



CHAPTER 6 ALMOST HUMAN



Greek and Roman mythology had never been a favourite subject of mine at school, but as I grew older I began to appreciate the legends and realize that they contained a vivid world of adventure with wonderful heroes, villains and, most importantly, lots of fantastic creatures.

In the late 1950s Charles and I discussed the possibilities of filming a Greek legend, specifically the story of Perseus. Following the lack of enthusiasm for *Mysterious Island*, we resurrected the idea and searched for a legend to form a natural storyline for Dynamation. Like *7th Voyage*, we would have to adapt and gently manipulate the story. Between us we read all of the Greek legends, and instead of the Perseus story (which we felt had some problems), we eventually decided on Jason and his search for the golden fleece, allowing us the most flexibility for high adventure and fantasy.

Having decided that it was to be 'Jason', Charles presented our idea to Columbia in December 1960. The front office was intrigued and gave us the go-ahead to prepare drawings and a treatment for the project, tentatively called *Jason and the Golden Fleece*. So it was that what would be known as *Jason and the Argonauts* was born, and of all the films that I have been connected with, it continues to please me most and is, rather gratifyingly, the film most people mention when they meet me.

The earliest written notes I have relating to *Jason* were made during the filming of *Mysterious Island*, hastily written on the back of a page of the script, entitled *Sinbad in the Age of Muses*. I am not sure why I used that title (I probably thought that by keeping Sinbad in there it would lead to better box office). It was those scribbles that presumably led me to formulate some of the basic ideas that would become *Jason* and scenes for future pictures. Aside from the main premise of Sinbad and Jason setting off together on a quest for the golden fleece, there are references to 'a land of the dead with walking skeletons', 'flying on a griffen', 'Medusa the magician' and 'the harpies'.

Because myths are usually very episodic and lack strong continuity, such stories need some degree of manipulation. But the story of Jason lent itself more than most to a natural flow of instances that could, we felt, be strung together to make a cinematic story. Its central theme told of the hero Jason searching for the magical fleece, throughout the quest encountering all manner of obstacles and beasts. What we had to do

was string the 'encounters' together, so providing a natural progression. I began this by visualizing some of the key sequences, and the first results included the harpies (an early version), Talos, Triton and the clashing rocks, modifying each one until I was satisfied that they would work on the screen.

Whilst I was working on the concept drawings for the key sequences, Charles commissioned a treatment and screenplay from Jan Read. At a 'sweatbox session' I showed my drawings to Jan and Charles, and between the three of us we discussed how to link them together. Jan then went off to formulate and bridge my drawings with a suitable continuity for a screenplay. During one of the preliminary discussions we considered the idea of top and tailing the story with a modern section. This, we realized later, was a mistake, but in those early days we were reluctant to plunge contemporary audiences directly into a film set in ancient times. We felt that it needed a prelude, and doggedly pursued this line of thought, which Jan then transferred into a first rough screenplay. This screenplay begins with a group of tourists visiting the Temple of Poseidon at Sounion, in Greece, and whilst looking around they come across a strange man who relates the story of Jason. As the story of the Argonauts' great adventure unfolds, the screen dissolves into the time of legend.

Although sections of Jan's screenplay were carried into the final picture, the bulk of the story and dialogue, especially the beginning, tried too hard to remain faithful to the legend, making it far too complex and cumbersome for the kind of picture Charles and I were looking for. Although Jan worked hard at trying to resolve the problems, we needed a writer who was familiar with the subject, so Charles

Left hand page. Two key drawings for the film. Above is my concept for the Hall of Zeus at Thessaly, and below is an early design for what would have been part of Jason's journey into the underworld. Here he is seen with Cerberus, the two-headed (it should have been three) guardian of the underworld. Although we didn't use him in *Jason and the Argonauts*, he was a creature that would pop up in *Clash of the Titans* on Medusa's Island.

decided to bring in Beverley Cross who, amongst his other talents, was an expert on Greek mythology. Although the usual 'sweatbox' script sessions continued, it was Beverley who tightened everything and wrote much of the excellent dialogue, sometimes on a day-to-day basis:

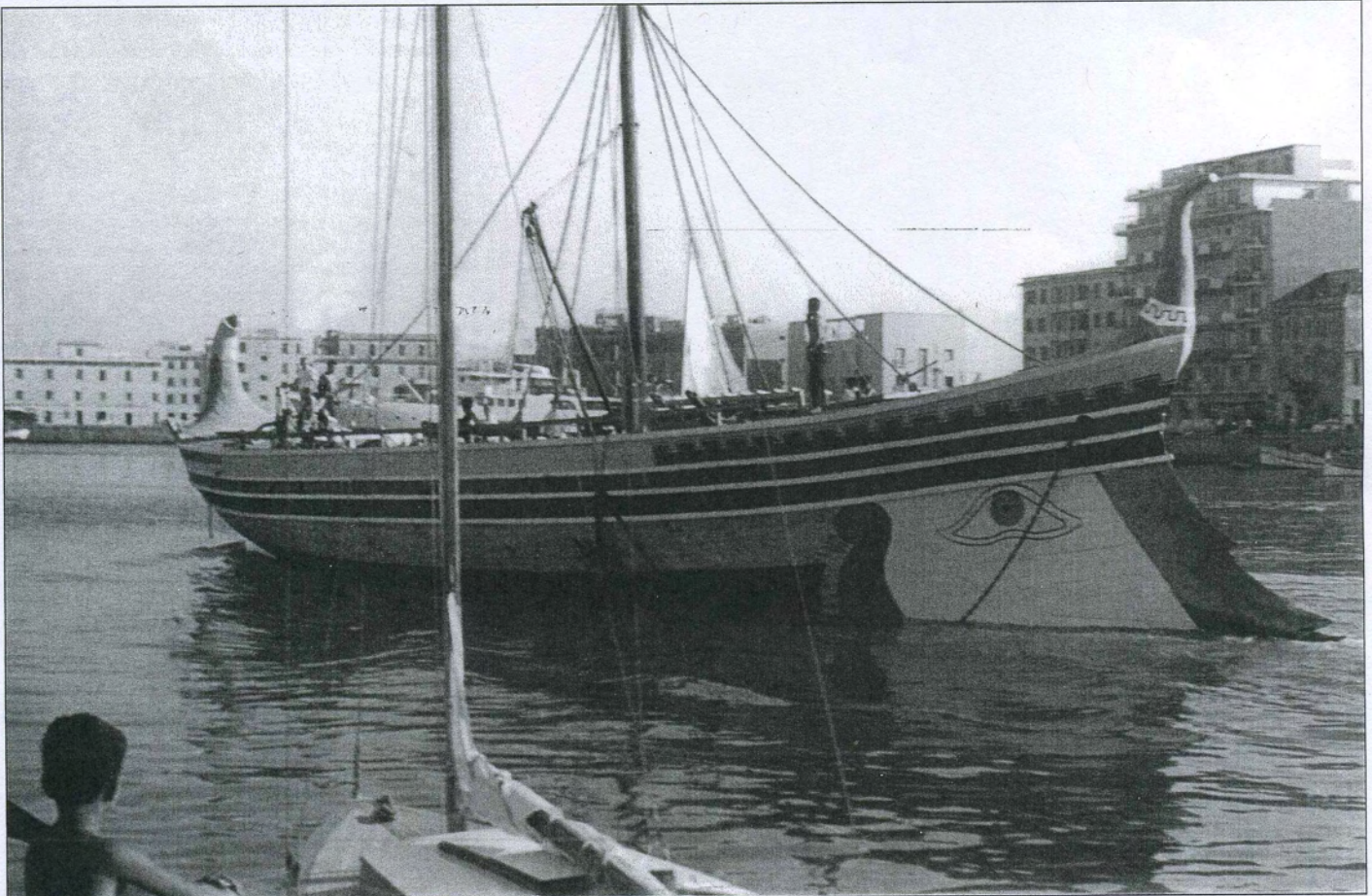
Jason (Todd Armstrong) has been deprived of his kingdom by King Pelias (Douglas Wilmer) and the only way in which he can gain his inheritance is to search for the famed golden fleece in the land of Colchis. A ship is built by Argos (Laurence Naismith), and, with the help of the goddess Hera (Honor Blackman) and the hindrance of Zeus (Niall MacGinnis), Jason sets out with the Argonauts, amongst whom are Hercules (Nigel Green) and Acastus (Gary Raymond). Stopping for water, they first encounter the giant bronze statue Talos, which nearly destroys the Argo and is only stopped when Jason releases its life blood. The second encounter is with the harpies whom the gods have sent to harass the blind seer Phineas (Patrick Troughton). In return for directions to the fleece, Jason agrees to capture these demons, which he does. Finally, Jason and the Argonauts have to find their way through the Clashing Rocks in order to reach Colchis. Just as all seems lost, the god Triton saves the Argo. Eventually they arrive in Colchis where Jason falls in love with the priestess Medea (Nancy Kovack). King Aetes (Jack Gwillim) tries to stop Jason from taking the fleece, but after killing the hydra which protects the magical fleece, Jason and Medea escape. Aetes pursues them and casts the teeth of the Hydra to the ground, from which spring seven warrior skeletons. Together with two of his men Jason fights the skeletons but Jason alone escapes to rejoin the Argo and Medea.

Our next task was to cast the film. For the role of Jason, Columbia suggested Todd Armstrong, a young studio contract player who had been a support actor in *Walk on the Wild Side* (1962) but had little, if any, lead experience. However, his good looks and screen presence persuaded us that he could handle the difficult role, which called for both tough physical and acting abilities. Unfortunately, when we had completed a rough edit of the film, Columbia felt that his strong American accent didn't mix with the accents of the dominant British cast (contrary to several articles that I have read over the years, he had a good speaking voice) and so they wanted to soften it. We therefore had to dub his voice using a British narrator with a slight American accent. Fortunately, the end result is a good mixture, and the general audience would not be able to tell that Todd was dubbed.

Nancy Kovack, another Columbia player, was cast as the high priestess Medea, but the rest of the cast was made up of British actors, including Gary Raymond, Niall MacGinnis, Laurence Naismith, Honor Blackman, Andrew Faulds and Nigel Green, who played a larger than life Hercules. Although Hercules doesn't feature greatly in the story, we felt that it was an important role but wanted to get away from the Italian beefcake the public had expected of him. Nigel was perfect as a slightly older and more intelligent hero, who in his ratty old lion skin was both a braggart and compassionate, especially when his friend Hylas disappears beneath the crumbling statue of Talos and he decides to stay behind to look for him.

When it came to locations, it was only natural that our first choice would be Greece, but after a recce taking me all around the country, I found it to be very bleak and grey. At that time the ancient ruins, other than the Parthenon, were mostly unrestored and in too much of a state of decay (even for the Phineas sequence, which necessitated a ruined temple) for the project. Rejecting Greece, we decided to look at what was then Yugoslavia, where once again I spent a lot of time. It seemed perfect, especially the mountain and coastal areas. We chose a number of sites located around Dubrovnik and found a standing set of an ancient city at the Yugoslav Studio, which had been built and used for an Italian feature production. However, this love affair with fresh locations didn't last long. Well into pre-production we began to have 'difficulties'. It became clear to Charles that certain production representatives were trying to 'load' our budget, whereupon Charles, quite rightly, blew his top. Although we were committed to the crew and the actors, we decided to move the production, pulling out of Yugoslavia only a month before shooting had been scheduled to begin. I can remember a feeling of panic in the air. At literally the eleventh hour we turned our sights to Italy.

By the 1960s Italy's film industry was thriving, which meant that it would be able to supply all the facilities for our production without costing countless millions. Also, having filmed *20 Million Miles to Earth* there, we knew that it had good unused locations, as well as Greek temples (mainland Italy had been



colonized by Greeks before the rise of Rome). But the question was, would they be right for *Jason* and the peculiarities of *Dynamation*? To save time it was agreed that Don Chaffey, the director, would recce the north whilst I travelled south. Fortunately, I found perfect Greek ruins and an abundance of good coastal locations against which we could sail the *Argo* and use as backdrops for most of the major scenes. The most striking scenery was in and around the tiny seaside village of Palinuro, south of Naples between Pisciotta and Sapri. The unusual rock formations, the wonderful white sandy beaches and the natural harbour were all within a few miles of each other, making for a convenient and economical shooting schedule. Some differences in basic composition are often a direct result of compromising with the available locations. Sometimes it can be bad but often it is good. For example, the first time I saw the temples of Paestum, which served as the background for the harpy sequence, I almost flipped. However, when the production was to be shot in Yugoslavia, we had planned to build Phineas' temple on top of a mountain, although on a much smaller scale. As it happened, the Yugoslavs had done us a favour: not only were the locations far superior, but Paestum, the icing on the cake, was far better than anything we could have built.

There are always unexpected problems with location shooting. Although there was plenty of sunshine during most of the filming, there was also a lot of rain. About six weeks of steady rain to be precise. This made it very difficult to film and get supplies to some of our remote locations, which on occasion meant that we very nearly

ran out of food. At one point all we had was cornflakes and spaghetti! I also recall having to take our production trucks through an olive grove to get to one specific destination. After we had photographed the necessary scenes, an Italian farmer approached us and told us that we had squashed all the olives lying on the roadway with our trucks. These were the olives that had fallen on the ground! He probably thought that as we were a Hollywood film company, we could pay lavishly for the olives. Although unhealthy for our budget, we decided it would be wise not to incur the possible anger of the local Mafia, so Charles paid the farmer for his loss.

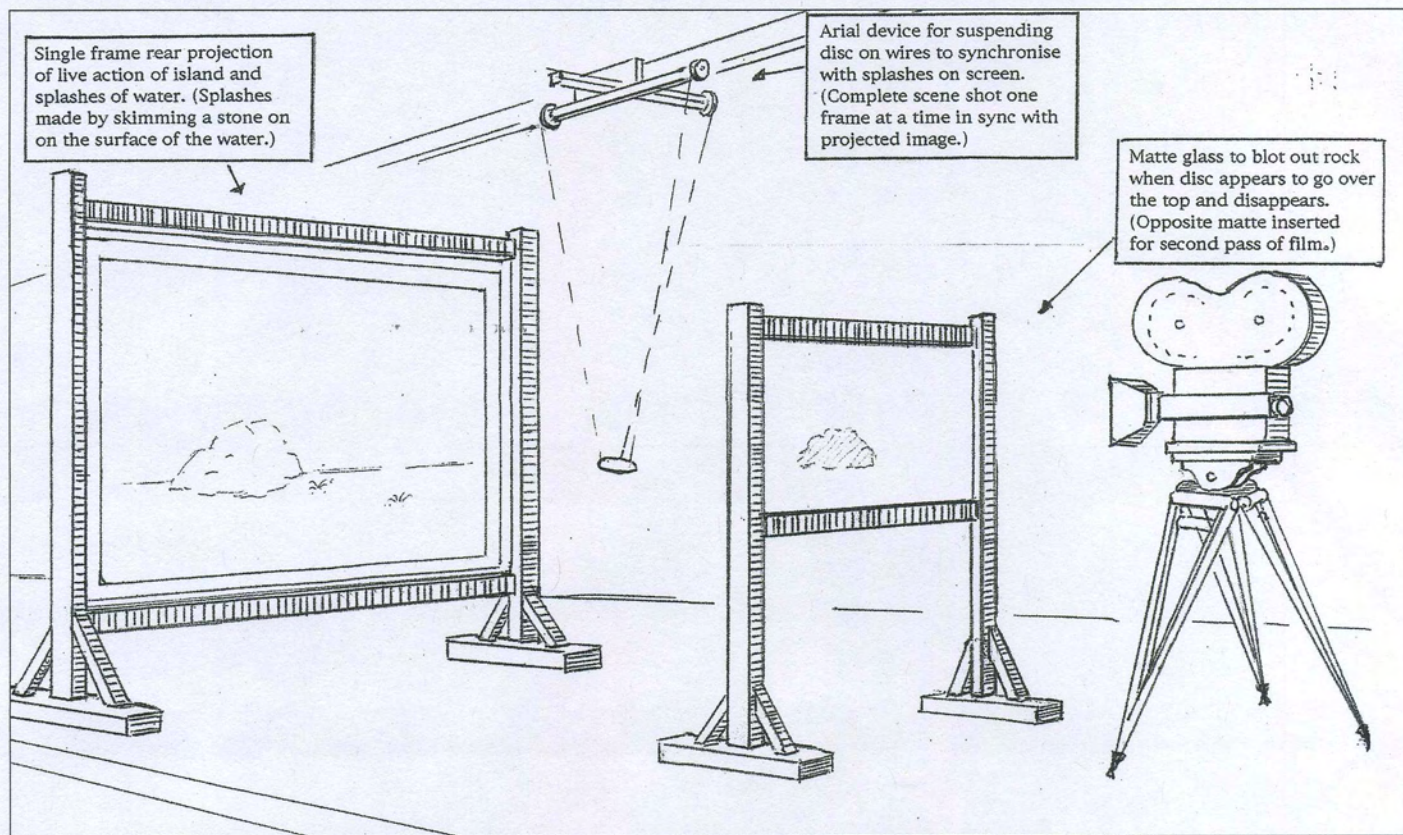
One of the other problems was that we were not the only crew filming in Italy at that time. On one occasion we were shooting a scene in which Jason's ship, the *Argo*, was to appear from around a rocky bluff. Everything was ready, the camera was rolling and we radioed the ship to start off. What should come around the bluff but the *Golden Hind*! The tension was broken when Charles was heard to shout, 'Get that ship out of here! You're in the wrong century.' It transpired that another British film crew was shooting some second unit footage for the TV series *Sir Francis Drake*, and their vessel, with its more powerful engines, beat ours around the cove.

The first live-action scenes to be shot were those onboard the *Argo*, which was a focal point for a lot of the action. Because it had to accommodate cameras, crew and cast, it had to be solidly built. The outer shell of the ship was mounted over the existing framework of

a fishing barge and the whole thing powered by three Mercedes-Benz engines, allowing us both to move the craft to and from locations and also to manoeuvre the vessel to catch the correct sunlight for each new set-up. The cost of building her was \$250,000, a huge portion of the overall budget, but following the completion of all location filming, Charles sold it to Twentieth Century-Fox, who used it for the Actium sea battle in *Cleopatra* (1963), which offset the cost of its construction.

The Hera figurehead, located at the stern of the vessel, was designed so that the eyelids opened and the eyes moved, but I drew back from making the mouth move, as I felt most audiences would liken it to a ventriloquist's dummy, and it would then become borderline comedy. In the end we decided that Hera would communicate with Jason in his mind.

Most of the interiors were photographed in the small Palentino Studios, in Rome, but the main effects work was completed at Shepperton Studios in England. I used the yellow backing process once again, shooting all the travelling mattes against the huge screen we had rigged in our facility at Shepperton. Full-size sections of the *Argo* (the prow and the rail) were built for close-ups and matte work, along with a full-size mock-up of a section of the hydra's tail. There was also a four-foot model of the *Argo*, used for the Talos and clashing rocks sequences.

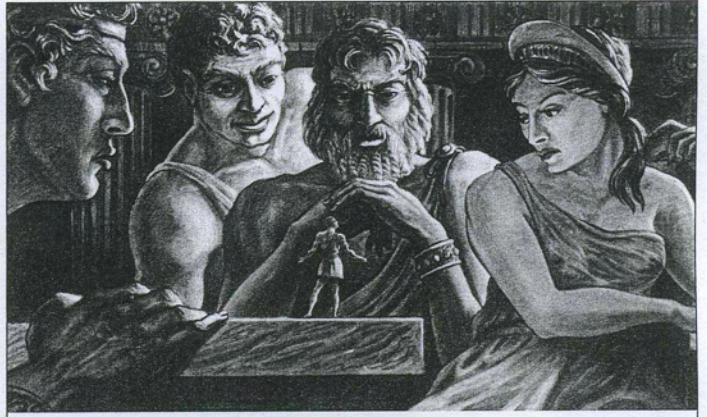


Left hand page. *Argo*. The 92-foot *Argo*, built in the Anzio shipyards, was beautifully designed by Geoffrey Drake, based on ancient Greek and pottery paintings.

Above. Discus throwing. This is a diagram of how I achieved the apparently simple task of throwing the discus across the water and over the rock.



THE GATEWAY TO THE GODS - MT. OLYMPUS



STANDING IN FRONT OF THE GODS AT OLYMPUS



Top. Concept drawings. The gateway to the gods on Mount Olympus, and my original drawing of Jason on Mount Olympus.

Above. Still from Mount Olympus scene. The view from the gods, Jason seen from above.

Right hand page. Still from Mount Olympus scene. Combined with the gods looking down at him, it seemed that a tiny Jason is standing in front of them.



In November 1961 I sent my father the designs for the construction of the model armatures, which he produced with his usual high quality, so much so that they still work smoothly today. In all there were fourteen complex armatures: one Talos, one Talos foot and hand, one Talos arm and hand, one hydra, two flying harpies, six fighting skeletons, one Jason and one Acastus. They arrived in February 1962, allowing me four months to make the bodies and paint them before beginning the animation.

Jason and the Argonauts has received so much attention over the intervening years, both in countless articles and on television, that I find it unnecessary to detail everything I did on the picture. As with the other films I have discussed, I have selected particular scenes because there is a story to tell, an interesting method of achieving the effect or simply because I am particularly proud of the sequence.

As an introduction to the gods, Hermes (the messenger and herald of the gods, played by Michael Gwynn) appears to Jason as an old man who then transforms himself into the god. All this takes place in a ruined temple, a set filmed on a mountain near Palinuro, overlooking the sea. The day scheduled to film the sequence saw the weather dark and stormy with intermittent rain, and because the story was set in Greece, such weather would usually be seen to be a problem. As the schedule didn't allow for any delays, we were forced to wait for the rain to stop and then shoot all the scenes, which at the time we thought would look awful. However, back at the studio we subtly added thunder to the soundtrack and this, along with the dark brooding skies, gave the scene an unexpected feeling of being in the presence of the gods.

The growth of Hermes from an ordinary man to the gigantic figure of the god was completed against a yellow backing screen as a travelling matte superimposed into the background. We used a dolly track to move closer to Michael Gwynn, giving us the desired effect of his image growing to enormous size. Today I would have used a zoom lens, but at that time we didn't have them. When the god had apparently grown to the desired height, we drew around his outline to create a matte into which we faded in a

smoke effect, previously used in *The Story of King Midas* and again in several other scenes in *Jason*.

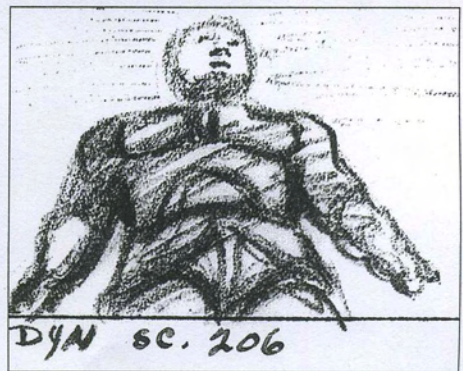
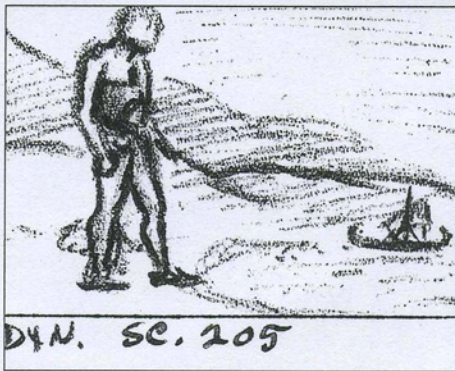
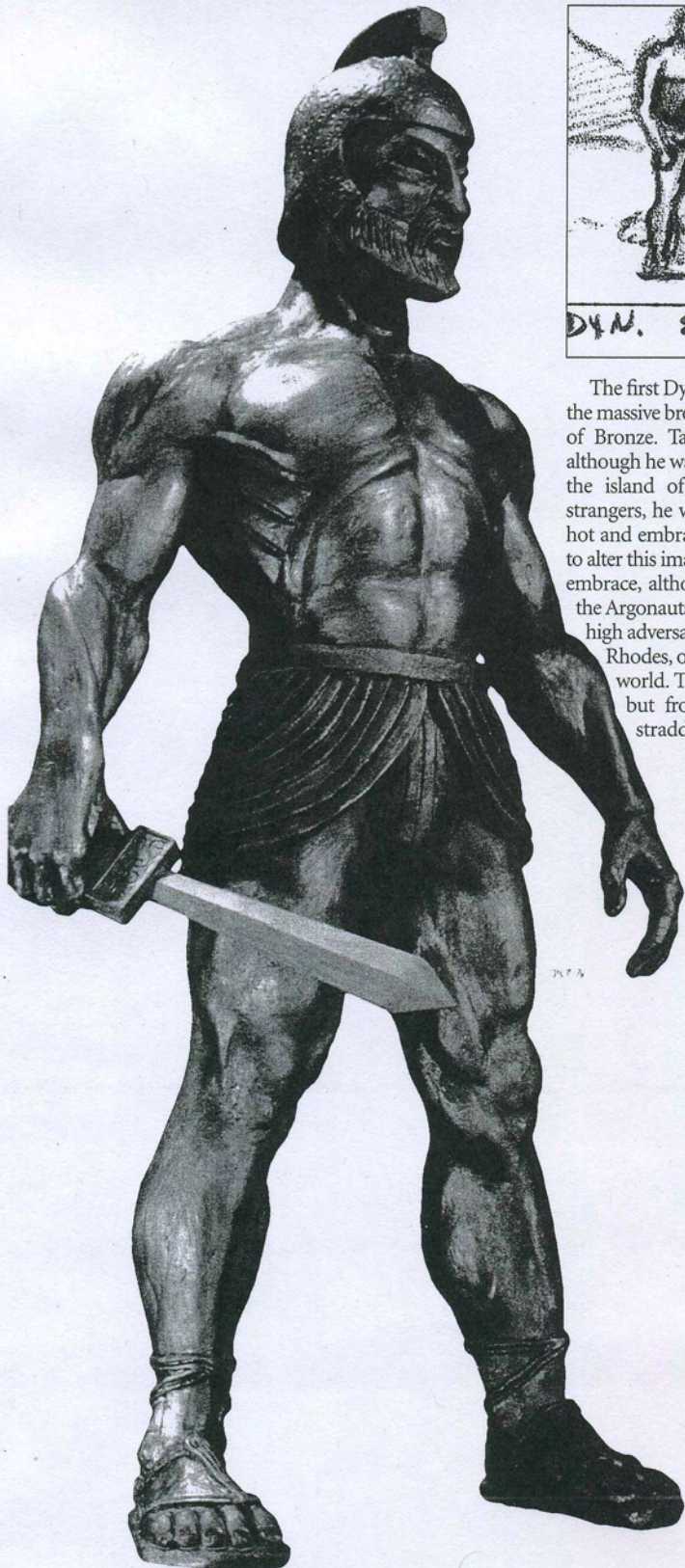
In one of the early scripts Hermes, in the form of a man, asks Jason to climb into his chariot, whereupon Jason witnesses the transformation into a god (but without any increase in size). The journey to Olympus is also interesting. With one pull of the reins the horses are transformed into unicorns and fire spits from the wheels of the chariot, taking both Hermes and Jason into the sky. Sadly, the script was altered to save time and money, and we ended up with almost a straight transition to Olympus through a dissolve.

Once transformed into his true entity, Hermes delivers Jason to Zeus on Mount Olympus. For the establishing shot on Olympus I had designed a massive imposing archway that would lead into the palace of the gods, but once again we changed the concept to save time. Creating Mount Olympus on our budget was always going to be a problem. It had to look impressive and inspiring but not cost too much, so we used a long shot of the temple-like palace set where the gods are seen entertaining themselves, then combined that with a matte painting. Both the art director and I discussed how we could depict the actors as gods. We didn't want to cut from the mortal world to the gods with barely anything to differentiate between them, so we decided to use a variety of images and designs to give the impression that the gods were truly omnipotent and dominated the world of humans. The obvious trick was to make the gods huge versions of humans (the ancient Greeks always imagined their gods as gigantic images of themselves). We also painted the set pure white with gold embellishments, and dressed the actors in white and gold togas, which were distinctly different to the humans' more earthly colours. As a final touch we later added in the lab an edge of mist around the frame. We also wanted to have a physical means by which the gods are seen to play with the fates of mankind. We accomplished this with a chess-like board game played by Hera and Zeus and which reflected the events on Earth (in *Clash of the Titans* we used a miniature arena with tiny statues in niches as the game pieces). It was important to the story that the human characters feared the gods but

also saw them as vulnerable and fickle by treating the mortals as chess pieces.

Jason arrives on Olympus in the hand of Hermes, from which he steps onto the board game that Zeus has before him. For this confrontation with Zeus we built a full-sized board set with oversized pieces on which Todd would stand and deliver his lines upwards, towards the camera, so as to appear as if he was talking to a gigantic Zeus. I used a travelling matte of Todd, against yellow backing, of him with his back to the camera as Hermes places him on the chessboard.

Once back on earth, Jason holds games to select the men who will sail with him on his voyage into the unknown. This is the first time that we are introduced to other key characters, especially Hercules and Hylas, the latter of whom challenges Hercules to see who can throw a discus the furthest. Hercules throws first and we see the discus soaring through the air and hitting a huge rock in the sea off the beach. Next Hylas throws, but artfully skims the discus across the surface of the water like a stone, so that it not only hits the rock but sends it over. Although the two actors throw real discuses in the medium shots, the long shots of the discus use a tiny animated model. Hercules' throw was fairly straightforward. We first of all photographed the sea and rock for the back projection plate and then I animated the discus (which was about an inch across) on an aerial wire, flying across the screen to apparently hit the rock. However, Hylas' throw was very different, as the discus had to skim or bounce off the water. I managed this by getting one of the crew to throw a flat stone to skim the water between the beach and the rock. This created the splashes I needed for the animation. Using the footage as a back projection plate I carefully timed the duration between the splashes and animated the tiny discus to correspond with them until it hits the rock, at which point it bounces over and disappears. To make the discus seem to disappear behind the rock, I had to insert a special matte. In actual fact the discus was animated in front of the rock but the matte allowed a line along the top of the actual rock, so blotting out the animated disc as it crossed below that line. On a second pass the image of the rock was printed in the blacked out area.

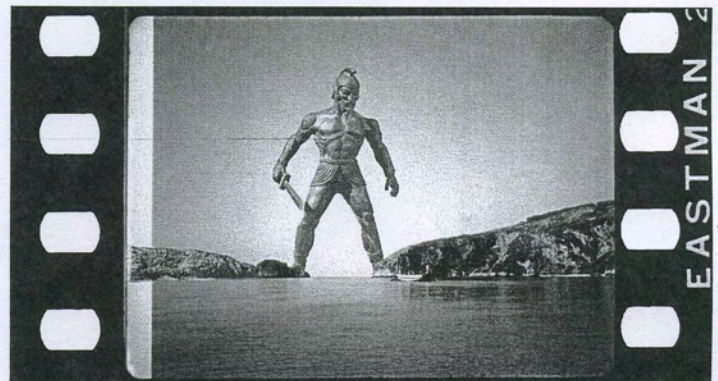


The first Dynamation sequence in the film is Talos, the massive bronze statue that comes to life on the Isle of Bronze. Talos *did* appear in the Jason legend, although he was only 7–8 feet tall and was located on the island of Crete. When he came across any strangers, he would heat his body in a fire until red hot and embrace the unfortunate intruders. We had to alter this image. We first of all did away with the hot embrace, although we did have him crush some of the Argonauts, and then I made him a huge 100-foot high adversary, which was based on the Colossus of Rhodes, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. There are no remnants of the Colossus, but from some accounts we know that it straddled the harbour of ancient Rhodes

facing the open sea – totally impractical but the stuff of cinematic dreams. Our Talos straddled a natural harbour, so preventing the exit of the *Argo*. A Colossus in reverse.

The sequence was filmed in a bay near Palinuro where, during my recce, I found a big natural rock arch on the beach. Having the action take place through a natural arch allows the audiences to believe in the effects. They suspend disbelief because they know the arch is real, therefore Talos must also be real. Of course, the mind of the viewer wouldn't ask that question, they would just accept it, which is what I always try to achieve.

When I drew the storyboards for *The Isle of Bronze* (just having reced the Yugoslavia locations),



Top. Frames from the Talos sequence. The statue of Talos comes alive and descends from his plinth to pursue the men on the island and then as they flee in the *Argo*.

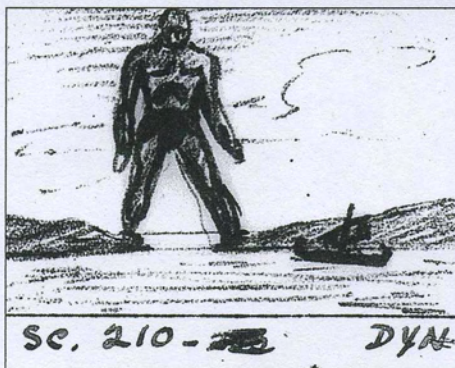
Middle. Sections from the Talos storyboard. The action and general look of the scene is almost as it appears in the completed film. It is another example of how planning is so vital in these movies.

Left. Talos model. Talos was based on the ancient Colossus of Rhodes. It had always fired my imagination, and over the years I had tried to use the concept, which I finally achieved, to good effect in *Jason*.

Above. Test frame for the Talos sequence. This shows Talos straddling the two sections of land to block the exit of the *Argo*. In this test the miniature "addition" to the land, which makes it look like a natural harbour, can be seen on the left hand side of the frame.

Right hand page right. The end result showing how my storyboards were filmed. The actors' reactions were crucial in making the audience believe the 'threat'.

Right hand page left. The original concept for the sequence. This is my original key drawing for Talos confronting the *Argo*. The only thing I changed was Talos' helmet, which I decided made him look more warrior-like and therefore more threatening.



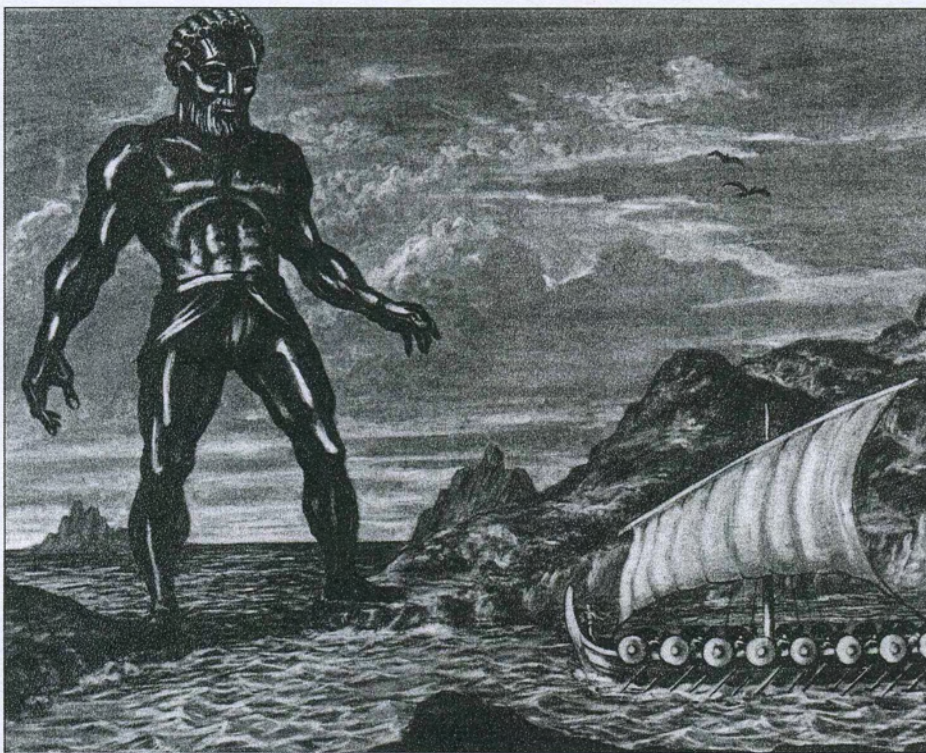
I had visualized the events leading up to Talos coming to life as something slightly different. Leaving Jason and the other men to search for food, Hercules and Hylas come across the head and hand of a huge bronze torso coming out of the ground. Hercules hits the hands and it rings with a resounding metallic echo. However when the locations were changed to Italy, I had the idea of beginning the Talos sequence with Hercules and Hylas standing at the head of a valley in which we would see huge bronze statues created by Hephaestus (the god of fire and metal-working). I called it the Valley of the Titans.

The model of Talos is approximately 12 inches high. In addition to the animated model, I constructed two other fibreglass copies and sections of his body for

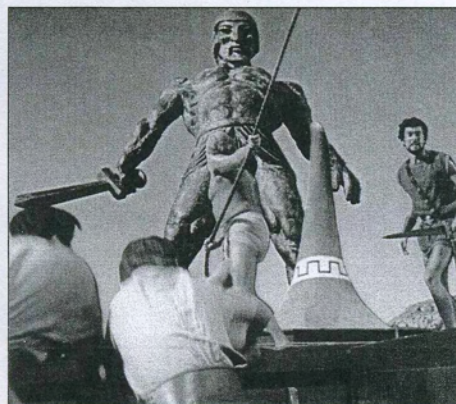
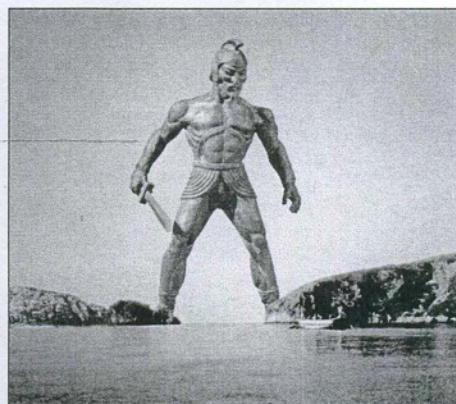
close-ups, including an arm and hand (which comes through the rock arch) and a foot and ankle (for the 'Achilles heel' sequence that would match the full-size one we had filmed on location). When it came to animating the model, I found myself faced with a whole new set of rules. It seems ironic that for most of my career I have been trying to perfect smooth and life-like animation action, but for Talos (which was the longest animation section in the film), it was necessary to create a deliberately stiff and mechanical movement in keeping with a bronze statue that had sprung to life.

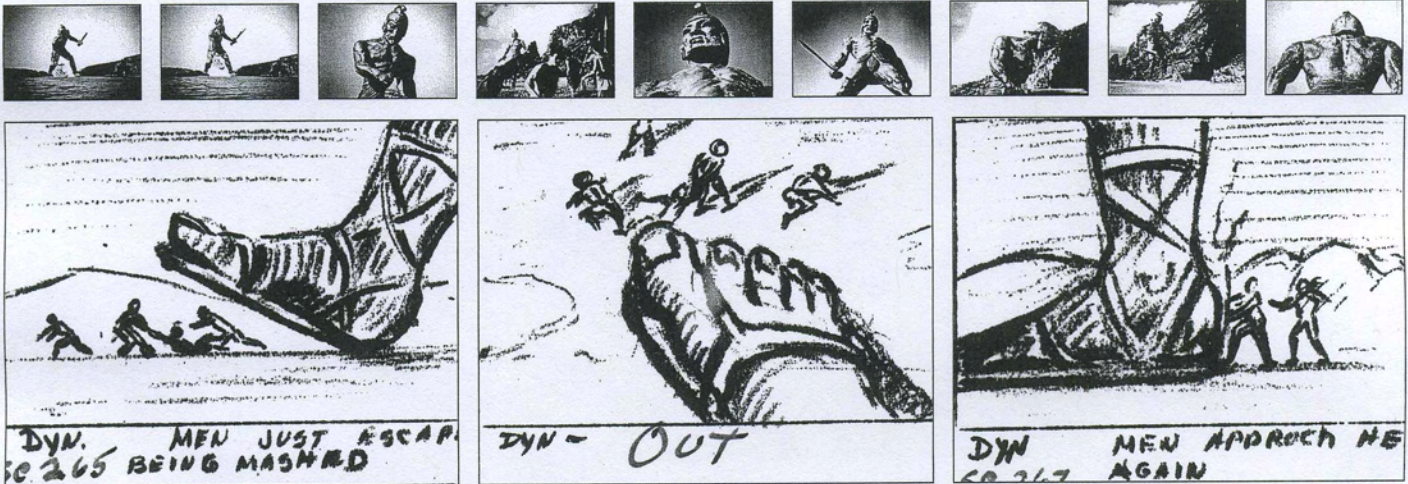
At first I had intended all the statues in the valley, including Talos, to be freestanding, but when I began designing the sequence, I realized that it would be

more dynamic to have Talos climb off a plinth or platform. Quite often there were elements in a movement or action which owed something to an image I had subconsciously stored in my mind. It might be an animal or human reaction, a book illustration or occasionally a movement inspired by something in a movie. An example of the latter is in this scene. It begins with a low angle shot of the statue kneeling on the pedestal, then slowly this huge inanimate object turns its head to look down at Hercules and Hylas. It's an eerie action heralded by deep metallic sounds. The slow movement of the head turning was inspired by an image from a Japanese film in which a woman, sitting with her back to the camera, slowly turns her head. That one, almost supernatural,



TALOS CONFRONTS THE ARGO





movement just popped into my head during the process of animation. There was no conscious attempt to copy it, but the action was perfect for Talos. A further example of influences occurs at the conclusion of the Talos sequence, when we see the bronze giant fall forward onto the beach. This action of the object falling towards the camera gave the scene bulk and was an action inspired by a silent film I had seen in which an enormous clay statue falls on someone. However, unlike the head turning, in this case the action was designed as a dramatic end to the scene.

The highlight of the whole Talos sequence is the 'Colossus' scene, where we see the bronze giant straddle the exit to the natural harbour to prevent the *Argo* leaving. In fact the headlands to the harbour

were not natural but a sleight of hand look-alike. The curve of the land, on the left-hand side, was in effect an island off the mainland, connected together with a miniature so that it looked like a natural harbour. The miniature 'bridge' was placed in front of the projection plate so that Talos appears with one foot on each piece of land. His right foot 'stands' on a platform behind a split screen of the real land and the other on the miniature.

After Talos has apparently destroyed the *Argo*, the men struggle back to the beach where Talos pursues them. His massive form appears from behind a tall jagged promontory and he turns his body to look down at the puny men on the beach. This was designed to be as impressive as possible. Like all good

stories, hope is at hand when Hera tells Jason that Talos' weak point is his heel. He has to remove a cover to allow the giant's ichor (the life blood of the gods) to drain out. To enable Todd Armstrong to attack Talos' heel, we had a full-size plaster foot and ankle built in Italy, which we managed somehow to get to the beach. After much experimentation, the props department came up with a concoction for the ichor consisting of oatmeal and coloured water. For the medium shots of the animated model foot and ankle, the steaming ichor was actually cellophane. You can't animate water, so I had to find an alternative. Cellophane was the answer. First of all I constructed a round wire mesh frame onto which was mounted a circle of rolled coloured cellophane and then lit it with a red light to



Top. Frames of the Talos sequence.

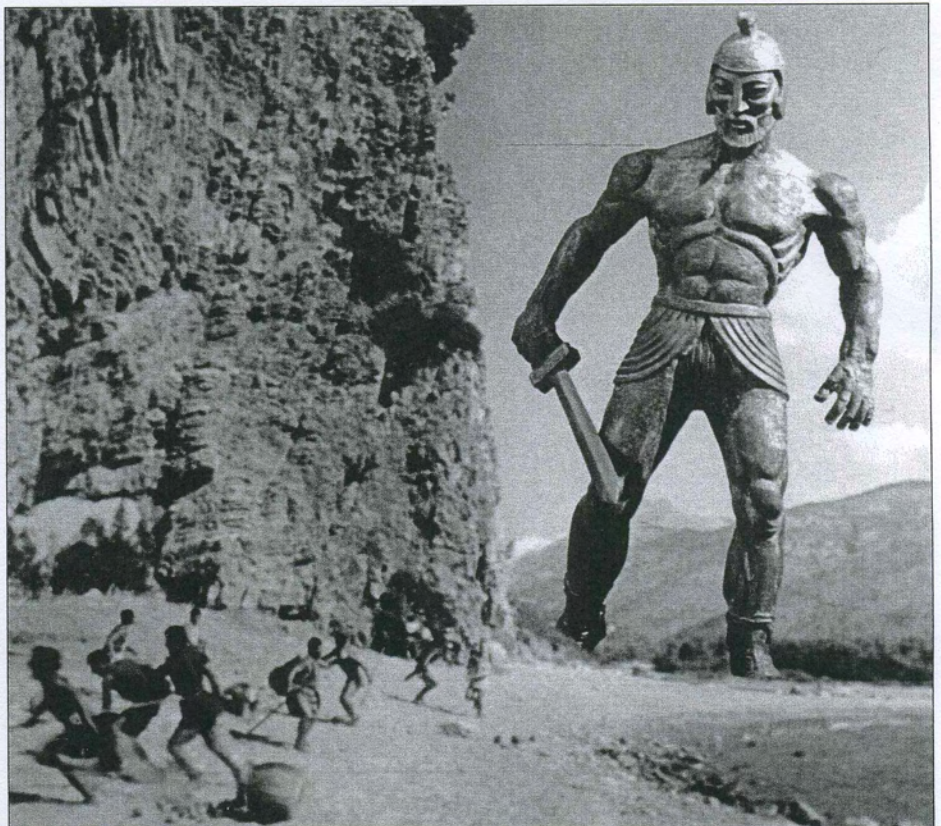
Middle. Talos sequence storyboards. This section of the storyboard shows Jason locating the cover on Talos' heel and opening it, so releasing the ichor.

Above and right. Talos appears from behind the promontory. This helps the audience to quantify just how big Talos is, which in turn tells us that there is little chance of escape. The sequence is a classic mix of Dynamation using my figure of Talos cut with live action sequences. This is also another example of depth. The beach and the fleeing men take the eye to the Colossus, which is both dramatic, to say the least, and frightening.

The Talos model was shot to deliberately integrate with the landscape in the location I had scouted and chosen. The actors needed a little prompting to get the reaction I wanted, particularly so that their eyeline and head angles matched what I knew they would seem to be looking at in the final scene, the deliberate, yet mechanical movement of Talos added to this scene's dynamics. All the time the scale of the live action was upper most in my mind as I was animating the sequence.

Right hand page left centre and right. This is the original model of Talos in the position that appears in the picture of the scene on the far right. It stands against a rear projection screen onto which I projected the live action. The model was integrated into the scene by means of a split screen.

Right hand page bottom left. Talos as a bronze statue. Because the latex rubber from which the models are made deteriorates over the years (some more quickly than others) I recast Talos many years later as a real bronze statue in exactly the same dimensions as the original.





OVER SIZE JPROP - STEAM
268 COMES OUT.



DYN - MOLTEN METAL POURS
OUT STEAM RISES



DYN - STEAM RISES AT A
SC. 270 FOOT. TALOS HEAD

match the real slop from the full set. I animated the whole thing, moving it a fraction of an inch each frame, after which it was inserted by means of matte lines so that it seemed to be coming out of the ankle and disappearing into the sandy beach. The steam was real. It was produced during the filming of the live action by placing a smoke pot behind a board (which represented the ankle). When I came to animate the sequence, I placed the model foot in front of the board on the rear projection screen, so it seemed as if the steam was coming from the ankle.

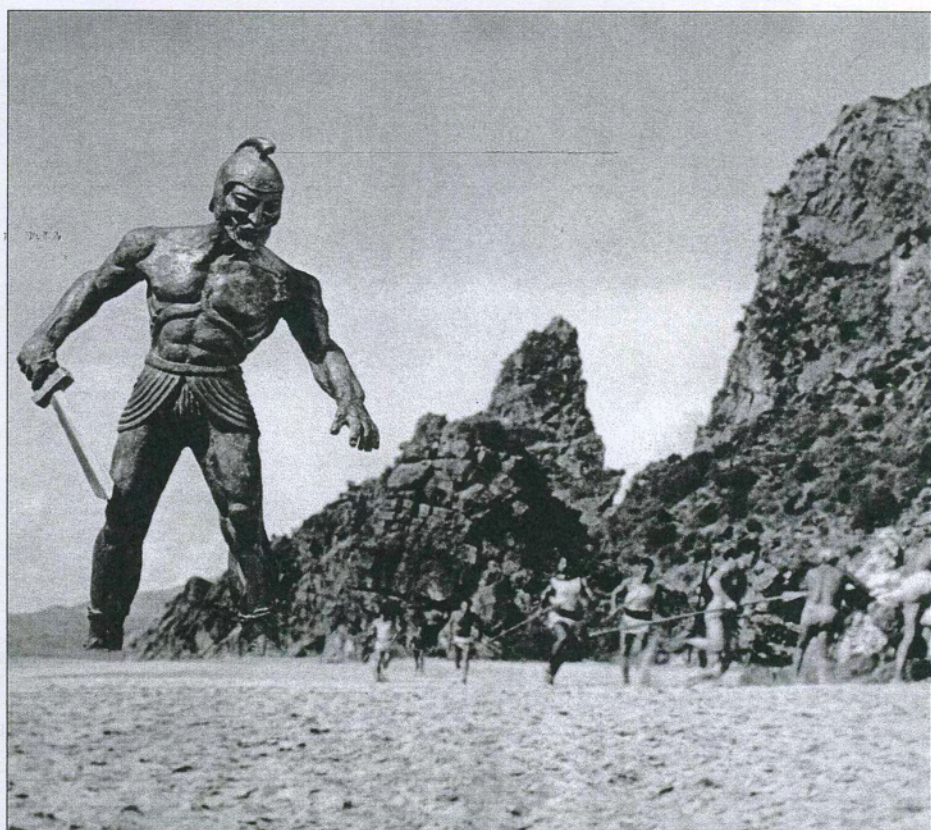
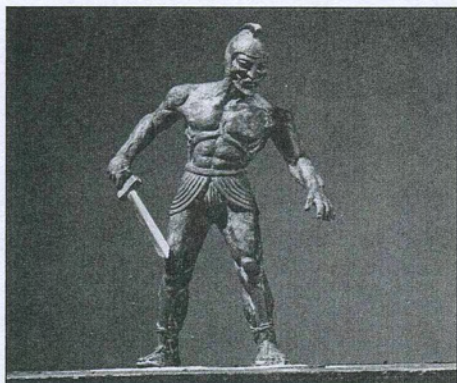
The conclusion of the Talos sequence sees huge cracks appear all over his body as the ichor drains away, he totters and then falls forward towards the camera and onto the beach. I didn't use the main

model for this but a fibreglass one that I then cut into cracked sections. The cracks were filled with clay and the whole thing painted to match the armatured model. During the animation I shot a frame and gouged out a little of the clay, then shot another frame, slowly creating the appearance of cracks opening up on the body. At the same time I animated sections falling away and finally disintegrating when the model struck the ground.

The next Dynamation scene was the torment of Phineas by the harpies. The name 'harpies' gives the impression of dislikeable creatures, and in the legend they are described as having the face of a woman, the body of a vulture, with their feet and fingers armed with sharp claws. As always, I had to take some

liberties with this description, making them bat-like to give a more practical but at the same time more menacing appearance.

For the harpies sequence I designed several 'contacts' with the humans. The first is where the blind Phineas is fighting off the demons and we see his stick and belt yanked from him by the creatures. Like all good 'contacts', this was begun during the live action filming. Both objects were attached to offscreen wires and on my signal a member of the crew pulled them away from Patrick Troughton. Later in the animation studio I would animate the models on their wire braces to seem as though they were snatching the objects. In the case of the stick, I changed it (between one frame and the next) to a miniature one because





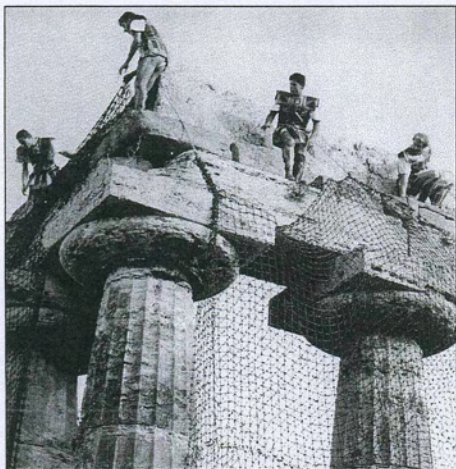
PHINEUS AND THE HARPIES

one of the harpies is seen holding it. There is also another 'contact' when the stone altar/table Phineas has been eating from is seemingly pushed over by the harpies. This again was rigged during the live action and I simply animated the model to appear to push it over.

The whole sequence was filmed in and around the largest of the three magnificent temples of Paestum (we would later use another of these temples for the

exterior shots of Medusa's lair in *Clash of the Titans*). For Jason and his men to capture the harpies, the script called for nets to be stretched over the roof and sides of the temple. We had to place the actors on the top of the ancient temple columns with ladders. When the net falls onto the disorientated harpies, we see them struggling beneath it. For this I used a very fine miniature meshed net that had been specially made and strengthened with wire, which I suspended

on wires and then animated in unison with the model harpies as they plummeted to the ground. Once on the ground, I combined the real and miniature nets so that the real net, which the men are seen pulling, works on the projection plate and the miniature net (in the foreground) is seen with the creatures struggling underneath. Following the encounter with the harpies, the story moves on to the clashing rocks and the god Triton.



Above. Drawing of harpies. Long before my aborted 1954 project *The Elementals* and the unrealized bat creatures in *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, I had wanted to do something with winged demons. The story of *Jason* provided me the opportunity of creating a duo of delightful ladies.

Left. Capture of the harpies. Although the ruins of the temples of Paestum were 2500 years old, the authorities were very co-operative, letting us climb all over the monuments. I can't imagine the Italian authorities letting any film crew do this today!

Right. Harpies sequence. For this sequence I constructed two animation models of approximately 8 inches high with a wingspan of 18 inches, and two smaller, less articulate ones to be used for the long shots.

Right hand page. The blind Phineas being attacked by the harpies.







We searched for months to find an actor to play Triton. The part required one special qualification, namely long arms, because he had to be able to reach across to the opposite miniature cliffs to prevent the destruction of the miniature *Argo*. Even on the miniature the gap was quite considerable. We eventually chose an actor who was also a swimmer and thus able to submerge himself for fairly long periods. It was not an easy role for anyone to play. The poor man had to wear an uncomfortable rubber fish tail corset and avoid all the complex mechanisms, operated by wires by a studio technician, that controlled the tail. In addition to that, his wig was heavily lacquered to prevent the water making it look like wet noodles. After the first take of

him emerging from the water he looked a little ordinary, so I told him that I wanted him to stick his lower lip out, like the Royal Hapsburgs. This would give him a majestic and sinister appearance. Although he spent hours and hours in the water tank wearing all that paraphernalia, he never complained.

The whole sequence was shot in about a week on a small stage at Shepperton Studios where we had built a special tank that included a wave device. The clashing rocks themselves were 6–7 foot high plaster sections mounted on wooden platforms that in turn were mounted on car inner tubes so they floated and allowed the whole thing to be moved backwards and forwards by studio prop men.

When we first built the set we made the sections of rocks that fall away during the clashing process of Styrofoam covered with plaster. Nobody, including myself, had considered any problems with this until we came to the first day of the shoot and found on attempting to ‘clash’ the rocks that they splashed into the water and just floated. Overnight the construction shop made replacement solid plaster rocks that proved to be ideal. Wilkie Cooper and I shot the sequence using high speed photography, which exaggerated the splashes, consequently giving the scene a dreamlike quality that perfectly reflects the surrealistic subject matter of a huge god holding back rocks.

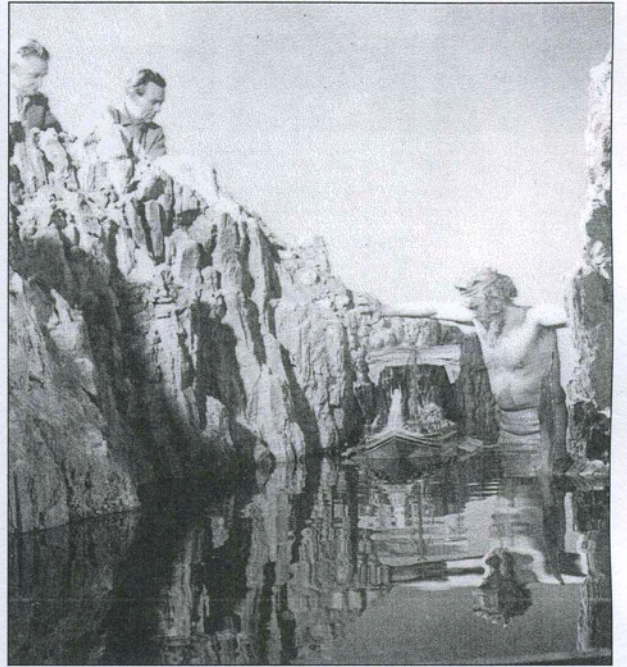
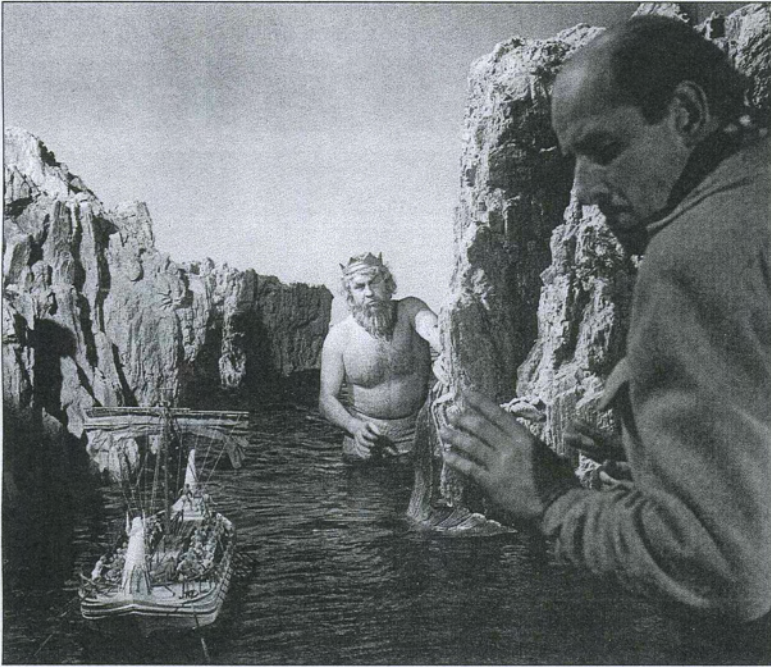
Top. My conceptual drawing for the clashing rocks visualized Triton as an animated model with water matted in around him. However, I soon realized that this was too complicated for our budget and decided to use an actor filmed at high speed.

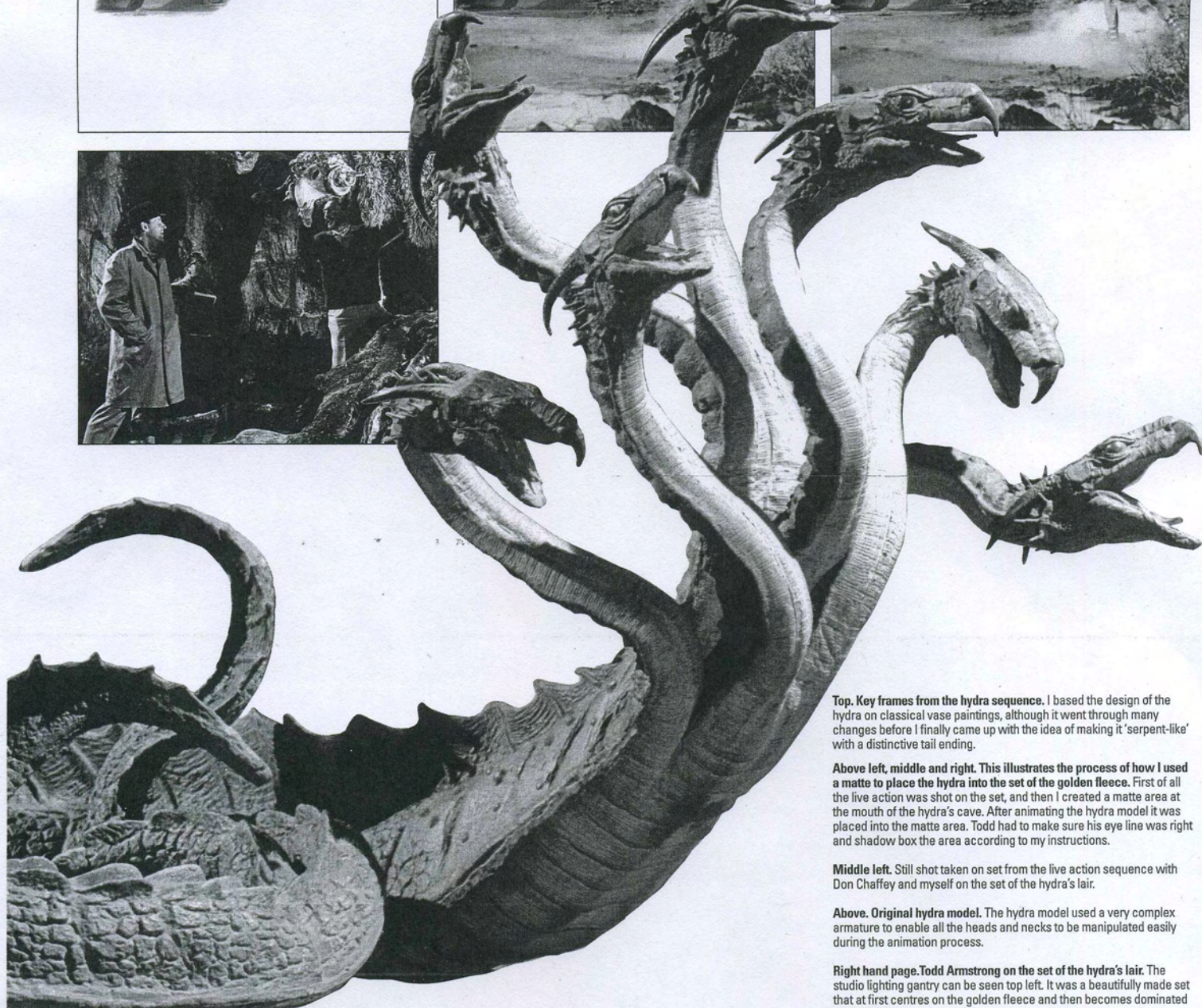
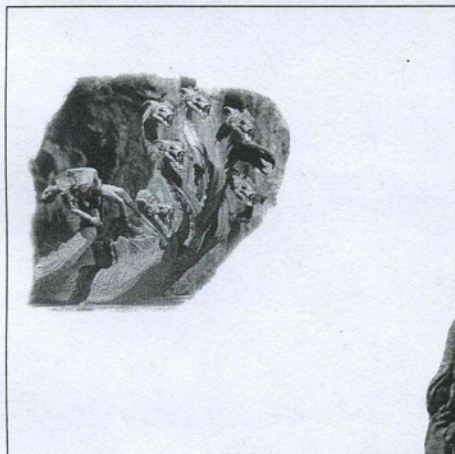
Right. Still from the film. The *Argo* along with its mariners was shot in front of a yellow backing screen in the studio. Later an optical printer was used to combine this with the action of Triton and the rocks. It was important to keep a sense of rhythm throughout the whole scene, which emphasized both the drama and the scale of what was appearing on the screen.

Right hand page. Triton stills. Although the actor playing Triton (sadly I can't remember his name) spent hours and hours in the water tank wearing all that paraphernalia, he never complained.

In these still shots one can clearly see the set and the direction being given to the actor. It was very important for us to choreograph the actor to fit in with the other elements.







Top. Key frames from the hydra sequence. I based the design of the hydra on classical vase paintings, although it went through many changes before I finally came up with the idea of making it 'serpent-like' with a distinctive tail ending.

Above left, middle and right. This illustrates the process of how I used a matte to place the hydra into the set of the golden fleece. First of all the live action was shot on the set, and then I created a matte area at the mouth of the hydra's cave. After animating the hydra model it was placed into the matte area. Todd had to make sure his eye line was right and shadow box the area according to my instructions.

Middle left. Still shot taken on set from the live action sequence with Don Chaffey and myself on the set of the hydra's lair.

Above. Original hydra model. The hydra model used a very complex armature to enable all the heads and necks to be manipulated easily during the animation process.

Right hand page. Todd Armstrong on the set of the hydra's lair. The studio lighting gantry can be seen top left. It was a beautifully made set that at first centres on the golden fleece and then becomes dominated by the hydra.



Following the clashing rocks, Jason and his Argonauts finally arrive at Colchis, where they locate the fabled Golden Fleece. In our version the guardian of the fleece is the seven-headed hydra, but in the original legend it is a dragon that never sleeps. I felt that a dragon is seen today as a medieval beast, besides which, I had already animated a dragon before, so I searched through the Greek legends and came up with the hydra, which appears in the Hercules legend when he slays it as one of his labours. Originally, it was portrayed as having more heads than I could have coped with (a hundred heads

according to Diodorus; fifty according to Simonides and nine according to Apollodorus), and as soon as Hercules cut off one head, two grew in its place. The hero finally kills it with the help of Iolaus, who applied a burning iron to the wounds, so ensuring no head would grow, but for our film this was all too complicated, so I gave him seven heads (as it's a magical number in all legends) and killed him with a sword through the heart. As with Talos, I based the basic design of the creature on classical vase paintings, although it went through many changes before I finally came up with the idea of making it 'serpent-

like' with a distinctive tail ending like a forked snake tongue. The seven heads were designed to resemble a dinosaur-like bird with curved beaks and two ear-like crests curving backwards, an image that would suggest a throwback to prehistoric times. When designing such a creature I always have to ask myself, 'Can I put this on the screen?' If I had no such limitations, my imagination would run riot, but in the end it is time and money that dictates practicality, although with the hydra I did set myself a pretty tough task.

The hydra model was over three feet long, which up to the time was one of the largest I had designed





and built, but it did allow me to photograph it in detail. It also possessed an incredibly complex armature that provided a wide range of movements, including its snake-like body, seven heads, double tail, mouths, tongues and blinking eyes. All these body elements had to be synchronized. For every frame of film, I would move the model perhaps by only a millimetre, but there were sometimes thirty-plus movements required. Each element of the body had to be moving and then I had to remember that the third head was going forward and down, the fourth was going backwards and

up, the tail was curving this way, the body another way. As if these elements were not enough, I also had to animate, at different stages of the sequence, two human figures (Acastus and Jason) who were held in the grip of one of the tails. Both scale models were based on the actors, whom we had photographed from every angle in their costumes to obtain the best likeness. For the close-ups of the characters gripped by the tail, the real actors were suspended on wires and wrapped in a full-size section of the tail.

All too soon, Jason slays the hydra by twice

plunging his sword into the creature's chest, the second thrust being fatal. The choreography for this was done on the set in Rome, although I had pre-planned it before we began filming. At a predetermined point in the action, Todd thrust his sword forward and then dropped it onto the studio floor. In the animation studio the real sword on the rear projection screen was hidden behind the animated model of the hydra and substituted with a miniature sword at the moment most appropriate to keeping the detection of the substitution minimal.

Top. Frames of the hydra sequence.

Below. The original concept drawing for this sequence.

Note how only the figure of Jason changes in the final film. The rest is more or less how it appears in the film.

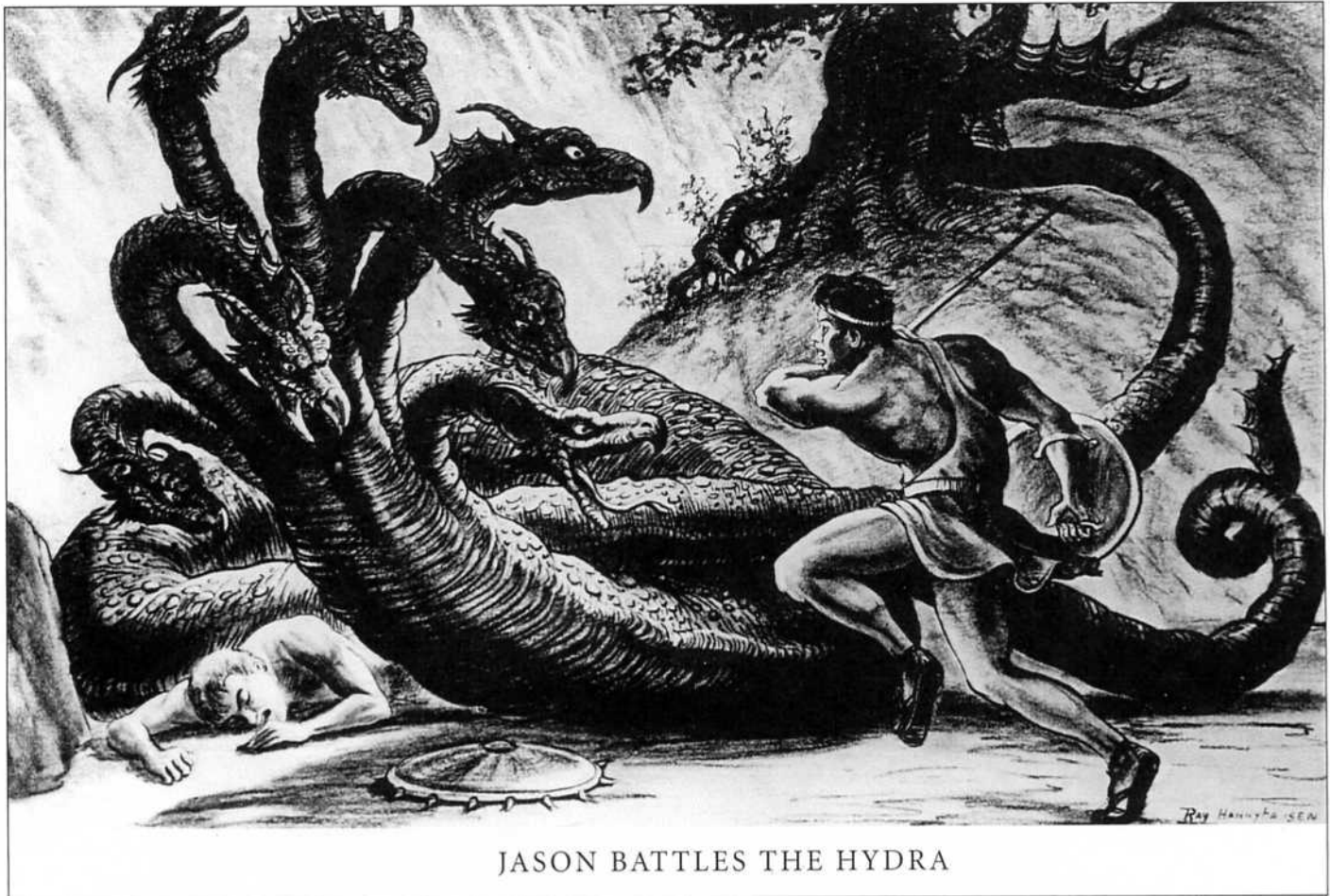
Right hand page. The battle with the Hydra as it appears in the film.

Unfortunately, when a still frame of the picture is enlarged as this is it does show the grain in the rear projection. When the film is projected at 24 frames per second, then these imperfections are hardly noticeable. In the still the matte line in the ground around the base of the hydra is clearly visible, along with these miniature rocks, and the eye-line can be seen to be exactly right, as though Todd was actually looking at the creature.

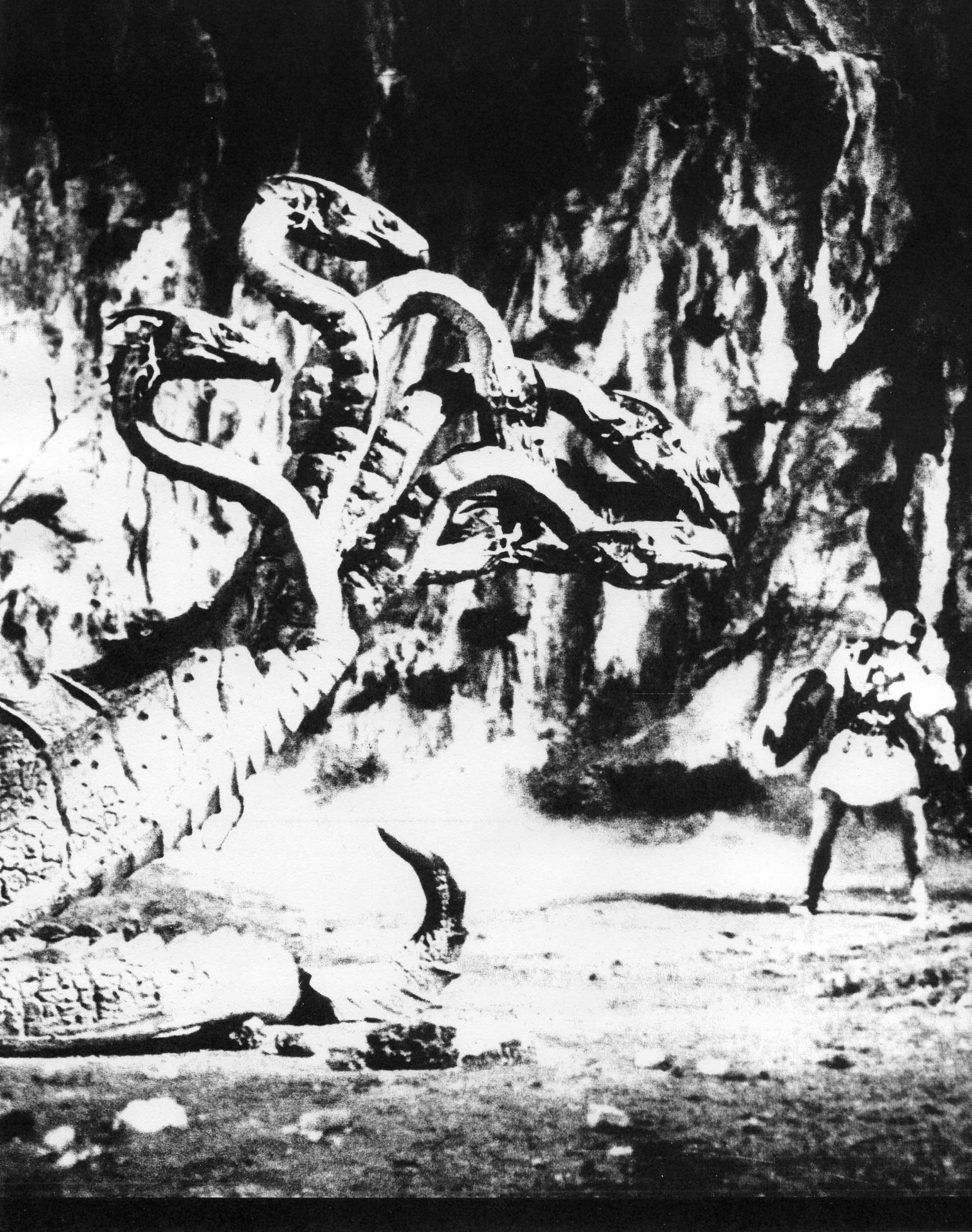


Above. Three stills of the hydra emerging from its cave. The first is the model on the animation table. Notice the rocks on the floor: this was a little trick of bringing the creature into reality. The rocks seemed to be part of the cave and the surrounding rocks. The second still shows the

creature against the rear projection screen with the rock background and the third is the final composite of the creature emerging from the cave, achieved by means of a matte line drawn around the mouth of the cave in the live action.



JASON BATTLES THE HYDRA







The climax of the film is the battle with the children of the hydra's teeth. When Aetes catches up with Jason he scatters the teeth whilst calling on the forces of darkness to avenge him of the crime. From out of the ground appear armed skeletons. In the legend it is rotting corpses, and despite originally designing the scene as such, we thought this would give the film a certificate that might have barred children, so we decided on seven skeletons (the same number as the hydra's heads). By today's standards the rotting corpses would not only be acceptable, but expected.

projection plate. Below each of the holes I constructed seven little platforms to which the crouching skeletons (they are crouching when they first appear up through the ground) were attached. I then fixed each of the platforms to a screw device (a mechanism I had developed for *It Came From Beneath the Sea*), allowing me to slowly animate each skeleton rising up and breaking through the cork. To allow the cork to be animated at the same time as the models, I cut each disc into sections so that when the skeletons broke through, it would seem like clods of earth had

Left hand page. Two of my earliest sketches for Jason's fight with the skeletons. Even at a very early stage I was interested in having the children of the hydra's teeth rising from the ground, in this case the grave or from Hades. I was inspired of course by the classics, however these do not translate readily into the equally fantastic realms of Hollywood.

All the live action for the sequence was filmed on a hill above the beach near Palinuro, where we had shot the Talos sequences. When we were looking for locations for *Clash of the Titans* some years later, we naturally returned to the hill, but at some time over the intervening years a huge hotel had been built on the site. To say we were disappointed would have been an understatement.

All of the skeleton models survive today. Some are in exhibitions and the others are in my collection. As the skeletons are one of the most popular creatures, one of the models usually has the honour of travelling with me to lectures and conventions in a custom hand-made protective box, in the shape of a coffin, which amuses fans – an appropriate mode of transport I feel to survive the rigours of 21st-century air travel. However, there have been occasions when customs have thought this somewhat strange.

The other key drawing shows the advance of the skeletons and the fleece being rescued by Jason and his counterparts. I really wanted a sense of a legion, very disciplined, moving as one, a formidable enemy for even the hero Jason to deal with.

Top. Rare original storyboards, which Tony only rediscovered a year or so ago. I had thought them lost. They show my planning of each cut with the animation of the skeletons interacting with the live action sequences. Referencing these against stills from the original print of the movie shows that I was able to maintain a singular (if very complex – and consequently exhausting) vision of how the sequence was to unfold.

Above. Frames from the final film. As you can see, the end result closely matches my original storyboards.

Once Jason has killed the hydra, he flees with Medea and the fleece. When Aetes, king of Colchis, sees the dead hydra, he calls on the power of Hecate, queen of darkness, to deliver to him the children of the hydra's teeth, the children of the night. Fireballs rain down from the sky and consume the body of the creature, reducing it to a skeleton from which Aetes' men collect the teeth. Les Bowie (an accomplished British special effects technician) photographed the fireballs. Based on the exact angles I wanted the fireballs to appear from, Les made up a number of small balls of wadding soaked in petroleum that were lit and thrown from a platform at night. He filmed a variety of angles for me, and once we had chosen the best ones, they were added by double printing in the camera.

Each of the model skeletons was about 8–10 inches high, and six of the seven were newly made for the sequence. The remaining one was a veteran from *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, slightly repainted to match the new members of the family. Of course, I had to take certain liberties with the human skeleton to allow the bones to cover the metal armature. Like the skeleton in *7th Voyage*, the shape of the bones was created from cotton wool soaked in latex, which I then shaped into bones and allowed to solidify. For their appearance from the ground we built a miniature section of landscape made of plywood, covered with painted plaster and into which we cut seven random holes. These holes were covered with cork and the whole thing painted to match the area in front of King Aetes and his men who would appear in the rear

been pushed aside. Each of the sections had copper wire passed through them, allowing me to animate them so that it seemed as if the skeleton had done it. Some of the cork pieces appear to roll away from the hole, and these were animated by using wax to hold them in place for the frame to be shot. I could, I suppose, have made the skeletons simply appear in a cloud of smoke, but the result would not have been the same. The effect of these 'children of the night' almost unwrapping themselves from the earth is far more dramatic.

When all the skeletons have manifested themselves to Jason and his men, they are commanded by Aetes to 'Kill, kill, kill them all', and we hear an unearthly scream. What follows is a sequence of which I am very proud, although the logistics involved were immense.



Above left. One of my very earliest sketches for the fight between Jason and the skeletons on the plinth. This even precedes the key drawing that appears on the following page.

Above right. What Jason sees.

Right hand page, top. At the very earliest stage, such scenes as the skeleton fight are designed and visualized with continuity sketches. However, when these are drawn for the script, they are executed in the broadest terms, dictating only set-ups. The original storyboards show my planning of each cut with the animation of the skeletons interacting with the live action sequences.

Right hand page far top right. Lost idea. The storyboard image of the missing animation shot of the skeleton searching on the ground for his head.

Right hand page middle. Contact shot planning. In this section of the storyboard one of my pre-planned "contact" shots is illustrated. In frame two (shot 634) we see Jason swinging his sword and in the following shot (635) the sword making contact with the skeleton's head and decapitating him (can a skeleton be decapitated?). I had planned that the shot would show Todd's lower legs and in front of this projected image I would animate a miniature sword slicing off the head.

Right hand page bottom. This was one of my key or concept drawings for this particular sequence. I based the look of the drawing on an ancient classical theme, but with touches of Doré. In the final film the temple in the background was not included. This I think was never a possibility on our budgets, but the drawing helped to sell the idea of the project.

I had three men fighting seven skeletons, and each skeleton had five appendages to move in each separate frame of film. This meant at least thirty-five animation movements, each synchronized to the actors' movements. Some days I was producing just 13 or 14 frames a day, or to put it another way, less than one second of screen time per day, and in the end the whole sequence took a record four and a half months to capture on film. There is one scene in which we see a skeleton chase Fernando Poggi, our sword-master, and jump across a ruined gateway. It looks great but took me longer to complete than any other scene in the sequence because the model had to be animated on aerial wires. I only have myself to blame, as I designed it that way.

kept things simple, there would be fewer problems.

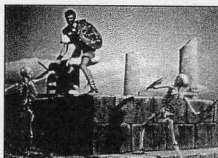
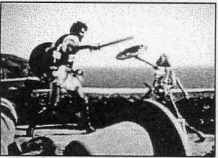
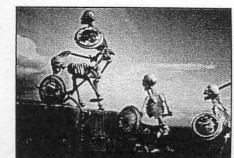
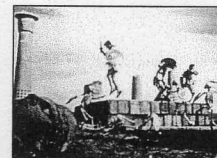
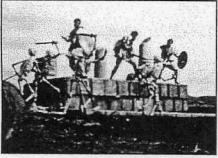
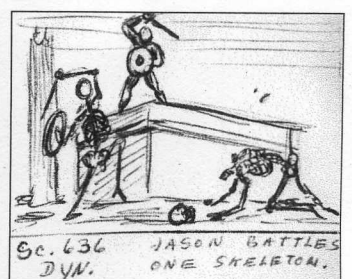
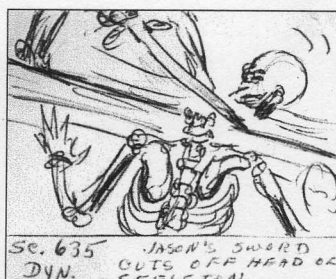
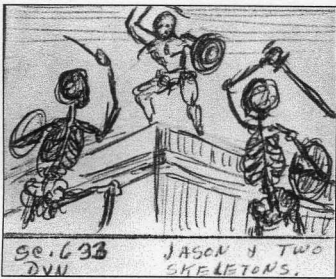
The synchronization between the live actors and the models is, of course, vital. During the skeleton fight (or, for that matter, any fight between real actors and models), I had to count each frame of film on the rear projection plate to determine exactly where the actor's sword, which appeared on the plate, and the skeleton's sword would meet. The number of frames would determine how long it would take for the skeleton to go from point A to point B so that the swords met at exactly the right spot.

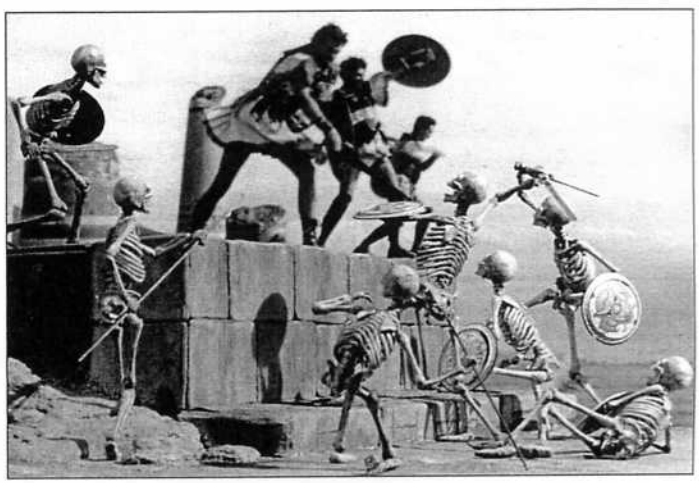
The number of frames dictates what speed is required to get the skeleton's arm up, so that when the actor's hand is in a certain place, the skeleton's sword will block it. The speed of the live-action photography

As I have made clear, little or nothing in any of our films is left to chance. Everything is pre-planned to avoid waste, which costs money. However, in the case of the skeleton fight there is one brief animation shot that was cut. It showed a skeleton on all fours, feeling around the ground for its severed skull, and was meant as light relief. When we viewed the complete sequence it was decided that it slowed the pace and was therefore cut out. It was one of the very few times that any of the filmed animation was dropped from our productions. In the UK one scene in which we see the skeletons charge the camera and hear a horrific shriek, was cut for the film's release. The censor thought it far too risky for British children, and as we wanted a children's certificate, the shot had to come out. Like the cyclops and the skeleton in *7th Voyage*, the scene was reinstated some years later.

Concentration, especially with such a complex scene as the skeleton fight, is a vital talent for any animator. The minute your mind wanders, you lose continuity and a whole scene or a day's work can be lost. If the phone rang (in the 1960s I didn't have the luxury of an answering machine), I would either let it ring or take it off the hook altogether. When I look back at the hydra sequence, it is remarkable that I ever remembered which head was going forward or backward and whether a model was accelerating or decelerating. I am often asked whether I used a flow chart (a record of movements and progression of the models) to detail the moves but the answer is no. Occasionally I would make a few basic notes when I broke for lunch, and sometimes, but rarely, used a surface gauge. Aside from that, I always found that if I

would be 24 frames per second, so I had to judge the speed of the movement for the animation accordingly. The broader the movement of the model, the faster it will appear to move when run at 24 frames. It presents a problem of timing because the models and actors must appear to have been photographed at the same time. This makes it necessary to sometimes move the model about half a millimetre per frame in order to keep in synchronization with the live actors. Sometimes I would have to 'kill' footage (killing time means that the model action is not completed) in order to get the skeleton from point A to point B to meet the actor, but occasionally I would have to do the opposite by 'fleshing out' time with subtle movements to allow synchronization with the live action and so lengthen the scene.





Top left and above. The still above left shows the stuntmen rehearsing with Todd Armstrong, Andrew Faulds and Fernando Poggi for the skeleton fight. The stuntmen wore numbered sweatshirts so that the actors knew which skeleton they were supposed to be fighting, and this was also used as a reference for when I came to animate the 'real' skeletons. The sequence of stills above show Andrew Faulds acting out his death from one of the skeletons. The actors were relentlessly rehearsed so that when shooting the sequences, everything was as convincing as possible. Again, of course, the eyeline was crucial, as well as the smoothness of the shadow boxing.

Top right. The scene on the plinth as it appears in the final film. The plinth in the rear projection has been replaced with a model plinth exactly aligned with the real one. On and around this I placed the skeletons, matching their movements with the footage kept of the stuntmen with the actors, and so matching the actors' movements.

Right hand page top. More stills of the shadow boxing, several with a stuntman.

Right hand page. My designs for the skeleton armatures showing in detail some of the ball and socket joints. Also is a still of one of the skeletons.

Below and right hand page below. Frames from the finished film. In them can be seen the death of Andrew Faulds' character and the leap into the sea.

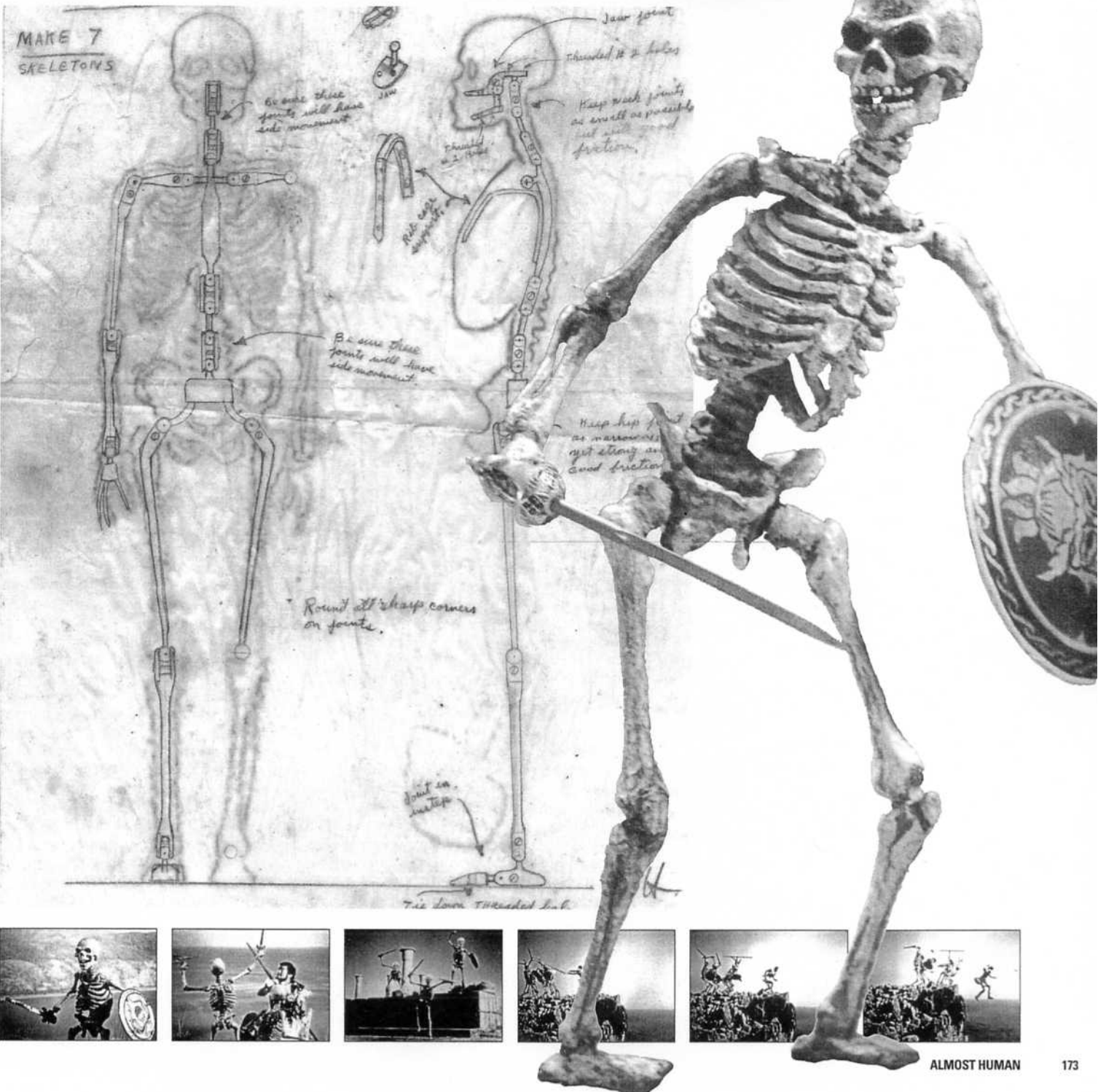
At the very earliest stage such scenes as the skeleton fight are designed and visualized with continuity sketches. However, when these are drawn for the script, they are executed in the broadest terms, dictating only set-ups. That's all very fine on the drawing board, but there are unpredictable factors – the actors, the weather or how the location chosen will apply itself to the set-up – none of which can be anticipated on our budgets, so everything must be kept as fluid as possible.

Planning is crucial, but one way to avoid too many variants is a reliable crew. The live-action choreography for the skeleton sequence was intensely complex but was, as usual, made less problematic by the presence of both Wilkie Cooper, our cameraman, and Fernando Poggi, our sword-master. Enzo had been our sword-master for every production since *7th Voyage*, but just before the production of *Jason*, he had decided to retire and so Poggi, who had worked alongside Enzo, took over the role. He also played one of the Argonauts in the skeleton fight sequence. I must confess that since I had visualized the skeleton sequence, I had had concerns about how we were going to photograph the live action. I needn't have worried. As soon as the location photography began, Poggi and I discussed the sequence, and when he wasn't working on a scene, he practised with the actors and the seven other stuntmen, away from the camera and crew. Poggi insisted that the seven stunt-men were dressed in numbered white sweatshirts, and, like Enzo, he again used a hand clap for the beats that would determine the duration between each action. Slowly, as the fight was practised over and over, the sequence came together, with the end result that on the day of the shoot it went extremely well. As with most scenes

such as this, it was shot twice. The first was a black and white guide print of the actors and stuntmen in picture, which allowed me to keep track of exactly where the skeletons would be. The second was a duplicate of the first but without the stuntmen, showing only the actors 'shadow boxing'. It was this that would be my back projection plate so that I could align the models to the action.

I designed and animated into the skeletons certain human 'touches' to give them some character. For example, I was able to give the impression that a skeleton was mortally wounded, while another example occurs on the platform when a skeleton rolls to the edge, apparently stunned, with its bony arm hanging over the side. The arm can just be seen swinging with the force of the movement. It wasn't something I needed to do, but these 'touches' add character and occasional relief to a scene. The illusion of reality is achieved through 'contact' between the live actors and the models. It was the vital ingredient to enable the whole thing to work for the audience. Although I designed several of the 'contacts' at the planning stage, it wasn't until we arrived at the actual location that Poggi and I were actually able to define them. Apart from the obvious clashing of swords, we see one of the skeletons' heads being lopped off and there are several actions of pushing and kicking the skeletons away. However, there is one shot that puts Todd Armstrong into direct 'contact', and this is when we see him plunge his sword through a skeleton's ribcage. During the live action Todd plunges his sword down and then at a specific point in the movement lets go of it so that it drops to the ground. In the animation studio I animated the skeleton in





front of the sword dropping onto the ground, which appears in the back projection plate, and replaced the real sword, as it appeared to enter the skeleton, with a miniature one. Todd then pulls his arm away and the skeleton is seen clutching onto the miniature sword. Of course, you can't kill a skeleton with a sword, but the effect is exciting.

So how do you kill skeletons? We puzzled over this conundrum for some time and in the end we opted for simplicity by having Jason jump off the cliff into the sea, followed by the skeletons. It was the only way to kill off something that was already dead, and besides, we assumed that they couldn't swim. After filming a stuntman jump into the sea, the prop men threw seven plaster skeletons off the cliff, which had to be done correctly on the first take as we couldn't retrieve them for a second. To this day there are, somewhere in the sea near that hotel on the cliff edge, the plaster bones of seven skeletons.

The sequence is one of my favourites, although I would never want to do it again. It was painful to the extreme. Hours and hours of the same movements can wear a man down. But it was worth it. It is there on film for all to see, and no matter what technology is invented, it can never be reproduced. In stop-motion the whole scene has a supernatural quality that could only be achieved by the use of dimensional animation. My one and only regret is that we didn't photograph it at night or, even better, twilight. There is no doubt in my mind that this would have greatly heightened the overall effect.



Above. Myself and Diana on our wedding day in 1963.

Not long after I had completed Jason, in late 1963, I received a script (not from Charles) concerning the Loch Ness monster, a subject that had always fascinated me. The whole idea of a lost prehistoric creature in a Scottish loch has wonderful possibilities for model animation, but this screenplay, entitled Breakout of the Loch Ness Monster, didn't meet expectations, so I turned it down. It was just another monster-on-the-rampage movie, this time featuring a radioactive (picked up from a satellite that had crashed into the loch) plesiosaur from the Mesozoic Era, whose best scene was to emerge from the loch and attack a boat. I am not aware that it was ever made, and while the idea had some potential, it would definitely have required considerable expansion to give the creature a more credible role.

As I was nearing the completion of the animation, a rough cut of the film was sent to Bernie for him to write the music. Once again, he delivered a brilliant score possessing a vitality and originality that managed to complement the fantasy action. As was his style, he used large amounts of wind, brass and percussion (but no strings) to create an overall feeling of mystery that reflected the ancient world. The title overture is a variation of the *Argo's* theme and is the film's most distinctive piece of music: a heroic, stirring battle march that dominates the score. The Talos sequence is composed of brass, low winds and timpani, evoking the gigantic bronze creation, and as a finale he wraps the skeleton fight in an aura of nightmarish imagination. Although we didn't know it at the time, this was to be Bernie's final score for us, but it is a tribute to his genius that I continued to animate on subsequent films with his music always in my mind.

Jason and the Argonauts took nearly two years to complete and cost an unprecedented (for us) \$3 million, which made it our most expensive and lavish production to date. Although we had made the film under the title of *Jason and the Golden Fleece*, Columbia discovered that there had been an Italian sword and sandal movie starring Steve Reeves with the same title. We obviously didn't want it confused

with the very image we were trying to avoid, so Columbia's publicity department came up with a list of alternatives, amongst them *The Incredible Voyage of Captain Jason*, *Journey Into the Unknown*, *The Fantastic Voyage of Jason*, *Perilous Voyage* and *Set Sail For Danger*. Eventually we decided on the simple and straightforward title *Jason and the Argonauts*. As the publicity machine began to be involved, they came up with yet another 'new' technical name for Dynamation, called Dynamation 90. It was obvious that they were running out of good ideas. Before you ask, no, I don't know what the 90 stands for, except that it was probably an attempt by the department to create a feeling that it was a widescreen process, much like Panavision 70. It was neither widescreen nor possessed any different technology from any of our other films made since *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*.

When the film was released it generally received good reviews. In their 5 June 1963 review, *Variety* said of it, 'Here's a choice hot weather attraction for the family trade - a sure delight for the kiddies and a diverting spectacle for adults with a taste for fantasy and adventure.' They go on to add, 'an impressive display of cinematic verisimilitude for which associate producer and special visual effects expert Ray Harryhausen rates at least the motion picture equivalent of two ears and a

tail. ...The money, at any rate, is on the screen.' The *Hollywood Reporter* said in their review of 5 June 1963, 'Here is a legendary adventure, expertly produced, a triumph of "cinematic".' On the down side, *Time* magazine reviewed the picture by commenting that 'they have dreamed up monsters Jason never saw, including a steam-powered *King Kong*, built of bronze, with a drain plug in his heel! And that was the best part of the review! As I have gone to great lengths to emphasize, we do take 'liberties' because the film has to appeal to general audiences, and you can't do that if you stick to every exact detail, as if Greek scholars were the only ones to view the picture.

Although in Britain the film was one of the top ten big moneymakers of 1963, it was unfortunate that the film opened in the States at the same time as the public was becoming tired of the Italian muscle epics that had seldom visualized the creatures in mythology, and which we had desperately tried to avoid being associated with. Over the intervening years since the picture was made, it has become a classic (not my words) and is, as I have said at the beginning of this chapter, one of the most popular of our movies. I am often asked if we intended there to be a sequel. Fans quote the fact that Jason still had to confront Pelias, the usurper of his throne, and Zeus is heard to say, 'But for Jason there are other adventures. I have not yet finished with Jason. Let us continue the game another day.' I suppose we must have hoped that there would be a sequel, but apart from resolving the conflict with Pelias, we would have had to take even greater liberties with the second half of the legend in which Medea kills her two children by Jason, dismembers their bodies and returns to Colchis. I did, however, want to make a film of the Labours of Hercules, but like so many ideas, nothing ever came of the suggestion.

As almost a footnote, Columbia submitted the picture to the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences for consideration as a possible special effects contender. We all fully expected it to earn at least a nomination for visual effects, but it was ignored and the picture that won was *Cleopatra*. I am told by certain Academy members that it was seen then as nothing very extraordinary, but how could that be, when at the time nothing like it had ever been done for the screen? A nomination and an award would have helped it at the box office. Disappointment on both fronts, but my private life was far more successful. After the completion of the production, on 5 October 1963 I was married to Diana. *Jason and the Argonauts* was a project that seemed to encourage marriage. Seven of us (there's that magical seven again) on the crew took the vow of wedded bliss, either during the production or shortly after.

What subject could we film next? Something different, something eye-catching and spectacular. Ever since my amateur days I had always wanted to make a film of one of H.G. Wells' novels. Although *War of the Worlds* and *The Time Machine* had been made into respectable films, another of Wells' stories, *First Men in the Moon*, had always seemed a good vehicle for Dynamation. Instead of the usual invasion from another planet, *First Men in the Moon* would enable us to explore another world and a complete alien civilization. On our budgets, this was likely to rival the tasks of Hercules!

RAY HARRYHAUSEN

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&
TONY DALTON

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