

THE ORIGINAL MIGHTY MORPHIN POWER RANGERS MOVIE FACT FILE

Revision No. 2 By Paul Matthews
"the Zordmaker".

This document was originally written soon after the completion of the original Power Rangers movie in Sydney way back in 1995. Now, twenty years later in 2015 and on the eve of a new Power Rangers movie entering production, we look back on those heady MMPR beginnings. I have revised the original document. I have also added commentary on what has happened to some of the key people over the following 20 years including myself.

And so.. Let's now go back. Way back.

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On 4th February 1994 at 3:29pm, I aimlessly wandered into the living room and flicked on the TV as the 'phone rang. Picking up the 'phone, I glanced at the TV screen and saw the last three seconds of the closing credits of Episode 5 of Season 1 of the original Power Rangers TV Show.

I stood in shock. I realised that this event would change my life forever.
(P.S. the caller hung up..)

After confirming my suspicions the following day with the Pudgy Pig, I was hooked. Totally. Suddenly Astroboy and Robotech just weren't good enough anymore. For the next eight months my every breath was "Power Rangers" and if I didn't see at least four hours per day I would go into shock.

That was until the 15th November, 1994. When through an extremely unlikely chain of events, I was given the job of Art Department Electrician on the first MMPR movie, to build the next generation of Zords to those I had come to know and love.

The Art Director (Colin Gibson) swore he would cure me of this fandom disease. I would never crave for MMPR again after jumping in. And so this piggy jumped into the mud. With heroes all around me, we set about the task of work.

And it NEARLY worked Colin. But I'm afraid near enough isn't good enough.

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What *REALLY* happened in Sydney all those years ago? In this blog we will take a close look at some of the quirky problems that made the original "Power Rangers Movie" what it was.

Without holding any bias, I honestly believe this production was a landmark for the Australian film industry. A time when many fractions became one whole. The experience of working on MMPRM was kind of similar to successfully negotiating your way past the gates of hell.

Many very long and trusting friendships were forged. These same relationships went on to form the backbone of the Sydney "big budget" offshore film making scene throughout the 1990's. These people went on to create the production core of landmark films like Dark City, the Matrix films, the Babe films, Mission Impossible 2, Moulin Rouge and the Star Wars prequels. In the 21st Century they went on to create Superman Returns and most recently; "Mad Max Fury Road".

As we track the beginnings of Sydney's film business, there's generally one common denominator on all the CV's of key people who shaped these films. If you look right down the bottom of their list, there'll usually be a film right at the start where that person got their *first break*. *Their first taste of the business*. *Their foot in the door*.

And in Sydney, that film will almost certainly be the original *Power Rangers Movie* in 1994.

Studios do not an industry make. People are what makes things work.

And so it was to be that on the **31st October 1994**,
events began which would forever change our farmyard industry.
The day the Power Rangers came to town.

THE HISTORY OF THE POWER RANGERS MOVIE PRODUCTION

The history of "Mighty Morphin Power Rangers" (from herein known as MMPR) is well documented in blogs throughout the internet so we won't repeat it here.

In March 1994, the phenomenal success of the MMPR TV show led to the desire by Saban's (the TV show producers) to create a movie version. Fox Television (who owned the television rights at the time) forwarded the project to "20th Century Fox" for consideration.

Driven by an unstoppable publicity phenomenon throughout the USA in early 1994, the plan was successful. MMPR: The Movie was very unusual. It had succeeded in "jumping the queue" that normally proceeds big budget productions. The desire was to produce a high quality product: VERY FAST. Only one problem. *No director!*



Power Rangers—the Live Show. Just one of the many examples of the MMPR phenomenon that had gripped the world in early 1994. The pressure to take this property to the big screen was unstoppable.

Initially in March it was arranged that Steve Wang would direct the feature and that it would be filmed in Canada and the USA. Steve had just wrapped production on a film called "*Guyver, Dark hero*". It had "morphing" super suit similarities along the same lines as Power Rangers.

However by July, the director had changed to Bryan Spicer. Co-producer David Coatsworth had also been recruited to the project from Canada. A script was formulated after Bryan and friends reportedly "spent ages watching hundreds of episodes of the MMPR TV show with the luxury of a fast forward button".

Bryan and his team were successful in convincing FOX to try using computer animation for the third act instead of the initially planned model city with suited actors (A-La the TV show). *You need to remember..* this was still prior to the release of digital animation stalwarts such as Pixar's "*Toy Story*". *Well before* James Cameron's landmark "*Avatar*". Computer animation (especially when mixed with live action) was still a relatively unknown and high risk venture. Nobody really knew what to expect.

However the short history of the project quickly caught up. There were simply no studios in the USA or even Canada capable of commencing the project at such short notice. To add to the complications, they had been also been informed by Saban Entertainment (producers of the TV show) that the only period in which the original Hero Actors (i.e. the rangers from the TV show) were available to work on the movie were within October and December 1994. This clashed with winter in the Northern hemisphere. The third requirement were a large number of exacting locations which could not readily be found.

At the time, there was a certain executive Vice President at Fox known as Jon Landau. Of course everyone today knows about Jon. His spectacular success in producing many of the James Cameron blockbusters such as "*Titanic*" and "*Avatar*" is legendary. However back then, he was just *another Fox executive*. Looking for that big break. Jon had been watching with personal interest the emerging success of Australian offshore productions. The most recent at the time being the first ever to be shot at the new Gold Coast based Warner Bros. Studios: Steve De Souza's "*Street Fighter*".

Accordingly, the salesmanship of Fox representative Jon Landau paid off. From July, MMPRM was now slated to be shot in Australia. At that time it was envisaged the same Queensland "Warner Movie World" studios would be used as for "*Street Fighter*". However these stages were booked by other productions until January 1995.

Fortunately Jon Landau knew a vibrant little bloke in Sydney named **Colin Gibson**. Colin had connections with just about everyone who was anyone in the "underground" Sydney film making scene in the early '90s. With films like "*Babe*" and "*Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*" under his belt, it didn't take long for Colin and his ramshackle clubhouse crew to make a bid for the MMPRM project to move to Sydney instead. A move seconded by producer Suzanne Todd, who was excited about the location possibilities of Sydney as a substitute for Angel Grove. However there was still a problem. Now they had locations and a team.. but.. *no studios*.



The Commemorative Pavilion, one of two identical enormous halls built in the late 1930's at the Sydney Showgrounds, often to double as filming stages.

The following four weeks saw some of the fastest talking ever seen in the industry.

Between August and 15th September :

- Jon Landau (Fox) and John Meredith (NSW Film Office) spoke to NSW Politicians about Colin's idea of using the two large pavilions at the Sydney Showgrounds as filming stages. These were currently booked for the mundane task of marking school exam papers.
- A slinging match ensued between two Government ministers, played out in Sydney newspapers. This resulted in the exam marking being relocated at the 11th hour. This in turn allowed the Commemorative and Government pavilions at the Moore Park Showgrounds to be re booked for what then became known in the Sydney press as "**Mighty Morphs**". Remember : this was a full year before anyone had even suggested that the site might eventually become what is now known today as Fox Studios Australia.
- The establishment of "Tengu Productions". An Australian production company arm of "Rita Enterprises" - itself the LA based production of FOX responsible for producing the movie.
- The lease and setup of a production office in nearby Waterloo.
- The hiring of an initial crew of around 80 personnel including a complete construction department of 15 carpenters and complete art department, consisting entirely of freelance workers from agents and/or their contacts.
- The commencement of construction of the "Command Center" and "Zedd's Palace" at the Showground site, which commenced September 15th.

All this in FOUR WEEKS! It was a shade of things to come. Sydney's film industry was about to feel growing pains it had never felt before.

During October, the top brass from America and the Australian crew began to thrash out the movie together. Australian cast were assembled. Along with the 16 American cast, production began on 31st October with a central Sydney location shoot that was later to become the "Hornitor crushes cars in city streets" scene.

Meanwhile, in the background, was an actor known as Gabrielle Fitzpatrick. She was about to have a devastating effect on the production nobody could foresee.



Inside the Commemorative Pavilion during the early days of "Mighty Morphs". Zedd's Palace is to the left and the Command Centre Set is behind it in the background. In front, Danny Stallcup and other MMPR stunt performers prepare to fly as Tengu Warriors. Zordmaker Photo.

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The final cut of "Power Rangers" was very different to the script imagined by Bryan and his team in October 1994. The principle difference was the initial absence of visors on the helmets of the Power Rangers. At the start, it was initially felt that the total covering of the Ranger's faces removed any ability to express emotion, so the visors came off. Key shoots in October and early November took place using the Hero Actors in costume with no visors on the helmets at all.

(Note - on set, the Rangers from the TV show were called "Hero Actors". Their stunt doubles were called "Ranger Actors".)



The Hero Actors in their suits on the first City Streets shoot on the night of 18th November, 1994. As can be seen, there were no visors in the helmets. Photo : Marc Vignes



By mid November it had become clear to Bryan and his team that this was a ghastly mistake. The Power Rangers in Morphed Mode are not supposed to show emotion. They are supposed to be a powerful unforgiving fighting force. The dailies looked horrible. Something was terribly wrong. The speed at which the production was set up had taken it's toll. The lack of pre-production time, experimentation and consultation had resulted in a disaster.

In the words of one Fox executive, "It looks like a TV show!". Questions were also

being asked as to the ability of the Hero Actors to be everywhere at the same time. Also some of their stunt capabilities (although impressive) came into question.

The feeling was that it would be better to have stunt actors in the Morphed Mode suits. That way, both filming units could be kept busy filming at the same time. The decision to replace the morphed power rangers came in mid November. This came after screening of dailies for the first night City Streets shoot on 18th November. This ironically was the first day and place that Yours Truly first became involved in "Mighty Morphs".

Standing nicely right there were a team of Jeff Pruitt's original MMPR stunt team who had been recruited to play the Tengu Warriors. This cast quickly became known as the "Ranger Actors", for which suits and helmets were cast in record time. From that point, all morphed mode shots with helmets were done by;

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| White/ Tommy | — Hien Nguyen |
| Pink/ Kimberly | — Sophia Crawford |
| Blue/Billy | — David Wald |
| Yellow/Aisha | — Bridget Riley |
| Black/Adam | — Danny Stallcup |
| Red/Rocky | — Stuart Quan |

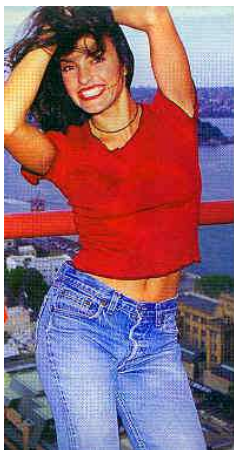
Occasionally these actors swapped roles. Particularly in fights involving the Oozemen (as they also played the Oozemen!) and in some Cockpit shots (for example, Danny Stallcup played Red Ranger in Monkeyzord but Black Ranger in Megazord).



Two other shots of the early Ranger suits without visors, taken on 18/11/94 Photos : Marc Vignes



A late night shot of the Ranger Actors taken in January 1995. Apart from the three crew members (of course the one on the right in the dorky shorts is a very young Yours Truly), from left is Stuart, Bridget, Danny and Sophia. Zordmaker photo.



Mariska Hargitay

Back on 2nd November, a little bit before the "Visorless rangers" debacle, another event took place which was to alter forever what might have been. Literally only hours before set call, Gabrielle Fitzpatrick (who was originally to play Dulcea) was diagnosed with an ovarian cyst which required an operation for immediate removal.

In an amazing 11th hour casting change, Mariska Hargitay (daughter of "sex idol" Jayne Mansfield) replaced Gabrielle Fitzpatrick as "Dulcea". Production then commenced on the Dulcea parts (with the hero actors) the following day.

This was a *very, very expensive mistake!*

Unfortunately this was not to be recognised until after several weeks' filming had taken place at the Chinese Gardens at Darling Harbour (known on script as "Dulcea's Compound"). This section of the film contained much of the original plot behind the existence of the Ninjetti powers and its effect on the rangers.

Again the dailies told a tale of woe. Mariska really was "B-U-I-L-T" (as the script called for her to be). However she just didn't cut it as the Master Warrior of Phaedos.

On 20th December—only two days after the Ranger visor issue had been dealt with—Mariska was stood down. *The entire 4 weeks of footage shot with her and the Rangers then became unusable* - and was cut from the film.



Right : Whilst initially casting for the Dulcea part, the producers interviewed an Australian actress—Catherine Sutherland. She was unsuccessful in gaining the Dulcea part. However when time came to replace the Pink Ranger in the TV show, the producers remembered Catherine—and invited her to become the second Pink Ranger "Kat" in the MMPR TV show.



A rare shot of the Rangers in "Dulceas' Compound" as it was originally meant to be. The urn in front of them is Dulceas' magic dust bowl. Alas, their adventures sleeping on color coordinated beds (YES, they really DID exist, I can personally testify to seeing them) were to remain the stuff of dreams. Photo : Marc Vignes



Above : Clipped from the widescreen version of the film, Dulcea's backside is on display as she pins Tommy to the ground. Of course this one belongs to Gabrielle Fitzpatrick. The photo to the left shows the scene in production at Bombo Quarry (Phaedos Shoreline) near Kiama, NSW. Photo : Marc Vignes

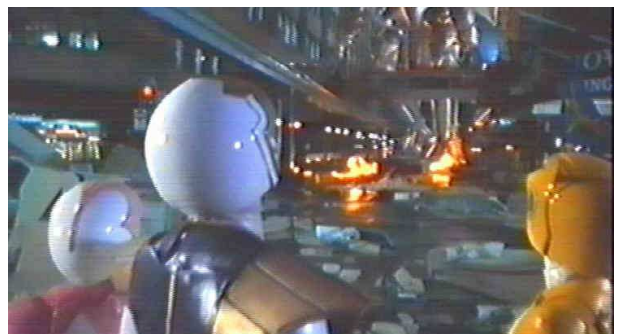


Of course by this time, Gabrielle had now recovered from her operation! And so she returned to her rightful role of Dulcea in time for the critical location shots at Kiama (Phaedos Shoreline) which took place in the week starting on 8th January 1995.

So.. by late November, *more than 70% of footage that had been shot by that time was now useless.* Any frame showing visor-less Rangers and anything involving Mariska was now on the cutting room floor. Dozens of

reshoots were commissioned. These included weeks more of shooting at the Construction Site and the technically difficult and expensive "City Streets" scenes. One of these was scheduled for a Friday Night only a week before Christmas. Not the time to be shutting down the CBD of Sydney!

A further bungle at this time was the "Rat creatures" debacle. The original script called for the Rangers to fight "Rat Creatures" which were to be created by Ivan. The "Rats" were typical Saban cheapies. Even I doubt Bryan or anyone else in Australia had seen them until the night of the shoot. The scenes were shot.. and instantly hit the floor the next day. *The Rats were out!*



A shot from the film extracted from the second "City Streets" night location shoot in George St Sydney. This time with the visors in place.



David Wald, in Blue Ranger costume, on set of the Megazord cockpit shoots in January 2015. The weakness of the suits is clearly visible. Zordmaker photo.

To replace them, the overworked Wardrobe and Prosthetics departments (and especially a small Sydney based effects shop called "Studio Kite") gave birth to the Oozemen. *In only four days! (everybody works better under pressure, dont they?).* Meanwhile, the "Rat Creature" costumes were tossed into a dirty corner out the back of the production office. (More on that later..).

By mid December, things were looking very grim. Deep down in our hearts, every crew member knew where the Morphins were heading. And no Ninjetti powers were going to save them!



Stuart Quan and David Wald in front of a sign leaving absolutely no doubts as to the location where "Mighty Morphs" was made. Photo : Joseph Porro's Website.

Shooting continued in earnest. Even by the 2nd week of December, the official line from "the top" was still that the film would wrap by Christmas - the original wrap date. But that's not all. Further disasters occurred.

It was decided that a suitable "location" Chemical Plant for Ivan Ooze couldn't be found. So now it would have to be built. Craig Stearns and his team worked round the clock to develop the Chemical Plant set. This was to be built inside the Government Pavilion "stage" and would use part of the 1936 vintage structure in the design. Drawings, plans and specs flew in every direction in the construction office at the showground as impossible demands came to complete it.



The Chemical Plant set, built inside the Government Pavilion of Sydney Showgrounds. Massive cost overruns on this set resulted from a lack of understanding or knowledge of what it was for or what it should be able to do. Zordmaker photo.

Carpenters and painters were progressively stolen from supposedly lesser important tasks to work on the "Chemical Plant". Zord cockpits were loaded on trucks and driven round Waterloo with Yours Truly chasing them to find out where work had been relocated to. It was *absolute chaos*. The daily call sheets and production schedule were *totally useless*. They were out of date before they were even typed.

The final week before Christmas was *sheer hell*. The impossible demands really did become impossible. As Christmas approached there was no direction, apart from the fact that the original Command Center and Zedd's Palace sets (both located in the other Commemorative pavilion stage) had now been demolished to make way for "Phaedos Outlook" to supposedly be built.

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Remember how the original Hero Actors were only available between October and December? Well ..you guessed it.

Now Christmas was here. They're still stuck in Sydney. The Morphins had now come too far to back out and it was time to remake the movie. As Bryan and the producers went away to re-write the script (taking into account the unusable footage as well as taking the advantage to work in a number of new ideas made possible by Fox's backing of the project - particularly the bone creature scene) the Hero Actors hit the camera early in the new year to battle the "Wizard of Deception".



The TV show Green ranger summons his zord. In the background? The Suttor Pavilion, and the lighting towers of the Sydney Cricket ground.

Thats right! Saban's had no option but to move part of the TV show production to Sydney as well. The Season Two MMPR episodes "The



Wedding" and "Return of the Green Ranger" were partially filmed in Sydney alongside the movie production. The "Morphed Mode" scenes were still shot in LA using local stunt cast (ever wondered why they never took off their helmets in that abandoned theatre in "The Wedding"?).

Indeed a number of shots in "Return of the Green Ranger" featured various locations around the Sydney Showgrounds. One was alongside the Commemorative Pavilion, in which the set for "Phaedos Outlook" was being constructed.



Here, at a park bench regularly used for crew lunches, the Hero actors hammed it up for the



TV cameras even when directly behind them, a black triangular steel frame (which was too heavy for the feeble TV crew to move) sits discarded. It's actually part of the gimble frame that supported the prop-plane set that the Rangers jump out of at the start of the movie.

Remember those *Rat Creature costumes*? That's right. You guessed it. Suddenly, they "vanished" from that dusty production office corner and then reappeared in "colonial Angel Grove" with humans (familiar ones, in the form of the Ranger stunt actors again) inside them.

TV show : Return of the Dusty Rat Creatures!

TV show : The Rangers gather at "The lunch spot". In the background.. The prop plane gimble frame.



As for Angel Grove history, well.. if "Angel Grove" was supposed to be Sydney Australia, then it seemed obvious that "Colonial Angel Grove" should naturally be a tourist park known as "Old Sydney Town" on the NSW central coast about 2 hours' drive North. Which of course, *it was!*



TV show : "Old Sydney Town", as it appeared in "Return of the Green Ranger" in 1995. The park closed in 2003 and is no longer open to the public.

During this time, poor old "Bulk & Skull" sat around and did little. Jason Narvy bought a classic 1965 Ford Falcon and became the envy of several crew, but other than that not much happened.

Paul & Jason therefore asked the TV production if they could be 1st Assistant Directors for the TV episodes. And they consequently *got the job!*

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So now, we find ourselves over the Christmas. New year break over and ready to film once more.



TV show Above : The SFS (Sydney Football Stadium) in the bg. Below : Outside the Macarthur Pavilion (clearly shown).

The movie producers now had their heads together. They had a new script and a production schedule that actually made sense. The "Phaedos Jungle" (which was supposed to be built at the Showgrounds) never saw the light of day. An alternative location (where the bone creature scenes were shot) had now been found in Queensland.

Of course the other thing that now "became available" was an empty stage at the Queensland "Warner Brothers" studios on the Gold Coast where the film was originally going to be shot in the first place. So it was here that the final MMPR set was commissioned. Here, the Rangers would fight the "rock creature" gate keepers as they tried to get their new powers on Phaedos.

The other main reason for the move north to Queensland was the impending end to the lease on the Showground pavilions. These were initially only available until Christmas. "Mighty Morphins" had overstayed their welcome. However they managed to squeeze one more set in before finally wrapping in Sydney in early February. (The Showground was at the time owned by the Royal Agricultural Society which holds a massive agricultural show called the "Royal Easter Show" in late March every year on the site. Of course nowadays it's known as Fox Studios Australia, with the Easter show having been relocated away from the site back in 1997.)

Still to be filmed in January were virtually all of the cockpits, which you author of course was deeply involved in. Also the chemical plant, a host of green screen shots and "Phaedos Outlook"- this time with Gabrielle Fitzpatrick in the green bakini as "Dulcea". The distant planet Kiama (as it became known in the press but otherwise known as Bombo Quarry) was a location about 150km South of Sydney which was used for the Ranger's arrival on Phaedos. This location scene took one week to shoot.



"Phaedos Outlook" was the last large scale set to be constructed at the showgrounds in what is now, 20 years later, known as Fox Studios Stage No. 7.

Morphin power!



Foul play: Power Rangers do battle in a Kiama quarry.

Picture: Michael Perini

THE lure of the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers was too strong for Derek Brumpton to resist.

Clearly enthralled, the game 66-year-old local perched on the cliff-top overlooking Kiama quarry, oblivious to the discomfort of his wife, Mary, who had a bad back from gardening.

"There she is. She's Tim Tui or something - the bimbo in the Power Rangers and she was knocked down by three giant chooks this morning."

Suddenly one of the birdmen is launched - a helpless Power Ranger in his clutches - high

By SARAH HARRIS

above the rocks by crane. Mrs Brumpton forgets her pain and raises her binoculars for a better look as the unfortunate actor hurtles across the quarry on a wire trapeze.

"Cut," hollers the director through his loud-speaker. "Jim, you have to flap your wings with a bit more force and rhythm," he declares, ordering another take.

Already the envy of her eight grandchildren, Mrs Brumpton had apparently become a convert to the latest batch of childhood superheroes in one "fowl swoop".

"I might even go and see it when it comes out. Until you watch them making a movie you don't really realise what goes into it," she says.

Over the 10 days the crew spent filming the 20th Century Fox movie Mighty Morphin Power Rangers in the south coast town hundreds of locals made the trip down to the quarry for a look.

The movie - a spin-off from the hugely popular television series - is the first of many expected to be filmed in NSW under Fox's plan to build a multi-million film studio in Sydney.

Right : Happenings as reported by the Sunday Telegraph, 5th Feb '95 - referring to the Phaedos Rocky Outcrop location in Kiama.

January proceeded smoothly compared to the chaos of the previous year. The humble pie was now fairly where it should have been. Virtually all the shots from this January '95 period made it into the movie. *Why couldn't it all have been like this?*



Our Heroes, on "open set" at Jordans' Seafood restaurant in February 1995. Ironically this is one of the very few places left still standing in Darling Harbour 20 years later. So be sure to get on down there when you visit Sydney won't you. Zordmaker photo.

And so Bryan decided to go out with a bang - literally. The last Sydney location shoot was to be the end of the movie. Here, crowds would gather and fireworks light up the sky to congratulate the Power Rangers' triumph over Ivan Ooze.

The Producers asked if it was possible to get some "Extra" extras for the night. Suddenly *the crew were afraid*.

Are you going tomorrow night?
Nope!!
Not me either!
Nor me!
Count me out!!

I was confused. What was *going on*?

The Sydney print media and radio stations the next day confirmed what had happened. The "shoot" had suddenly become an invitation for the *entire city of Sydney to come and see the Power Rangers!*

It was touted as an *extravaganza*. "Meet the Rangers!" "Free Giveaways!" etc etc etc. Some entrepreneur had grabbed at the chance to make it big. Noting that half of Colin's art dept. crew had suddenly vanished without a trace, I volunteered to be present. As only a true fan would. I couldn't let the Rangers down now, could I?

Once I arrived I soon found out why the others bowed out so quickly. The result was "interesting" if not a little cruel.

They ended up with about 8000 humans present that night "on set". Many were dressed as junior Power Rangers etc. Normally for this size crowd, a major event should be planned. But this was a movie set. 1st AD Steve Love had only one thing on his mind - the camera and the movie.

To add to the amusement, at that time Season Two of the TV show had not yet aired in Australia. This meant that nobody who wasn't crew could possibly know at the time that *Johnny Bosch, Karan Ashley and Steve Cardenas were.. well.. power rangers*.

JOIN the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers in their Sydney movie - and share in \$5000 worth of Power Ranger prizes.

The Daily Telegraph Mirror and 2WS are giving 10,000 people the chance to be extras in the thrilling final scene to the Mighty Morphin Power Rangers movie which has been shooting on location in Sydney.

The last scene will be filmed at Darling Harbour on Friday from 8pm-11pm and Power Ranger fans have the opportunity to be part of the movie.

The theme of the final scenes is to thank Sydney. It will feature the alien-busting team plus three new Power Rangers not yet seen in the television series.

To be part of the action and go into the draw to share in \$5000 worth of prizes from Toys R Us, collect the coupon on Page 22 then go to the Convention Centre Forecourt at Darling Harbour at 7.30pm on Friday.

Make sure you take your Daily Telegraph Mirror with you.

The prizes include Power Rangers toys and accessories. The coupon must be placed in the provided barrels at Darling Harbour by 8pm.

The action kicks off at 7.30pm with martial arts demonstrations from the Power Rangers' stunt team plus fireworks displays during the night.

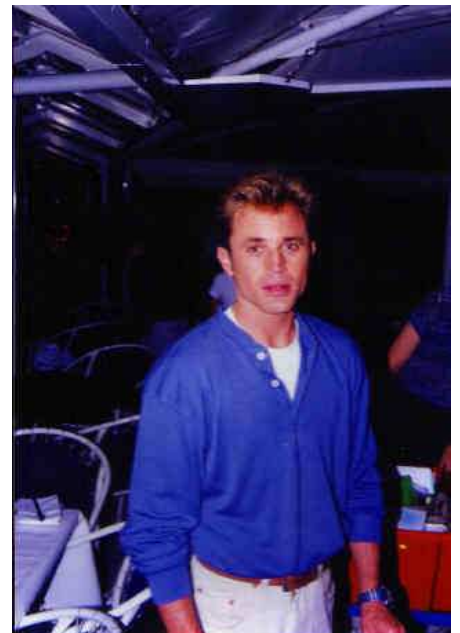
Prizes will be drawn throughout the night and all winners will be notified by mail.



Power Rangers
\$5000 in prizes

Entry coupon P22

Someone, Somewhere was responsible for the disaster caused by the above statement in Sydney's Daily Telegraph, 1st February 1995. Can you blame most of the crew for backing out?



Above ; David <the walking dead> Yost, on open set that fateful night at Darling Harbour. Good to see he's kept his communicator on. Zordmaker photo.



A small section of the largely disappointed and crushed crowd who turned up "to see the Power Rangers". Zordmaker photo.

They wandered and mingled in the crowd for what seemed like ages without being recognised. Even AmyJo and David and Jason mingled in public for a while unrecognised. Eventually Jason Narvy and Paul Schrier (Bulk & Skull) wandered over, in costume. Suddenly everyone suddenly knew what was going on and then found the other Rangers had been mingling.

Autograph signing then began in earnest but *it was hopeless*. The crush of 8000 people on a hot night was too much. There was no way everyone could see or even begin to understand what was going on.

Somewhere.. an embarrassed promoter yelled into a hopelessly overloaded PA system.. saying .. well.. he had no idea either. Then we would ask: "Where are the stunties?" Where's Danny? David? Hien?"

Eventually the "Ranger Actors" went over to the distant stage area and began to display some stunt routines. However many of the young kids could not understand, since they were not dressed as the "power rangers".. when in fact they were.

Costumes? Well given the heat, Danny & crew were pretty glad they had been "forgotten". Wardrobe had no idea the costumes were to be used that night. They had all been left behind at the showground. So the confusion and disappointment for many young fans compounded.

The confusing crush became tighter. The first fireworks batch were let off. Filming then commenced, however the wind was changing direction constantly. The fireworks shot was spoiled by the fact that you could not make out the "Thank You Power Rangers" sign. In the movie, this shot has been "digitally enhanced" and faked. The writing you see on screen is not the fireworks.

The crowd, now partly appeased, then spread out to watch. Suddenly the wind changed completely and became very strong for the rest of the night. Unfortunately the remaining fireworks scenes had to be cancelled due to safety concerns.

In between shoots, the hero actors (particularly David and Jason) continued doing autographs for the crowd. Steve called them back every time. These guys were incredible that night. I can personally attest to the fact that David was literally sleepwalking, not having slept for days. The others had survived on an average 4 hours' sleep per day for virtually the whole production. Over 80% of the movie had been shot at night, mainly because of the endless time spent at the construction site filming the stunt scenes.

Then comes,, the *payback*.

A small child loses her mother. She runs past the barrier, into Steve Love's leg and grabs hold.

He picks her up and frantically uses his directors' megaphone to try and find the missing mother amongst the throng of thousands. He looks hopelessly at the crew. At Colin, then at Paul Murphy, then at Noni Roy. We all turn away. Even the rangers pay no attention.

He's standing there hopeless. All filming has stopped because Steve's got a renegade kid in his hands. We think quietly. Looking briefly at the crowd of 8000 crushed, hot, disappointed kids and angry parents, then back at Steve and his newfound friend. We think - ***serves you bloody right mate! Next time you'll think more carefully about having an "open set"!***



Above : What the public was expecting to see on the Open Set night - Power Rangers! But alas this photo was taken only days beforehand, after a long day shooting the Megazord cockpit. Zordmaker photo.



Above : What Zordmaker's camera saw of the fireworks on Open Set night. Below is the "digitally altered" version, as you see it in the film.



Above : The ultimate irony of the entire madness that was "Mighty Morphin". Many crew (including the producers and even Colin) got to position themselves in many shots over the weeks so they would hopefully be seen in the film. However the only crew member that *actually got INTO the film itself* was.. Well.. Me. And it was an accident! Here, after repeatedly blowing over in the strong winds, The Zordmaker positions his 90kg frame to act as a human signpost for the "Celebration Tonight" banner on the open set night. Photo clipped from the film.

The Darling Harbour shoot signified the end of "Mighty Morphs" in Sydney. By March 10th, the "Tengu Productions" office was a bare shell. There were no traces that the Rangers had ever been in Sydney. They were however in Queensland fighting the Gargoyles.

After a further short visit to the Northern Territory to shoot a single Phaedos outlook scene, the movie wrapped in what could only be described as a puff of unsmoke. Suddenly the USA contingent were jetting back to L.A. The whole thing was over. I had learned the most important lesson of film production. That no matter what happens, no matter how mad or bad things get, there will *always be an end*. Sometimes crew just live for that moment to finally come.

But not quite. In the intervening months in Australia, "Mighty Morphs" still left it's mark:

- The Perth Symphony Orchestra entered the studio in Western Australia to record the incidental soundtrack for the movie.

- Jamie Croft and Gabrielle Fitzpatrick entered studios in Sydney for a 6 hour ADR (automatic dialogue replacement) session. This was linked to L.A. via digital ISDN lines. This is believed to have been the first practical use of such technology between LA and Sydney.

- Sydney special effects group "Conja" won a number of SFX contracts in Mighty Morphs. These included the "Ivan Ooze" morphs and the external matte shots of Phaedos.

MMPRM Epilogue 2015

Quite a number of key Sydney film people were "forged together" in "Mighty Morphs. The credits list is long. Now here in 2015, let us go over a few of these names and consider briefly what happened to them after they successfully navigated the gates of MMPRM Hell.

With most of the executive for MMPRM having come from the US, the Australian Art Department was the "engine room" that really created "Mighty Morphs" in Sydney. This department was headed up by a small vibrant bloke called **Colin Gibson**.

Colin had previously spent his time assisting as crew on films such as "Priscilla, Queen of the Desert" and George Miller's "Babe". So much more than an Art Director, Colin single handedly took enormous risks and bought together so many people in those early 1990's times. In an industry crippled with nepotism, Colin found new people, trusted them and plugged them into his Art Department machine. Without Colin Gibson, there would have been no "Mighty Morphs" in Sydney. And potentially no other big films made there since.

Colin went on to become George Miller's "go to man" of choice. Colin gained associate producer credit in the technically complicated 1998 feature "Babe: Pig in the City". He then went on to begin work with Miller on his piece-de-la-resistance : "Mad Max Fury Road". As we all know, it would take *another fifteen years* before this film would finally reach our screens here in 2015.



Above : This very short clip in the film was the very last shot for "Mighty Morphs". It was shot in the Northern Territory.

Below : The Hero actors, in one of the few situations where they actually are seen in suits in the film. Photo : Marc Vignes.



Above : One of the rare photos in existence of Mariska Hargitay as Dulcea, taken in the Chinese Gardens location at Darling Harbour by Mark Vignes.

Below : The Ranger Actors in the thick of it inside the Megazord Cockpit, late one night in January 1995. Zordmaker photo.



Another key player in MMPRM's Art Dept was **Tim Ferrier**. He went on to Art Direct and then Production Design many TV series and films in Australia, dragging many other ex MMPRM crew with him.

But probably the biggest example of how "Mighty Morphs" changed Sydney would be in the Lighting department. Until MMPRM came along, film lighting in Sydney had consisted of a motley collection of Gaffers each with their own truck and equipment financed from whatever they could scrape up.

"Mighty Morphs" however was so many factors larger than anything that preceded it. No one Gaffer or company could even hope to have access to enough resources to provide the enormous amount of people and equipment needed to bring the Power Rangers Movie to life. Although **Reg Garside** is credited as the Gaffer in MMPRM, in reality two other gaffers also came together to make MMPRM work. **Mick Morris** and **Simon Lee**.

Thereafter, Reg, Mick and Simon formed the "powerhouse" of the Sydney's big budget film capacity in the '90s, having demonstrated that Sydney really did have the grunt to be able to handle "the big stuff". They would all in some way have their hand in just about every big location or set in the Sydney scene until 1999. This is when Fox and Panavision Lighting got fed up with how they were being "left out" of the big dollar lighting hire scene in Sydney. Panavision decided to drive a truck of cash up to each of the "big three" to buy them out. With each of them having spent over 20 years in "the game" doing 20 hour work days night after night, it wasn't a hard sell to convince them to retire. Alas, the "golden years" of Sydney film making were now over.

Then of course, we have the **Zordmaker** "electrician to the stars". With my own MPRM experience being typical, (MMPRM was the first film I ever worked on) the Rangers thence thrust me into another 8 years on the Sydney big budget scene. While there's a long list of TV productions to consider, my two majors were undoubtedly *Babe-Pig in the City* and Baz Luhrmann's *Moulin Rouge*. Without "Mighty Morphs", none of this would have happened.



Above : Two clips from the film showing the CGI Hornitor and Scorptron. The first shot is looking South down Kent St from the corner of Market St, in effect where the second shot is looking straight down on the same intersection. The Ranger action would take place on the corner of Market and George Sts.



Hollywood monster stalks Sydney streets



ABOVE:
Running from
an imaginary
beast . . .
extras show
fear on the set
yesterday
Picture:
TRENT PARKE

RIGHT: The
record
breaking



HOLLYWOOD hit Sydney in force yesterday when 100 shoppers fled the evil Hornitor near the Queen Victoria Building.
As extras ran from the giant beast, a car registered in the fictional city of Angel Grove leapt the gutter and skidded towards the crowd.
The Hornitor is the latest monster to confront the Power Rangers — the crime fighters now breaking ratings records in the US, where they are more popular than the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.

Morphin Power Rangers movie in Sydney is a step towards city's drive to be a heavyweight movie studio town.
The Hornitor did not make a personal appearance at the corner of Market and York streets — his towering presence will be created with the aid of computer graphics and added to the live action.
A 150-strong production crew yesterday began filming what could be the first of many feature films made in Sydney by industry giant Twentieth Century Fox.

movie production complex in Sydney, possibly at the show-ground, which could see up to \$130 million injected into the local film industry every year.
The young rangers stars, whose characters change from teenagers with martial arts skills to the masked pilots of robotic pre-historic animals called Zords, will make their first official appearance on the Sydney set on Wednesday.
Producer Suzanne Todd, whose credits include Die Hard II, Lethal Weapon II and Predator, said Sydney was perfect set-

THINGS YOU NEVER WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT THE MMPR:TM PRODUCTION

(in order of their appearance in the movie)

The Skydiving Scenes:

These are cuts back and forth between real skydiving footage (produced by an Australian stunt team over south-western Sydney in late November) and a set replica of the prop-plane in which the Rangers interact and jump out of.

The flying scenes where you see ranger faces were done in front of a green screen on the same night as the prop-plane shoot. One interesting aspect about the prop-plane set was that virtually all the paint on it was dripping wet whilst filming. Rain had forced the abandonment of regular location schedules and so a substitute indoor scene was required very fast. This was to be either the crane-zord or the prop-plane. You can imagine why the paint was wet.

Ernies:

Richard Genelle ("Ernie", in the TV show version of Power Rangers) was present in Sydney as paid cast for the entire production. He did not feature in the movie or get credit. A great deal of footage from "Ernies" did not reach the screen.

The location used for "Ernies", is now a Mc Donald's Restaurant at Darling Harbour in 2015.

The Construction Site:

This is now officially known in Sydney as "World Square". Back in 1994 it was a failed late '80s building venture until it was found by Coatsworth and his team. The only access to the site was via seven flights of narrow stairs. Up and down which everyone and everything- was required to be moved for "Mighty Morphs". "World Square" as it exists today was completed in 2004.

The Rollerblading scenes:

The shots on this scene swap rapidly from Darling Harbour to The Rocks, the Construction Site and East Sydney. All these locations are very distant from each other in reality and would definitely be a very long rollerblading ride!



Left : The Tengu Warriors, hoisted high up on a crane, float down into the construction site. Not many producers would go to the trouble or risk of shooting these kind of shots this way "fully practical" today. One of the very few times I wished I was one of the stunt actors.. COOL is the word.



Above : Adam hangs above the big fan for those skydiving shots.
Below : Paul Shrier and Jason Narvy (Bulk & Skull) are about to jump out of the skydiving plane set. They need to be careful not to touch the walls.. Because the paint is dripping wet.



Above : The "Construction Site" is now known as "World Square" in the 21st Century. The famous Sydney Monorail, which features heavily in the third act - is now no more. It was decommissioned in 2014 and the track has now been removed.

The Third Act:

The "Third Act" of MMPRM begins where Ivan creates Hornitor and Scorpitron. The "Third Act" of Mighty Morphs was the most challenging technically. The Chemical Plant (where Ivan creates the monsters) is actually the interior of the "Government Pavilion" in Sydney Showgrounds inside which the set was built, however the monsters and their construction frame was done using digital mattes.

ALL of the "Chroma Key" (i.e. where a color on a screen is replaced by another scene) shots in Mighty Morphs have been done using "Greenscreen" technology. The reason is obvious. The usual Blue Screen method was unusable.. because *Billy wears a Blue uniform!* At the time this is believed to have been the largest scale use of Greenscreen yet for feature film.

And yes—the TV Show *Green Ranger* was effectively killed off in the movie due to the need to key using either a blue or green screen. Billy, the Blue Ranger, won this fight.

There is a shot where Scorpitron blows up a blue car at the traffic lights. This shot is from the first of the "City Streets" shoots and is on the corner of York and Market Sts Sydney. The car (a Datsun Bluebird) was blown up three times.



Above : Scorpitron deals it out to the Datto.

There were more than 28 different types of "Ooze" developed by SFX for Mighty Morphs. Most used combinations of gelatine and food dyes or non-toxic kindergarten paints. The sewers of Sydney were unusually purple during those months.

A 7/8 scale replica of the top of "Centerpoint Tower" was built for the scenes where

Ivan and Goldar are atop the tower. The scene behind them is photographically reproduced painting measuring 90' by 60' and lit from behind by over 600kW of tungsten lighting.

Virtually all the other city shots are of a miniature city built in L.A. by Sessums Engineering. However at the start of the Third Act, where the feet of Hornitor are dodging the crashing car and where both monsters are coming down towards the Rangers standing in the street, the shot is real. The CGI Hornitor has been superimposed onto the actual shot of George St, Sydney.

To do this, extensive measurements of the location were required to give the CGI artists a guide as to the three dimensional space occupied by Sydney and the monsters. This involved shooting reference film with orange street cones at a known measured distance from the lens.

Zord Cockpits:

There were a total of five cockpits built. None now still exist. After exhausting the possibility of transporting them back to the USA for use at Sabans for the TV show, they were then on sold to "Planet Hollywood" in a desperate attempt to reduce the amount of red ink all over the Art Departments' books at the end of the film.

Unfortunately a decision was taken to dispose of them after PH were unable to contact The Zordmaker whilst he was overseas in May 1995. A tragic loss and one I will always regret.



Above : The "Hornitor's Foot", with Yours Truly alongside to hopefully give you an idea of how large the beast was supposed to be. Zordmaker photo. Below : As clipped from the film, the digital "Hornitor's Foot" stamps down on the pavement on the corner of Kent and Market Sts, Sydney.



Above : the 7/8 scale replica of the roof of Centrepoint Tower, another set dressed by the Zordmaker.





Above : The Crane cockpit on its gamble and ready for a nights' filming.



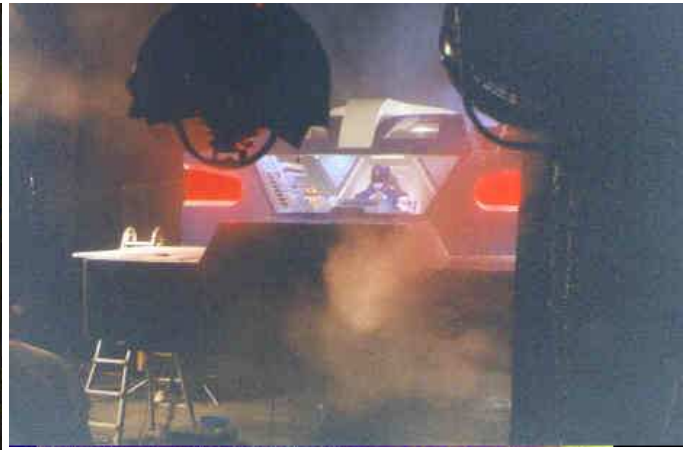
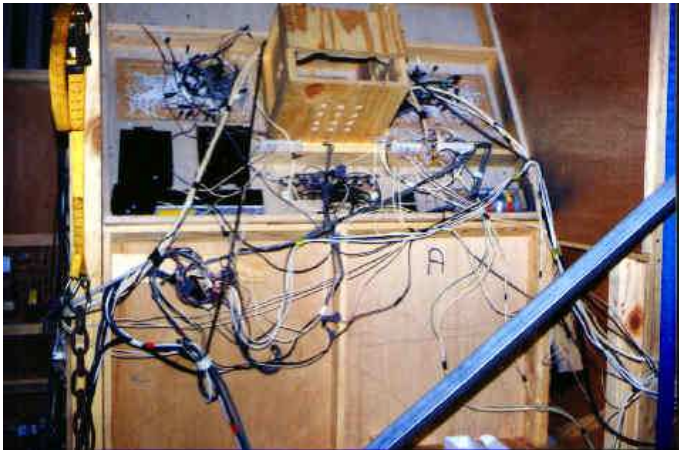
Above : Megazord Cockpit master shot. This was what "The Zordmaker" was all about. Below : The rear of the Wold cockpit.



Above and Below : The "Business end" of Megazord cockpit. Very Low Tech!



Below : David Wald in Wolf cockpit, during shooting for MMPRM.



- The Zord Cockpits were;
- Crane / Falcon Cockpit
 - Bear / Wolf Cockpit
 - Frog Cockpit
 - Monkey Cockpit
 - Megazord Cockpit

The displays in Megazord utilised over 3000 lamps wired over 71 different state circuits. (truly useless information.) Remember—this was decades before bright, multicoloured LED lighting existed. 90% of the lamps used in the megazord displays were tungsten.

"ZORDMAKER'S MIGHTY MORPHS PHOTO PARADE"

Here's a bunch of other photos we couldn't fit into the main body of the story. Enjoy.



Above : Yours Truly at work in Megazord. Remember, this was January and the average temperature outside was 38 degrees C. Amongst crew, shirts were never worn and occasionally the pants were discarded too.



Above, Below and Left : Alpha Five (Peta Maree Rixon) in rehearsals in the Command Centre set. During this test night, half of the electronics in the panels and the buttons melted due to design faults courtesy the previous electrical team I replaced. It was all rewired and rebuilt in no more than six hours, using whatever materials could be found around the lot at 11pm at night, along with fans added under the panels to keep them cool. Quite a few other sets were "cannibalized". At 7am the next day, the show went on!



Left upper and lower : The Tengu Warriors take off from Zedd's Palace. The Command centre set is in the bg. The stunt performers were strung up on a truss hanging from an "Industrial sized curtain rod." As the truss was lifted by chain hoists, the performers were "pulled out" towards camera by crew members. They ran off 90 degrees down the end of the pavilion, pulling the carriages using ropes strung around their waists. Below : What the camera saw.





Above : David Wald—first trial of costume. Trademark cap and long hair, the latter really working against him when it came time to put the helmet on...



Above : The Bear cockpit, with Bridget Riley at the controls.
Below : Craig Stearns' concept drawing of the Bear Zord.

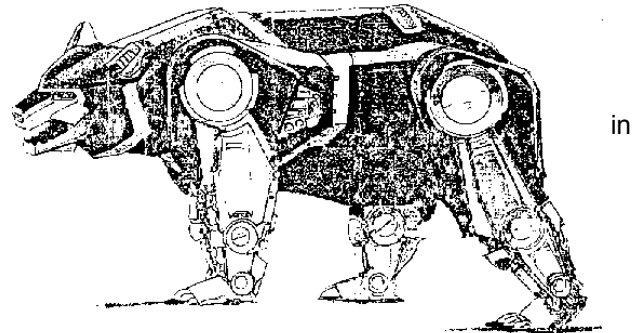
The Embarrassing White Ranger:

Hien Nguyen (the stunt White Ranger) is a particularly irresponsible fellow. No matter how much the costume dept. told him to take things easy with his suit, he insisted practising his katas and jumping around whenever he had it on.

As a result, it would constantly rip and tear at his crutch. Sometimes so badly as to reveal his underpants. Quite often this "little problem" wasn't discovered until it was too late. One such time was on 22nd December. This was when the stunt rangers were called to assemble for a stills shoot session alongside the normal shooting that was going on that night.

You guessed it - he did it again. The costume dept just gave up on him this time. No amount of white gaffers' tape, spray paint and hot melt glue could even hope to solve the problem without building a totally new set of pants.

With time short, the stills shots were taken with the suit as it was. A giant rip extended from his balls and down his right leg. These very same still photographs were later extensively used in promotional posters and Saban's own licensed products for the movie. Whoops.



The "Unlikely chain of events"!

For 20 years it has remained a mystery. Now the truth can finally be told. *How DID "the Zordmaker" actually end up working on the original Power Rangers Movie?*

In 1994, I was a member of a small team of young idiots setting up a community radio station in Western Sydney known as SWRFM. Another member of this station at the time, good friend **Ken Jones**, worked in Centrepont tower as a radio maintenance engineer for Comsite rentals (now known as Vertel).

The MMPRM set dressers (in particular Tara Kamath) contacted Comsite one day in the hope that they might be able to lend the production some life like antennas which would help dress their 7/8 replica set to look more like the real thing. This request then made it through the Comsite corporate machine and down to Ken Jones. Ken, in turn (of course) *knew Me*. And also knew that at that time, I was a *mad fan of the MMPR TV Show*.

Ken was reluctant to lend any antennas to the Art Dept on the likelihood that they were very expensive equipment and they might get damaged (GOOD CALL Ken!). However his "solution" was to suggest instead that Tara might like to contact Me instead. Ken trusted me (as an engineer) and knew I had the skills to make sure any equipment Comsite (or anyone else) lent the production would return in one piece if I was the one doing the dressing of the set.

Ken's suggestion then worked itself up through the MMPRM Art Dept. Through Tim Ferrier and on to Colin Gibson, the Art Director and general "Boss Of Making Everything On Mighty Morphs Work". It was therefore Colin who made the call to the St Marys abode of Paul Matthews - until then only known on the (very young and tiny) internet as "Paul MMPR Forever!".

The call was swift and straight to the point. I needed VERY little convincing. Upon placing the phone back on the hook, I jumped so high in the air I left a hole in the ceiling with my fist. It probably stands as the defining "YES!" moment in my life.

I was to report to the Production office for an interview and then attend the City Streets shoot a few days later. The pre requisite for the "job"? I would need a *mobile phone*. So I rushed out to buy a cheap Motorola Brick the same day. (This WAS 1994 remember!). Pay? Well, we won't go into that! Sufficed to say, this was the early days of film in Sydney. A lot of people were working with very little financial remuneration at all. The Hunters and Collectors song "Holy Grail" (*"We ran into millions, and nobody got paid!"*) still resonates loud for me of those early years.

While in discussion about Angel Grove Tower, I let it slip that I was a qualified electrician special class with extensive electronics tickets. Colin then let it slip that he was in serious trouble looking for someone who could dress the Command Centre and Zord Cockpits with electronic jiggery pokery. The guy he currently had on the job was famous and well known Art Dept Electrician **Graham Beatty**. Graham was trying to work two jobs at once. He was charging MMPRM like a wounded bull for a job he really didn't have any time to do and was working nights only. "Would I consider doing it instead"? Colin asked.

This therefore would be the first of many times since when I have walked out of a production office calmly accepting a responsibility in front of the team. Then suddenly realising "Oh my gawd, what the f%^%% have I just done?".

I was virtually broke. I was living at home. But I had landed the job of my dreams. *It was going to work. I had nothing to lose.*

Colin took it upon himself to give me a tour of the construction stages and show me what they were doing. Alas I never knew what I had gotten myself into. I just took it day by day. As we all did. And the results are now on the screen for all to see.

Out of all the work done by the Art Dept dressers, the work done by "The Zordmaker" on MMPRM filled more frames of the film's final cut than did any other. Ironically, I even *made it in to the film myself*. And the final irony was.. Graham Beatty ended up working with me on MMPRM anyway. There was simply too much work to do for it to be done by one person. It turned out to be a great collaboration as we learned a lot from each other and both stayed on in the industry for many years afterwards.

"Mighty Morphs" was the open door to the following eight years of my life running "Artist Electronics". I was known amongst many the nepotistic film industry by the same name Colin gave me when he first saw me: "Electrician to the Stars". In the end it was simple. Because I did a better job faster and cheaper than anyone else. And I could do that because since I was ten years of age, electrical and electronics was my passion in life. There wasn't much I didn't know a bit about it. Those things I didn't know, I knew where to find out more about it real fast.