

The Rocky Horror Show: Back to the Retrofuture

By
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Jenifer K. Cooper
B.G.S., University of Kansas, 2013

Submitted to the graduate degree program in Scenography and the Graduate Faculty of the
University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts.

Co-Chair: Dr. Dennis Christilles

Co-Chair: Kelly Vogel

Dr. Rana Esfandiary

Dr. Mechele Leon

Date Defended: 20 January 2023

The thesis committee for Jenifer K. Cooper certifies that this is the approved version of the following thesis:

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Abstract

The cult classic *The Rocky Horror Show*, after fifty years in existence, has gained in exposure to the point that it has become mainstream. The societal boundaries the play once pushed have expanded beyond its then-daring scope, and its familiarity cancels out the subversion from which it was born.

That familiarity is removed via the design mechanism of Retrofuturism, a process of envisioning a future world from the vantage point of the past. Specifically, the style is Raygun Gothic, a term encompassing various space-age, aerodynamic styles seen in the 1930s-60s. It is frequently seen in illustrations of the Golden Age science fiction that in part informed the show's creation. Collage as an artistic medium provides a visual dissonance that disrupts the viewer's complacency.

The sleek shapes of the scenic design are set against each other with a variety of textures and media imagery. Costume design reflects a character hierarchy associated with different times in the Raygun Gothic era, creating a temporal collage. Lighting in primary shades, mostly pink and blue, recalls the color-mixing systems of that time, and looks clean on the set amidst the more complex physical elements.

To displace *Rocky* from its typical setting is drastic, but necessary. The show's purpose came as much from its outcast audience as from its own script. To preserve that meaning, to reclaim *Rocky* for the counter-culture, we must take everything else apart.

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THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW: BACK TO THE RETROFUTURE

INTRODUCTION

A comedically perverse takeoff on science fiction and horror B-movies of the 1950s, *The Rocky Horror Show* opened in 1973 to an audience of sixty. Today it is a well-established cultural juggernaut with a studio film still shown in theaters, a network TV adaptation, comic books, pop culture toys, fan conventions, and stage productions year after year around the globe. It is becoming a Halloween staple in the way *A Christmas Carol* dominates stages in December.

The customary empowerment of the audience to interact with the story – whether at a live production, a screening, or a living room viewing party - to embody the characters, to get up from their seats and do the Time Warp again and again has fueled *Rocky*'s long lifespan. The audience keeps the script as relevant as the production does, through constant revision of their own participatory responses. It is a story they tell to and with each other, a ritual of the contemporary counterculture.

The participatory fandom has historically been a home for the wayward, the weird, and the wounded. With this proliferation of exposure, and acceptability in polite company, has *Rocky* itself been absorbed into the culture it once subverted?

This production seeks to tear apart the monolith's familiarity, building a collage of the story's inspirations: 1950's science fiction and horror media, with a counterpoint of the century's earlier Hollywood glamour.

It is anchored in the 1950s, with an abiding nostalgia for the glamour of the 1930s and '40s. It mostly avoids anachronisms from the real-life span of the show's existence, the 1970s through present day, as camp is geared toward nostalgia for the past – even the past's idea of the future. Audiences need that nostalgia as well. A return to the cusp of the modern era places us in

a time when the world saw the beginning of space travel, and advances in the eradication of disease. Any future could have happened.

At its outset, *Rocky* made a burlesque of middle America's sexually repressed culture and traditional gender expectations, and exposed innocence and normalcy as fragile illusions. In the 1970s, despite the sexual revolution, it was still shocking for a show to go on the offensive against that pillar of polite society, "decency." It is worth noting that in the U.S., Hollywood's Hays Code had ended only a few years prior in 1968. In the '50s, the maddest of mad scientists on film could not have gotten away with Frank's transgressions.

But today, the message has changed. It observes and reflects society, but no longer crosses as many boundaries of acceptable taste. True crime is a major area of entertainment, and genderqueer stories continue to gain widespread respect. What makes *Rocky* a special experience, as it was when its cult status developed? Susan Sontag writes in "Notes on Camp":

"The experiences of Camp are based on the great discovery that the sensibility of high culture has no monopoly upon refinement. Camp asserts that good taste is not simply good taste; that there exists, indeed, a good taste of bad taste."

Today, the bar of bad taste has been raised. There may be no way for *The Rocky Horror Show* to leave the mainstream and be reclaimed by an underground cognoscenti. But its subversive roots are here put on display with the use of collaged imagery from earlier times. Collage itself has been called a subversive art form (Kruger and Pierce). It appropriates images from their intended placement and gives them new meaning. Its mismatched object representation disrupts the comfort of a more monostylistic scene.

Rocky Horror and its community once meant a great deal to me. I went to the movie every week, said the lines, threw the props, and performed as Columbia in a shadow cast for a while. *Rocky* was a world I fit into. To see it so ubiquitous now in the pop culture stratosphere is

a wonderful story of the work's success, but we simultaneously witness a dilution of its counter-cultural status - a core element that built the phenomenon. Only by disrupting its familiarity can it be endowed once again with a boundary-pushing, transgressive spirit.

SCENIC DESIGN

The concept of Retrofuturism in art is to create a vision of the future, from the perspective of a past era. The Raygun Gothic aesthetic draws from the clean, curvilinear, futuristic design movements of the 1930s-'60s. It encompasses, for example, the Atomic Age, Googie (associated with California motels and diners, with irregular shapes and Space Age references), and Streamline Moderne (a subset of Art Deco known for its aerodynamic forms, seen in consumer goods and architecture). It was a widely popular illustration choice for the Golden Age science fiction that influenced *Rocky Horror*, and provides a clean, aerodynamic visual backdrop for the awe, terror, and wonder that our protagonists experience. As a form of popular rather than high art (yet before the Pop Art movement), it is instantly recognizable – and at the same time unfamiliar, forgoing the past and present for possibilities of the future.

To “clean up” *Rocky*'s set design may seem counterintuitive, if not an outright production sin against its transgressive nature. The dark and dirty sphere Brad and Janet stumble upon contrasts sharply against the middle-class American Dream they've inhabited until now; shouldn't the visual translation support that?

But this is only a visual scrubbing, favoring the sleek lines of science fiction films that inspired *Rocky* in the first place. There are no dark corners in which horrors can lurk, only the illuminated space for them to play out in front of our eyes.

Prologue: The grand drape opens on the first chords of “Science Fiction, Double Feature,” and we see the projected show curtain: a shimmering, textural collage of images that have inspired the production: Mid-century modern starbursts, sci-fi magazine covers, oversized filmstrips, a leg silhouette in black leather. Some elements are painted with 3D vision’s characteristic red and cyan edges. Paper 3D glasses are included in the audience’s prop bags, and during the show the Phantoms or Trixie will cue the audience to wear them.

I.1: Brad and Janet have just been in their best friends’ wedding, and Brad is proposing. The primary scenic element is the projection of an idyllic chapel exterior, collaged with romance comic book covers and exaggerated printing techniques. The Phantoms, who sometimes serve as visible set crew, place a white church pew and three flower-adorned white columns. After “Dammit, Janet,” the Narrator then has a brief monologue on the apron, in streetlamp-like downlight with a rain effect. Everything else is dark.

I.2: Lightning flashes, and Brad, Janet, and the Phantoms return with a cutout Ford Galaxie to the stormy night projection. It features the castle exterior, modeled after the Art Deco-inspired Église Sainte-Jeanne d'Arc in Nice, France. The cathedral’s parabolic domes echo the shape of rockets on the covers of *Galaxy* or *Fantastic Stories* magazines, or bubbled space colonies.

Projected live from offstage, Riff Raff appears in large scale on the surface of the castle to sing the bridge of “Over at the Frankenstein Place.” As the song finishes, he appears down right to allow Brad and Janet entry into the castle, a single rocket leg signifying the doorway. As the stage darkens and the drop flies out, the narrator enters again on the apron, rolling a bulletin board with pinned evidence and connecting strings.

I.3: Finally, we enter the castle ballroom. It's part soundstage and part launchpad, the centerpiece of which uses retro rocket legs as pillars that frame a round performance platform upstage. The legs are painted with oversized fragments of vintage science fiction magazines. Upstage of those is a tall, wide, parabola-shaped flat that reflects the profile of the exterior. It resembles an orchestra shell or a time travel tunnel. It is painted for a red/cyan 3D effect, and looks black-and-white with 3D glasses on. At the sides of the stage, legs have been replaced (for the most visible four feet) with the oversized filmstrips previously seen in the show curtain. Far upstage is an outer space drop, painted in the style of vintage paperback covers, with a red bloodstain dripping in the upper left corner.

Downstage right and left are two small revolve units, six and twelve feet in diameter respectively. The stage right unit serves here as an entrance to the ballroom, a visual transition with sumptuous red drapes inside a sleek metallic cannister. The stage left unit is a platformed acting area, with a collage of the movie references from "Science Fiction, Double Feature," and a deep red leather chaise longue.

Frank's first appearance, for "Sweet Transvestite," must be spectacular, nothing an audience member could predict. He flies in from above, posed as a pinup girl on a rocket, downstage center. The rocket is about the proportion of a carousel horse, and perhaps similarly fabricated. It will fly out shortly after Frank dismounts, and he will exit the scene via the wings.

I.4: The scene changes to the Lab. The downstage units rotate, and a counter unit is placed on the upstage platform by Phantoms. This counter has racks of colorful vials on top, with cranks and levers on the front. The downstage right unit now shows Rocky's birthing chamber, with a curved sliding glass door, and a clamshell cutout behind Rocky referring to Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*. On the downstage left revolve are more levers, gadgets, and luminous

screens. A few steps lead to its elevated floor, which conceals a coffinlike freezer chamber for Eddie. An operational oversized vintage television screen is flown in, hovering between the downstage left unit and the upstage-center rocket legs.

Entr'acte: The stage is dark. The narrator is on the apron, stage left, with a black chalkboard painted with investigative notes (the other side contains a pinboard of evidence). Lighting with a Venetian blind gobo will evoke the setting of a film noir detective's office. In his further appearances in Act II, he may or may not have the prop, or different props. He will cross the plaster line on at least one occasion.

II.5 and II.6: Frank's seductions of Janet and Brad are played in deep color: strong red downlight with cyan highlights for Janet's, and the reverse for Brad. The downstage left unit is turned with the ballroom side downstage, with the chaise longue removed and a half-round platform and foam mattress with satin bedding added.

II.7 through II.9: The lab, as before. During II.8, for "Once in a While," the Phantoms will bring on the white church pew from "Dammit Janet" for Brad to moon on.

Transition: The ballroom is restored *a vista*, and dressed by Phantoms for the Floor Show, Frank's crowning moment of pageantry. The Music Director will need to be consulted for an extended vamp. Phantoms set the elements that indulge Frank's nostalgia: shell-shaped footlights, red velvet ropes. Riff Raff and Magenta use hand trucks to bring on the fully paralyzed Brad, Janet, Columbia, and Rocky, then are not seen again. The downstage right unit turns, and the previous ballroom entry has become a ticket booth, with the addition of a half-door panel and a hanging sign, and Trixie eerily stands inside. Downstage left, the sci-fi collage side returns with the chaise longue to be occupied by Phantoms accessorized in fancy theatre-going

garb, with popcorn and opera glasses. At the director's discretion, a Phantom could instead pull guests from the audience.

II.10: Riff Raff and Magenta appear up left, on a 12' platform behind a cutout rocket-shaped flat that towers over the stage, fog billowing from its base. It is painted in the same red/cyan 3D effect as the time tunnel. The masking surface behind them in the rocket is a black and green metallic fabric backlight can glow through.

II.11 and Epilogue: In a momentous special effect with fog, sound, and blasts of light and color, the rocket and castle disappear. The Castle Exterior drop flies in, and Janet and Brad enter from the downstage wings. The narrator appears on the apron and leaves in blackout. The show curtain flies in as warmers come up and Trixie sings the reprise in the same spot as the top of the show.

COSTUME DESIGN (in order of appearance)

The costume design is centered on the 1950s, a high point in the set's Raygun Gothic era, and a time associated with wholesomeness and conformity. The characters who arrive at the castle during the story (Brad, Janet, Dr. Scott, and prior to the action, Eddie) remain anchored there until Frank takes control of them (or they die).

The characters in Frank's orbit, though, exist to serve and amuse him. Thus, every character in the castle environs must answer the question, "How would Frank have them dress?" He craves the lush glamour and decadence of earlier decades, and envisions it for himself and those who surround him. The 1930s and 40s then become an additional layer in the time of the production, resulting in a temporal collage.

TRIXIE THE USHERETTE welcomes us to the cinema for a viewing of schlocky B-movie sci-fi and horror, outfitted in the grand tradition of classic movie houses. Her costume has an architecture of its own (whereas the physical theatre might not have an apt one), decorated in red velvet and glitz. She herself has become a physical fixture of the theater, stopped in her own time.

THE PHANTOMS have a base costume influenced by pinup icons Bettie Page and (as mentioned in “Rose Tint My World”) Lili St. Cyr. They have individual looks, but are thematically linked by lingerie, fetishized textures like leather and rubber, and BDSM garb, all in black with accents in varying shades of red and purple. This is Frank’s party; he sets the dress code. Their handling of accessory “garments” and props in flat collage also calls to mind puppeteers in black. And puppeteers they may be, but Frank is *their* puppeteer.

Their first appearance is in “Science Fiction, Double Feature,” and they wear flat body boards of the snack characters from classic “Let’s All Go to the Lobby” shorts: a soda, popcorn, a box of candy smokes because it’s the 1950s. In “Dammit Janet, they wear copies of Janet’s bridesmaid dress... but only the front half of it, leaving their base costumes exposed in the back. In “The Time Warp” their base costumes are adorned like Christmas trees with clocks, calendars, year numbers, and small time-spirals. They carry feather fans for “Sweet Transvestite,” and wear clear vinyl coats in the Lab, the same ones as Brad and Janet, carrying large test tubes, beakers, and lab tools.

In the second act, the Phantoms don’t appear until “Once in A While,” returning in the pink dress-fronts from “Dammit Janet,” just to twist the knife in Brad’s back. From their next entrance until the Floor Show, they stay in their base costumes, then add accessories to become either floor show “crew” (toolbelts and flat caps) or in-house “audience” (a fur cape, a top hat

and monocle). By “Superheroes,” they have abandoned the accessories, but pick up the lobby flat costumes again for the reprise of “Science Fiction, Double Feature.”

BRAD MAJORS and JANET WEISS, as a couple, are the representation of innocence and optimism, the picket fence set, the traditional nuclear family. Their journey begins at the wedding of friends, looking forward to their own. They don’t know it, but the safe post-WWII world they inhabit is on the cusp of a reckoning. All these dreams will explode before them, and before society at large soon enough.

Brad’s best man tuxedo is indigo blue, with a pale blue shirt. To veer from black and white is to peacock, as he has planned to propose to Janet right after the wedding. In the modern pink-blue dichotomy, a strong blue is manly indeed.

Janet’s pale pink dress, ballerina-like in its fragility, is a confection of tulle with so many embellishments of the same shade, they could be cake icing. Her readiness to be consumed will come into play later.

In the castle, after the Time Warp, they are literally stripped of American Dream artifice. Their undergarments are modest, functional, and most likely purchased at Sears. In the lab, they are given coats to “feel less vulnerable,” but the coats are clear vinyl. Back in the Lab for “Toucha-Toucha-Touch Me” and “Once in a While,” they remain in their undergarments – though the Phantoms will bring on Brad’s blue tuxedo coat.

Later, dressed by the phantoms while under the effects of the sonic transducer, their Floor Show costumes shatter any remaining naiveté. They are cast, along with Columbia and Rocky, as Frank’s adoring regal court in a vaguely ancient scene that calls up numerous occasions of Greek and Roman influence in costuming sci-fi alien civilizations. But this is no history lesson. They each wear a sheer, skimpy tunic without visible top undergarments; a gold brief with strapped

sides; gold fishnet tights (up to the waist, not stockings); and gold platform heels. Janet's new wig is curled and pinned up in the Roman style, and Brad's hair is combed forward into a Caesar cut, or if necessary, he can be wigged. After Riff Raff and Magenta's mutiny, a final explosion of soot makeup applied quickly in the wings, and a disheveling of their tunics and wigs finalize their fall from innocence.

THE NARRATOR is a hard-boiled private eye of the film noir variety. He recounts the events in Denton like a true-crime story of a case that left him as beaten and lost as its victims. As a framing device, mostly residing on our side of the fourth wall, he is not bound to the same decade as the characters in the story. He plays to the earlier decades in a fedora, vest, and shirtsleeves, loosened tie, and a rumpled overcoat when standing in a rain effect.

RIFF RAFF and MAGENTA keep their extraterrestrial identity secret in the garb of domestic servants: a handyman and a housekeeper. Instead of partaking in the decadence of Frank's world, their costumes desexualize them and emphasize their functions in the castle. Riff Raff wears a utility jumpsuit, zipped up the front with multiple pockets and loops for various tools. He has different hats appropriate to his function in the scenes: a top hat for "The Time Warp," a hardhat in the Lab, and a long nightcap in the second act. Magenta's housekeeper uniform is both unsexy (as per Frank's household structure) and an object of fetish: though the staff are not permitted agency like the Phantoms, they are still at Frank's disposal. The fabric for both uniforms is a space-age creation with a copper hexagram topstitch over plum-to-green changeable taffeta with a copper-tinged surface treatment.

The same fabric will be used for their finale costumes, with lighting inside their rocket unit to emphasize the taffeta's green threads. These are more revealing and form-fitting, claiming a higher place in Frank's hierarchy of who is allowed to show their body. The garments' fitted

hoods create a smooth space-suit profile, and leave only an eerie oval of Riff and Magenta's faces visible in the green light.

I'd like to think COLUMBIA was snatched up as a young, street-busking Shirley Temple impersonator. Her sequined pinafore dress, long polka-dot socks, and sausage-curved wig seem almost obscene on a grown woman, and the bodice is pared down to reveal more skin. Red and black fight the suggestion of innocence. They link her to the Phantoms in Frank's entourage, yet set her apart as both an Earthling, and Frank's previous favorite toy. Even her lollipop prop is red and black. Underneath multiple petticoats, her Saturday bloomers will be revealed in the choreography of "Whatever Happened to Saturday Night?"

This little-girl profile is repeated in her Act II fluffy chiffon nightie, a fashionable look of the time. The outer layer has a dotted Swiss texture that recalls the previous long socks. Hot pink sequined bunny slippers create a jarring mood contrast; at the director's discretion, they may be made into tap shoes.

Her Floor Show costume is as described above for Brad and Janet, and her wig is curled and swept up in the same ancient style as Janet's.

DR. FRANK-N-FURTER enters the number "Sweet Transvestite" as a pinup on a rocket from above, his body mostly hidden by an oversized feather fan. We can glimpse holographic silver platform boots, dramatic makeup, and a silver-threaded bouffant with a crown. When he lands, Phantoms bring more fans to cover his body, with teasing peeks, through the first verse. At the chorus, the fans are dropped, revealing a rock-star space-queen sex-goddess superhero, with holographic silver thigh-high platform boots; black fishnet thigh-highs and trunks; shoulder and hip flares and gauntlets out of the same holographic material, and a red-tipped rocket-missile bra standing 8-10" from his chest.

Next we see Frank in the lab, in a Dior-inspired white vinyl lab coat with extremely wide lapels, belted, and open below his bare chest. It is tailored with built-in breast forms and a nipped waist. The skirt is full, hemmed to the knees in the back and to the crotch in front. Silver accessories include gloves, platform Mary Janes, wig in victory rolls, and an atomic symbol necklace. At the end of the act, when Mendelssohn's Wedding March plays, a Phantom pins a veil on Frank, serving with the white coat as a bridal ensemble, anticipating almost virginally his consummation with Rocky.

When Frank seduces Janet and then Brad, we do not see (nor do Brad and Janet) most details of his costume. He starts each scene with a wig – first to match Brad in silhouette, then to match Janet. When it is removed, he's down to his wig cap rather than another wig. To seduce Brad, he also wears a stuffed bra to match Janet's. He is already wearing the tight black leather pants with heavily studded black platform combat boots which will be seen more clearly when he returns to the Lab.

When he chases Riff Raff into the Lab and beats him for losing track of Rocky, Frank has added post-seduction accessories that create a dual-gendered look. His chest is bare, without any breast-like enhancements, and the leather pants, boots, and chained biker's cap read masculine. We see he is bald under the cap, a jarring effect after four wigs. But he wears a femininely flowing peignoir in chiffon, with ultra-dense and long feather trim.

In the transition between the Lab and the Floor Show, executed *a vista*, Frank stays onstage a few seconds to direct the Phantoms, then has vamp time and "Rose Tint My World" to change. His Finale costume is earnestly glam, fully embracing the premise of the pageant: a royal court of gold in the exotic setting of Earth's ancient western civilization – or perhaps a representation of some point in Transsexual, Transylvania's history. He enters wrapped in a

gleaming ivory pleated cape of crepe back satin, with handheld sticks extending the radius of the garment. We see glimpses of a dark metallic gold lining, fused and pleated with the satin. It cuts a geometric profile of overlapping semicircles reminiscent of Delaunay or DeLempicka. A tall gold headdress adds another arc. His body remains covered by the cape at first, in different configurations.

On the reveal, he throws the cape open into a full circle. The gold lining creates a starburst or halo-like effect, framing him like a deity. He is wrapped in criss-crossing shiny gold straps from thigh to chest, showing lots of skin, with a sculpted gold codpiece that draws the eye.

EDDIE wears the garb of a rebel: engineer boots, dirty jeans, and a visible undershirt beneath a western-cut shirt with the sleeves ripped off. He has tattoos, and his hair is in a pompadour. Embroidered skulls on the shirt and a skull belt buckle emphasize his relationship with death, which his family feared well before his disappearance. All exposed skin (face, neck, arms) has frost makeup, and there is a prominent surgical scar across his forehead.

ROCKY is Frank's ultimate expression of earthly male desirability, informed by Charles Atlas and athletes-turned-actors Buster Crabbe (*Flash Gordon*, *Tarzan the Fearless*) and Steve Reeves (*Hercules*, *The Last Days of Pompeii*). Lyrics describe him with "blond hair and a tan;" his long flowing hair (or wig) is a shade of blond that complements the actor's skin tone. Body contour makeup enhances his muscles, and cosmetic tan can be used if the actor is especially pale. Surgical stitching appears on his body in multiple places: an autopsy Y-cut, attachment points for limbs, and a forehead scar for the insertion of half of Eddie's brain.

He emerges from his birthing chamber in a shiny, leopard-print wrestling singlet. It is primal, but as clean and streamlined as the outer space aesthetic. He wears brown leather and gold gladiator sandals, a nod to the hypermasculine sword-and-sandal movie genre.

His Floor Show costume is as described above for Brad and Janet, and warrior-like braids are added to the front of his long, golden locks.

DR. SCOTT, in this production, is a woman. This sets up a more threatening dynamic for Frank, who displays more hostility toward the women in the story than the men. The actor should be a woman or femme-presenting person. Her gray suit is not feminine in cut, though it should be tailored well enough not to look bulky.

Given her new position as a woman wielding the power of science – and a 2023 audience’s sophistication - her secrets revealed in the Floor Show must be more deviant and dominant than a single fishnet stocking as in the film. Her suit, we discover, is a tear-away; underneath is the same revealing gold costume as the other four. All of this is subject to modifications for mobility, as we would prefer to cast an actor who actually uses a wheelchair.

THE BAND are in the orchestra pit, but as they might be seen from the balcony, and when they stand for bows, they are welcome to adopt the Phantoms’ fetish-wear motif. If a SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETER is employed, they will wear simple clothing in a color contrasting their skin tone. DECK, FLY, and other CREW who should not be seen will wear regular stage blacks.

SPECIALTY PROPS

Dr. Scott’s wheelchair is a replica of an Eames Lounge Chair, an expression of luxury that indicates power - again, intimidating Frank. A wheel system has been added, controlled with a silver joystick on the armrest on the actor’s dominant side.

Many hand props and small set units (car, upstage lab counter) will be two-dimensional cutouts that add textures to the bigger collage: photo, halftone, vintage illustration styles. They

may or may not be to scale, depending on visibility and comic potential. These include the wedding bouquet and column flowers, Janet's purse and newspaper, a glow-in-the-dark oversized wrapped condom for both seduction scenes (a tongue-in-cheek aside to updated knowledge about safer sex).

Riff Raff and Magenta's space age finale weapons shoot laser beams in green, and have sound effects.

The Narrator's wheeled, dual-sided bulletin board and chalkboard has a sturdy oak frame as one might find in a classroom of the past. The cork side is papered with case evidence: photos, star charts, depositions, and lots of string. The green chalkboard is full of complicated equations and perplexing diagrams.

LIGHTING DESIGN

In approaching the lighting for *Rocky Horror*, I opted for a primary color scheme: red, green, and blue, and lighter but pure shades of those. It is an acknowledgement of early 20th century color-mixing, and its simple crispness reinforces the starkness of the spaceship and lab environments. Emphasizing pink and blue at times would also put us in mind of the gender binary, and *Rocky's* deconstruction of it (which is not the main thrust of this design, but relevant to the work's continuing subversion).

Area and Scenery

Since the first three scenes are played in front of a projection screen, mostly on the apron, front light will have to be steep to minimize washout, with a side fill. This is an additional system to the full stage's front light.

The narrator exists in spaces defined by light on the sides of the apron. First we see him under an effect of falling rain in nighttime streetlight. Later he is in a space defined by a Venetian blind gobo as a film noir private eye office.

Inside the castle, general front light will be a McCandless system, in Flesh Pink (R34) and Cool Blue (R66). Side and high-side light will be deeper: Cherry Rose (R332) and Tipton Blue (R362). Just as R33 is a cool warm, R362 tends to the warm side of cool, with violet more prominent than green in its undertones. Top light will use color-changing LED instruments for ultimate flexibility.

The far upstage painted drop is lit in No Color Blue (R60) striplights to show its colors clearly, even at a low intensity, and Medium Red (R27) when referencing blood (Eddie's death; Finale). Blue and green should also be available for mixing. The upstage flat and the top of the downstage right revolve unit both have R34/R66 front light to match area lighting. When the rocket appears in the Finale, its front light is tightly shuttered. Since the rocket's paint is red/cyan 3D, as little additional color as possible is desired. Depending on the intensity, a slight blue (R360 Clearwater) could be needed to correct amber tones.

The upstage platform and both downstage units have rings of digital accent lights that can change color and have chase patterns programmed. They visually flow across the stage, defining the shapes in lower light, and evoking grand showtime imagery as well as futuristic devices.

Followspots, Specials, and Effects

Followspots will be used in most if not all musical numbers. One or two will be sufficient at any given time.

In “Over at the Frankenstein Place,” haze builds across the apron, catching patterned light and the beam of the headlight rigged into the cutout car. Riff Raff sings live in an offstage video booth with green screen. His image, from the shoulders up, is projected larger-than-life on top of the main projection. When he enters onstage later to invite Brad and Janet into the castle, they walk offstage into a hazy light (R96 Lime).

“The Time Warp” encourages the audience to get up and dance. The house is lit with color-changing movers, and two disco balls spin in opposite directions. Shin kickers and footlights on the pit rail add dimension to the dancers’ lower bodies. The rings of bulbs on the rounded set pieces run in chase patterns. We may need a lobby sign.

“Sweet Transvestite” uses every bell and whistle. Two spots on Frank. Colorful Sharpie beams in a rock’n’roll haze. The disco balls again. Sparkling stars rigged to the cables of Frank’s flying rocket.

The Lab will need angular white high side beams, visible in the haze, and deep shadows. It has tubes, screens, and equipment to light. The footlights will be used in Frank’s monologue. Rocky’s birthing chamber, the downstage right set unit, will be lit inside with a shimmering sort of texture. A cloud of fog comes out of the door when Rocky is born, lit in Sky Blue (R68) to satirize baby gender reveals.

“Hot Patootie” has fog and pale blue light that come from the opened freezer, with Eddie’s entrance. The song changes the stage to concert lighting, but with a spare look, more like a rockabilly dive bar than the club or arena concert atmosphere of Frank’s numbers.

As discussed above in Scenic Design, Janet and Brad's seductions are lit respectively in red with cyan high sides, and cyan with red high sides. Instruments should be shuttered tightly on the downstage left unit.

In the Floor Show, color should distinguish it as a show-within-a-show. A gold-toned backlight will emphasize the "Rose Tint My World" begins isolated on the upstage platform, building heavily shadowed modeling on the actors. Each has a special. Footlights create a surreal sense. Frank will get both followspots, and there are opportunities in the finale to reuse effects and techniques introduced earlier in the show. Bubble machines are used in the "Don't Dream It – Be It" segment.

The rocket unit appears upstage left, and the area is flooded with fog and bathed in R96 Lime. Lime highlights accent farther areas of the stage. When the projection screen comes in, there should still be enough fog downstage to last the duration of "Superheroes."

CONCLUSION

It is no accident that the final words in the story are "lost in time, and lost in space and meaning." Brad and Janet are indeed lost in an all-consuming sense and can never return to innocence and naiveté. The epilogue, a reprise of "Science Fiction, Double Feature," then delivers us back to our own time and space – but what did it mean?

Not *too* much; camp succeeds as much from superficiality as from its nostalgia and excess. And it can evolve to suit the needs of its audience. Through Retrofuturism's lens, we are presented with an optimistic setting that makes the acts committed within that much more horrific. It serves as a reminder to a complacent mainstream audience that *The Rocky Horror Show* remains the milieu of misfits.

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2. Sontag, Susan, "Notes on Camp." *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*. New York: Picador Press, 2001. Reissue of 1966 edition, with an afterword from 1996.
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4. Framke, Caroline, "Fox's Rocky Horror Picture Show is a bizarrely sanitized update of a proudly transgressive musical." *Vox*, October 21, 2016.
5. Kruger, Barbara, and Richard Prince, "All Tomorrow's Parties." *Bomb Magazine*, April 1, 1982.
6. Piro, Sal, and Michael Hess, *The Official Rocky Horror Picture Show Audience Participation Guide*. Livonia, MI: Stabur Press, Inc. 1991

APPENDICES

SCENIC STORYBOARDS



Figure 1: Show Curtain Projection



Figure 2: Anaglyph (3D) Variant Projection



Figure 3: Chapel Exterior Projection



Figure 4: Castle Exterior Projection, Practical Headlamp



Figure 5: Castle Exterior Emerging



Figure 6: Live Feed Projection over castle exterior



Figure 7: Narrator, SL Apron

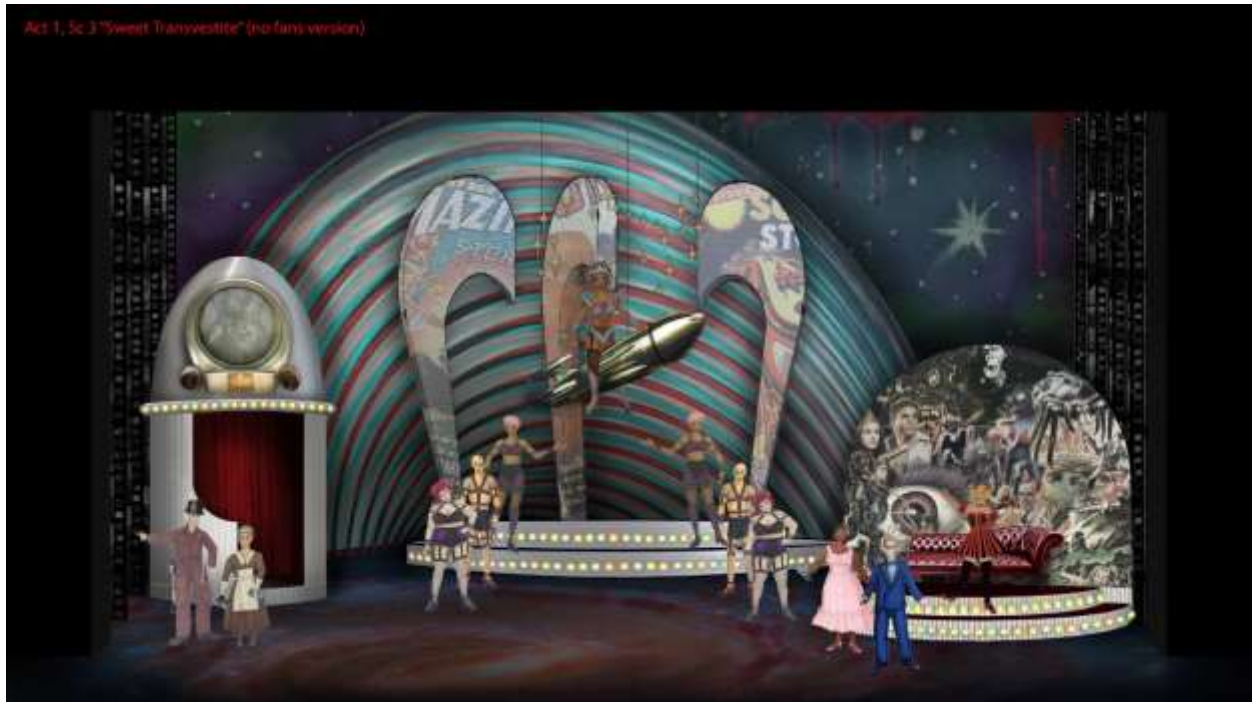


Figure 8: The Ballroom, Frank's Entrance



Figure 9: The Lab, Birth of Rocky



Figure 10: Janet's Seduction



Figure 11: Brad's Seduction



Figure 12: Ballroom: The Floor Show



Figure 13: Riff Raff & Magenta in Rocket



Figure 14: Castle Exterior "Superheroes"

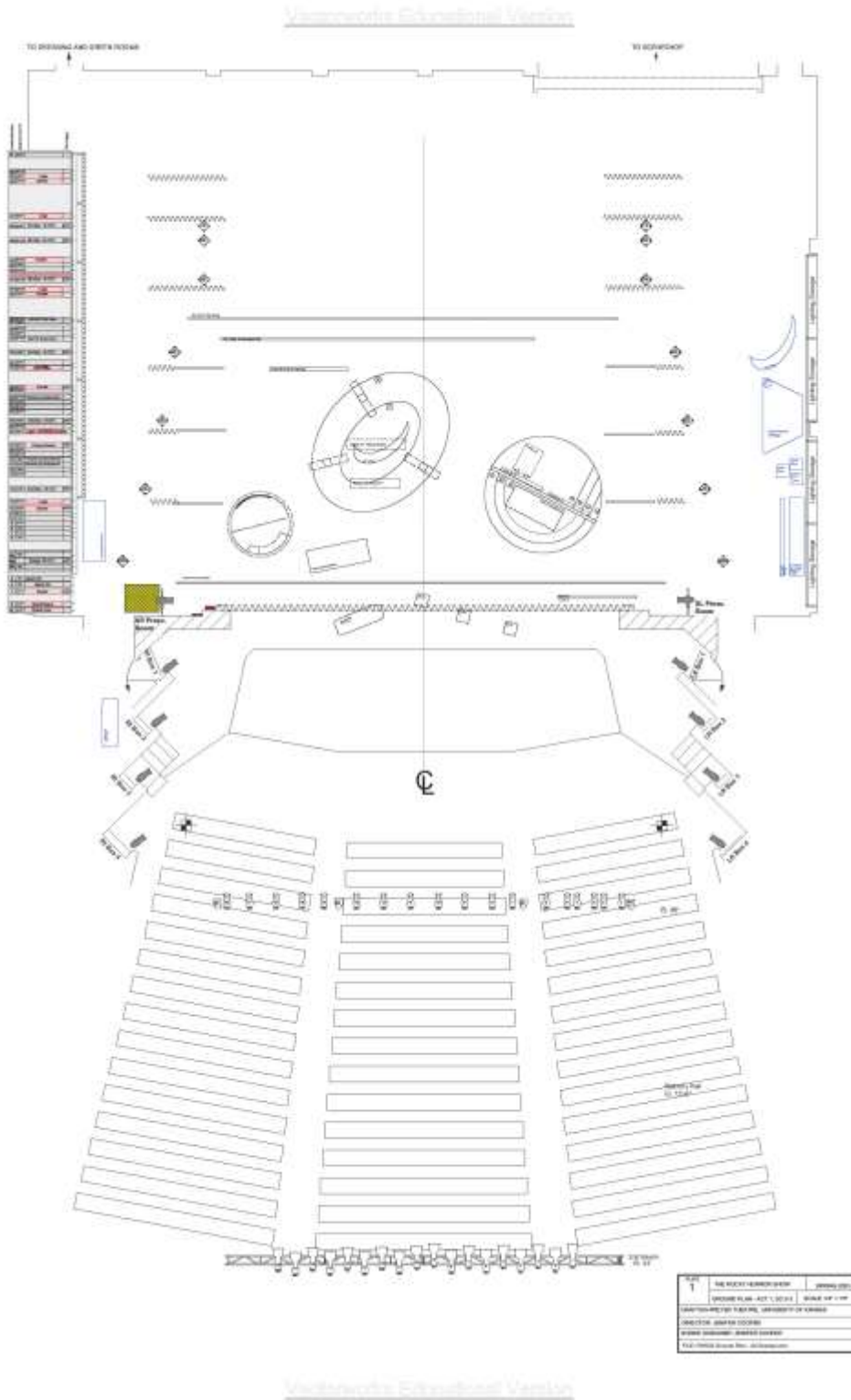


Figure 16: Ground Plan, Scenes 0-2

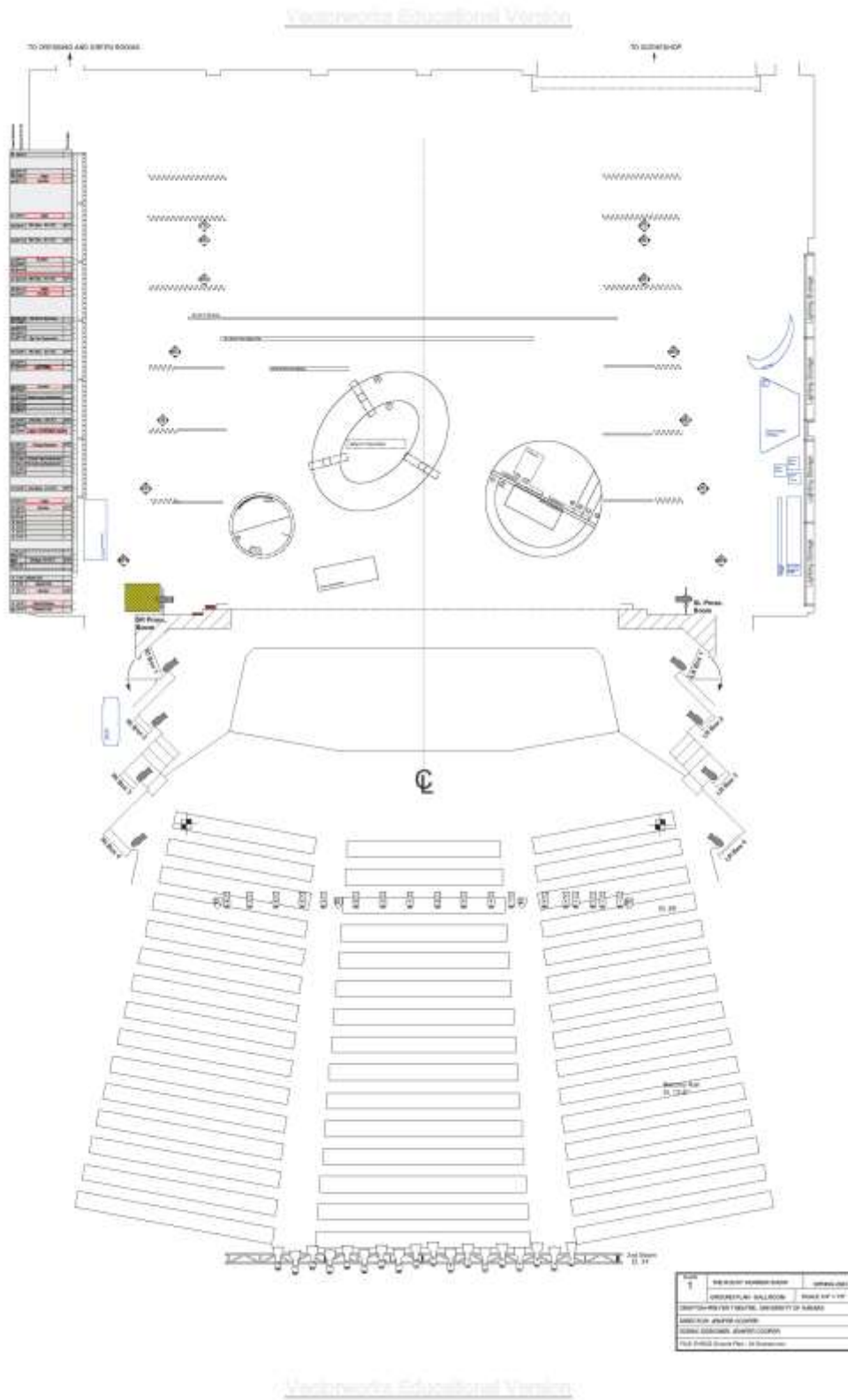


Figure 17: Ground Plan, Ballroom

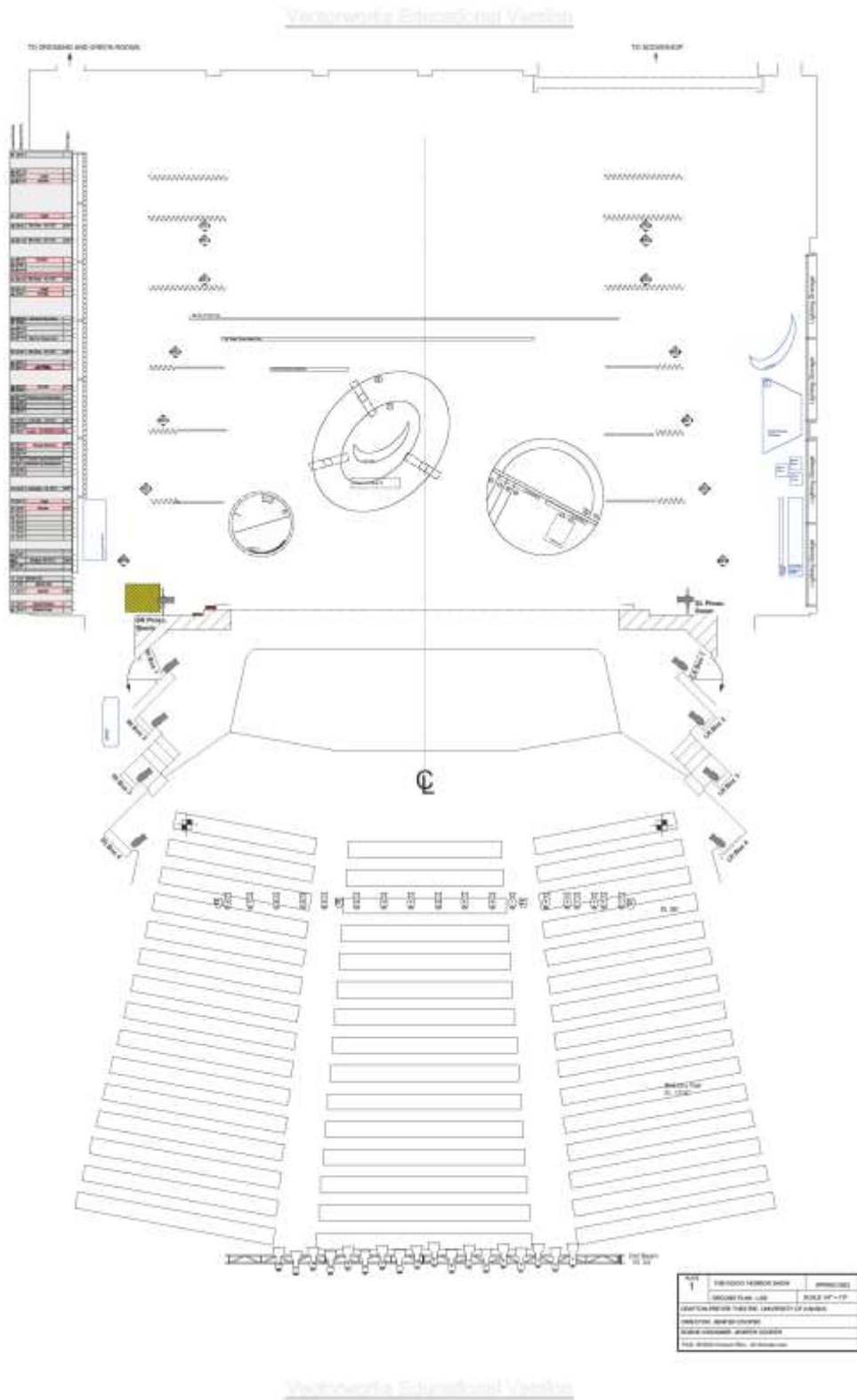


Figure 18: Ground Plan, Lab

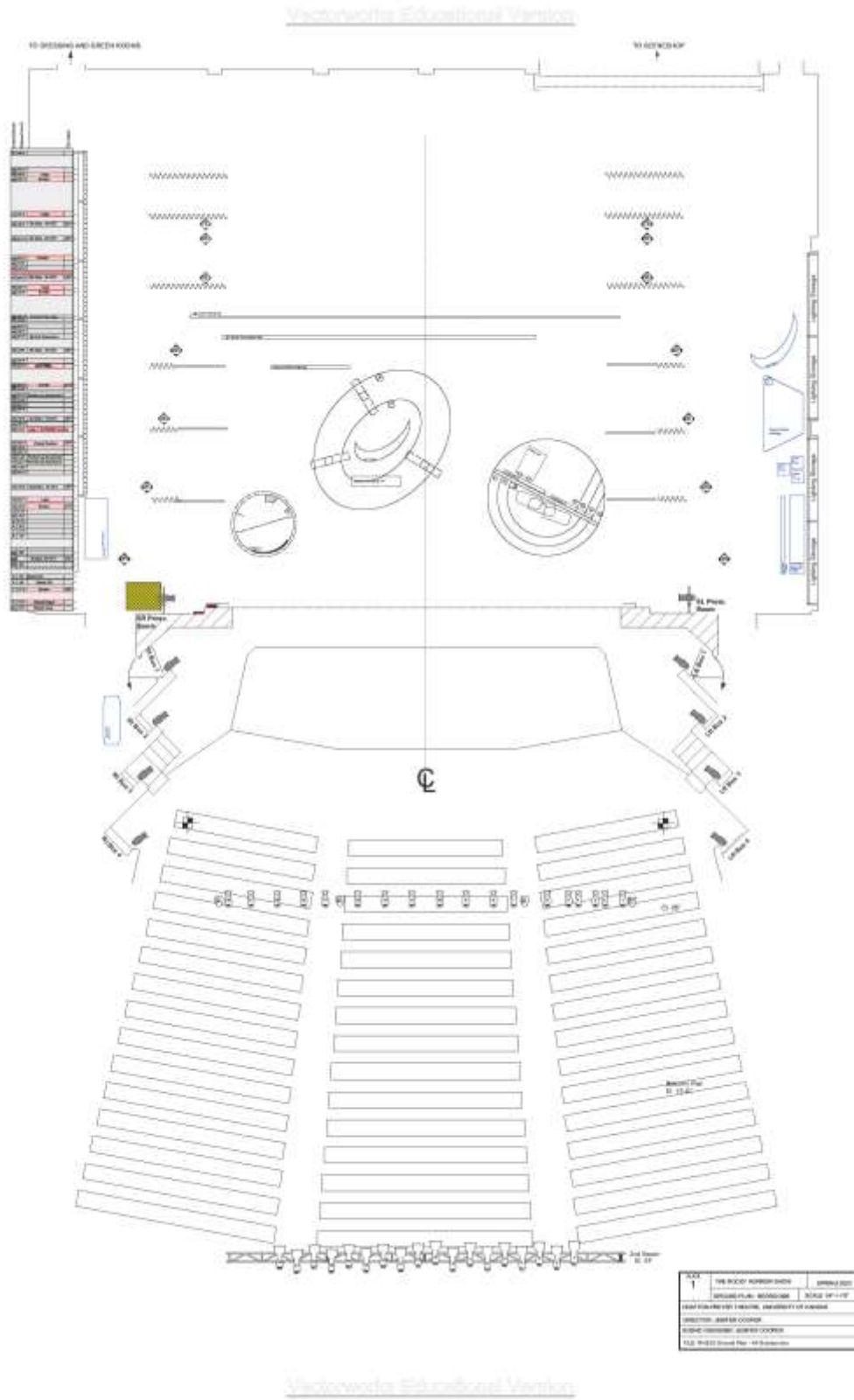


Figure 19: Ground Plan, Bedrooms

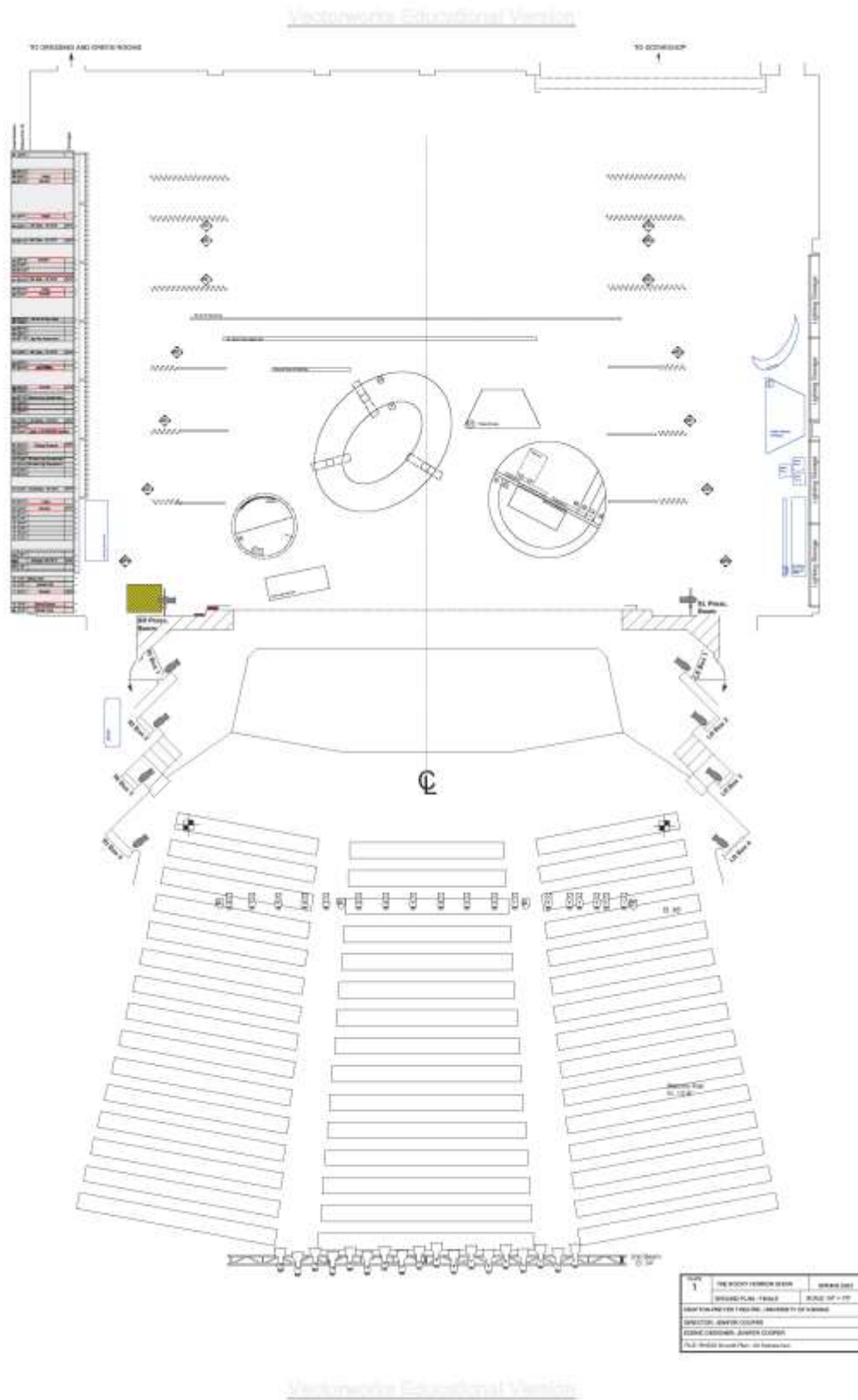


Figure 20: Ground Plan, Finale

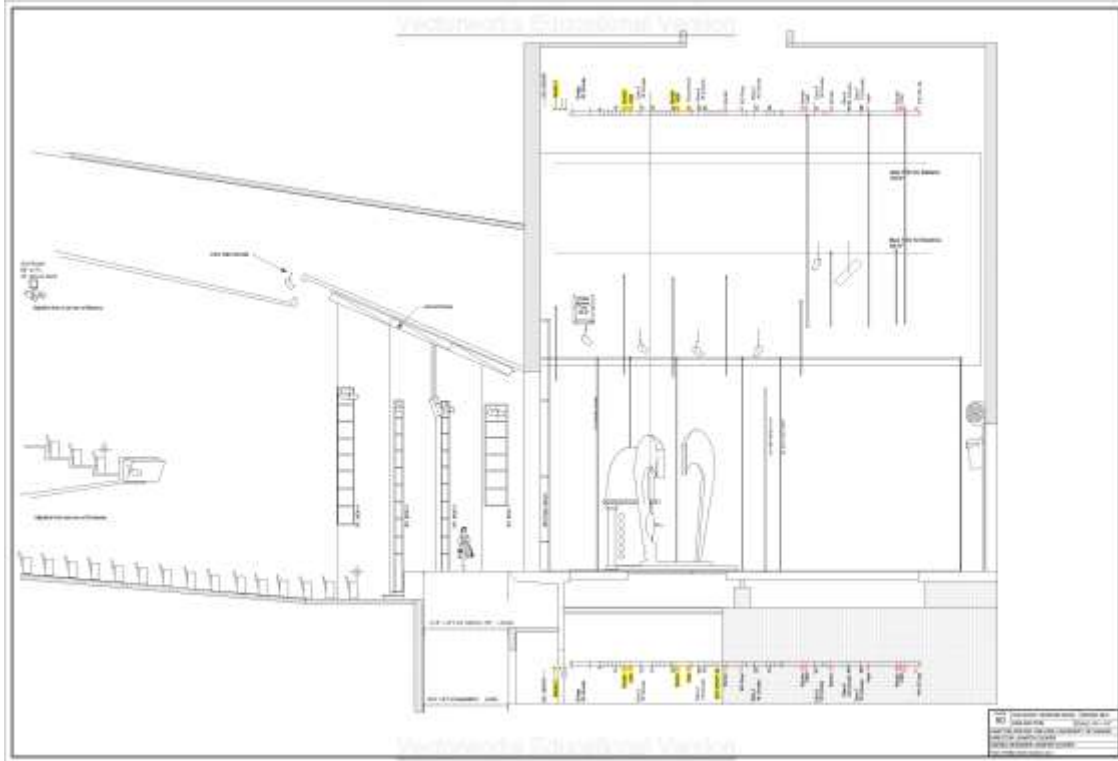


Figure 21: Side Section

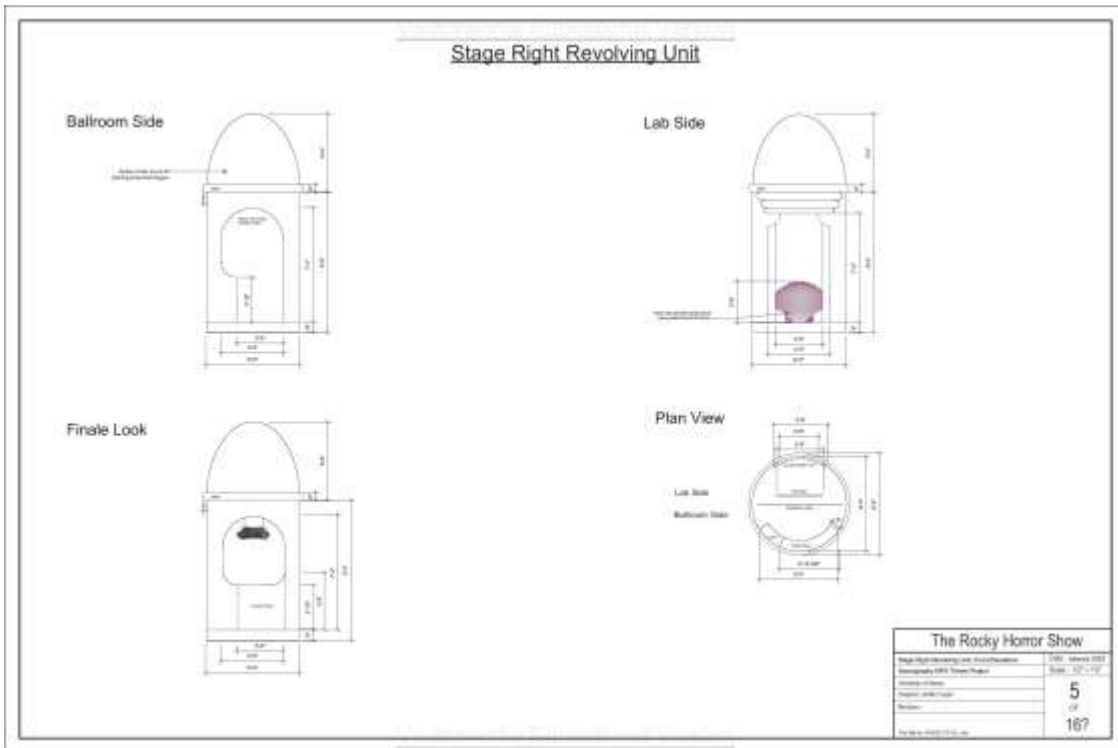


Figure 22: SR Unit Elevation

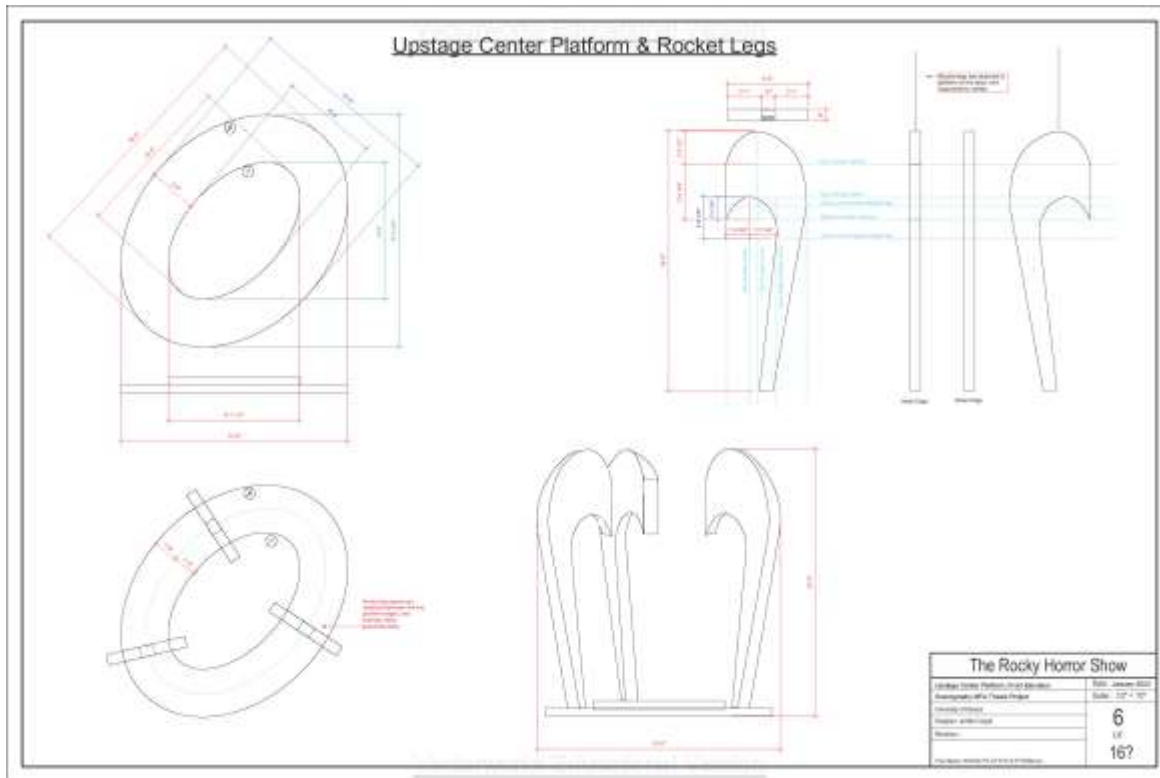


Figure 23: Center Platform Elevation

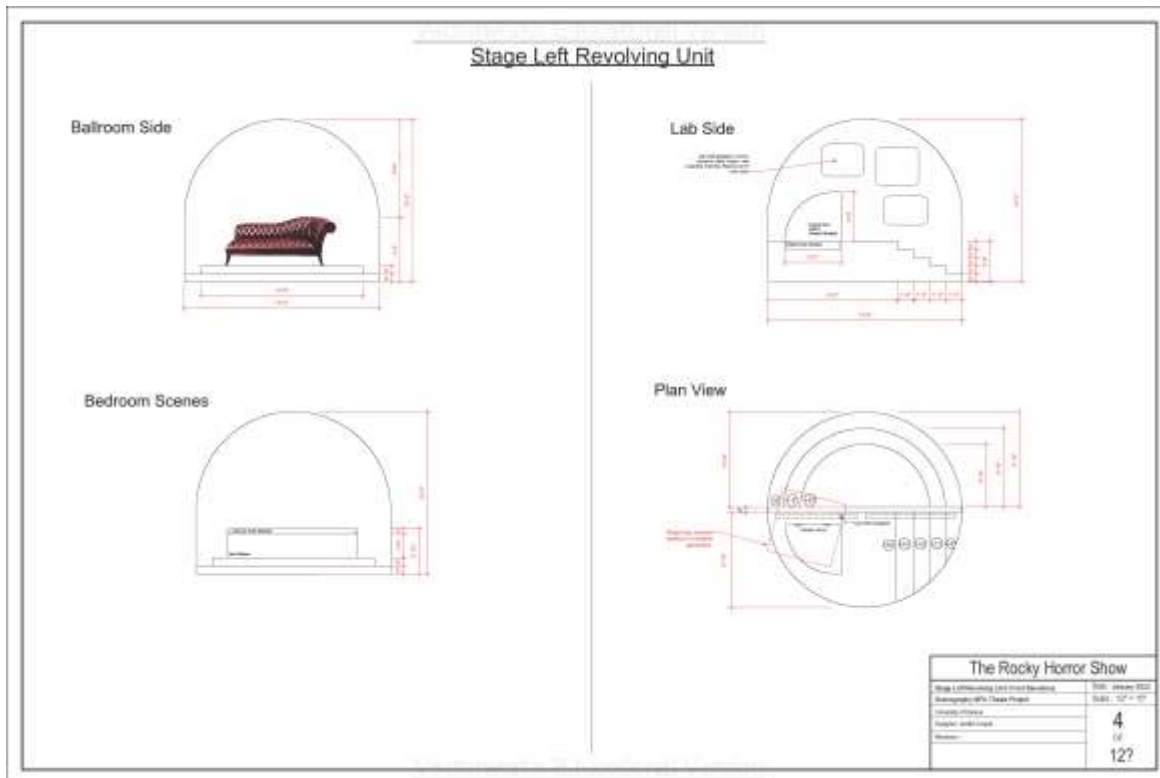


Figure 24: SL Unit Elevation

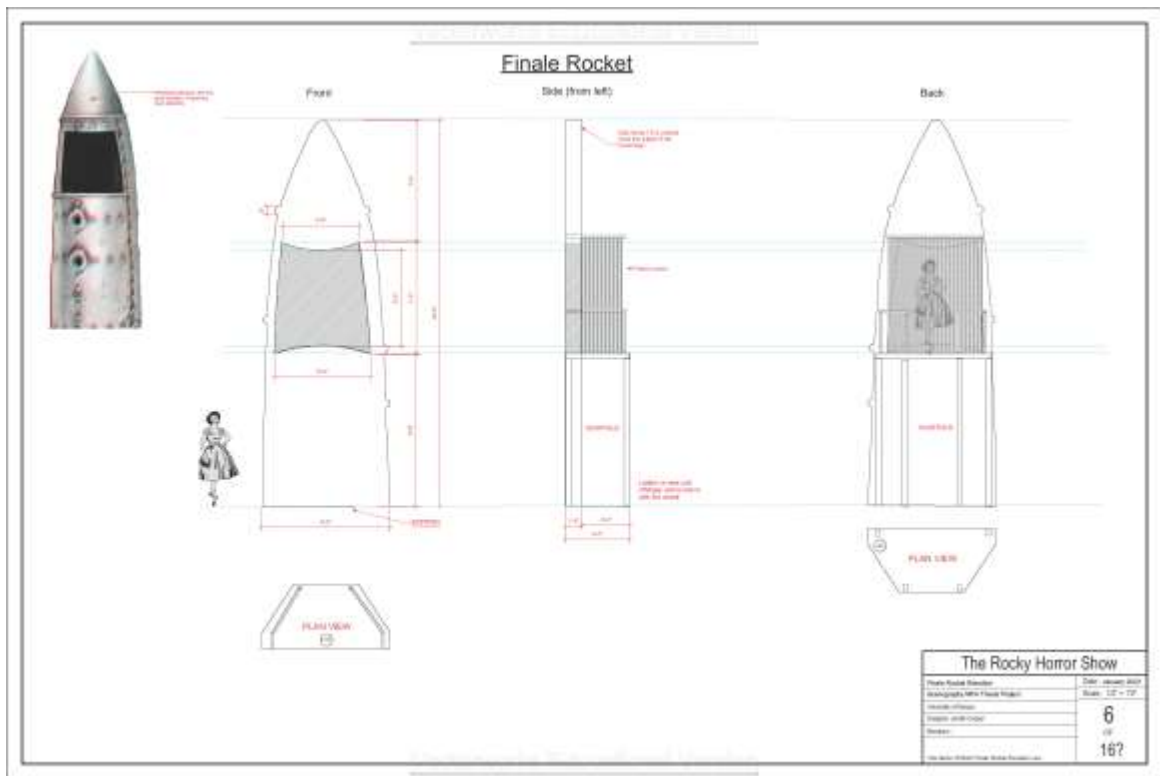


Figure 25: Finale Rocket Elevation

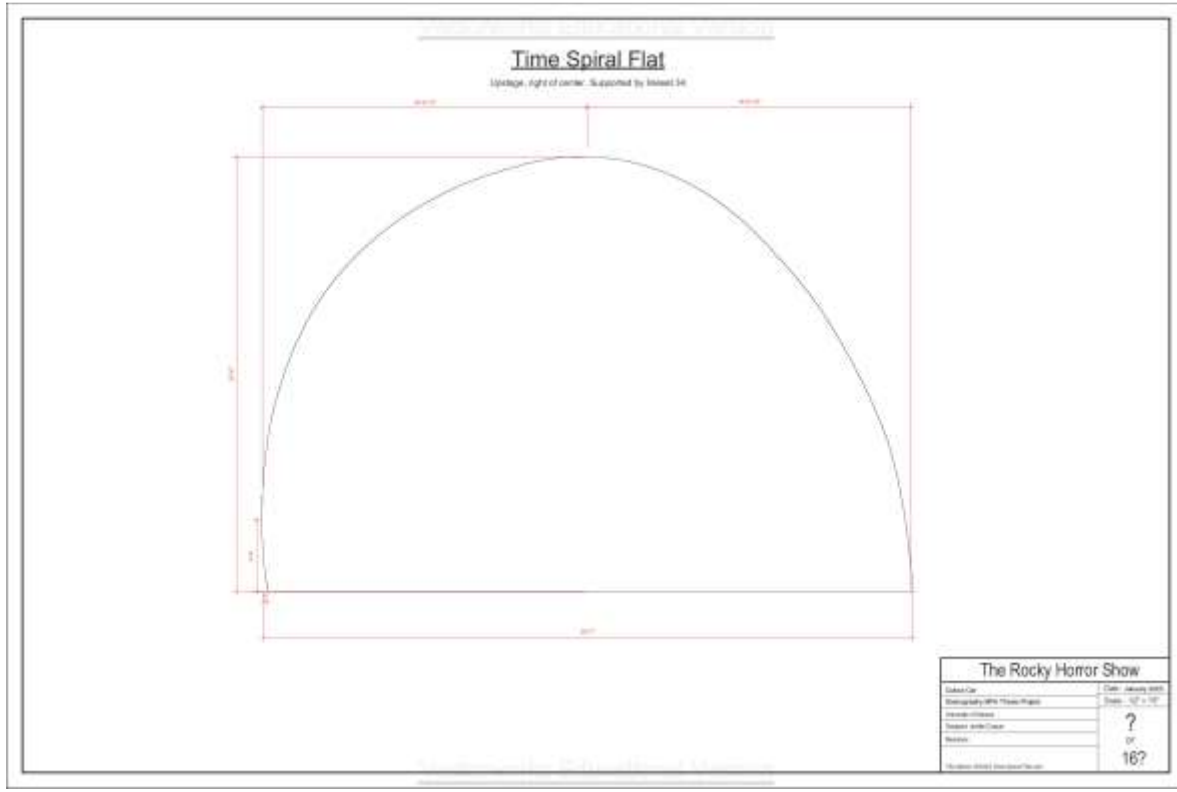


Figure 26: Time Spiral Flat Elevation



Figure 27: Time Spiral Paint Elevation, SL

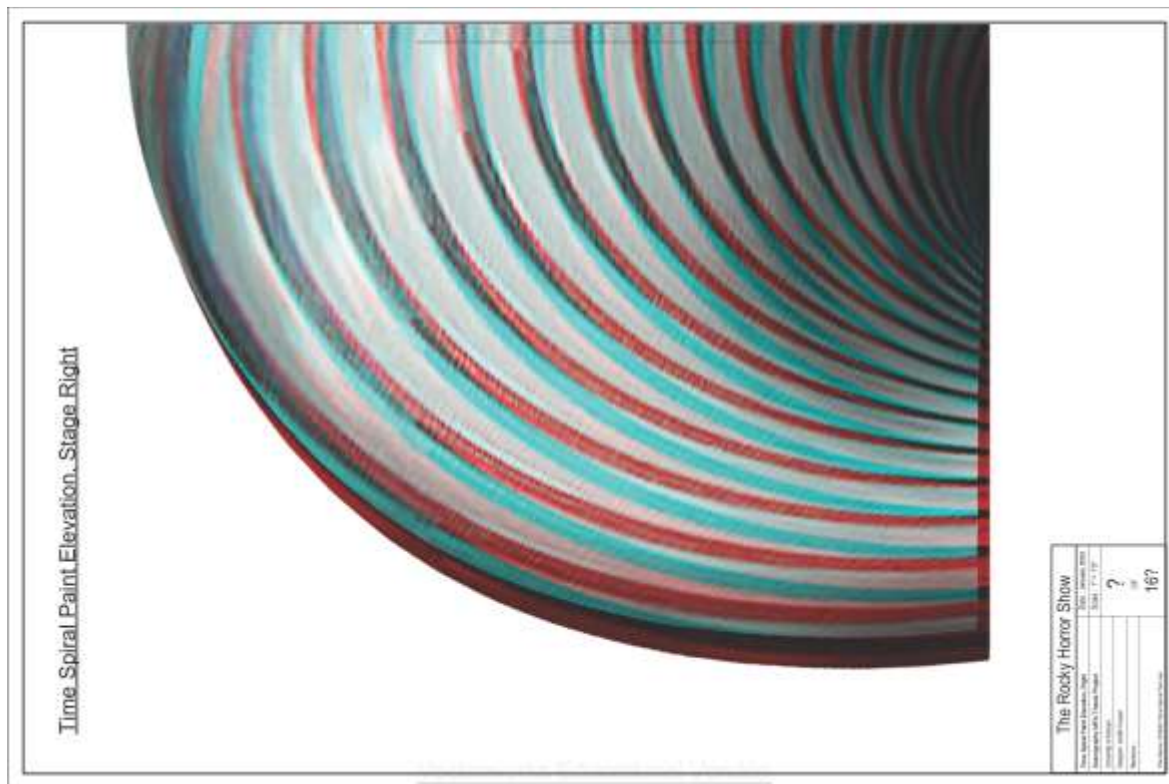


Figure 28: Time Spiral Paint Elevation, SR

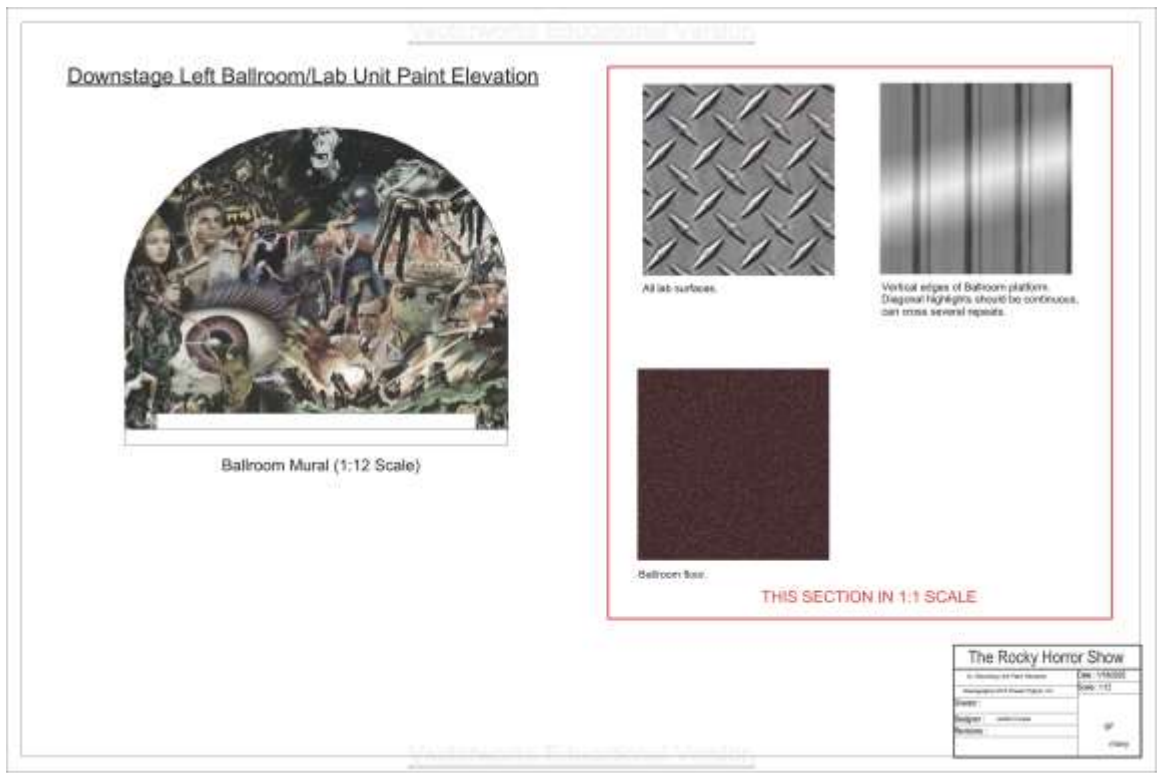


Figure 29: SL Unit Paint Elevation

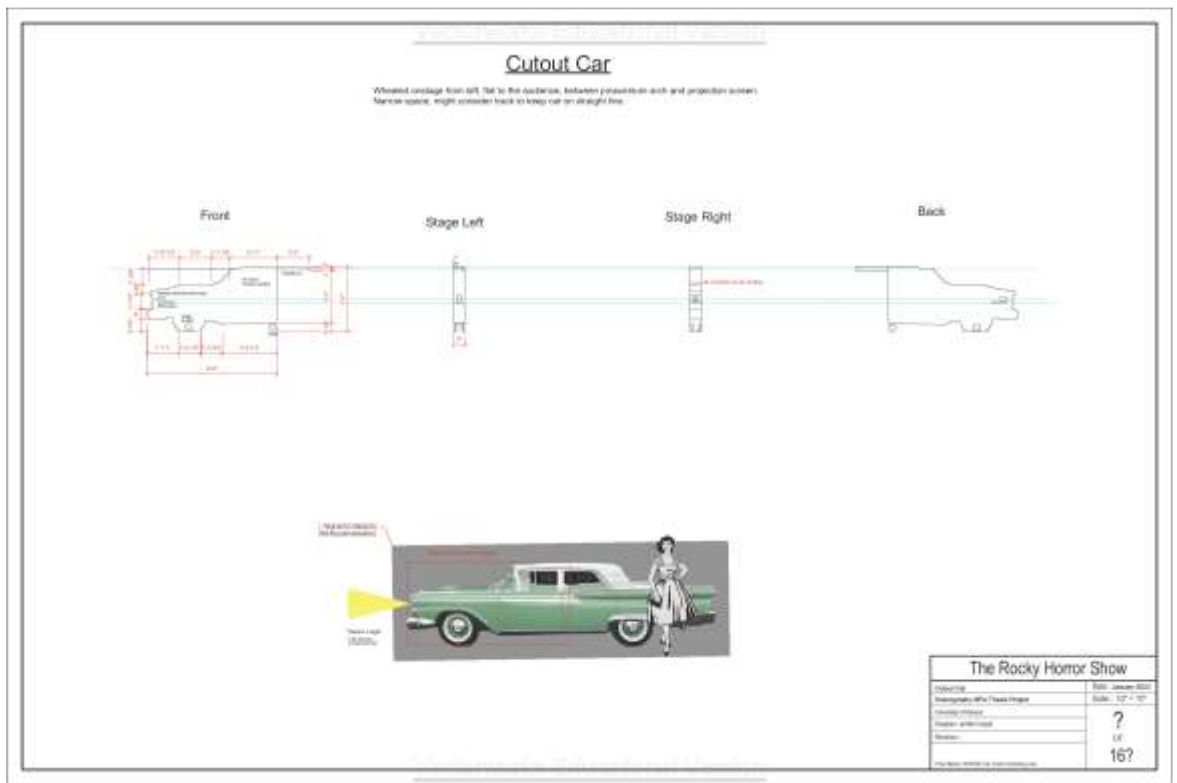


Figure 30: Cutout Car

COSTUME RENDERINGS



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
TRIXIE THE LISHERETTE



ONE-PIECE,
BACK ZIP

Trixie (The Usherette)



Jacket bodice and hat
Velveteen
Cotton/rayon blend



Fringed epaulets

Brass shank buttons



Trunks
Metallic stretch Lycra spandex



Trims of varying width



Gold fishnet tights



Apply gold paint to visible platform

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
PHANTOM
BASE COSTUME



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
PHANTOM
BASE COSTUME



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
PHANTOM
BASE COSTUME



Phantoms: Base Costumes



Ribbed vinyl pleather



Power mesh
Nylon/spandex



Patterned stretch satin
Nylon/spandex



Leather



PVC vinyl



Various shiny and/or stretchy fabrics in black and color contrast
Shades of red, purple, and dark pink

Phantoms: Scene Add-ons

Prologue & Epilogue: Science Fiction, Double Feature



Painted luaun, with
3D red/cyan effect
Sand and seal the edges
to prevent snagging

Attachment system
should leave arms free

Handles on the back

Scene 1: Dammit Janet & Scene 8: Once in a While



A simplified copy
of the front of Janet's dress

Bra structure and elastic
waist to attach in back

Pastel flip wigs with
pink headbands

Scene 2: Over at the Frankenstein Place



Short black vinyl rain slickers

Props: high-powered
vintage-looking flashlights

Phantom Scene Add-ons

Scene 3: The Time Warp, Sweet Transvestite



Flat accessories: assorted timepieces, years in different fonts, spiral imagery
 Print on 3/8" Neoprene rubber sheeting for sturdy flexibility
 (except clock hands, which are metal)
 Attach to base costumes with metal rings, clasps

Metallic boas, sparkly headpieces, spiral fascinators

Scene 4: Sword of Damocles, Charles Atlas, Hot Patootie



Short black alligator textured leather/vinyl aprons
 Round goggles with x-ray design on lenses
 Heavy-duty black rubber gloves

Entrac' - Scene 7: No phantoms
 Scene 8: see Scene 1
 Scene 9: No add-ons

Phantom Scene Additions

Page 3

Sc. 10 - 11: Floor Show and Finale

Phantoms are split into three different functions for the Floor Show.



Stage Audience

Pull house audience members onstage to watch the Floor Show

Fancy theatregoer accessories:

- Stylish hat, not too big
- Tuxedo vest/dickey with black tie
- Opera glasses
- Faux fur and satin wraps
- Vintage handbag

Fan Bearers

Hold scenic elements of Floor Show



Loincloths: gold foil knit with lots of drape



Floor Show Crew

Run around getting cast and stage ready during transition into Sc 10
(Costume crew offstage does main changes)

- Half-apron with costume stuff including shears
- Flexible tape measure, 60"
- Vintage men's suit vest, no collar
- Flat cap

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
JANET WEISS
© DAMMIT, JANET



+ PINK SATIN WRAP
OVER AT THE FRANKENSTEIN FACE



BOUQUET PROP

CHIFFON & TULLE

BRAID TRIM

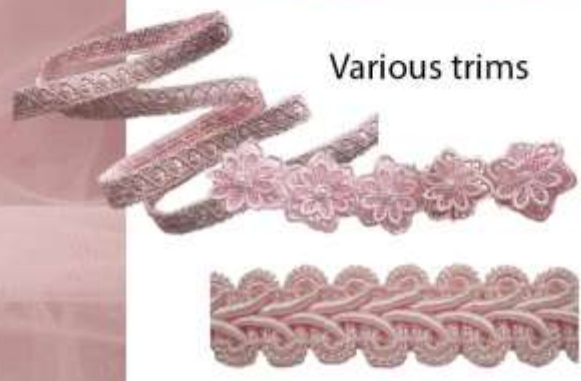
NYLONS IN
ACTOR'S SHADE

*

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
JANET
② THE LAB



Janet 1 & 2



Yellow gold
Zirconia or crystal
Added offstage after
"Dammit Janet"
She uses a big prop ring
in the song



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

BRAD MAJORS

© DAMMIT, JANET: VICE AT...



NAVY SATIN CONTRAST:
LAPELS, BOW TIE,
ROCKET TRIM,
PANTS STRIPE

RING PROP

NAVY PATENT LEATHER

8

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

BRAD

② THE LAB



BRAD 1 & 2





The Narrator



Wool felt trilby or fedora
with black grosgrain band



Lightweight wool suiting
Twill weave



White poly/cotton
medium-wight
shirting

Necktie
Navy geomtric jacquard
Silk or rayon



Tan trench coat

Rick Owens cop shoes
or thick-soled, round-toed
dress shoes



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
RIFF RAFF
① THE TIME WARP



② ENTRY/BALLROOM

③ THE LAB



④ ACT II



ZIPPER

TWO-TONE TAFFETA
(PLUM & ACID GREEN)
W/ COPPER HEX PATTERN

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

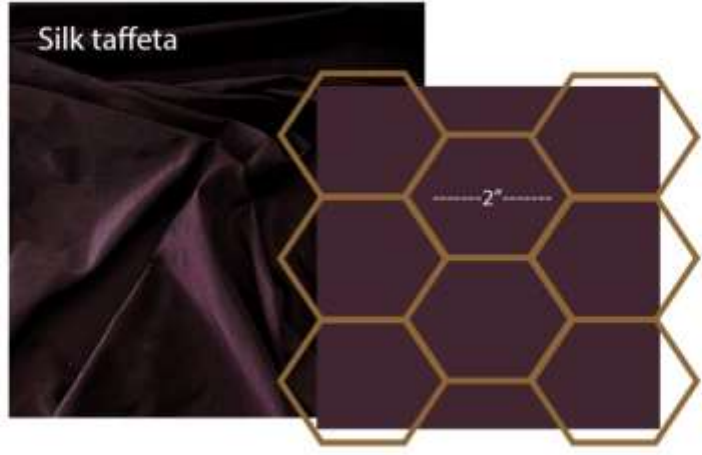
MAGENTA

① THE TIME WARP



TWO-TONE TAFFETA
(PLUM & ACID GREEN)
w/ COPPER HEX. PATTERN

Magenta & Riff Raff 1



Apply copper hex pattern to taffeta (paint?)

Riff Raff



Magenta

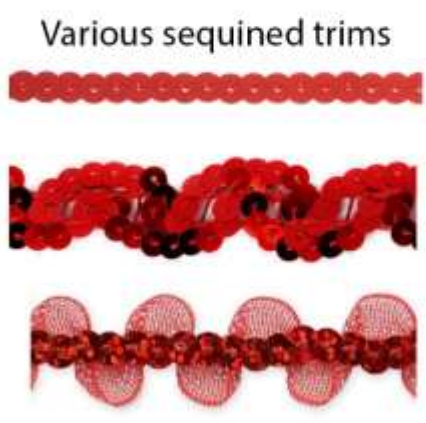
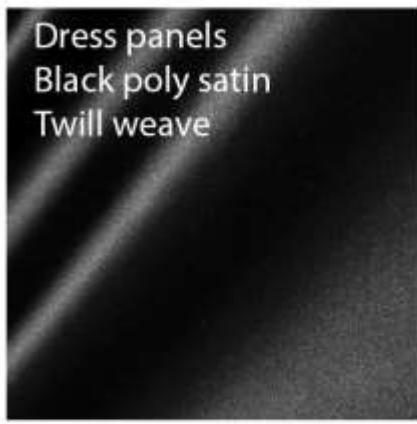


THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
COLUMBIA
@ THE TIME WARP



SEQUINED

COLUMBIA 1



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
DR. FRANK-N-FURTER
D. SWEET TRANSVESTITE



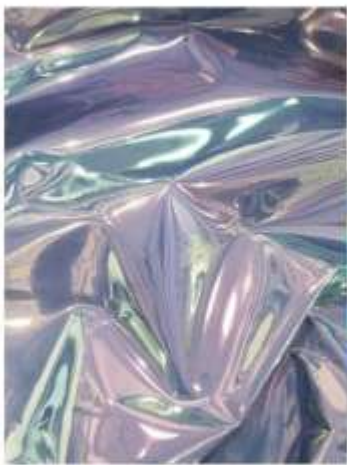
HOLOGRAPHIC MATERIAL-
SHAPED OR VACU-FORMED

BUILT-IN SAFETY
HARNESS FOR
FLYING ENTRANCE
& EXIT

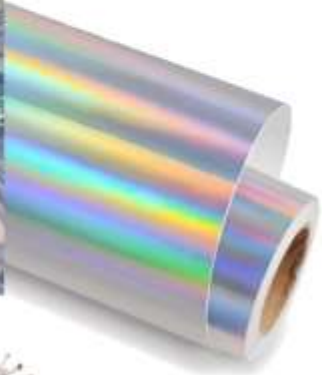


BACK VIEW

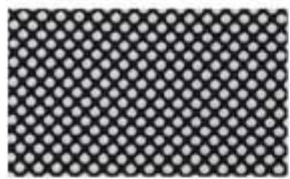
Frank 1: Sweet Transvestite



Bra, wings, hip flares, headpiece
Holographic molded vinyl
or applied over solid form
Paint missile details



Star necklace
Invisible strands
More strands



Trunks
Black stretch mesh
+ stretch partial
lining



Atomic stocking clip



Probably have to
shape a straight top

Boots

Holographic material
preferred; this heel
is good

Lab Accessories



Magenta, Columbia,
Riff Raff, Phantoms



Round shielded
sunglasses

Wide-cuffed
heavy rubber gloves

Brad & Janet



Clear pvc vinyl

White vinyl piping trim
(upholstery)

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
DR. FRANK-N-FURTER
② THE LAB



Frank 2



Lab coat dress
Poly/spandex 2-way stretch vinyl



Wedding veil



Silver gloves
Cuffed



And embellished



Safety glasses
Oversized if available



Atomic silver necklace
Oversized



Patent leather platform
Mary Janes
with chunky heels

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
ROCKY
@THE SWORD OF DAMOCLES



SURGICAL SCARS

Rocky 1

Metallic poly/spandex



Body stitching
(Makeup)



Gladiator Sandals

Leather or a passable substitute

These look like rubber; that's ok too



Brown with gold trim
or
gold with brown trim

Use texture in adding trim or paint



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
EDDIE



FROST MAKEUP -
SEE RESEARCH

ENGINEER BOOTS

Eddie



Undershirt
(purchase)



Black suede cloth



Red & black plaid
medium weight
cotton weave

Patches



Overdyed cotton denim jeans
Button fly, high waist



Silver skull
belt buckle



Black leather engineer boots

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
COLUMBIA

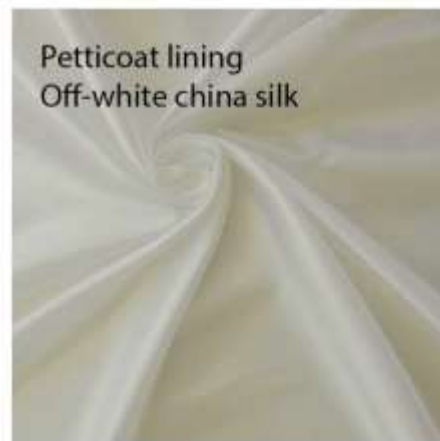
② TOUCH-A TOUCH-A TOUCH ME



RAG CURLS
(WIG)

SLIPPERS:
HIDDEN TAPS
INVISIBLE STRAPS
SEQUINS

Columbia 2



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
DR. FRANK-N-FURTER
© PLANET SHMANET, JANET



Frank 3

Burgundy silk chiffon



Peignoir



Hand-painted spiral galaxy

Ostrich boa trim
At least 4-ply
Stitch in other colors
and thin



Pants
Black leather



These would
do nicely

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
DR. EVERETT SCOTT
@EDDIE'S TEDDY



Dr. Scott! 1



Black half-frame glasses,
lightly tinted

Light blue & tan striped tie



Orthopedic shoes

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
COLUMBIA
③ FINALE



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

ROCKY

② FINALE



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

JANET

© FINALE



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

BRAD

③ FINALE



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
DR. EVERETT SCOTT
② FINALE



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
DR. FRANK-N-FURTER
④ FINALE



CLEAR VINYL SHOE TOPS/STRAPS.
PLATFORMS AS HIGH
AS ACTOR CAN MANAGE.

Floor Show



Tunic
Sheer gold silk voile



5mm gold braid



Bikini
Two-way stretch gold spandex



Coin trim

Cape
Pleated silk shantung



Frank



Headpiece



V-shaped pieces on bralet are metal

Bralet elastic structure



Shoes



Vinyl top (left), chunky heels (right), higher platform

Floor Show Accessories



Gold fishnet tights
sewn to lower edge
of bikini bottom

Brad's laurel wreath headpiece



Rocky's braid tubes

Hoop earrings



Shoulder clips
These are metal earrings
Simulate with 1/8" ribbon

Fingerless gloves



Wrist cuffs



Snake bicep cuff

THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW
RIFF RAFF
@ FINALE



THE ROCKY HORROR SHOW

MAGENTA

@ FINALE



Magenta & Riff Raff 2



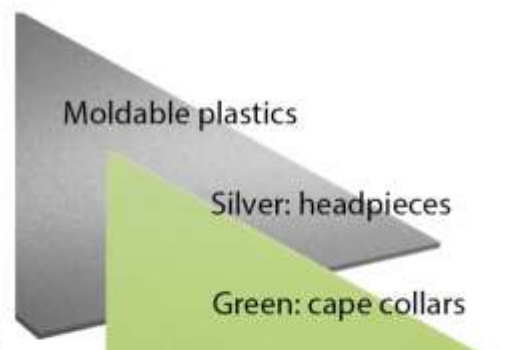
Silk taffeta
Bodice and pants



Apply copper hex
pattern to taffeta
(paint?)



Silver poly satin
Bodice trin/apron



Moldable plastics

Silver: headpieces

Green: cape collars



Cape
Silver poly satin

Pants and top/hood
Nylon/spandex power mesh



Grid pattern may need to be
applied (paint?) if patterned
power mesh can't be found

Gloves and Boots



If necessary,
cut down boots to ankle,
gloves to wrists
Make shafts & sleeves
from chartreuse and
clear vinyl



Paint heels silver



COSTUME PLOT

31: View full Excel spreadsheet at https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11rrdScI2gZqtkhSD0S2GgajKGQdoI9HN/edit?usp=share_link&oid=108009998926051276681&rtpof=true&sd=true

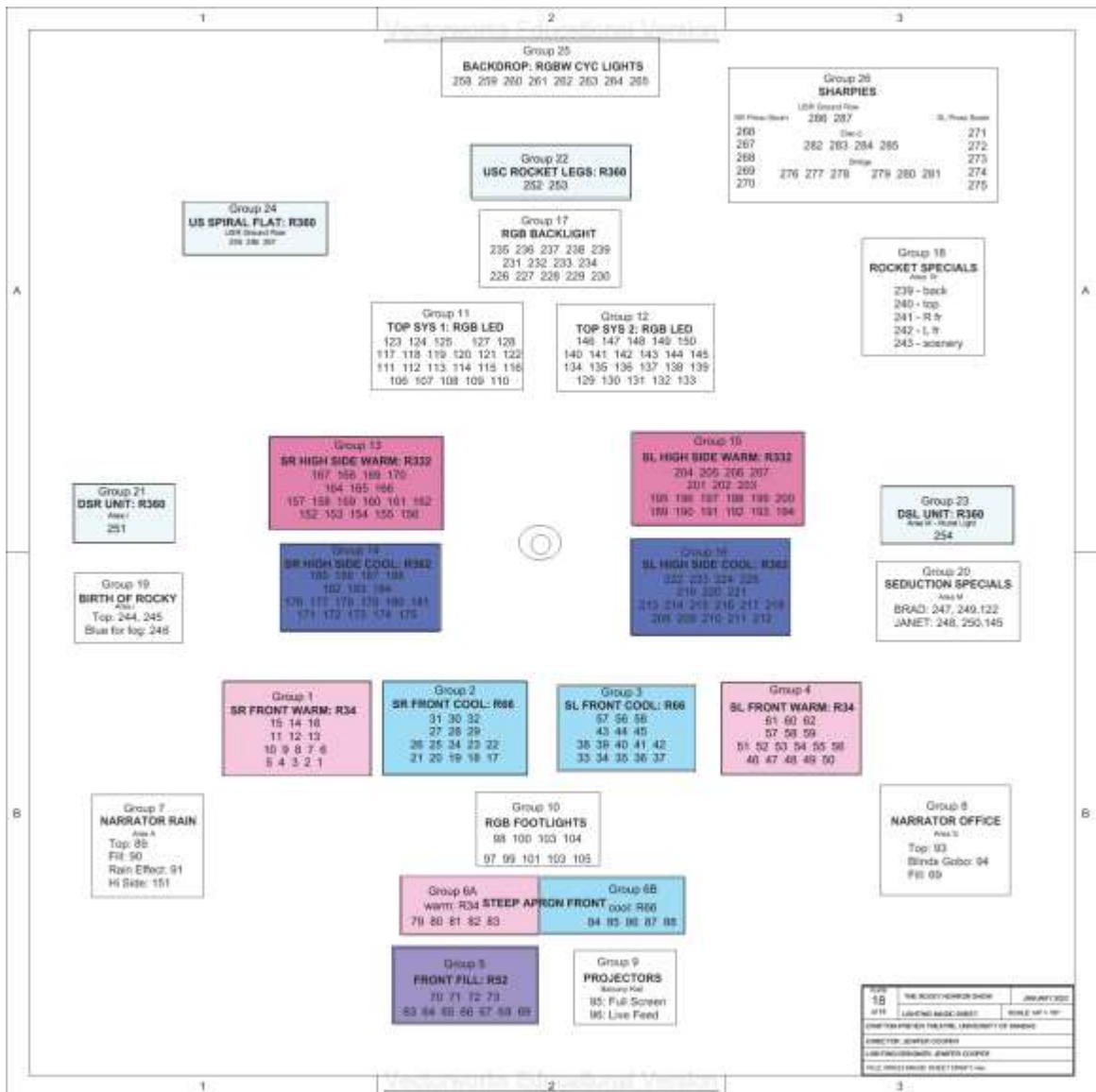


Figure 33: Lighting Magic Sheet