

HOW TO

MAKE YOUR OWN FACE INTO A LATEX MONSTER MASK!

By Arnold Goldman of The Monster Makers

I am sure you have all heard it said before—“Boy, would your face make a great Halloween mask!” or, “That mask is almost as scary as my (brother, uncle, sister, father, etc.)!” Anyone who has ever made, seen, or owned a scary Halloween mask has heard that corny line many times, and I thought it would be fun to do a demo that would finally put some real meaning into those annoying and predictable remarks. So, come along as I show you a simple process for turning your own face into a gruesome latex Halloween mask!

STEP 1. Meet our unfortunate victim and fellow Monster Makers crew member, Ronnie K. Ron has kindly agreed to let us replicate and then destroy his cool exterior. He understands that it is for a good cause. So no hard feelings.

STEP 2. The first task in turning Ron's face into a mask is to take a lifecast. We've prepped all of our materials:

Prosthetic Grade Cream Alginate, plaster bandages, latex gloves, water, and a couple of buckets. We start by mixing the alginate with water.

STEP 3. It's a messy job but someone has to be the victim. If you're especially claustrophobic you might not be the best candidate for a mask, but Ron has been through all of this before and gladly agrees to receive the first glob of gooey alginate. Yuck!

STEP 4. The alginate goes on quickly. When applying alginate, press it firmly against the skin so you do not trap air. This is especially important around the eyes, corners of the mouth, and behind the edges of the nostrils. We are just doing the face, so no bald cap is necessary. You of course DO NOT want to cover the nostrils. Be sure to work carefully around that area. If the nostrils do get covered just have your subject exhale sharply though them to open up the airway. No need to panic should it happen. Just discuss it with your subject in advance.





STEP 5. Just before the alginate begins to set, we should press some cotton fiber into the alginate. This will allow the plaster bandages to adhere to the alginate by forming a mechanical bond between the alginate and the bandages.

STEP 6. After the alginate sets we begin to apply the plaster bandages. It is also important to work the bandages against the alginate to make sure that they make complete contact with the alginate so there are no air pockets.

STEP 7. The bandages are applied over all exposed alginate, leaving the nose for last. Beforehand it is important to prepare various size small strips that you can use to cover the nose area.

STEP 8. Once the plaster bandages have set, have the subject lean forward and help remove the mold. We applied a little Vaseline along the eyebrows and hairline beforehand so the mold comes free easily.

STEP 9. Here is our subject, happy to be free from the mold. Most people describe it as a very relaxing experience. This mold looks like it will work great for our purpose.

STEP 10. Because latex masks are made from plaster molds, we will need to first cast the face in a material that is malleable. We also want to make some gruesome changes so we will need to create a copy of the face in

clay. For that we will melt down some oil-based clay and pour it into the mold.

As you melt it you will want to make sure it is sufficiently hot to pour. Our clay melts to a pourable consistency at around 200-degrees F. Some of the Chavant clays melt very well, too. Be very careful, though, when melting clay—it can get dangerously hot and cause severe burns. Never exceed 220-degrees F.

STEP 11. After about 10 minutes the clay will build up sufficiently in the mold and we pour out the excess. We have deposited about a half-inch thickness in the mold that will work fine.

STEP 12. After the clay is completely cool (you can refrigerate the mold or submerge it in cold water), we can begin to demold.

STEP 13. The clay comes out very easily. No mold release is necessary. Keep in mind that the mold is usually destroyed in the process so you cannot reuse it.

STEP 14. Here is the finished clay copy. Any imperfections can be easily removed. In the case of making a monster mask we can't really have enough defects, so we will be adding a generous amount of exciting new flaws! Muuaahhaahaha!

STEP 15. Here is the clay all cleaned up and ready for damage.

STEP 16. Now we can get busy on making changes for the mask. I have decided that we will give Ron a disease. Let's see—leprosy? necrotizing fasciitis?—there are so many to choose from. Why don't we just make this up as we go along, then? I like Ron, but he *did* spill a drum of latex once. This will be fun!

STEP 17. It doesn't take long for things to go horribly wrong with Ron's complexion. Yikes! But now we need to remove his clay eye and put in a fake eye. We will leave one diseased and one unaffected.

STEP 18. Once the fake eye is positioned and the eyelids sculpted we can begin to ready the pattern for the mold. Here I am filling the gaps around the bottom of the oil

clay as it meets the tabletop, using water-based clay.

STEP 19. Here you can see a closeup of one of the gaps. If we didn't fill this, the plaster would seep underneath and make a very unsightly and unworkable mold.

STEP 20. In this image I have everything ready to go. All we need is some hydrocal, a brush, and a bucket of room temperature water.

STEP 21. Carefully sift the plaster into the water until it comes up a few inches above the top and doesn't sink back down. Mix until it is creamy and has no lumps.

STEP 22. Once the plaster is uniform, apply with a brush to capture all of the detail. A few sharp breaths of air over



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Images courtesy of Mark Alfrey & Howard Senft






the surface will release all the bubbles and better capture the detail.

STEP 23. Here is a shot of the finished detail coat.

STEP 24. Once the plaster thickens sufficiently you can glob it on and build it up fast. Just make sure there are no thin spots. We want at least one inch all the way around, preferably two-inches thick.

STEP 25. As the plaster sets you can shape a flattish top that allows you to rest the mold on its back while you pour in the latex.

STEP 26. Once the plaster is set we can carefully remove the clay sculpt. Be sure the plaster mold gets hot before you remove the clay.

STEP 27. Here is the finished mold with the clay removed. We have a little clean up left but nothing significant.

STEP 28. To make sure we capture all the detail we will apply the latex with a brush. You do not have to wait long to do this, and in fact the mold is still warm when I begin.

STEP 29. Make sure you gently scrub the latex into the mold to get all the nasty detail. You can then pour the remaining latex into the mold. Let it sit for about 10 minutes to build up a sufficient thickness.

STEP 30. After the time is up, drain the excess latex back into the container. We used about six ounces for this casting. Turn the mold over and leave it in front side down to drain the excess latex. Five minutes should do. You can then place the mold open side up in front of a fan overnight to dry.

STEP 31. Once the latex is dry you can carefully peel it from the mold. The latex will still contain some moisture

so it is a good idea to powder it with cornstarch to keep it from sticking to itself and creating a crease.

STEP 32. Since I'm only doing a face mask I've attached an elastic band to hold the mask in place on one of our head forms. This will allow me to work hands-free while I paint.

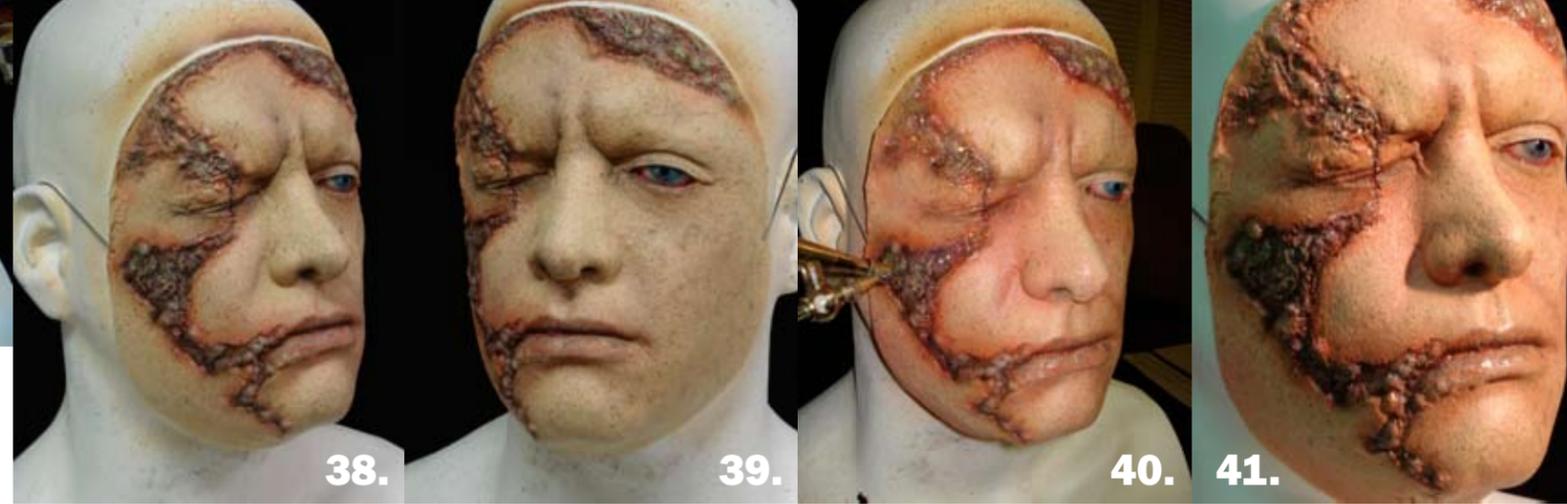
STEP 33. I start with a jaundiced-looking flesh tone using mask paint. As with the previous demos, I am using a Paasche H to apply the base color. Since it is all set up I will stick with it for the entire demo and use a new technique that I learned for some of the detailing.

STEP 34. For the diseased areas I spray a brownish color to act as a background for layering. I turn down the spray to about 50 PSI. For the base color I usually set it a bit higher at up to 80 PSI. It is hard on the hose but mask paint sometimes needs the extra push since it is a thicker medium than acrylics and inks.

STEP 35. Over the brown I use a sponge to stipple a lightened version of the base color. This is lightly applied to the high areas of the diseased spots to create a secondary background to accentuate the additional colors that will be overlaid.

STEP 36. Next I start to add some bits of color to break up the skin tone. These little flecks of color are splashed on using a chip brush, which is cut in half with your finger running through the brush near the mask. Mask maker extraordinaire Jordu Schell demonstrated this very effective technique at our June seminar. All kinds of subtle color variations can be easily added this way.

STEP 37. I then go back to the diseased area and begin to stipple additional colors over the highlighted base. Green, red, and yellow are all added to the boils and affected areas. I am starting to really like my Ronnie mask, now! As



I think back to all of that valuable latex he poured down the drain, I start to ratchet it up a notch. More puss!

STEP 38. To make the diseased areas stand out I add some darker colors to the low points of the wounds. I also spray some red around the bad spots.

STEP 39. Next I get busy on the good eye. The iris is carefully painted. First a dark blue for the background color and then lighter for the iris detail. This time I use a small brush to do the iris detailing.

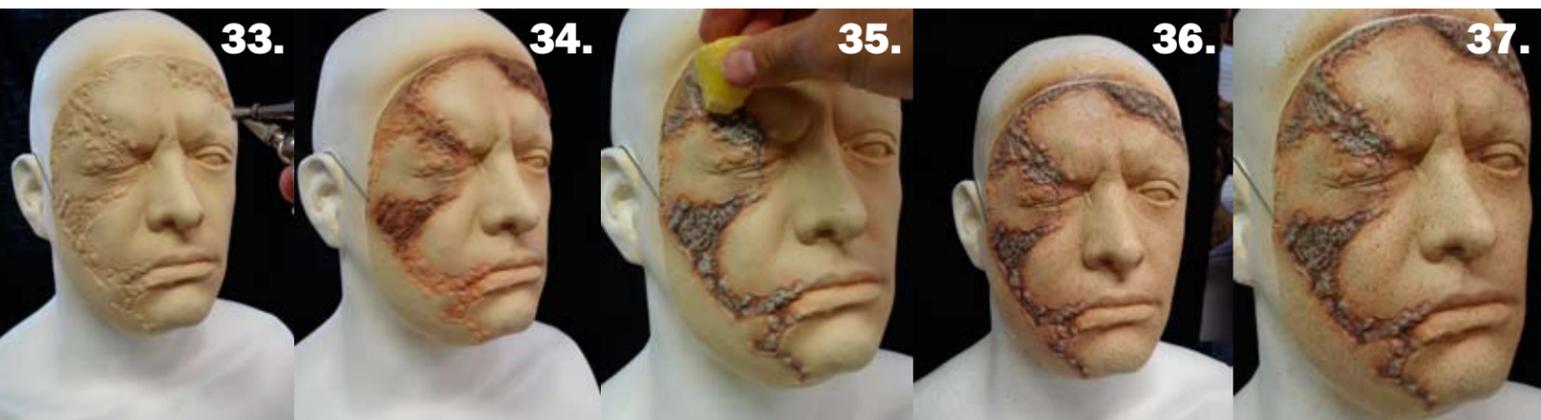
STEP 40. I decide to add quite a bit more red around the face to adjust the flesh tone. I've concentrated the red

around the edges of the diseased areas as well. This pulls all the colors together and creates a nice finished look.

STEP 41. For the last touches I add five-minute epoxy to gloss the eyes and Perma-Wet over the diseased spots.

At last, here is the finished piece—Ronnie will never be the same! He is actually a great guy and we love to have him around the shop. Let's give a big round of applause to Ronnie and P.J. for assisting me with this really fun demo. 

For more details on the making of this mask, be sure to log on to www.monstermakers.com.

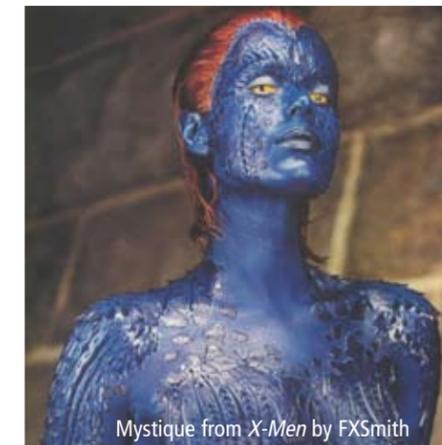


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