sculpted piece glued onto a spandex suit that the dogs wore. We also worked on a little extra make-up for the face, but nothing that would alter their movement. You'll see a lot of ribcage and bone when they run."

But perhaps the most exciting effects challenge was the creature called the Tyrant – Alice's final enemy (or "boss" in game-speak) – which would continuously morph throughout its sequences. These ambitious visuals would require a close collaboration between Mulcahy, Tatopoulos, Jacobs and the actors and stuntmen that would embody the creature. "He is an expanded crazy version of the Super Undead," Tatopoulos explains. "The whole concept was that this creature was coming from inside the person and bursting out. Every time they showed the creature, some part of his body would expand and change. The wounds would open and tendrils would come out of it and resolve themselves."

For his part, Tatopoulos created one general suit for the creature and additional add-on pieces that were sculpted separately to be attached as the Tyrant changed. The transitions would need to be partially practical and part CG. "These weird tendrils that would come out and shove themselves together, those would be moments of extreme CG," Tatopoulos explains. "And then it hardens, and that would be an appliance. This effect was a good mix for CG and practical where the two worlds create something interesting, but the actors have something to interact with during production."

Despite the difficulty of working on-the-fly, as opposed to having everything laid out in advance, the effects team relished the freedom of Mulcahy's off-the-cuff style of creative decisions. "He's an extremely creative director, and sometimes we'd want to see something different," says Tatopoulos. "So, we always had to be ready with different pieces to accommodate what he wanted for a given scene."

Jacobs echoes the sentiment, “Russell’s style of filmmaking is to have multiple cameras running at any given time. He always wanted to get a lot of energy in the shot, which means the visual effects had to roll with it and provide him with a lot of flexibility in the filmmaking.”

Throughout the production process, the company found a hearty and enthusiastic leader in director Mulcahy. “Russell has a very strong vision of how this movie should look,” says Jovovich. “He’s really captured this very spooky, creepy quality in the daylight. When the dailies started coming back of these incredible shots, we were blown away. There’s so much happening in every shot. And he’s like this little fireball on set. His passion and his enthusiasm are extraordinary. And he’s so much fun to work with.”

“He’s unlike any director I’ve ever worked with,” adds Iain Glen. “He’s got a brilliant visual eye and a wonderful energy. He and Paul have got different strengths and styles, but they combine brilliantly.”

For his part, Mulcahy feels the film delivers on the promise of the first two *Resident Evil* films but ratchets everything up a notch. “Expect to be surprised, to be shocked, to be thrilled,” says Mulcahy. “The film’s full of scares and action. It’s very fast, and it’s got a whole lot of new dynamics in this one, which I think make it quite original. It’s a great ride.”

Completing the final film in the trilogy is particularly satisfying for Anderson. “I’ve been very lucky in seeing my vision of the *Resident Evil* films come to fruition,” he comments. “In six years we’ve made three movies, so it’s been great to see such a broad vision come to the screen. These are very different landscapes that the characters have moved through – from the tight claustrophobia of a chamber piece horror to the broad expanse of a movie set in a darkened city to the expanses of the desert. It has been tremendously exciting for me to experience as a filmmaker, and as a fan of zombie movies as well.”

* * * *

"Oscar®" is the registered trademark and service mark of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences