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Animated "Wire-Frame" Werewolf - Hack

by Marc A. Stevens

So I'm sitting around thinking of what I wanted to do for Halloween, as far as decorations and props were concerned. I really liked some of the animated props I had had seen 'do-it-yourselfers' complete, and those being offered by design companies who charge thousands of dollars to rent their equipment. Unfortunately, I didn't have the cash to shell out for the MAJOR props which I would have loved to have for my Halloween d'cor, so I opted for the 'do-it-myself' method.

I got the original idea actually from one of our neighbors and their lawn ornaments. You know those crazy people who put those fake, animated, wire-frame deer's or bear's in their front lawns around the fall season, trying to fool people, you know the ones. Anyway, these animated, wire-frame bear's come complete with a collapsible body and a motor mounted in the neck of the frame so that the bear's head moves from side-to-side. These lawn decorations can be bought at any Menards, Home Depot, or Meijer outlets for around \$59.00

After mulling the idea around in my head, I came up with a great new animated prop for Halloween, based around the animated bear frame. Since the height, girth and frame of the bear is similar in size to an actual wolf, I decided that the bear frame could be modified into an animated werewolf. The five best features of this prop was that, 1) the total cost was CHEAP, 2) the prop itself could fit back into it's original box for easy storage, 3) the prop was going to be animated (meaning that the werewolf's head was going to move back and forth from side-to-side (I just LOVE animated props!) 4) the bear's frame posed and elongated neck which makes the prop look more surrealistic, and 5) The 'WOW' factor vs. total cost. Now, when I design my props, I think a lot about number 5. I want MAXIMUM 'WOW' or 'shock-value' for the minimum amount of money.

THE PARTS:

- 1 ' Animated 'wire-frame' bear (lawn ornament) (\$50.00)
- 1 ' Cheap werewolf mask (purchased at Meijer for around \$15.00)
- 1 ' Pair of foam filled elongated arms (purchased at Spencer's Gifts for \$21.00)
- 2 ' Cans of spray paint (Brown or Grey in color ' around \$3.00)
- 1 ' Ream of brown fabric
- 1 ' Can of spray adhesive (\$2.50)

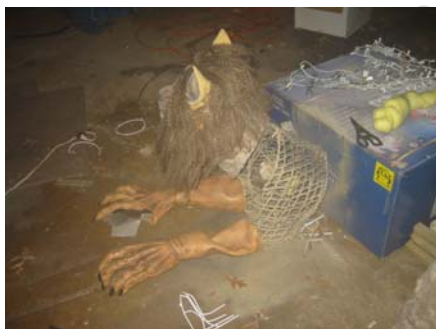
TOTAL COST OF PROJECT: About \$100.00 (give or take a few cents)! :)

THE DESIGN:



The picture above is of a work already in progress. Once I purchased the needed supplies I decided to jump right into my project, forgetting to grab my digi camera BEFORE starting the project. My apologies' I digress. As you can see from the photo, the front half of my animated 'hack' werewolf is about 1/3 of the way already completed. The wire frame 'bear' comes in the blue box (in picture) and is in four separate parts: The head, the shoulder portion including it's front 'paws' (which houses the servo-motor that gives our werewolf it's head turning action), the back, and the belly with legs.

CONSTRUCTION STEPS:



- 1) Remove your new animated, wire-frame bear from box and remember to keep the box for storage.
- 2) Cut off all of the attached Christmas lights, but remember to keep the string as we will use these lights later for the 'glowing' red eyes.
- 3) Remove the right and left front paws by cutting them off with a pair of heavy duty wire cutters.

You will need to do this because we will be using the foam filled arms later that will give us our front support for the werewolf. Additionally, by cutting off the front paws and applying the foam arms gives our werewolf a 'surrealistic' springing action. When the head turns from side to side, it will appear to also be 'bouncing' up and down as well.



4) Bend the front wires of the bear paws so that the wires come to a point. This will make it easier for you to apply the foam filled arms. (as seen in picture)

5) Time to spray-paint our creature. In a well vented area, I spray-painted the entire frame (head, shoulders, back and belly) black (since out of the box the frame is white and I don't want any of the frame to show). After I let it dry, I gave it another coat of spray-paint BUT this time used a brownish color to match the hair color of my mask.



6) After the paint dried, I now needed to give my beast its 'skin'. Using my wire frame as a guide, I cut holes in my fabric and left enough space for over-lapping for the neck, torso, back and belly. It is probably a good idea to start wrapping anything that sticks out from the body, i.e. neck, front limbs, and rear legs. Do not worry about covering the wire frame bear head, as this will be covered by the new werewolf mask.

7) Start by wrapping the neck first. Spray a liberal amount of adhesive to both the wire frame neck AND the BACK portion of the cut out fabric. Start wrapping the fabric around the wire frame from the bottom center of the neck until it comes full circle and lines up with where you started. Cut off any excess and 'tuck' any extra material towards the INSIDE of the wire frame. Next, apply the same technique to the front and rear limbs. Next, wrap the front torso (allowing for holes in the fabric to fit through over the limbs) the back, then the beast's belly. Let dry. (note the actual wire-mesh frame in the picture)

8) You will notice that, depending on the type of mask you get, it may have its own hair and plenty of it (mine did). So I decided to give my werewolf a facial! There was way too much hair on the face of the werewolf mask, so I decided to cut off the excess facial hair to open up the visibility of the face and used the facial hair as a 'stripe' down the center of the werewolf's back.

This gave my werewolf a 'raised-spine' effect. Spray a little adhesive along the spine of your creature, slap on the extra hair along the center of its back and, VIOLA!

9) Since were working with the werewolf mask, now would be a good time to 'fit' your mask around the head portion of our wire frame bear. NOTE: YOU MAY NEED TO CUT YOUR MASK TO ALLOW IT TO FIT PROPERLY OVER THE WIRE FRAME BEAR HEAD. This is another reason you don't want to buy one of those collector masks for this project. I decided to cut my werewolf mask down the bottom center to allow for the hair to fall away from its face and open up the neck area.

10) Once my werewolf head was mounted, it was time to wire the red, glowing eyes. Using the original string of lights that came with the package, I replaced 2 white bulbs for red ones and ran my lights back through the body only using the two red lights as the center of my werewolf's eyes. The rest of the light string can be wrapped with duct or electrical tape to hide any lights that may show through. Poke a couple of tiny holes in the center of your beast's eyes and slide the red lights through the eye holes.

11) Take your foam filled arms and slide them over the front paws of your wire frame. Make sure to push them in as far as they will go as this will add support to our frame.

12) Next, assemble all the parts' attaching the werewolf head to the front torso (were the motor is housed) then the rest of the body (back and belly). Plug it into an out let and VIOLA' YOU GOT AN ANIMATED WEREWOLF THAT'S GUARANTEED TO 'WOW' THE NEIGHBORHOOD!

I got a fantastic reaction to this prop from kids to adults alike! The smaller kids were scared to the point of either wetting their pants or crying to their parents (the smaller ones anyway) and the older kids to adults thought it was cool enough to ask me where I got it from and where could THEY get one! Of course I HAD to tell them' I MADE IT MYSELF! :)

FINAL NOTE:

I'm sure some of you who post projects to this site will undoubtedly hack my hack and only improve upon my creation. I look forward to seeing what you do with your new animated werewolf! Have fun! I hope this works for you as well. Happy Haunting'