

Farewell to Gus Fring

For the *Breaking Bad* episode “Face Off,” we were tasked to create an explosion in a nursing home room, out of which walks our antagonist – seemingly unharmed. The camera then swings around to reveal that half his face is missing just before he drops dead out of the frame. This was all to happen in a single Steadi-Cam looking shot with no cuts and serve as a fitting denouement for the character of Gus Fring.

Special Effects

The explosion was shot practically to ground the effect realistically. Since this scene was photographed on location, a great amount of control was required to achieve the desired destruction while preventing damage to the building and fire suppression system. Numerous tests were conducted to not only direct the safe movement of the door and debris, but also in developing a practical technique to remove the tell-tale vapor trails from the air mortars.



Special Make-up Effects

A lifecast of the actor was created and used to sculpt an anatomically accurate representation of the physical results of the explosion, including missing bone and tissue. Once approved, the

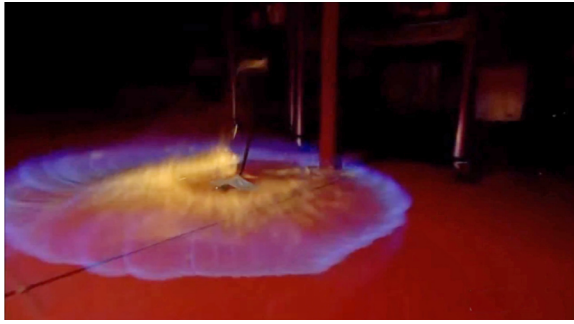
head was molded, ran in silicone and painted. This would later be scanned for use as a CG element. A matching prosthetic that the actor could wear was then created to represent as much damage as possible – this would help seamlessly blend the transition from the appliance to the CG elements that would simulate the hollow cavity in the actor’s head.



Visual Effects

The explosion, debris and resulting dust was shot with a locked off camera in one take. The camera was then unlocked for the dolly up to the close-up. Photographed without the benefit of motion control, it was necessary to recomposite all of the debris from the explosion plate over what would be take 19 of the actor plate to maintain the illusion of a uninterrupted moving shot.

The actor wore a make-up appliance that matched the mutilated sculpture. Tracking marks on his face and appliance helped facilitate adding the CG geometry to create the missing mass of his face. This required painting back the set behind the actor’s head. A note to avoid any blood spray resulted in that the explosion had somehow cauterized the tissue but had exposed bone and facial cavities. Animation was added to create steam from the wound, the dangling jawbone as well as extraocular muscles trying to move a missing eyeball.



SuperLab Destruction

Following the murder of Gus Fring, Walter White and Jessie Pinkman return to the Methamphetamine "SuperLab" in order to destroy it and any evidence it may contain.

The shot was achieved practically via Special Effects.

The initial "spark" set off by the timer, was a variac fed thru the timer, and slowly turned up. Arcing material was placed on the floor to help the ignition of the "chemicals."

After testing several mixes and fluids, white gas was selected due to its burn rate and duration. Both characteristics were necessary in order to achieve the desired look, but also to control the fire and keep crew and set safe.

However, white gas would severely blister the red painted floor, so the entire area was sprayed with a light coat of water to act as a protective barrier. This would allow the white gas to "float" on top of the water and permit the fire to race across the SuperLab floor.

This approach allowed production to do several takes of the effect without damaging the set. The walls, tables and equipment were also sprayed with white gas right before camera rolled. The gas would ignite for about 15 seconds and then burn itself out. Of course, fire extinguishers were on hand to protect personnel.

As the camera pulled back, the fire would "chase" the camera along the floor, allowing a widening shot to see the SuperLab being consumed in flame.