



**THE ACTORS** who play superheroes in films are just ordinary humans. Somehow film makers have to make them fly, appear or disappear and escape from all forms of danger in order to make their characters seem superhuman. A large team of technicians helps the director and camera crew in creating the various special effects used to give the impression that something extraordinary is taking place on screen. Flying, for example, is something we often see superheroes do and there are lots of ways to create the illusion that someone is flying. It can be done by simply suspending an actor from wires in front of a moving background; or it can be done by computer, which can be complicated and take much longer.

Reporter, **Jo Novak**, asked three technicians about the part they play in creating special effects. These are their answers to her questions.

**Q How do actors survive the fires, explosions and other dangerous accidents in films?**

They don't! Only a stunt double like me can do that. Films would be very boring without the exciting scenes stunt doubles perform. The way it works is that I get made up and dressed to look like the main star. I do all the dangerous, exciting bits instead of the actor. You can't tell it's me because all my shots are filmed from a distance so that you never get a clear view of my face.

I'm trained to make sure that my life is never put at any risk, though. If I have to fall from an upstairs window, I wear padded body armour under my costume and land on soft crash mats to cushion my fall. Close-ups of the star are added later, so the audience think she was the only one ever involved in the action. That's how actors are made to seem braver than they really are!



**Molly Lerner**  
stunt double

**Q How do actors change from ordinary humans into superheroes, monsters or even aliens?**

**A**

That's what we call morphing – transforming one image into another. Before computers, this was a lengthy process that involved gradually altering an actor's make-up and filming each new look after each make-up change. My most complex project required 15 applications of make-up. Now, a hi-tech computer

needs only two 'still' images – the actor before and after the change. These two photographs are all that is needed by the computer program to generate all the stages in between, blending them so smoothly that you believe the transformation is happening before your very eyes.



**Hema Aslam  
make-up artist**

**Q How do you make the bangs, crashes and other sound effects?**

**A**

My job, as part of the sound crew, starts when the filming is finished. We work on the actors' dialogue, the music and all the splats, bangs and crashes you get in action films. We create most sounds artificially, record them and add them at this late stage. A lot of our work is still done without computers. You'd never guess, but the scrunching sound of footsteps in snow

is made by squeezing custard powder inside a rubber glove; the sound of crackling fire is made by rustling paper. On the other hand, we produce roars, explosions and the thud ... thud ... thud of a heartbeat electronically, using a synthesizer. This sound is stored on a computer and called up when needed to fit the film.



**Darren Hughes,  
sound technician**

1. The special effects you have read about were described by three technicians.

Here are some effects.

Draw lines to match each one to the technician who could tell you about it.

Special effect	Technician's name
<i>howling animal</i>	Hema
<i>becoming a monster</i>	Molly
<i>escape from fire</i>	Darren

1 mark

2. Why does Darren Hughes not need to be present during filming?

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1 mark

3. Look at what Molly Lerner has said.

Why are close-ups of the main actor added into the shots of Molly's stunts?

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1 mark

4. What is Molly's attitude towards the main actors?

Explain fully, using the text to help you.

3 marks

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5. How helpful are computers in creating special effects?

Use the information to explain your answer.

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2 marks

6. *My most **complex** project required 15 applications of make-up.*

Which word most closely matches the meaning of the word *complex*?

Tick **one**.

complicated

☐

troublesome

☐

simple

☐

fun

☐

1 mark