



## Behind the Scenes with John Landis

*Interview by Stacie Seifrit-Griffin*

*In the spring of 2021, I spent a wonderful afternoon at the home of director John Landis and his wife Deborah Nadoolman Landis, an award-winning costume designer, author, and professor. They live on a winding road in the hills of Beverly Hills, not far from Pickfair Estate, the legendary home of Mary Pickford and Douglas Fairbanks.*

*As we enjoyed lunch in their den surrounded by bookcases full of memorabilia, John shared stories about his life and his films currently on the National Film Registry. “National Lampoon’s Animal House” was added in 2001, “The Blues Brothers” in 2020, and “Michael Jackson’s Thriller,” added in 2009, is to date the only music video on the National Film Registry.*

*I was introduced to John by Dan Aykroyd, who told me, “John Landis is one of the smartest individuals in the business, with reference intelligence, a huge brain, and great heart. He is a great friend to me.” I would also add passionate, and as you read this interview, I hope you feel it, too.*

### **John Landis on becoming a director**

I'm from LA. I was born in Chicago, but when I was three years old, my parents moved to West LA - about a mile from Westwood Village. So, I grew up going to the movies.

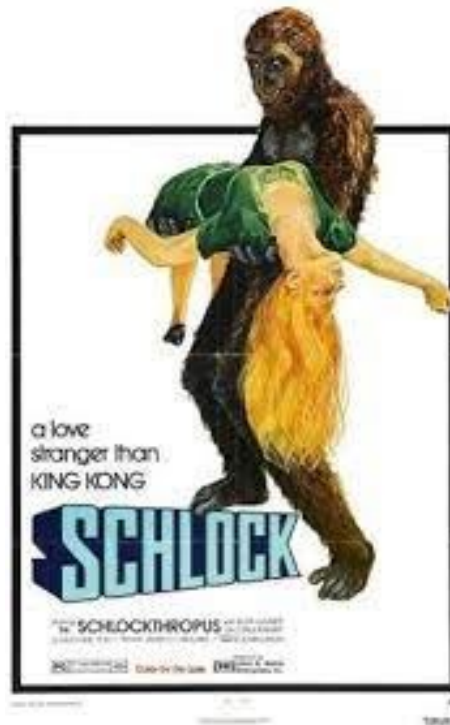
At UCLA Film School, for many years, they would show a free movie at noon for anyone who wanted to come to Macgowan Hall. I would ride my skateboard or bike, and I saw a lot of movies there. I saw “The Shop Around the Corner” for the first time sitting next to Jim Morrison. He was a student at the time. The only reason that I know it was him is because we talked for quite a long time, and he said, "I have a group." Then two weeks later, he was on “American Bandstand” with The Doors. I said, "I know him!" I was maybe 14 or 15.

**Do you think going to those films every day is what made you want to be a filmmaker?**

No, but this story is such a cliché. The true story is, when I was eight years old, I saw “The 7th Voyage of Sinbad” at the Crest Theater on Westwood Boulevard and I had the total film experience, the complete suspension of disbelief. Some people have it with “2001: A Space Odyssey” or “Star Wars” or “Wizard of Oz,” but I just loved “The 7<sup>th</sup> Voyage of Sinbad.”

I have this very distinct memory. I was eight years old, my mother was at the sink, and I went up to her and said, “Mom, who makes the movie?” She said, “What do you mean?” I said, “Movies, who makes them?” She said, “The director.” This is in retrospect very sophisticated and surprising because we had no relatives in the film business at all.

At that moment, I was going to be a director when I grew up. My entire energy, all my everything, was tied up with the movies. I wanted to see every movie, learn everything about the movies, work on movies and then become a director. That's why I'm a high school dropout. As soon as I was legally able, I got a job at the mailroom at 20th Century Fox. I lied. I said I was 17. I was really 16. It's a long story, but I was a mail boy first, and then I started working on movies. I made my first film, “Schlock,” when I was 21, which was a terrible film, but at least I made it.



### **But it made you a director!**

Yeah. In film schools, I always ask the students, "What is a filmmaker? What is the definition of a director?" You get these extremely esoteric answers. I always say, "A movie director is a person who has directed a movie. Period." You can say "I'm a filmmaker," but if you haven't made any films, then no you're not. That was my advantage as opposed to others in film school. I'm always meeting people in college who don't know what they want to do yet. I always knew.

Deborah always quotes this producer who said that he was really in the transportation business and saw himself as a travel agent. You come into the cinema, sit down and he'll take you somewhere else. The whole point for a movie to work is you must have the suspension of disbelief. It doesn't matter the genre. That's why your actors and actresses are so important because they must be believable. Really though, everybody's important.

One of the things that's sad about the crafts, by that I mean costume design, photography, set design, the score, music, props, all that stuff, is it doesn't matter how good you do your job if people don't like the movie. Very often really bad work is praised because people loved the movie. The movie totally got them.

In 1979, Steven Spielberg made a movie called "1941," and it didn't do well. Deborah designed the costumes, and the costumes are fantastic. The sets are fantastic. Photography's fantastic. The special effects are fantastic, but nobody notices if they didn't like the movie. And then there are movies where everything's really kind of mediocre, but the story hooked you, and people love it.

### ***On "The Blues Brothers"***

"The Blues Brothers" was made pre-CG [computer-generated], which means we're doing everything you see in the movie. Those cars are really doing those stunts. It's amazing.

In today's films, there are still stunts, but you don't have to hide any wires or rigging because you can remove them later and digitally erase it. I look back at some of the things we did that were so complex and took so long. Now, you just shoot it and clean it up later.

**The mall scene stunts look very complex. Someone watching the film for the first time may not believe that it wasn't CG.**

What's funny in "The Blues Brothers" mall scene is every single person in the mall is a stunt person that was flown in from Hollywood. Hundreds of stunt people because it was too dangerous. All that glass is real, and they're really crashing those cars around. You need people that know how to get out of the way.

Another amazing stunt had 36 cars going 110 miles an hour in downtown Chicago. To do those shots, we had to shoot it very early in the morning on Saturdays and Sundays. We had to make sure that no one came out on the street from a driveway or cross street. It took about half a mile to get those cars up to speed, and that isn't even on camera. We also had around 150 PAs [production assistants] with walkie-talkies. It was like a military operation. It was wild.

## What is your favorite scene in “The Blue Brothers”?

I don't have favorite scenes, but there are scenes where I really like how the music works. We play a Sam and Dave song, “Soothe Me,” and cut to the Blues Brothers as they're driving up the on-ramp of a freeway at night. We even cut to the eight-track of Sam and Dave playing in the car. I really like that. I like the way that music plays with the picture. Also, the whole song plays. The audience wouldn't notice, but the editing is such that the song plays with the dialogue. You'll have to hear it. The music's playing the instrumentals when [from the script]

Jake: “What?” Elwood: “Uh, oh, what! Rollers.”

Jake: “Shit, what?” Elwood: “Rollers.” Jake: “Shit.”

It's silly, but I like how that worked with the music.

There are other gags, too. There's one where I wanted the Blues Mobile to come from lower Wagner Drive, up this ramp, and a police car goes right in front of them. Through the magic of movies, the Blues Mobile jumps over the car and lands on the other side. It was [stuntmen] Eddy Donno and Tommy Huff. Tommy was doubling Elwood, and Eddy was doubling Jake. Elwood's driving, so Tommy was driving to do this jump with this ramp.

He said, “You want me to clear this car?” I said, “Well, actually, I'd love it if your tires could just take off the [police car's] MARS bar, to shoot the light on top.” He said, “How much you'd give me?” I said, “I'll give you \$50 if you can just take off the MARS bar.” I didn't think he could do it because it's rigged not to come off, and the car's rigged to get into a collision. When you watch the movie, look at it. He did the gag, and with his one tire he takes off the MARS bar. It's unbelievable.



**Dan Aykroyd and Tim Matheson both to me that you like to go big and keep the cameras rolling. Thank goodness it worked because you couldn't do it again.**

We could never do it again.

**What did you think when Dan Aykroyd gave you a 300-page script for “The Blues Brothers?” Dan said he had all the characters developed and it was all written out.**

He had a movie for each member of the band. Danny had never written a script. He didn't know anything about the form. What I thought was, I can't shoot this. It was unshootable.

Danny has brilliant ideas, but his execution of the ideas is often too wacky and really out there, but the concepts are brilliant. It was the same for “Ghostbusters” with Harold Ramis, and in “Spies Like Us” with Lowell Ganz and Babaloo Mandel.

Danny only directed one movie which was called “Valkenvania,” but they released it as “Nothing but Trouble.” Deborah designed it, and it stars Chevy Chase and Demi Moore. It's a real window into Danny's brain. It's a deeply strange movie, but it really is what Danny does when he doesn't have a collaborator, or when he doesn't have someone going, “Uh...”



**“The Blues Brothers” certainly came a long way from being a “Saturday Night Live” skit.**

I always want to correct that. The Blues Brothers did not originate from “Saturday Night Live.” It's often reported that it started as a skit on “Saturday Night Live.” If it did, then NBC and Lorne Michaels would own it. They don't.

John and Danny were both in Second City. Danny in Toronto, John in Chicago. It's an interesting time in comedy history. There was the “National Lampoon” magazine. There were great groups

like Second City, The Committee in San Francisco, and The Groundlings. There were a lot of actors, performers and writers coming up. In Second City, Harold Ramis and John Belushi were from Chicago, and Danny and Gilda Radner from Toronto. The "National Lampoon" magazine started a radio show, "The National Lampoon Radio Hour," some of which was really brilliant. It was very successful.

**I would love to find those tapes.**

John Belushi produced it. This was way before "Saturday Night Live." The cast was Gilda Radner, Harold Ramis, Eugene Levy, Bill Murray, and others, but they were the "Lampoon Radio Hour" and they did some great stuff.

Then there was an off-Broadway show for The Groundlings which was a parody of Woodstock that starred John Belushi, Chevy Chase, Christopher Guest, and I think Gilda Radner. All these things were going on, so when Lorne Michaels created "Saturday Night Live," he just cherry-picked these brilliant comedians. Lorne was originally a stand-up comedian.

**That's interesting, because he seems to play the straight man, the dry straight man.**

No, he was pretty wacky. Anyway, when John Belushi went to Toronto to teach some improv stuff, that's where he first met Danny, and they formed an instant friendship, an instant bond. They couldn't be more different, but they became very, very close.

John was very much into heavy metal music, but they took a road trip across the country listening to music. Danny's idea of a good time is driving from L.A. to New York in two days.

They were really getting into the blues, and they started creating these characters, Jake and Elwood. It was a way for them to perform the blues, and they performed as Jake and Elwood around New York and Toronto, backed by Willie Nelson's band, and by Delbert McClinton's band. They always wanted to perform as the Blues Brothers on "Saturday Night Live" and Lorne said, "I don't understand it. I don't know why this is funny."

Finally, he let them do it, but they were dressed as bumblebees. John was very upset about it, but they did it. Then Carrie Fisher was a guest host, and she said, "You've got to let them do it."

They dressed up in their suits and performed "Soul Man" with the Saturday Night Live band. Paul Schaefer led the band, and it included Blue Lou Marini and Tom Bones Malone. They performed a couple of times and then, Steve Martin said, "I'm performing at the Universal Amphitheater in LA. Would you guys be my opening act?"

It's a long story, but I was trying to get Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi in "Animal House," because the parts were written for them. D-Day was written for Danny, and Bluto was written for John. [Writers] Doug Kenney and Chris Miller were from Lampoon and Harold Ramis was from Second City, and they knew John and Danny. I really wanted to get them. Danny didn't do it and John did.

Also, around that time, I saw them perform as Jake and Elwood in Toronto with Delbert McClinton's band. Howard Shore was there, and he said, "You should call yourself 'The Blues Brothers.'" I said, "There's a movie in that!"

Universal made a several picture deal with John Belushi, one of which would be "The Blues Brothers." They each got \$10,000 or something for the future Blues Brothers movie, although I'm not sure if Universal ever intended to make it.

Two years later, "Animal House" came out and it was a huge hit. John and Danny are invited to perform as the Blues Brothers for Michael Kleffner, an A&R guy for Atlantic Records. Kleffner is this giant guy, big guy. He's dead now, poor Michael, but in "The Blues Brothers" movie, when they're doing the final concert, they start to run away, and this big guy shows up. "Oh my!" Danny says, "Now the mafias is after ya!", and the large guy says "No, no, no, I'm the guy from the record company and I want to sign you up." Then, he gives them all the cash. That's the real Michael Kleffner. The movie is full of non-actors.

Anyway, Michael Kleffner made them a deal with Atlantic, and said they've got to get their own band. That's when John and Danny put together this astonishing band of great musicians and amazing performers. Just extraordinary. It all came together when they opened for Steve Martin.

Deborah and I got married that day, and after the wedding everybody went to see the Blues Brothers and Steve Martin at the Universal Amphitheater. The band was at my wedding.

Michael Kleffner made this deal for a live album that would be recorded as their opening act for Steve Martin. That became "Briefcase Full of Blues" and the album went double platinum. Someone at Universal realized that John is now a big star in theaters because of "Animal House," Danny and John are stars on the hottest TV show in America, and have the biggest selling record in the world, and we have the rights to make a movie.

Universal called me and asked if we could have "The Blues Brothers" movie in theaters by August. That was like ten months away. I said, "Yes." But there was no script. When Danny finally turned in his script, 300 pages, I said "Oh my God." I started rewriting it right away.

I rewrote Danny's script. I gave it to him and he rewrote my script. He gave it to me, and then I rewrote his script. For example, he wrote, "It's 106 miles to Chicago. We've got a full tank of gas, half a pack of cigarettes." Jake says, "Hit it." I added to say, "We have a full tank of gas, half a pack of cigarettes, it's dark and we're wearing sunglasses." Then, John says, "Hit it." It really was a collaboration, but it was all his concept.

### **Love it! Tell me other additions that formed the script...**

One is that we decided they would be in sunglasses. The most important part of an actor on screen is their eyes. But, we're covering their eyes the whole time. Also, the style was deadpan. It's kind of Jack Webb doing comedy. I think the line that Danny wrote that I just love is when the woman says, "Are you the police?" He says, "No ma'am, we're musicians." Total straight face.

**I love Carrie Fisher with the flame torch and blowing up the phone booth.**

And the chases just keep getting bigger and more and more insane. I love when the Nazi's car goes five feet in the air. I love the fact that we took a car and picked it up by Sikorsky helicopter, and dropped it 1,400 feet into downtown Chicago. That's real. There's a shot where you're watching the car falling, and then the Sears Tower comes in. It just is so overblown. And I love the siege of Cook County. You have basically the united power of the state. Police from six different police forces, and the military. You have all this stuff converging, and you cut to the two guys in the elevator.

**And, that elevator music! Brilliant. You held that shot a long time and it's so good.**

So funny, and of course, most of those scenes could only be done one time.



## ***On “National Lampoon’s Animal House”***

**In the “Animal House” food fight scene, you can only do that one time, too because it would be a mess everywhere.**

You know what's interesting? For years, people have talked about the “Animal House” food fight, but the food fight is just one shot. It’s John yelling “food fight,” pan out to a massive, big shot and everyone throws their food in the air. Cut. That's the food fight. People have images of this tremendous food fight, and I'm thinking, "What are they thinking about?" Maybe because the scene before when Bluto's in line with the food, and then at the table where he eats and spits the food. You do hear dishes crashing, but I'm always thinking what food fight?

**It inspired many food fights in my high school cafeteria.**

It's just so funny to me.



**Was there a lot of improv in “Animal House?” Tim Matheson told me a couple things like the toga party and that you shot a lot of B-roll.**

I do improv in rehearsal. In “Animal House,” I did like to throw things. I mean, I literally threw things at the actors. For instance, Otter and Flounder are walking in the supermarket, and in the script, it says, "I need a bottle of Karo syrup," or something like that, then Otter takes something off the shelf and tosses it over his head, and Flounder has to catch it.

We rehearsed that, but when it was time to shoot, I had a table set up by the camera, and I had tons of groceries piled on it. I said to Tim, "Okay, toss the bottle, but when you get off-camera, you and I are going to start throwing stuff at Flounder." If you look at that scene, they're walking, and Tim tosses the bottle. Then suddenly, all these things are flying. You can't hear me, but I'm yelling "Catch it, catch it, catch it!" Look at it, it's unbelievable how many of those things Steve (Furst) manages to get before he just collapses.

**He could never have done that if it was scripted.**

We couldn't have gotten it. He was not capable of doing that, except in the panic of adrenaline.



### ***On “Michael Jackson’s Thriller”***

#### **How did you get involved with the “Thriller” video?**

Well, that was Michael Jackson calling me out of the blue. I was in London, and Michael had seen “An American Werewolf in London,” and he loved that movie. He loved the work of special effects artist Rick Baker, especially the metamorphosis scenes.

I really didn't want to do music videos. You have to understand at that time MTV wasn't *the* MTV, yet. They were just focused on rock music. “Thriller” helped make MTV a global sensation. Rock videos were made for usually \$35,000 to \$50,000. “Beat It” was considered incredibly extravagant, it was like \$150,000.

I flew back to L.A., and I met with Michael, he was still living with his parents in Encino. All he wanted to do, his whole contribution, was to turn into a monster on screen. Obviously, Michael is someone fascinated with metamorphosis.

When we made “Thriller” [video], he was 20. He already had his chin done and his cheeks done. He had his nose done, but he still looked great. He hadn't gone too far.

The last time I saw Michael was about a year before he died, he called me up, and I went to see him at the Universal Sheraton. We had a nice reunion, and he wanted me to direct something. It was hard to look at him. He looked terrible.

I want to say that I liked Michael a lot. When we made “Thriller,” we were close. Not best friends close, but close for years. We worked together very well, too.

Here's the thing about Michael Jackson, if you saw him live, you got a true appreciation of how brilliant he was, because no matter where you were, your attention was totally focused on him. He was explosive on stage. He was amazing.

Anyway, for “Thriller,” he wanted to turn into a monster.

I called up Rick Baker, and we went over to Michael's with a book full of monsters. We learned that he didn't really like to see monster movies because he thought they were too scary. I liked the design Rick came up with, it was something scary, but really kind of cool and elegant. I called it a “werecat.” Softer than a werewolf.



### **Did Michael want the video to be more like a movie?**

“Thriller” is a movie or rather it's a 15-minute theatrical short. I wanted it to play the way the Three Stooges or Laurel and Hardy or Bugs Bunny used to play before the main movie. It was intended to be theatrical.

When Michael called me, the album “Thriller” had been out for over a year. It had already become the best-selling album of all time. The two videos they made before, “Beat It” and “Billie Jean,” were hugely influential and important.

### **You're right. Those videos told great stories, but “Thriller” is longer and more theatrical.**

On the album, the song is like five minutes. In the “Thriller” video-movie, I took three minutes of tracks and made them 11 minutes. We completely remixed the whole thing, and we cut the song. We shot on film, it cost half a million dollars to make, which at that time was insane.

### **The record label must have *loved that!***

Walter Yetnikoff [President of CBS Records] told us to go “f” ourselves because he felt that they already had the biggest selling record of all time, so why spend half a million dollars on a video.

Michael said he would pay for it himself. George Folsey, who worked with me on my projects as a film editor and often producer, was clever. He went to cable television. It was 1983, so it was still new. Bob Pittman of MTV said, "We don't ever put money out, we only play stuff for free." HBO didn't want it, but Showtime did.

Showtime said, "We'll give you \$250,000, but we can't give you \$500,000 because that's insane." I said, "Okay, you have an exclusive for two weeks."

When Pittman learned we did the deal with Showtime, he called me and was furious. Then, MTV put up \$250,000 for the second exclusive window. So, we had our money. Bob Pittman always claimed that MTV produced it, but really they only invested in it. My contract with MJJ Productions was for a theatrical short.

It was a pleasure shooting it. The dancers were great and put in a lot of rehearsal. Disney made a very good distribution deal, put it in the Avco Theater on Wilshire, where in three weeks it made something like \$2 million. It was a fortune for one screening room, and it was interesting that they screened it with "Fantasia."

Two things happened that were totally unexpected. One was Michael's manager at the time, Frank DiLeo. Do you remember Frank DiLeo? He's got a big part in the movie "Goodfellas."

Anyway, Frank DiLeo, without anyone's permission, got a copy of the "Thriller" video, and not even a good copy. He made about 150,000 copies and sent them to TV stations all over the world. Of course, they all started playing it. Disney went crazy. Showtime went crazy and got an injunction. They were supposed to have it for two weeks. Then MTV had the exclusive for, I think, three weeks. But now, everybody had it and it was seen everywhere. They basically robbed me of the profit of owning it and having it widely theatrical where it would look better and sound better. Good for Michael, though. The album tripled in sales.

In a twist, early in the process, I got a call from some man named Austin Furst from Texas. He said that he had a company called Vestron Video and wanted to make a bid to release "Thriller" on VHS. Since the video was only 15 minutes long, George worked out that they would film us filming the video and call it "The Making of Thriller."

Now, I don't know if you remember when home video was new, but to buy a movie it cost around \$80- \$100. That is why these mom-and-pop video rental places opened up, and then it became big business with Blockbuster.

Austin Furst said he was going to price it to sell-through, which I'd never heard before. What he meant was to price to sell at \$24.95. That still seemed high to me, but at \$24.95, he sold at least 6 million copies. It set the home video business in motion, and the industry started lowering the prices to about \$8 or \$9. All this because Michael Jackson saw "An American Werewolf in London" and wanted to turn into a monster.



### ***On “An American Werewolf in London”***

“American Werewolf in London” was a script I wrote when I was 18 and working on a movie called “Kelly's Heroes.”

**One of my all-time favorites. Clint Eastwood, Donald Sutherland, Teddy Savalas and Don Rickles were so great in that film.**

Did you ever see my documentary on Don Rickles? I won an Emmy for that. I'm very proud of that. But “Kelly's Heroes,” I love that film, too, was shot in Yugoslavia, now the former Yugoslavia.

It was a wild experience, a wild time. I had witnessed a weird thing while we were there, which were these gypsies. It's a long story, but basically, I saw this guy being buried in the middle of a crossroads. They were burying him feet first, which was weird.

His body was completely wrapped in a shroud, and then the shroud was wrapped with garlands of garlic and rosaries. They put him in the ground standing up. I was fascinated.

The Yugoslav guy with me explained that this guy committed a crime. Rape or murder, something egregious. He was being buried in this elaborate way to prevent his body from rising and causing mischief. This is 1969, a couple of weeks before the US had landed a man on the moon. They looked like dress extras from the “Wolfman” with babushkas and earrings and all that. That inspired me because I thought, “Well, they believe this, so others may believe it, too.”

If you're a sophisticated, educated person, how would you deal with something that you know is impossible standing in front of you? That evolved into “An American Werewolf in London.”

When I came back to the U.S., two years later, I tried to get it made. The reaction was the same everywhere; “this is too funny to be scary, or too scary to be funny.” I said, “Well, it's both.” I put humor in it because I felt it made it more realistic. I still feel that way, because it's an absurd premise, and werewolves don't exist.

In any case, it was optioned a couple of times, and I got hired as a writer because of it, but no one would make it. Now my career is underway, and I've made "Animal House" and "The Blues Brothers," both of which made a lot of money. I went to Universal with the script and they said, "No, you're crazy." I went to Paramount, they said "yes," and then they took it back. I went to Warner Bros. and still no. I ended up offering it as a negative pickup to anybody who wanted it.

A negative pickup is the best way to make movies, and the big studios really don't do it anymore, but a negative pickup is where the filmmaker assumes 100% of the responsibility. It's the way many independent pictures are made.

The way it worked was, in this case, I went to Polygram Pictures, a Dutch company at that time, and I said, "I will make you a movie based on this screenplay." They told me that it had to be no more than an R-rating. It had to be at least 90 minutes long and not longer than 120 minutes. It had to be in 35-millimeter color. There were other delivery requirements based on this script.

And they said, "Okay, if you give us that movie, we will give you \$10 million." We made that deal. They have no commitment whatsoever unless I deliver the movie. Well, to borrow and get \$10 million, I need an insurance policy. I went to a company called Film Finance. They're the most famous, they still do it, and there are others. It's like a mortgage. They can always foreclose the mortgage.

I made a negative pickup deal with PolyGram. It became a British movie. We became British financed from British Bank and British crew, 90% British personnel. I actually had a big fight about the two actors, two Americans, because they weren't famous. If they had been movie stars, it wouldn't have been a problem, but they were unknown.

**So even after the success of "Animal House" and "The Blues Brothers," no one would give you the money?**

It was too wacky, and they didn't believe in it. So, I moved on and I made it for the budget. That was the best production experience I've ever had because literally George Folsey and I were the ones signing the checks. It was nice not fighting with anybody. I was in total control, and it was a pleasure making that movie.

Here's the twist in this one, when we made the movie and before it was finished, Universal made a deal with Polygram that they release all their pictures. So now my film became a Universal release in the United States. Then, years later, Polygram sold all their movies to Universal. Now, I own half and Universal owns half of the movie.

## ***On costume design***

**Deborah certainly is an important influence on your films, especially with costume design.**

To me, there is no one better. Do you know that she is the one who put Michael Jackson in the red jacket for “Thriller?” It’s iconic. It changed fashion. After the video came out, everyone was wearing these red leather jackets.



She is also the one who put John Belushi in the “COLLEGE” sweatshirt. Simple, brilliant, and now iconic. Her films credits are extraordinary and my films only scratch surface of her talents.

Some of the hardest stuff to do is contemporary. You can get away with anything doing a historical thing because nobody really knows what it looked like, or a futuristic thing, or a fantasy thing, but with a contemporary picture, everyone knows what the style is.



Her attention to detail goes beyond just the scope of the shot. A great story is when we were making “Animal House.” We rented this house in Oregon, and I go into the garage to see Deborah and Judi Belushi spray painting flip flops. They had gone to every store they could to buy up all these flip flops for the toga party scene. They were on the floor spray painting these flip flops with gold paint. There was gold paint everywhere. I’m thinking we will never get our rental deposit back. <laughing>

Anyway, I asked why they were doing this when I won’t be shooting anybody’s feet. I said, “Who shoots feet?” Deborah looked at me and said, “Maybe so, but they need to be in complete character.” She was right because in the scene where they are dancing to “Shout,” the cast does go to the floor. I’m still not sure you can see anybody’s feet, but she had it covered.



People don’t get how hard costume design is, how skilled it is, and how important it is. When you think of movie posters, 90% of the time it’s the costumes that sell the feel of the movie. The costumes can really create that initial interest.

I think it’s great that the Library of Congress collects these stories. I hope you collect stories from all the crafts, because everyone working on a movie is important.

**I plan to! I want to say that I’m grateful that you followed your dreams.**

Some of it is luck and some of it is making your own luck. I certainly couldn’t do it without the best people around me.

*The views expressed are those of John Landis and do not necessarily reflect those of the Library of Congress. To learn more about these films and to read more interviews, including Dan Aykroyd and Tim Matheson, visit [www.loc.gov/film](http://www.loc.gov/film).*