



EVENT

# An American Werewolf in London

+ intro by Griffin Dunne

## AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON

Directed by: John Landis  
©: American Werewolf Inc  
Production Company: Lycanthrope Films Limited  
Presented by: PolyGram Pictures  
Executive Producers: Peter Guber, Jon Peters  
Produced by: George Folsiey Jr  
Production Manager: Joyce Herlihy  
Financial Administrator: Sam Williams  
Location Manager: Ray Freeborn  
Production Assistant: Jennie Raglan  
1st Assistant Director: David Tringham  
2nd Assistant Director: Mike Murray  
3rd Assistant Director: Russell Lodge  
Continuity: Pamela Mann  
Casting: Debbie McWilliams  
NY Casting: Dee Dee Wehle  
LA Casting: Michael Chinich  
Written by: John Landis  
Director of Photography: Robert Paynter  
Camera Operator: David Garfath  
Steadicam Operators: Robin McDonald, Malcolm McIntosh  
Focus: Jeff Paynter  
Clapper/Loader: Michael Anderson  
Gaffer: Maurice Gillett  
Grip: Dennis Fraser  
Stills: Barry Peake  
Special Effects: Effects Associates Ltd.  
Edited by: Malcolm Campbell  
Associate Editor: Simon Battersby  
Assistant Editors: Steve Maguire, Clive Hartley, Anna Ksiezopolska  
Art Director: Leslie Dilley  
Set Dresser: Simon Wakefield  
Prop Buyer: Sidney Palmer  
Property Master: Dave Jordan  
Construction Manager: Len Furey  
Costumes Designed by: Deborah Nadoolman  
Wardrobe Master: Ian Hickinbotham  
Men's Wardrobe: Keith Morton  
Women's Wardrobe: Sue Wain  
Make-up: Robin Grantham, Beryl Lerman  
Special Make-Up Effects Designed and Created by: Rick Baker  
Special Make-up Effects Crew: Elaine Baker, Doug Beswick, Kevin Brennan, Tom Hester, Steve Johnson, Sean McEnrow, Joe Ross, Bill Sturgeon  
Hairdresser: Barry Richardson  
Opticals & Titles: Camera Effects  
Original Music by: Elmer Bernstein  
Music Played by: The Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
Conducted by: Elmer Bernstein  
Music Editor: Michael Clifford  
Sound Mixer: Ivan Sharrock  
Sound Assistant: Don Banks  
Boom Operator: Ken Weston  
Dubbing Mixer: Gerry Humphreys  
Sound Editors: John Poyner, Don Sharpe  
Foley: Tony Lenny  
Stunt Gaffer: Alf Joint  
Action Vehicle Co-ordinator: Dave Bickers  
For: Jim O'Rourke  
Cast:  
David Naughton (*David Kessler*)  
Jenny Agutter (*Nurse Alex Price*)  
Griffin Dunne (*Jack Goodman*)  
John Woodvine (*Doctor J.S. Hirsch*)

As they make their way across the Yorkshire Moors, two backpacking US students are attacked by a ferocious creature. Only one of them survives and on arriving in London he realises that he has become cursed. John Landis's classic film redefined the very idea of comedy horror – with much of the humour coming from Griffin Dunne's hilarious performance – and features Rick Baker's groundbreaking make-up effects.

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## Contemporary reviews

Sophomore humour appeals, if at all, simply because it is sophomoric; thus, there was no dickered with 'sophistication' in the John Landis team's *Animal House*. Here, however, the material calls for a much lighter tread, so often has the ground been covered by filmmakers in hobnail boots.

Landis ends *An American Werewolf in London* with a title card congratulating the Prince and Princess of Wales on their marriage; and hovering above the preceding action is a feeling that it is taking place in a cinematic country of the imagination not far removed from tourist Britain. Trafalgar Square, Tower Bridge, the Zoo and Piccadilly Circus are all used, and all perceptibly draw attention to themselves. What is refreshing, however, about the film's ambience is that these British clichés are neither extended nor dwelt on. The Eros cinema in Piccadilly where the climactic transformation occurs is showing an authentic (though specially made) piece of homegrown tat titled *See You Next Wednesday*, the pub on the moors, filled with catatonic locals, has a sort of four-square reality, despite the pentangle scratched on the wall flanked by two immense prop-shop candles; the hospital employs an Indian porter, who is inevitably parodied but not, thankfully, in the usual oh-by-golly fashion. It takes perhaps a percipient outsider to bring off such a cockeyed view of Britain's national monuments. Nurse Jenny Agutter is also something of a surprise, sustaining herself through the watches of the night (in what might have been a tiresome literary plant, but isn't) with Mark Twain, and displaying both pity and love for the luckless David which just hints, intriguingly, at a deeper tragedy.

John Landis' other achievement is to have successfully grafted on elements from his previous work. The young Americans are straight out of *Animal House*'s Faber College, at heart sublimely self-concerned and enthusiastically naive. Entering the Slaughtered Lamb, East Procter's pub, they settle for a pot of tea when coldly informed that there isn't anything to eat and cocoa isn't served. Furthermore, this open quality – David Naughton first made his mark extolling a soft drink in an American TV advertisement – is carefully integrated with the plot. Jack returns ashen, with half his neck missing (at each appearance his putrefaction has advanced), and addresses David in his customary sing-song voice as if nothing really untoward had occurred: his death is a misfortune of the same order as his scuppered chances of bedding the girl he has been pursuing. The film is enhanced by uniformly careful casting in the secondary roles (John Woodvine as Hirsch, and Brian Glover as the chief stone-waller in the Slaughtered Lamb), and no one is allowed to run away with his tempting part. Mention must also be made of Rick Baker's werewolf make-up (recently seen to great effect in *The Howling*): hair sprouts, hands elongate, claws shoot forth, and a backbone metamorphoses with the sort of effortless expertise that makes one, quite properly, forget the artistry.

John Pym, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, November 1981

Brian Glover (*chess player*)  
 Lila Kaye (*barmaid*)  
 David Schofield (*dart player*)  
 Paul Kember (*Sergeant McManus*)  
 Frank Oz (*Mr Collins, US Embassy official*)  
 Don McKillop (*Inspector Villiers*)  
 Joe Belcher (*truck driver*)  
 Rik Mayall (*2nd chess player*)  
 Sean Baker (*2nd dart player*)  
 Paddy Ryan (*1st werewolf*)  
 Anne-Marie Davies (*Nurse Susan Gallagher*)  
 Colin Fernandes (*Benjamin, little boy*)  
 Albert Moses (*hospital porter*)  
 Kermit the Frog (*himself*)  
 Miss Piggy (*herself*)  
 Michele Brisogetti (*Rachel Kessler*)  
 Mark Fisher (*Max Kessler*)  
 Gordon Sterne (*Mr Kessler*)  
 Paula Jacobs (*Mrs Kessler*)  
 Claudine Bowyer, Johanna Crayden (*creepy little girls*)  
 Nina Carter (*Naughty Nina*)  
 Geoffrey Burrige (*Harry Berman*)  
 Brenda Cavendish (*Judith Browns*)  
 Christopher Scoular (*Sean*)  
 Mary Tempest (*Sean's wife*)  
 Cynthia Powell (*Sister Hobbs*)  
 Sydney Bromley (*Alf*)  
 Frank Singuineau (*Ted*)  
 Will Leighton (*Joseph*)  
 Michael Carter (*Gerald Bringsley*)  
 Elizabeth Bradley (*woman in zoo*)  
 Rufus Deakin (*little boy with balloons*)  
 Vic Armstrong (*bus driver*)  
 Lesley Ward (*little boy's mother*)  
 George Hillsdon (*news vendor*)  
 Gerry Lewis (*man in bus queue*)  
 Dennis Fraser (*2nd man in bus queue*)  
 Alan Ford (*taxi driver*)  
 Peter Ellis (*bobby in Trafalgar Square*)  
 Denise Stephens (*girl in Trafalgar Square*)  
 Christine Hargreaves (*ticket lady*)  
 Linzi Drew  
 (*Brenda Bristols, 'See You Next Wednesday'*)  
 Lucienne Morgan  
 (*Lance Boyle, 'See You Next Wednesday'*)  
 Gypsy Dave Cooper  
 (*Chris Bailey, 'See You Next Wednesday'*)  
 Susan Spencer  
 (*Georgia Bailey, 'See You Next Wednesday'*)  
 Bob Babenia (*usher*)  
 Ken Sicklen, John Salthouse (*bobbies at cinema*)  
 John Altman, Keith Hodiak, John Owens,  
 Roger Rowland (*assorted police*)  
 USA/UK 1981©  
 97 mins  
 Digital

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**SIGHT AND SOUND**

A meeting or a lunch or a phone conversation with John Landis is an effective way of appreciating how self-confidence in Hollywood inevitably leads to success. Landis sports an old Beatle-style haircut and a thick beard and fires rapid, well-formed sentences at his interviewers, invariably before the question has been fully articulated. But Landis, who had to wait eleven years to make *An American Werewolf in London*, doesn't strike one as an impatient man; he's simply buoyed up with enthusiasm and it makes one wonder if a box-office catastrophe might prove too unsettling.

At 31, he's slightly younger than Lucas, Spielberg and the generation of 'movie brats' and is quick to point out that, unlike them, he didn't attend the UCLA Film School: 'I just attended movies and then became a gofer – go for this, go for that – at 20th Century-Fox. Then I was a stuntman and an uncredited writer.'

Landis, who in a very short time has become one of the most bankable directors in Hollywood, acknowledges that studios and producers haven't much idea of what audiences want to see. 'You go to them with your idea, which might be really unusual, and all they care about is your track record. If you made money for someone else you can do the same for them.' His first film, *Schlock*, which he describes as the cheapest and most self-indulgent movie ever made, turned a healthy profit though it remains unshown in Britain. His two campus comedies, *Kentucky Fried Movie* and *National Lampoon's Animal House*, were big successes in America. Of *The Blues Brothers* Landis says, 'I've grown tired of correcting journalists about the cost of the picture, but the fact is that it made a great deal of money and producers don't seem scared of hiring me.'

*An American Werewolf in London* has also proved a success with audiences in America and Europe. 'In the States we benefited from two advertising campaigns. I wanted something classy, not the usual monster movie campaign, so we had the two American backpackers on the poster looking rather anxiously behind them. The film did poor business in New York and Detroit but did well in white, middle-class areas. It seems the Black audience stayed away because there were two ordinary white guys on the posters. Then we changed the design to the monster with his fangs and the Black audience poured in.'

Landis is understandably aggrieved by the sudden presence on the screen of full moons and hairy monsters stalking the city streets. One suspects that the current lycanthropic revival has more to do with the advances in special effects technology which dispense with lap-dissolves and other optical effects than any sociological causes or mythical yearnings. Landis is at pains to stress that he wrote the script when he was working on *Kelly's Heroes* and has hardly changed a thing, 'except some of the dialogue people don't say "groovy" any more.' He was traumatised when he saw Ken Russell's *Altered States*, which has a virtually identical sequence in which the hero returns to physical normality in a zoo, but he eventually decided to stick to the original, 11-year-old idea. As for the werewolf revival, Landis says, 'It's kind of alarming. I wonder what it means ...'

Landis is full of praise for Rick Baker's special effects wizardry (and indeed the metamorphosis is a remarkable piece of engineering) and for the British crew who made the film. But he insists that making movies today is no different from what it was in the heyday of the studio system. 'Although individual people like Cedric Gibbons and Hans Dreier might have vanished from the huge studio art departments, the organisation and infrastructure has survived. In Hollywood, whatever you might need for a scene, from a 1961 lilac Studebaker to a trained animal, it's there the next morning ready for work. The city authorities are very co-operative for location work. In England the situation is different. We had to be extremely persistent to shoot in Piccadilly Circus, where you literally have to rely on the goodwill of the bobby on the beat, and even things like trained animals are difficult to get. You end up using one of the crew's pets and waste hours until it barks on cue. There is a myth, though, that you can achieve better special effects in Britain than you can in Hollywood. The truth is that you can get them cheaper in Britain, which is why *Star Wars* and *Superman* were based here.'

Adrian Turner, *Sight and Sound*, Winter 1981-82