

## FX team turn filmmakers with “MARY DOE”; exclusive poster art

Written by Michael Helms

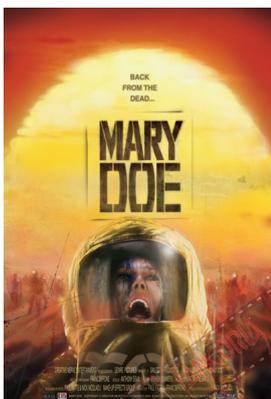
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The Australian MEG [Make-up Effects Group] FX team have been plying their trade for the better part of the last two decades, providing ever-excellent special makeup work for the likes of THE MATRIX, FEED, MAN-THING, NIGHTMARES AND DREAMSCAPES, the Asian features DOUBLE VISION and SILK and many others (see a gallery at the end of this article). The last five or six years have also seen them trying to get their own feature off the ground, and it looks like that'll finally happen soon with the zombie opus MARY DOE, for which they gave us a first look at the poster.

As MEG partner Nick Nicolaou tells Fango during a visit to their large industrial space, “We’d been handing projects over to producers and other people who said that they could get things going and were excited by the material, by the professionalism and by what we could offer as a makeup effects company. But everything fell apart. The trouble was, we weren’t at the forefront trying to push all those films, so we were never in the loop, never knowing what was eventuating.



“It was quite a frustrating and depressing process,” he continues. “It happened close to three times with three different movies that I thought were going to get up. It all came to a head when we tried to do a feature called PARADISE LOST. It was picked up by Weta in New Zealand, again all coming from a positive background. I had a strong lead-in with those guys; they’re good friends of mine. But again, it hit a brick wall after about a year, and I felt that was the end of it. I really wanted to get a project up, and to be informed and to know what was happening every step of the way. So in a matter of days after that project falling apart, we got a few friends together—my business partner Paul Katte and Franc Biffone, my DP on the trailer we did for PARADISE LOST—and decided that if we wanted to get our own movie up, we had to push it

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ourselves, because no one was going to do it for us. And MARY DOE evolved from that day.”

Walking into the impressive MEG facility through the back door and past the makeup school, which is in full swing, Fango is immediately struck by the “dead” faces that peer out of every available amount of storage space. There’s plenty of call for them in MARY DOE, as Nicolaou observes. “We’ve sculpted about 15 different zombie characters and produced over 150 prosthetic masks,” he reveals. “There’s going to be a whole undead, or as we call it, a mutant army, and we’ve gone with some zombie names for certain story elements. We’ve created great animatronic puppets for a big transformation sequence, fantastic miniatures of the military bunker facility in the middle of the desert where this movie takes place and other model effects that are key to the story as well.”

Upstairs, and thankfully separated by air conditioning from the incredible Sydney humidity, Nicolaou offers more details on the movie. “MARY DOE, which is planned as the first in a femmes fatale trilogy, is a zombie film at heart. It’s also a thriller. There are a lot of twists and a really strong female lead. It’s a film we thought we could get together with quite a low budget, but make it look like a \$10-15-million dollar American film, just with what we can offer as an effects shop.”

Paul Katte agrees that MARY DOE is a throwback to ALIENS and THE THING, adding, “That’s the style we’re going for,” and Nicolaou notes, “It’s going to be old-school special effects, great characters, physical mutants and other creatures in there. It’s what we grew up with, in that period. It’s what got us into the industry that we love. We’re not going to go with those video-looking CG beings because we don’t have the money to do it, so we’ll do everything in-camera, in homage to all those films that really inspired us.”

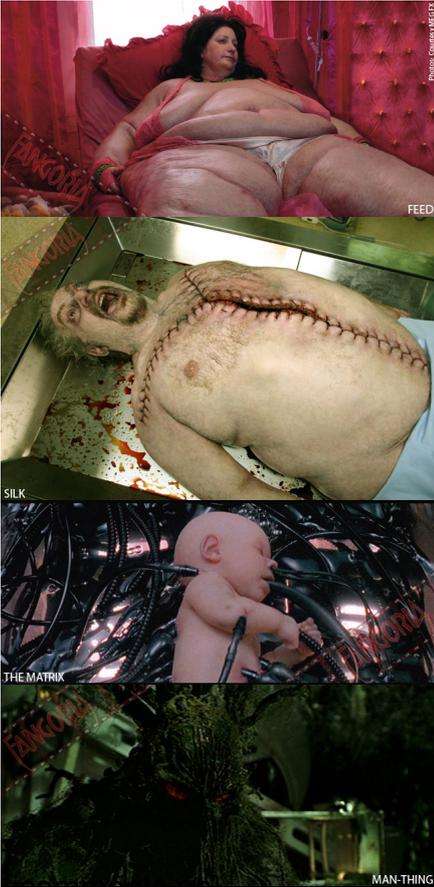
Even though it’s clear that MARY DOE has already had more work put into it than many films Fango has covered that have actually been in production, the project is still lacking the final bit of funding that would get it before the cameras soon (though Weta is providing some backing already). Nicolaou is hoping for an October shooting date, and whatever happens, rest assured that Fango will be there to report on MARY DOE. For more about MEG FX, check out its [official website](#) .

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