



When it comes to truly independent horror, Lloyd Kaufman always nose best.

because he had actually worked in fast food. He was overqualified," Kaufman says. Friedman responds, "Well, I had two choices after film school. Either go back to McDonald's, or get a job in Tromaville."

Kaufman then tells the story of how, in Friedman's first week in the office, they ventured into the basement to clean up after the rodents that had moved in in McDonald's wake: "We had a huge rat problem. We wore masks. Nobody else would go down there. Huge rats! They were the size of raccoons! We'd be working down there, and they'd lope past, look at us and go *pbhhhh!*"

With Troma struggling for resources, it's the fans who have pitched in and made sure that *Poultrygeist* got filmed. The movie was largely a grassroots effort, with devotees donating time and working for free. When it came time to plan and budget the special FX, "Lloyd said there was no way to do this," Friedman remembers. "This was going to be our most effects-heavy movie; we wanted it to be great. So we put it out there. We did it on the Fango message boards, C.H.U.D., Craigslist and Creature Corner. We told the fans, 'This is your opportunity to show what you can do.' A lot of people wrote in from our website. We called

"And the miniatures!" Kaufman continues. "We had to blow up the place, so we had two models of the restaurant. That was all fans who made those."

"And 200 beaks on the chicken zombies," Friedman adds.

"And how about the squibs?" Kaufman says. "Those were free. Everything on the movie was." Walker notes, "It's cool for the fans, and they all get credit on it."

"You've probably heard there are a lot of people out there who, when you say 'Troma,' they say, 'F**k them, they don't pay shit,'" says Friedman. "We got that, but there were others who said, 'Yeah, sure, I'll work for free!' Most of the people who volunteered have now found other jobs on film sets. And the people who wrote us saying, 'You guys suck,' well, who knows what they're doing now? Probably working at McDonald's, or cleaning up rat shit in a basement."

The crew suffered for their art as well, toiling long hours, sacrificing comfort and even diving into a meat grinder. Walker learned that the hard way: "Being a producer, as I learned on set, as this is the first movie I've worked on..." Kaufman interrupts: "Had you ever been on a movie set before *Poultrygeist*?" "No, this is the first film I've worked on besides crappy student shorts," Walker answers, and Kaufman begins to rant: "How cool is that? Let's say Troma goes out of business. Here's a guy just out of Yale University, and he's a producer of a 35mm movie. Let's make sure the *New York Times* doesn't say one word about it and make sure FANGORIA puts it on the back page."

"Anyhoo," Walker continues, "as I learned, being a producer of a Troma movie is a very hands-on experience, because you have to have your hands on everything. At

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words, "The giant devil-worshipping international conglomerates control the industry. All the laws that used to protect the public against monopolies have been done away with, and all the incentives that used to encourage independent cinema, like tax shelters and reinvestment tax credit, have too. It's much more difficult for independent studios to survive. The proof of it is that we're the only one left!"

Among those working with Kaufman on the movie are producer/screenwriter Gabe Friedman and producer Kiel Walker. Friedman had quite an influence on the birth of *Poultrygeist*: He and Kaufman both read *Fast Food Nation* after having unpleasant dealings with the McDonald's that moved in next door to the Troma building, which contributed to *Poultrygeist*'s anti-fast-food message. (Incidentally, both Kaufman and Walker are vegetarians, but Friedman is not.) Friedman also had something important on his résumé: "He got his job here

everyone, special effects schools. We got a lot of people just sending in masks."

Kaufman adds, "It was mainly individuals. A gal from Sweden mailed in the pulsating eggs. And then she actually traveled here to work on the crew for free and, uh, if you want to see her lay an egg, you can actually see her butt in the movie. We had about 80 people from Germany, Sweden, California, France, Australia...they came from all over the world and worked for free, just to help get the movie made."

"And to have the opportunity," Walker interjects. "That's the sad thing—if Lloyd does go out of business, a lot of people, people like me, really won't have a chance. So many people are given opportunities and start at Troma. Fans even sent in a whole gelatin head that we used in the movie when someone gets their face sliced off. It was great—a whole gelatin mold of a head. It smelled great by the time we used it, like two months later."

least in preproduction, there were very few of us. You'll see my face in various crowd scenes and anything where we needed people in the background. The meat grinder scene, they needed three small people to get into it and throw the guts out. I was in there for a couple of hours, upside down."

Kaufman interrupts again: "Kiel's head was buried in the crotch of some guy. He asked for that job," to which Walker just rolls his eyes.

"I remember when we shot that, Lloyd said, 'This has to be the bloodiest movie ever made,'" Friedman adds. "When we shot that scene where the blood shoots out, I remember we had to do it again because Lloyd kept yelling, 'More body parts!'"

The Troma Team rented a vacant church in Buffalo, New York for two months during shooting. There were 80 full-time crewmembers and 300 "actor persons," which is Kaufman's term for extras. "We don't like