By David B. Pearson

My father — Charles L. Pearson — and I are building a dollhouse based on the house that Buster built in One Week. This dollhouse will be up for bid at the Damfino Convention this October in Muskegon, Michigan. We had hoped it would be an exact replica, but as you will see, some things are impossible when Keaton is involved.

The model will have a detachable porch railing (suitable for transforming into a ladder), will spin on a turntable (for unexpected storms), and will include other goodies. The scale of the model will be 1 to 17.

As we went through the film — again and again and again! — we discovered some interesting facts.

We figured out that the house is 26 feet, 8 inches tall. First we looked at Buster, knowing he was 5'6" tall, and then at the planks on the outside of the house. Just after he ponders Sybil Seely's hearts (drawn on the seventh plank from the bottom), Buster bumps into the house. He is nine planks high. That makes each plank seven-and-a-third inches high. From that measurement, we were able to determine the height of the house, as well as all the other measurements throughout the building. Also, as the house spins, we were able to get shots of the outside from every possible angle.

Other interesting things we found were that, of the 15 windows, 10 of them are completely normal (with right angles at the cor-

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No wonder he's looking confused: This house is impossible.
Where does this door lead? Or the window?

ners), and four of them are off by only two degrees. One window, however, is off-center by 42 degrees, but that probably wouldn't be so noticeable if the others weren't so normal. (Oh, there is also a window in the back that is placed a little low — but it's a normal-shaped window.)

We also realized fairly quickly that although we can build an exact replica of the outside of the house, the inside of the house won't be that easy — mostly because we discovered that there can't really be any rooms inside that house!

Look at the film. Then fast-forward to the sequence where the house is spinning around. If you look closely, you'll see that there is a wooden pole holding the roof up. It's attached from the lower left corner of the house, and goes through to the right edge of the roof.

Another piece of evidence is the small platform that's just below the door on the outside of the second floor of the house. This platform allows Buster to stand inside the door so he can do his fall, giving the illusion that there's a second floor.

In reality, we believe that there are at least eight different sets to the house. There were three exterior sets — the house in construction on Tuesday, the house we best remember on Wednesday through Friday — and well, that darned thing at the end.

There were also separate sets built for each of the four rooms, as well as a set for the staircase.

Buster shot One Week in about six weeks, and he didn't appear to spend a whole lot of time worrying about the continuity of the film, perhaps because it was one of his first films. As the house is a "crazy" house to begin with, the lack of continuity adds to the dazed feeling we have seeing the film.

Anyway, it's certainly not as well-ordered a film as The General...

Here are some of the nits we picked.

—TUESDAY THE 10TH—

The left side of the house is already up before Handy Hank gets to change those numbers. Everything looks okay — but the next day it makes a sudden 20-degree turn outward on the second floor, creating the "milk carton" effect. Of course it then falls down around Buster, but it's still intact, isn't it?

—WEDNESDAY THE 11TH—

The floorspace of the first room interiors — the dining room, stairwell, and kitchen — are two-and-a-half times the size of the outside of the house.

Why does Sybil have that pail of dark paint? Except for those hearts, nothing else on or in the house is painted that color. The house is light gray, with white trim.

While Buster is pulling the piano into the dining room, he slingshots Handy Hank (who is sitting in the bedroom) through the roof. Both the dining room and bedroom are on the left side of the house, but when Hank's head comes out, he's on the right side of the house. How come?

In the dining room, two windows are shown on the wall behind Buster, but only one is behind Hank in the room directly above him.

When Buster turns the railing into a ladder to rescue Hank, he puts it against the front of the house, but when he comes down, the ladder is against the right side of the house.

—THURSDAY THE 12TH—

The bathtub Sybil is bathing in takes up too much room between the wall and the door leading outside.

The small bathroom window above the tub doesn't exist on the outside of the house.

When Buster falls through the chimney, the chimney is about three feet from the edge of the roof, making it a good eight feet to the left of the tub into which Buster falls. (Remember, there is five feet of no roof at all.)

This means Buster should have fallen about where Sybil is showering off.

The door between the shower and the bathtub leads absolutely nowhere!

—FRIDAY THE 13TH—

On Thursday, Buster falls 10 feet out the second floor door when he opens it outward, but on Friday Buster opens the same door inward to dispose of Handy Hank.

When Buster then enters the bedroom

And for that matter, where did Sybil get this paint?
from screen right, his guests enter the room screen left. The only problem is that the bedroom is supposed to be on the extreme left of the house.

Earlier in the film Handy Hank also enters the house screen left. Where are these people coming from? They are clearly not coming up from downstairs, as the staircase leads directly into the bathroom ... which is to the right. Come to think of it, how can anybody get into that bedroom?

While Buster is in the bedroom, it starts to rain. Buster notices that there are a few little holes in the roof. But why should he be worried about this, as the roof only covers about 52 percent of the ceiling?

Buster exits the bedroom, screen left, then enters the (way too big) kitchen screen left again (!), where he walks past another window to exit the door in the corner of the room. Cutting outside — just before the house starts spinning — we see that there's one window to each side of the door — which is now in the middle of the house. But seeing what we've seen from inside, there are at least three windows to the right of that door, and none to the left.

The chimney, which was three feet from the edge of the roof on Thursday, by Friday is located in the middle of the roof, placing it above the staircase, and is now about 12 feet from the bathtub.

The bottom planks of the house disappear just before the house starts spinning.

How can Buster make a complete spin around the kitchen, if it's only on one side of the house? Wouldn't he hit a wall?

— SATURDAY THE 14TH —

Let's not even think about Saturday.

We're just hoping no one asks us to build that version of the house.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Start saving your pennies. The Pearsons' one-of-a-kind dollhouse will be auctioned off on Saturday, Oct. 9, 1999, at the 5th Annual Damfino Convention in Muskegon, Michigan. The one and only.

Meet a Damfino:
Shoko Ohgawara

Shoko Ohgawara lives in Okayamashi, Japan. She has a law degree from National Okayama University (her specialty is political science), and currently works in the export and import trade of videos, laserdiscs and books. "Originally," she says, "I studied German classic films in my school days, because at that time my main interest was ultra-nationalism during World War II. However, Our Hospitality, which I happened to see on video, changed my concept perfectly. Buster's calmness and constancy in the midst of the reversed world told too many things. Since then, I have looked for his films in Japan — in vain — at last finding the fine Kinoversions, various books connected with Buster, and above all, your society. Among Japanese film scholars, The Damfino is famous."

She tells us that Okayamashi is a small, rural city — in fact Dr. Akagi was filmed in her neighborhood; it was shot in front of her great-uncle's clinic. She claims to have developed her love of American slapstick because her grandparents lived in San Francisco during the 1920s. "In fact," she laments, "I'm alone in Japan — my Japanese Buster-friends live in Tokyo, which is far away from here."

Shoko has introduced us to Moomin, friendly trolls created by artist-writer Tove Jansson of Finland for a very successful series of internationally known books. "Last Christmas," says Shoko, "a new book about Moomin was published by Tampere Art Museum in Finland. I translated it into Japanese — it will be printed in the near future." She believes that Moomin was influenced by what she calls "Buster's tempest comedy" and finds it disappointing that the Moomin TV series has not been bought in the U.S., although the books are published here. "I do hope Moomin and Shomin can make friends with all Damfinos," she says.

Below: Shoko Ohgawara's Keaton-Moomin drawing — from a Japanese Damfino to all the others around the world.

PHOTO COURTESY SHOKO OHHGAWARA

Shoko Ohgawara with Moomin

The KEATON CHRONICLE