



<http://www.phantasmechanics.com/harryhitch>

Meet Harry the Hitcher

Phantasmechanic Joseph Keller builds a customized, life-size adaptation of our hitcher prop!



Hello, my name is Joseph and I'm a hauntaholic. When I saw Phantasmechanics for the first time, I was floored and until then, my first "animatronic" was a single candle that floated via black thread but after seeing the flying crank ghost, the seed was sown, my Halloween would move from then on. My first big animatronic project was Rachel, my flying crank ghost; I followed the instructions extremely carefully and she turned out beautifully. And from then on, I was hooked.

I saw the Hitcher on Phantasmechanics and decided that I had to have one; my haunt theme leaning towards a decidedly Disney Haunted Mansion look, playful ghosts in a fun cemetery setting. I figured that if I could "squash" the Hitcher from 3 ghosts to 1 ghost, I could have a life size (or death size as the case may be) hitchhiking ghost.

Obtained from
Omarshauntedtrail.com



So here's how I did it and the mistakes I made and things I learned... First of all, the key to the 'natural' movement of the body is that the center bars that connect the large vertical parallel bars are always horizontal, therefore the body could be attached to that and it wouldn't lean over as the verticals tilted side to side [as shown at right and below. Text continues below.]



The vertical bars and center support are to be painted flat black to disappear into the darkness. The motor is a VERY heavy duty 6 RPM surplus motor I found online [picture at right] with a counter spring to help it come back up, the tried and true Dayton would probably work very nicely since the weight of the whole framework is basically all on the two center bolts supporting the vertical members.

What I had to learn is not to be skimpy or cheap, it cost me later...I initially made the whole framework from thinner aluminum bars and when I put the arm motor on, the whole thing bent. Same thing with the crank arms, I wouldn't suggest anything under 1/8th of an inch thick metal. I had to basically replace everything with sturdier aluminum stock. Experience is what you get when you didn't get what you wanted.



The arm crank mechanism is rather simple [pictures at right] but I had to rethink the way I did it again. I made a waving Bucky last year and the arm mechanism worked great using the elbow joint as a hinge. I got it to work on Harry but unfortunately, it was prone to locking up so I opted for PVC and a strap hinge. I thought about linking the arm to the leaning motor but opted not to; I wanted the arm having independent hitching movement for a more lifelike (or deathlike) look.



So basically, that's it, Harry's hitching on Halloween. He's going to be outfitted in a basic black suit and spray painted with a clear fluorescent blue for that otherworldly glow that's all the rage right now. Currently, he's nude but otherwise happy.

And of course, Harry and I thank Doug Ferguson for the inspiration and generously sharing his technical knowledge to the haunting world.

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