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GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY



FROM LEFT: Drax (Dave Bautista), Groot (voiced by Vin Diesel), Gamora (Zoe Saldana) and Peter Quill (Chris Pratt) team up in *Guardians of the Galaxy*; Bautista wearing an 18-piece prosthetic make-up; Karen Gillan as Nebula

A tongue-in-cheek sci-fi adventure featuring a group of Marvel Comics characters, *Guardians of the Galaxy* stars Chris Pratt as Peter Quill, the self-proclaimed Starlord, who teams up with a group of intergalactic rogues and misfits, including an assassin named Gamora (Zoe Saldana); the warrior Drax the Destroyer (Dave Bautista); the genetically-engineered raccoon Rocket (voiced by Bradley Cooper); and Groot (the voice of Vin Diesel), an ambulatory tree. The film also features Michael Rooker as the blue-skinned alien Yondu; Glenn Close as Nova Prime, leader of the peacekeeping Nova Corps; Lee Pace as Ronan; Karen Gillan as the villainous Nebula; and Benicio Del Toro as The Collector.

The team called upon to tackle what could turn out to be one of the biggest make-up movies of the year was led by make-up and hair designer Lizzie Yianni-Georgiou, with David White acting as special effects make-up designer.

The numbers are impressive: More than 80 lifecasts had to be taken for the film. The silicone technicians had to make 20-30 alien prosthetic pieces a day, 100-150 a week. More than 120 sets of Drax's 18-piece face and body prosthetics had to be run, with a team of five artists taking almost three hours to apply them. There were 21 numbered cast members in prosthetics and 42 in make-up and hair, as well as stuntmen, doubles and extras.

"It's a huge make-up film," says Yianni-Georgiou. "I think that people will be surprised at how make-up heavy it is, and how much work went into creating this particular world within the Marvel universe."

Both Yianni-Georgiou and White heard about the project while they were working on *Thor: The Dark World*. "People would raise an eyebrow and say, 'It's going to be huge,'" White recalls. "At first it was a drip feed of information, one character at a time. But they kept on coming and didn't seem to stop. Even when we were shooting, new characters would appear."

"Our director, James Gunn, wanted everything to look real," continues Yianni-Georgiou, "whilst also wanting to stay quite true to the comic book in terms of color. He also wanted our aliens' skins to have total coverage, down to the last millimeter. We had to have something that was delicate enough so that it didn't look like paint, but also lasted a 16-hour day on a hot summer set, with minimal touch-ups.

"Ronan's character first appears to the audience reborn in

a pool of black liquid, so the make-up had to be waterproof, too, whilst still allowing the skin to breathe. During testing, my team and I worked with all of the products on the market to develop our alien looks, but nothing clicked to the point where we—James and I—felt we had it. I brought in Dave Stoneman to collaborate with me to create the perfect product for our needs. We then took to testing it on each of our actors. With our ultra-fine product, using the different colors we'd developed, we airbrushed, speckled and veined onto the skin in layers so as to create characters that jumped out of the screen at the audience. It took us several weeks, but we did it!"

The workload for Yianni-Georgiou's team was considerable. "Through the medium of make-up and hair, I wanted to transport the audience to the cosmos where these beings exist within the film. We chiseled Chris [Pratt] quite a lot and gave him some facial hair to roughen him up and make him look like a ravager. Both Michael Rooker and Lee Pace really got on board with the development of their characters' looks; they were a joy to work with and really understood the level of detail and specificity that was required in order to make these characters come alive on screen.

"We felt that Nova Prime should have a regality to her whilst retaining a softness, so we designed some special little pieces that were added to her hair, which looked great on her. When it came to The Collector, I was very much influenced by images of Billy Idol and other '80s rock stars, whilst also focusing on the character as he appears in the comics. Benicio was keen to work with us to get the look right; we experimented with different markings on his face, which gave him a dark edge. He also agreed to have his hair bleached and cut for the character. We also did Peter Quill's mother, played by Laura Haddock, who is introduced at the beginning of the film in her death bed, having gone through chemotherapy, which we baldcapped and broke her skin down for."

And there were, for lack of a better term, space hookers. "That's where the fun came in," says Yianni-Georgiou. "They were in these fantastic-looking rubber costumes, and it wasn't hard to convince James to allow us free reign on their looks. We were able to do a lot with their make-up and hairstyles, and they really add to the overall look and feel of the alien world we had a part in creating."



David White (TOP AND BOTTOM PHOTOS) paints in the trailer, Michael Rooker as Yondu, Laura Haddock as Meredith Quill, Benicio Del Toro as The Collector



White's workload proved equally challenging, with such characters as Drax, Gamora, Korath and Nebula, plus several alien extras. His boldest design may well be for Drax, whose 18-piece prosthetic make-up had to tell the character's story by way of scarring across his body. "The fact that Dave was in most days meant we needed around 70 sets of prosthetics, as well as sets for his picture double, while I made six pull-on foam-latex suits for his stunt double," says White. "Since his skin was going to take some hammering, I ditched the Bondo [transfer appliance] route; because that was a risk I wasn't prepared to take.

"The pieces were made as big as possible and given a specific order of application. Dave's frame was massive, so if the pieces were too big, it would become impractical and clumsy. To save time, I had a Vac-U-Form of David's torso made with a series of holes punched into it. That became the map outline for the entire prosthetic touchdown, and Rice Paper Skin Illustrator was airbrushed through it, giving the perfect placement for every prosthetic piece. After the application, the remaining area was painted to match the already-grayed prosthetics."

As Nebula, Gillan had to shave off her long red hair for the duration of filming. "In my mind, there was no other option," White says. "The overall design would have looked totally out of proportion [with a bald cap], and it would have been massively time-consuming to maintain a cap throughout the day.

"We did many tests for the right combination of skin versus prosthetic, and any areas that didn't need to be covered by prosthetics were removed, so the neck was all painted, as was the top lip and ears. The mechanical outer eye area was a rigid Platgel 10 with 100 percent deadener, and she also wore 18-mm black contact lenses.

"Nebula's silicone-encapsulated prosthetic gives that lovely, silky, off-world look and was made up of five pieces for the head and face. The mechanical arm was a foam-latex/urethane mix, and her right arm was a one-piece wrap-around silicone skin, while her hands and nails were painted with different tones of blue, gray and purple, which were brushed, sponged and airbrushed on. We made up custom techno stencils to finish and blend highlights and shadows."

Marvel/Disney announced a sequel to the film a full week before the first installment was released; the make-up team is pleased with the first installment.

"On the last few days before we finished filming," says Yianni-Georgiou, "we shot the hero moment, where the characters are revealed for the first time as a unit—The Guardians of the Galaxy—as they strut through Yondu's ship. It was a real high, and made us all very proud."

"This movie had the biggest collection of talented mold makers, sculptors and make-up artists I've ever assembled," adds White, "and I'm extremely proud of them all. Their artistry, dedication and care for what they did was outstanding. And as an artist, I feel grateful to be given the opportunity to visually bring these characters to the screen in the way I would want to see them: as exciting and real as possible, but also with guts and soul." **MA**

Guardians of the Galaxy opened Aug. 1.

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