

Review of "How to Foam Carve Your Haunted House"

Written by Shawn Morse

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If you are tired of black walls or simple four-by-eight panels and want to add some depth and "Wow" factor to your haunted attraction or home haunt, you might have considered adding foam creations, such as faux stone or brick walls, cave walls, or wood panels. Perhaps you don't have the money to buy such lavish sets, and you don't know the first thing of how to do it yourself.

Disc 3 in the DVD series "How to Detail Your Haunted House" brought to you by Larry Kirchner of the Darkness Haunted House offers useful tips and techniques for carving foam for use in a haunted attraction or home haunt. This 85-minute disc is sponsored by Hot Wire Foam Factory, so you will see several of their industrial tools at work in a majority of the scenes. You will also get to see first-hand how to use several other tools, including—yes—a weed eater to shape foam.

As with any instruction of how to use tools that can burn, scar, or deform you, there is always a disclaimer, and this DVD is no different. Yet, I had to laugh when reading this screen. "Anything you see in these videos or dvd should only be attempted by trained professionals...DO NOT ATTEMPT to copy or replicate what you see in these videos." Wait a second, isn't the whole point of this DVD to teach you how to do what is shown without having to be a professional? While instructing us how to use a foam cutter, Larry even says, "you don't have to be a professional to do this stuff." I know the disclaimer is just to protect themselves, but don't you

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think it could have been worded a bit better?

First, we are introduced to the types of scenes that we can create by carving foam followed by an overview of some of the tools for foam-carving. Most of the tools are from Hot Wire Foam Factory, which has a great lineup of crafter, professional, and industrial hot wire tools. Because the Darkness is a large haunted house and (I assume) Larry and his team want to carve their foam sets as fast as possible, they resort to using only the industrial tools and, unfortunately, do not show in action ANY of the affordable crafter or pro kits that are also available. In all fairness, the industrial tools do get the job done faster though at a much higher cost.

If you've done any foam carving, you know that heating foam can release some noxious gases, which are not good for the brain. Hot Wire Foam Factory states in their how-to DVD accompanying their tools to always provide sufficient ventilation when carving foam. On this disc, however, Larry does not mention this very important point. As Larry and his crew cut and slice through foam, we see the toxic fumes rise into their unprotected faces. Please, people, if you have to carve your foam indoors, for your safety, wear a respirator or a mask.

In putting together this DVD, Larry also forgot to mention the different types of foam that are commercially available. You've got your white foam, pink foam, blue foam, dock foam, urethane foam, and more. You would think the type of foam would matter and it does! It would have been nice if they discussed the various types of foam, where to find them, and the various applications for each type.

Learn the secret detailing tips from inside **DARKNESS** HAUNTED HOUSE

HOW TO DETAIL YOUR HAUNTED HOUSE
DVD SERIES

Halloween Productions, Inc. creators of The Darkness Haunted House and hundreds of amusement attractions around the World will teach you some of the tricks to create, carve and complete finishing scenes, rocks, and scenery using foam. We'll teach you the proper tools to use to carve with foam including options to hard coat and detail your finished sculptures.

The Darkness features some of the most stunning waterfalls, to ancient lost temples all hand carved by the artisans at Halloween Productions, Inc. Now take a peek inside the process of creating scenes by foam carving and help put your attraction or next project over the top!

In this DVD our staff will create several rooms using different foam carving techniques creating scenes, designs in foam, tomb, rocks, stones and more.

Note: Photos on the box cover are not necessarily props created on the DVD.

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Using the hot wire carving tools, Larry and John show us how to carve different components in multiple scenes: a stone archway, stone steps, a stone façade, holes in the walls, and wood grain. In each of the three sets, Larry gives us an overview of his vision of the set, plays with the tools a bit, and hands over the rest of the work to John, who is the artist. John shows us excellent techniques for shaping foam to look like aged stone in various ways. He also introduces us to some hand tools, which are useful for shaping and texturing foam. (The hand rasp that John mentions is available from Hot Wire Foam Factory is, in fact, not carried by them. Look for an EPS foam rasp, such as one from DuraRasp.)

Even though they covered in detail how to carve foam to look like stone, blocks, and even wood grain, there was no mention of how to create faux brick walls, which requires a different technique of its own. They also did not show in detail how to create stone patterns in foam, which would have been nice to see.

Now that your foam is carved, you are ready to coat it and paint it. Larry mentions that his various sculptures will be coated, but he does not go into detail about what to use to coat the foam and how to do it. Fortunately, this DVD (when purchased through the Hot Wire Foam Factory) comes with a separate DVD on the various foam coating products that are commercially available.

["How to Foam Carve Your Haunted House"](#) offers a basic look at the tools and techniques of foam carving for creating faux stone sets in your haunt. This DVD is a good introduction to the world of foam carving for home and pro haunters alike, despite that it lacks some important safety tips and basics on foam and that the editing is less than professional with occasional distracting red flashing screens. Also, Larry could have done a better job with a script (and without chewing gum while talking to the camera). If you are interested in exploring the world of foam carving for your home or pro haunt, then check out this DVD. "How to Foam Carve Your Haunted House" retails for \$49.95 and comes with a free "Foam Coat System Basics" DVD when purchased through Hot Wire Foam Factory.

You can also gain a comprehensive understanding of the various techniques and tools for foam texturing at the "Foam Texturing" seminar presented by Chris and Jeff Davis of [Davis Graveyard](#) at the [West Coast Haunters Convention](#).