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Reporter photo by Delmar Watson
Big Actor: Terl, a three-story high balloon, has been appearing around Hollywood heralding the production of two films based on L. Ron Hubbard's novel, "Battlefield Earth." Producer William Immerman, left, and director Ken Annakin, right, join in the stunt making.

'Battlefield' promos in advance of shoot

By BILL DESOWITZ

When independent producer William Immerman announced months ago he would be filming L. Ron Hubbard's best selling science-fiction saga, "Battlefield Earth," as two back-to-back productions (each costing \$20 million), he immediately notified all the science-fiction conventions to start spreading the word.

Next, he threw a party on Sunset Blvd. to coincide with the American Film Market to entice buyers. When he signed director Ken Annakin ("The Longest Day"), he staged an elaborate photo session next to the Hollywood sign (see above), utilizing a giant replica of one of the film's creatures as a prop.

Although the first film doesn't begin production until December or January, Immerman initiated the promo-

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'Battlefield' promotion

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tion process at the earliest possible stage, taking advantage of all primary outlets. As an independent producer (Immerman was a vp at 20th Century Fox during the time of "Star Wars"), he maintains that creating an early awareness of the film is a necessity. He doesn't have a distribution deal yet, so he will be without the benefit of a major studio until the film is completed.

"One advantage of putting together an independent film is that you don't deal with a committee system," Immerman says. "This allows me to exhibit creative control with my writer and director. We plan to keep the picture in the public eye in various ways.

"Since Hubbard is not granting interviews, I will be conducting interviews on numerous cable talk shows, beginning with 'Dateline USA' on Group W. When the book is released overseas in its paperback edition, we will capitalize on this event, too."

In addition, Immerman will appear with Annakin and Abraham Polonsky ("Body and Soul"), who has been signed to write both screenplays at conventions and on future talk shows. Because Annakin and Polonsky are veterans, Immerman will attempt to organize retrospectives of their films as a further publicity tie-in.

Finally, Immerman says posters proclaiming "The Psychlos Are Coming" and "The Psychlos Are Here," which draw attention to the predominant creatures, will soon be distrib-

uted. However, the precise design of the creatures will be kept secret.

When questioned about the signing of Annakin and Polonsky — especially in light of the fact that this is a youth genre — Immerman explains he was searching for old guard professionals: "A lot of young directors have creative genius, but you never know how they will handle the logistics of an epic such as this," Immerman adds.

"With Ken and Abe, I felt secure they could handle the demands of the project. The genre may be new to them, but it is a human story about overcoming tremendous obstacles."

Currently, Immerman is scouting locations in Arizona, Colorado, California and England. He is also meeting with state-of-the-art special effects technicians to plan the film's visual design.

The hardcore science-fiction groups, by the way, have apparently embraced "Battlefield Earth." Immerman says there is constant interest in the development of the project, and people are lending their support on a regular basis. In fact, the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy and Horror awarded Annakin a prize last year for being named director of "Battlefield Earth."