

Feature



Inside a Props and FX Studio *Joshua Cole*

The head of a special effects studio that serves the movie and television industries talks about the studio, his work, and the future of practical effects.

I've been fabricating for about 10 years; 4 years professionally. I started out in the 501st Stormtrooper Legion during my time being enlisted in the US Air Force, doing charity work and learning the basics of replica building. I soon discovered sculpting brought me a great amount of joy, as well as creating products for other people.

In 2013 I founded Hex Mortis, located in Atlanta, Georgia. We create everything from props to practical effects for the film



Exterior of Hex Mortis in Atlanta, Georgia.

and television industry. From the time we started, we pretty much hit the ground running. I started being hired for television prop work. That soon led by word of mouth to feature film, where I have been ever since.

Our earlier work on the television show *Constantine* is among the ones that I am the most proud of. Even though the show was cancelled, it was eventually nominated for an Emmy. We also working on *Sleepy Hollow* and *The Originals*. We were also hired for *Ozark* and *Underground*, and have worked on *MacGyver*, *Stand Against Evil*, and just got hired for the second season of *Preacher*.

I enjoy building things with massive amounts of detail – I believe props and the costumes that my clients wear are just as important as the talent telling a story, down to every sword ding, blaster hole and fabric tear. Making things pristine and beautiful is one thing, but making it worn, lived in and battle-damaged allowed me to breathe even more life into my creations.

Films that have impressed me the most over the course of the last couple of years are ones that are very heavy on practical effects. I think the future,



Main view of Hex Mortis studio.



Artistic team working in the studio.



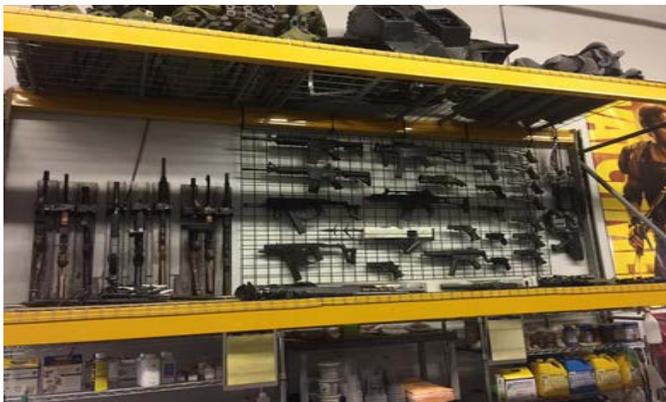
Paints and pigment storage cabinets.



Supply cabinets in main studio.



Resin casting station.



Props storage area.

hopefully, will be dominated by practical effects, using CGI more to blend seams, and to create things that you absolutely cannot create physically. That's the direction that I want to go: puppets, animatronics, monsters. We imbue objects that either were alive, or contain organic material, or in some cases never would have been alive, and breathe life into them.

I think that Hex Mortis will definitely start playing a bigger part in the battle of analog versus digital, because lot of the stuff we turn out here is all practical effects. We don't turn out any digital effects; everything is physical and corporeal.

All the people that we've assembled here are incredibly passionate. They're the best at what they do. We have everybody from stonecutters to metallurgists, all coming together to help create something larger than themselves. But every one of them is devoted to the idea of a better world through art.

You never get bored. We finish with one job and move on to the next thing and see where that takes us. I'm going to do nothing more than create the best product that I possibly can. If I create Girl Scout cookie buttons, they're going to be the most brutal Girl Scout cookie buttons you've ever seen. That's because I get to build a photon plasma rail gun the next day.

Joshua Cole is the owner and founder of Hex Mortis Studios, a master prop-making studio located in Atlanta, GA. They make props for film and television. Visit ['Hex Mortis' on Facebook](#).



Examples of props produced by the studio.



Joshua Cole as Doctor Doom

