

Crypt KEEpER

<http://www.deathlord.net/CryptKeeper/cryptk.htm>



Difficulty Rating:



Every haunter has a favorite project that they have had the pleasure to build. I suppose because he was one of my very first, the 'Keeper is mine. Here's how I did it.



This is a standard 12" floor model Holmes stand fan that oscillates from side to side. This will be the mechanism to turn the head from side to side in a slow, natural movement of someone scanning the room. I start with this and simply remove the fan and fan cage. Cut off the shaft that sticks out the front that used to have the fan attached.

Fast forward. This is what your Keeper will look like when roughed out. First you will make a box (you may be able to utilize a 5 gallon bucket upside down or a milk crate for this). For me making the box is actually the easiest thing. It will be about 16" square. You will mount the fan to the center of the box with drywall screws through the ends of the fan feet. Then simply work out from there.



Take a close look at the armature of the chest and shoulders. I made mine out of primarily 3/4" oak plywood. I started with a piece 17" wide and about 12" high. I rounded the top corners where the shoulders are and then tapered that down as a chest using a standard jig saw. Then I cut out a 6" diameter hole from the top of the chest that actually has an opening at the top of about 4" wide. This allows the neck to clear the wood completely as the fan body oscillates from side to side. Once you have the chest cut out, attach it to the shaft of the fan so that the fan body is centered to the hole. I used two pieces of wood that was cut out to slip over the shaft and then put one screw through the each end and into the chest (from the back) until the wood pinched against the shaft tight enough to keep it from moving or slipping.

Next we will build out to keep the shirt the Keeper will wear from getting tangled up in the fan's movement. This will look like skeleton bumps under the shirt, so don't worry about the look of a "real" skeleton. The section you see behind his head is a 13" wide arc that will allow the back of the fan body to move without hitting it. Screw this on with 2" drywall screws through the chest and into the ends of the arc. Use wood glue at these two joints and use 2 screws for each side.

Now we make a cage for the front of the fan at his chest center. Make your sides as shallow as possible and still clear the front *corners* of the fan body. Attach this the same way as the back arc with screws that go through the back of the chest and into the two pieces. Now we need to block the area with two 1/4" thick slats to keep the shirt from getting into the fan again. One is 1" wide and the other is 2". Just screw these on with 1" screws.



As you can see in the photo, the arms articulate. I achieved this by starting with the shoulder "sockets". I used a piece of 3/4" solid oak 2" long and 1 1/2" thick. Round the corners as you see here and drill one hole through the chest and screw a 1 1/4" screw through the back of the chest into the solid oak. Leave this joint dry (no glue) so under pressure the socket will turn left or right slightly. Next I used a 3/4" x 3/4" solid oak upper arm 13" long and drilled and counter sunk holes through both ends. I drilled a corresponding hole into the shoulder socket with one side countersunk and attached the two with a 1 1/2" long #8 machine screw. Both the head and the nut of the screw should be flush with the wood so they won't snag on the shirt later. Then I attached a 12" long forearm to the *inside* of the upper arm, overlapping each 3/4", then finally the 7" hand to the outside of the forearm. Now my arms are poseable to a large degree.

The legs are the same basic construction. The hip sockets are just a piece of solid wood 3 1/2" long 2 1/2" tall. Screw this down between the two side fan feet with 3" screws (be sure to predrill through the socket and countersink 1/4" deep). Drill a hole 3/8" below the top edge so when mating with the leg the two will be flush. Cut the upper leg 21" long. Mate this to the lower leg 19" long and to the foot 9" or so long. The legs need only articulate toward the front, not side to side.

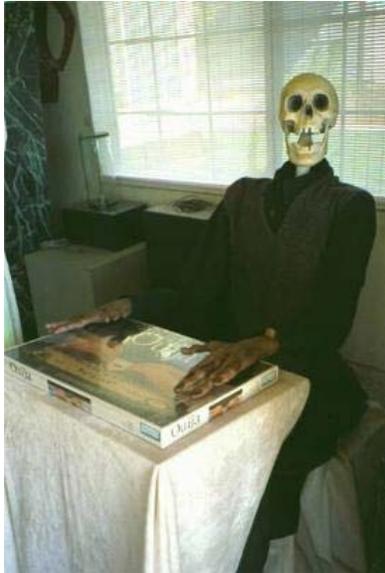


Next, attach a 3" wide piece of plywood about 14" long to the front of the box, 3/4" above the bottom with two 1" x 1" L brackets. Attach a 3" x 12" piece under the other end with 1 1/4" screws. Then screw down a post to the top of the extension. You can use a 3/4" section of black pipe (plumbing pipe) with a flange on each end. Since you want the overall height of your table in front of the Keeper to be about 26 1/2" high, buy a section of black pipe (threaded on both ends) 24" long. Next screw down a 16" deep, 18" wide section of the 3/4" plywood to the top of the post. This takes care of the wood work for this project!

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It is now time to attach a head to the fan body. In this case I used a talking head with eyes that light up that is motion activated. At the time it was the best I could do. However, I will be retrofitting the Keeper with a Boris talking head that will be able to sync. to the words he is speaking. For now we will attach a simple skull. As you can see in the photo there is a "neck" on this head, so I simply slip a 3/4" PVC pipe into one end and attach with a screw through both sides of the neck into the pipe. The other end I split in half back about 5". I then use a heat gun to soften the PVC sides so I can wrap each around the sides of the fan body. Once molded and pulled down snug to the fan I screw this down tightly with about 5 screws each side (3/8" x #8 pan head zinc).





This photo here shows our Keeper with clothes on. Let's mention here quickly that before we dressed him we attained an auto-reversing cassette player that runs off 110V and inserted an authentic Crypt Keeper cassette that I attained from Spencer Gifts a few years ago. This is a hard commodity to come by, so you may have a tough time attaining one. Try the internet to get a copy of one. Then I zip-tied the player to the post of the fan just below the chest. Adjusted to high you can hear him cackling through the night even over the extreme sounds of the haunt around him. Then I laid a white velour sheet over the box seat and the table, all in one continuous piece then frayed the edges all around at floor level.

For his clothes I used a very thick corduroy shirt to soften the sharp points of the framework then covered with an additional thick sweater vest over that. If you look close you will see the neck of the shirt remains open enough to fully ventilate the fan body so it does not overheat and cause a fire. Be careful with this. Since fans are built to draw air from behind and past the motor continuously, the manufacturers of them count on this element to help keep their moving parts cooled. So their motors sometimes generate more heat than a typical motor might. So it is a fair argument that the fan motor you use may possibly generate more heat than this one did and could pose a fire danger. You will need to run him under continuous supervision for a couple of hours to determine if he will run all night long or not and stay cool. I am not U.L. and offer no guarantee on my projects without the payment of \$250,000.00 U.S. dollars in advance to your undertaking the project so I can get the proper insurance in place! :) Black pants and black shoes complete the clothing effect. Then I attached two animated hands (the fingers move when motion activated) to each hand bone with zip ties. I couldn't find one right and one left hand so I simply painted the palm of one hand and painted on fingernails and it made a fine right hand.

I wanted the Keeper to look a little like the MC on Tales from the Crypt, so I needed to give him a rotting skeleton color. You could make him look a lot better with adding some rotting flesh element if you wanted to spend the time. I mixed up a few paints and sprayed him with a pin striping sprayer and was careful to cover the neck and his arms up his sleeves where the arm bones could be seen. Then I added the hair from a witch's hat and little sections of the hair strand



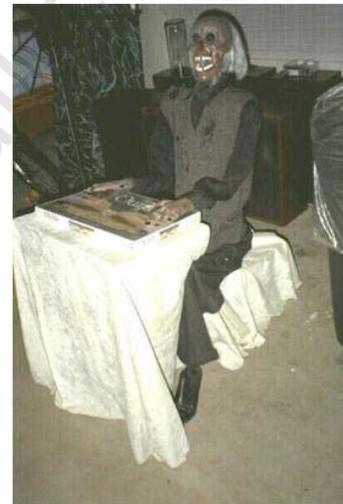
for eye brows as well. Next white paint was used for the teeth and red paint for the nose and gums. I outlined the red with black paint that added the curdled blood effect as well.

I needed to make his nice shirt and vest look a bit rotten as well as the face, so I cut out holes here and there and added a couple of spiders to his shoulder. But that wasn't quite enough. It looked like he was missing sections of clothing but not like he had been rotting away. After a little experimenting I learned that a wire brush made his clothes rot in seconds! The edges frayed and look really convincing.

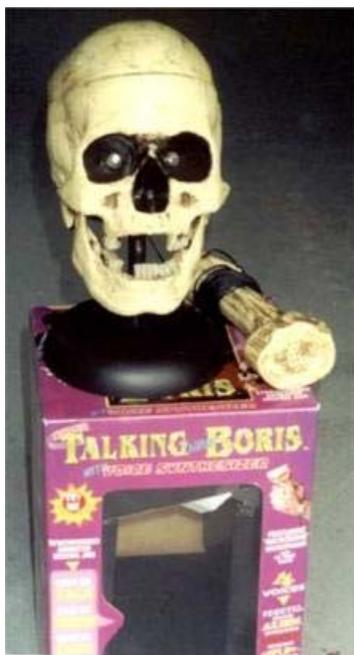
In fine tuning his animation I wound up setting the skull head to flash the red eyes and move his mouth but not to laugh as he can be set to make sound or remain silent. Then I leave the cassette tape playing all night, rather than hook it up to a motion detector. I hope to add the feature of making this motion activated some day as well, but so far have not had the time to dedicate to it. And the truth is I like hearing the Crypt Keeper talking in the background of the haunt all night anyway. Sometimes I leave him talking while I am setting up the haunt. Just for the HELL of it.

When he is actually set up in the haunt I place the Ouija board on the table and place his motion-activated hand on the pointer, so it looks like he is moving it around the table. It is a subtle feature and one that is lost on nearly every TOT, but I like it. When set up in the haunt I usually place him in front of the spider candelabra you see faintly on the left of the pic.

I hope you enjoyed your project and had excellent success. If you build one of these for your next Halloween, be sure to take a picture of him to send to me. I will post it here under reader's props!



Crypt KEEpEr UpdatE!



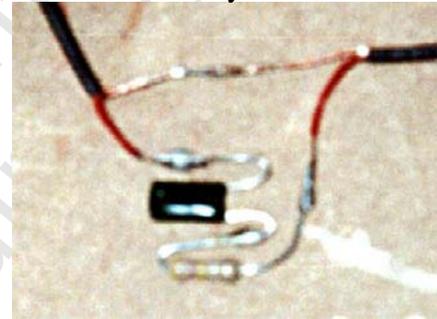
In 2001 I decided it was time that the Crypt Keeper get a new voice synchronized talking head and a new chair in which to address the TOTs. The first thing was to modify a Talking Boris skull to operate by lining in sound from a cassette player that plays back his voice.





After a great deal of help from the folks on the [chat list](#) I was able to find a capacitor and resistor that would allow me to use the headphone out jack on my cassette player to send a signal to the line that the microphone attaches to on the Boris. Radio Shack carries this .01pF Polyester Film Capacitor and the 10K ohm resistor you will need. The photo above shows a picture of a 470 k ohm resistor, but it turned out that the correct one is the 10k, so substitute the 10 instead.

Here is the Boris with the top of his skull removed and the microphone cord cut. On the skull cap I attached an 1/8" phone jack that I will be attaching the mic. lead to once I install the capacitor. This is not the location I used for the Crypt Keeper's new skull, as he will be fully viewed from the front and both sides. The phone jack I placed in the CK skull was below the black cover you see on the left of the photo, down inside the base of the back of the head. In this terrible picture you may be able to see the idea of how to attach your capacitor and resistor. They will be placed on the red, or inside wire with the capacitor soldered on the wire closest to the boris skull first and the resistor soldered closest to the phone jack. The shield wire will then be attached to the outside post of the phone jack for ground and the red to the center. It is of note to mention here that this took days to determine the exact capacitor / resistor combination that will make this work at a level that is audible by using the headphones out jack of a cassette player. However, this will not work with a little handheld player or little CD player as they simply do not deliver enough volume. You must use one of the larger players meant to be listened to like a stereo in your room.



Now that we have a voice, I need to make my plain skull look a little more like that handsome creature from the late night spooky show. First you must remove his LED eyes so they won't light up and lend a comical look to the face. Next his eye cavities are filled in with approximately one third of a ping pong ball apiece. It isn't hard to cut them out with a pair of scissors and shape them to fit the ocular cavity. Hot glue holds them in place very well. Next I sprayed the skull down with a light coat of gray paint so the skull wouldn't be as hard to fully color later. On top of the paint I sprayed the entire skull down with a coat of spray adhesive by 3M. This worked to give me a surface that I could glue paper hand towels to give him skin.

I have been wondering for years if yellow woodworker's glue could be used to replace the Phlx glue that is used to make skin as seen in my website under [Rotting Corpse](#). This is the first time I put it to the test and it worked perfectly. I mixed about 1/4 cup of woodworker's glue with about 1/2 cup of warm water and mix till it is thoroughly dissolved. Next I took strips of thick paper hand towels like you find in a commercial restroom and soaked it in the glue mix. I mashed up a ball of the paper mache' like material and filled in the cavity of the nose first. I then began laying on strips to the skull and formed it to the contours with my fingers. You must be very careful to keep your strips precisely following the separation of the top of the skull, as this must be able to be removed later to install batteries. Once he was fully covered I painted the skull in a brown color like the real CK.



The photo here shows how the center of his eyes were drilled out and he got a head of hair, all in the same effort to bring him closer to the "real" CK. The hair was cut from a cheap mask that came with a long white head of hair. Working from the bottom up I used the 3M spray adhesive one section at a time and then rubbed a bundle of the hair about 1/4" dia. at the very top of the shock against the adhesive. Overall he doesn't look bad and with the real CK voice coming from the synchronized mouth movements, it is very convincing. Far more so than with the previous head.

The cassette player I used initially for the voice of our chatty friend failed this year and I replaced it with a much larger unit that was no longer able to be mounted



inside his chest. Luckily I had the space beneath The seat in the Death Chair that allowed me to store it and also send sound up through the seat to speakers I mounted in his chest. However I decided not long after this rebuild to eliminate the analog cassette player altogether and replaced that with a Mimic Machine playback chip device. To amplify the sound from the playback device I used a small karaoke machine that you see here. Now rather than just talking all night, he merely plays back an 8 second clip as the TOTs pass by, triggered by remote control.



The resistors in his talking skull had to be replaced with the same set up you see used in [Lacerated Larry](#) to accommodate the different signal level produced by the small device. Whew! This boy has had a LOT of work done to him by now!

And here is how our chatting creep looks in all his gory. The new [Death Chair](#) gives him a much more prominent stature, as does his new animations. See him in action [here](#).

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