

THE BONEYARD

Bares Its Teeth ♦ By MARC SHAPIRO



The lights go up in a small screening cubicle. The audience departs, chattering in Japanese, German and other international dialects. If the tone of these assorted conversations counts for anything, the first-ever screening of the trailer for *The Boneyard* has met with major approval.

"I originally thought that showing my first film at the American Film Market wouldn't bother me," says FX pro-turned-director James Cummins of his maiden horror voy-

The production spent most of its money and time coming up with a creation uglier than star Phyllis Diller.

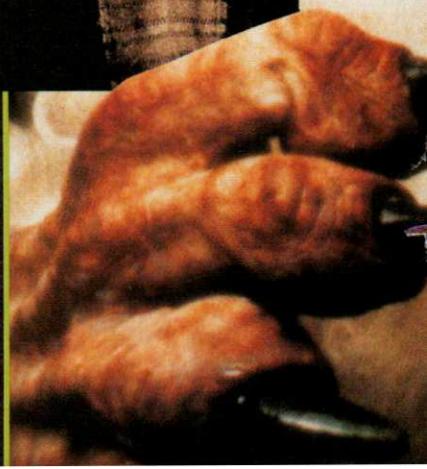
Former FX chief James Cummins receives a visit from two old friends, wishing him well on his directorial debut.



Miss Poopinplatz (Phyllis Diller) freaks out.



Photos: Cori Films



Former makeup FX honcho James Cummins knows what a directorial debut needs: a killer poodle and Phyllis Diller without her wig.



age. "But I'm looking at the people coming out of the screening room and I'm thinking, 'What are people going to think of this?'"

Cummins, whose makeup and design work has graced *House, The Intruder Within* and *Strange Invaders*, is a bit dazed at showing *The Boneyard* to the world. He knows that deals are transpiring that will get his flick before the masses, but as he sips a drink in a nearby restaurant, he pleads ignorance of the dollars-and-cents side of the movie business.

"I can tell you what this film is about," shrugs Cummins. "It's a Saturday matinee-type horror film that's dirt cheap and yet moves fast and is a lot of fun. The international people who have seen the film have jumped and screamed at the right times, so I guess that's a good sign."

The Boneyard, which stars Ed Nelson, Phyllis Diller, Norman Fell, Deborah Rose, James Eustermann, Denise Young and Binney the Poodle, focuses on a pair of police officers engaging the help of a psychic to investigate the mysterious deaths of three children in a small-town morgue. The investigation turns up a long-dormant curse that returns the dead children to life in the form of ghouls who terrorize the morgue group and manifests its terror in the form of monstrous demons and assorted nasties.

Budgeted at somewhere between the cost of a six pack and two Roger Corman movies, this Cummins-penned script showcases the FX of rookie Bill Corso. *The Boneyard* was filmed in a five-week lensing purge in North Carolina and produced by Rick Brophy.

Cummins claims that directing, rather than makeup, has always been his chief ambition. Still, *The Boneyard*, his third sold script but the first produced, would not have happened were it not for his former reputation. "The main reason the film got made was that I do know special effects," he admits. "Nobody was going to let me direct *On Golden Pond* or *Gone With the Wind*. My background was an effective marketing tool to get the financing."

The director's grasp of filmmaking sense was much in evidence when he set out to create *The Boneyard* script. "I think in terms of being commercial when I write, and that attitude was very much on my mind when I wrote this script," he states. "But what really sold the money people was the picture on the

***The Boneyard* features a morgueful of horrifying creatures, including a possessed poodle. Yes, a possessed poodle.**