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FRONT COVER: Allen Koszowski's interpretation of the vampire villainess from Fright Night II. INSIDE FRONT COVER: David L. Daniels reminds us that Bogart starred in one horror movie, The Return of Dr. X. INSIDE BACK COVER: Robert Knox dabbles into the realm of schlock 1950s' horror, this time capturing the alien fiend of It Conquered The World. BACK COVER: Pablo Dominguez, new to the MidMar art staff, offers an interpretation of Stan Winston's wonderful monster from Pumpkinhead.

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FROM THE EDITOR.....

Wow, what a year! Seven months after seeing our 25th Anniversary issue premiere at FantaCo's FANTACON last September, the new "regular" issue of Midnight Marquee is now available (our first bi-annual issue!). Our commitment to the twice-a-year publication schedule and color covers depends entirely upon sales and reader support. As long as we can afford to do so, expect MidMar every May and November.

TUNNEL-VISION Part Two: A few issue's ago I directed my venom at those narrow-minded individuals who criticize modern horror movies simply because of their extreme violence and ultra-gore. Hey, I would be first to admit that a majority of today's horror film output is pure garbage, but too many people simply condemn all modern splatter movies sight unseen. And that's what I consider to be narrow-minded. Well, there's a new wrinkle in the Tunnel-Vision problem, call it Yuppification-in-reverse. The original Yuppification problem is this: the movies, books, and music we experience as adolescents become the solitary artistic expression we carry with us throughout life (to the exclusion of new forms of expression) simply because in adulthood we seldom have the luxury of time to watch and listen and read new stuff (since we're too busy with careers, marriage, raising a family, etc.). Thus, we simply disregard the new by writing it off, labeling it as being "no good." Thus, there has been no decent rock 'n' roll music since The Beatles or The Stones (hasn't anyone out there heard The Replacements?) and no decent horror movies since the Hammer or Universal era. Thus, if you grew up in the 1940s you love "swing" and hate "rock"; if you grew up in the 1960s you still love The Beatles and hate "swing." We simply hibernate into a state of creative dormancy. Must be an adult...on time for fun...on time to explore something new. No time!

So what's Yuppification-in-reverse? Well, it's just as senseless and pathetic. Simply stated, it's becoming oblivious to any sense

[see FROM THE EDITOR pg. 30]

The science fiction movie boom of the fifties began in earnest in 1951. That year saw the release of the groundbreaking The Man From Planet X, The Thing from Another World, The Day the Earth Stood Still, and When Worlds Collide. A lull came the following year, filled only with Red Planet Mars. Behind the scenes, however, producers scented the money to be made and followed. One was W. (Wilhelm) Lee Wilder. Wilder was one of the independent producers now finding footholds in the industry as the major studios declined. He produced himself, directing offbeat little movies released outside the majors. titles like The Glass Alibi (Republic, 1946), The Pretender (Republic 1947), and The Vicious Circle (United Artists, 1948) In 1953 he created his own production company, Planet Filmplays, Inc., specifically to mine the science fiction fad.

Wilder's earlier films had tried for some artistic value. The three Planet Filmplays covered here were shot cheap and fast, purely to reap some quick bucks. But coming so early in the decade, they are different from the American-International school of cheapies. They are products of their own time, as the old studios were dying, before the coming of the new independents.

From 1953, the title Phantom From Space sinks towards us from shots of lightning and sped-up clouds like the opening credits of TV's Space Patrol. It is followed by newsreel footage of military hardware in action while a voice heavily intones. "This is Washington, D.C. and in the files of the Central Bureau, there is a story so strange in its implications that it defies ordinary classification It is the story of a handful of people who in the course of one desperate night held back a wave of panic and pandemonium. It began after sundown. Time: Seven-fifteen...as flight A coast patrol from Travis Field was returning to base. When the nightly air force transport pointed north toward Japan via the Great Circle Route. While at sea the Navy and Coast Guard maintained their usual round the clock vigilance. And from the Equator to the Arctic, the radar network swept the skies with eyes that never sleep. An unidentified object was picked up two hundred miles southwest of Point Barrow, Alaska."

This is only one third of the opening narration. It goes on and on at this rate with a mind-numbing slowness. A similar opening gave a tone of tension and urgency to The Day the Earth Stood Still. The tone of lethargy set here will stay till the end credits roll.

The unfolding plot is rather complicated and introduces us to a huge number of central characters: While tracing radio interference, Federal Communications Commission employee Hazen comes across a homicide committed by an unknown man in a diving suit. Lt. Bowers of the local police department investigates. After their reports are sent to Washington, Hazen and Bowers are sent to the "Griffith Institute" where they meet a scientist, Dr. Wyatt; his assistant, Barbara Randall; and Major Andrews, a representative of the military who seems a natural part of the Griffith Institute. Also along for the ride are Barbara's husband, Bill ("love interest" is nonexistent here); and a reporter, Wahrman.

The performances range from competent to mediocre, the best coming from Rudolf Anders' Dr. Wyatt, a hybrid of The Day the Earth Stood Still's Prof. Barnhardt and The Thing's Prof. Carrington. Noreen Nash struggles admirably as Barbara Randall. James Seay is competent as Maj. Andrews, a performance he would repeat in Killers From Space and The Beginning of the End, before being impaled on a giant hypo by The Amazing Colossal Man. Ted Cooper as Hazen and Harry Landers as Bowers are so alike that they're hard to tell apart. Why Steve Clark is included at all as Barbara's husband is anybody's guess. As he stands in the background, doing nothing, one almost expects him to take off his glasses and change into Superman. Each member of this unwieldy crowd is treated with equal importance in the film.

Jack Daly's reporter provides the sort of comic relief that makes Destination Moon, Rocketship XM, and just about any 50s' SF television series just that much more painful to watch. Wilder employed Daly in Once A Thief in 1950, and later as a powerhouse

foreman in Killers and an archivist in The Snow Creature as well as in The Big Bluff (1955), making him the only actor to appear in all four Planet Filmplays. He's more effective in small doses.

Then there's the Phantom. We had to wait a long time to get our first look at Klaatu, The Thing, and The Man from Planet X, but they usually rewarded us with a dramatic entrance. After an endless 25 minutes into Phantom, however, we cut to a long shot of a brickyard, the theramin starts up, and there's this man in a space suit running around looking like...well, like a man running around in a space suit. [A leftover from Destination Moon.]

Most of the cast chases the Phantom around the brickyard, which, like all the places they will run around, is a real location, full of real shadows which are used in a totally non-expressionist way. According to Myles Wilder, even the interiors in all three films were shot on authentic locations, including his father's office. For all that, Phantom never feels nearly as realistic as the studioscapes of The Day the Earth Stood Still. Phantom's low-budget roughness constantly calls attention to itself while the studio polish of Day is nearly unnoticeable.

To escape, the Phantom dumps his suit while a few wires and some film run in reverse try to convince us he's invisible.

They drive the suit (and unwittingly the Phantom) back to the Griffith Institute. To test the suit's unique properties, the scientists try to cut it up. Then they try to rip it up. Then they try to burn it up. It resists all efforts (after all, it was only a rental), but after Mrs. Randall plays around with some beakers containing water and bubbling pellets of dry ice, the gases in the helmet prove to be 11% methane ("Ordinary marsh gas?") and 89% they never get around to telling us.

Though the cast seems a reasonable cross-section of the white-collar public and has no trouble adapting to the idea of space visitors, all agree on complete secrecy to stave off a general panic. Thus Phantom casually shares with most 50s' SF films the surprisingly unchallenged belief that There Are Things The General Public Is Not Meant To Know.

Phantom from Space takes us back to the pre-steadicam age. Early on, during an interrogation, Hayson stands and as the camera tilts up to follow him, the image wobbles noticeably. After this, it almost never moves again. Virtually all dialogue scenes are static, shot at eye level, the immobility relieved every now and then by a laboratory zoom. Whole scenes go by with people sitting around talking, then jumping up and running around. Talking followed by running is the primary action of the film. Actors seem to have been composed in the frame by the sound technician rather than the cinematographer. In spite of this, somebody is always talking in a dead spot. Strangely enough, the inserts of people operating various devices are set up with more imagination than the dialogue scenes, full of extreme angles.

Phantom's most interesting sequence is one almost obligatory in science fiction films. The photography suddenly gets imaginative: shot from two low-angle setups (the only dialogue not shot from eye level). Everybody listens while the head scientist, carrying all the standard 1953 scientist paraphernalia (glasses, pipe, foreign accent), explains What It All Means:

Dr. Wyatt: I don't know, but...the human body is composed of various elements with a carbon base...
Bowers: Like coal.
Wyatt: Yes, now suppose we maintain the same chemical composition in the body of the X-Man, but substitute silica for carbon.
Bowers: Silica, that's glass.

Wyatt: Exactly. Now it is possible that a body with such a base, if it were subjected to an atmosphere foreign to its origin, might appear invisible to our eyes.

Bowers: Are you trying to say, Doctor, that we're...we're not dealing with a human being?

Wyatt: I didn't say that. On the contrary...all the evidence points in the opposite direction...toward the superhuman. With an intelligence far superior to our own.

Hazen: How can you tell?

Wyatt: First of all, Mrs. Randall saw that he has a hand, with digits, like our own fingers. And a thumb, opposing. That alone is a sign of intelligence. And, he comes from a civilization that has developed adequate space transportation to enable him to travel to Earth. We have nothing yet that can reach even another planet in our own solar system.

Andrews: That could account for the unidentified objects picked up by radar a few hours ago.

Wyatt: My theory is that the space ship, or whatever it was that he came in, operated on the principle of magnetic rather than atomic propulsion, and that somewhere in the outer limits met with the conditions where the Earth's gravity pulled it down and it fell into the ocean. And that he managed to save his life and reach shore.

Dr. Wyatt seems to base his entire hypothesis on a few observations and pulls the whole silica angle out of left field.

Though the Phantom's suit is radioactive enough to jam radio and fog photom, the only protection anybody wears is rubber gloves. When the suit evaporates, no one expresses the slightest apprehension about breathing it. Everyone behaves with a kind of blithe innocence about the radiation to which they so trustingly expose themselves.

At times, the characters in Phantom seem to he taken over by forces operating outside their own control. When Mrs. Randall meets the Phantom, ever though she is a scientist, she faints. This is because that is what a woman has to do in a movie. Then the Phantom is compelled to pick her up and walk around with her in his invisible arms, because that's what a monster had to do in a movie.

Phantom from Space, with its unsleeping radar and its talk of radiation, has entered one step into the atomic age. But its makers are still controlled by the unquestioned conventions of older movies which give Phantom probably its biggest claim to any artistic significance.

Like The Man from Planet X, the Phantom struggles to communicate. His efforts don't add up to much, either logically or dramatically. It becomes too easy to forget he is in a pretty tragic situation. The script by William Raynor and nineteen-year-old Myles Wilder (W. Lee's son) manages to tap this tragedy only once, when Dr. Wyatt says: "His voice must he beyond the range of the human ear. Maybe he's screaming." Being invisible, there is not much of a performance by Paul Sands to evaluate. We only see him at the very end, standing atop a telescope wearing only swimming trunks. After his death, with a knee properly bent, he is discreetly nude.

Monsters must die in old horror movies, so must the Phantom, transforming in death like the Wolf Man or the Invisible Man. Beginning a tradition which lasts to this day, his alien body disintegrates. All the evidence evaporates, so there's nothing to show thet the Phantom had ever been. While God would work overtime in

50s' movies like I was a Teenage Werewolf and Curse of the Demon to ditch all the evidence, this was a first for science fiction on film (though the failure to get a photograph was a running gag in The Thing)

Having all the evidence disappear allows a tidiness the film wouldn't otherwise have. We are left with neither The Thing's call for vigilance nor The Day the Earth Stood Still's call for awareness. The world is left completely untouched by the Phantom's brief visit. In the end, Phantom is at heart a film of the forties. The witnesses express no regret, only relief. They can go back to their lives again, unchanged.

That is a luxury not afforded to the cast of Planet Filmplays first release of 1954.

Phantom had made money, some of which Wilder used to improve his second effort, which never filled marquees with it's original title: The Man Who Saved the Earth. Executives at RKO thought it sounded too religious. The second Planet Filmplay opens like a documentary detailing the preparations for an atomic bomb test. Unlike Phantom From Space, this opening actually feels like a newsreel. So many of the preparations we see are no obviously authentic (and some aren't, including inserts of hands fiddling with various machines clipped straight from Phantom), and some of the footage is so beautiful, that the film achieves a gravity and seriousness lacking in Phantom. Laid-back narration, delivered by Mark Scott, sounds authentic: "Soledad Flats, Nevada. Military personnel, from buck private to top-ranking brass, men from research and news services move into position. The bomb-carrying plane makes its initial run. Radar with eyes that never sleep..." Then as the bomb goes off, the narrator's voice changes, weird electric organ music starts up, the title Killers From Space rises out of the mushroom cloud, and the movie begins.

The newsreel footage ends shortly thereafter, but in spite of some obvious special effects, the tension does not completely dissipate because it is allowed to mix with another anxiety of the atomic age: suspicion.

The action quickly centers around military scientist Doug Martin, played by young Peter Graves with a pipe and no glasses, resembling J. Robert Oppenheimer. Like Oppenheimer (Myles Wilder denies a conscious connection), Dr. Martin finds himself the focus of suspicion.

In his first major scene Dr. Martin is questioned by base surgeon Major Clift (Shepard Menken, whom we first see in a tight closeup staring straight into the audience, as if we were the ones being examined. William H. Clothier's cinematography is instantly more imaginative than in Phantom, as if Wilder was rediscovering expressionism within this more realistic format), who replies to Dr. Martin's innocent explanations with a voice full of skepticism.

Dr. Martin finds his security clearance revoked and his associates talking to him strangely. His very identity is questioned by Briggs (Steve Pendleton), an FBI agent who sums up his job by saying, "Oh, we can suspect anything, Colonel."

Dr. Martin begins to feel people staring at him. We in the audience are made to share this, by Peter Graves' natural charisma, and because the camera often assumes his point of view. As people talk to him, we in the audience see them looking directly at us.

Killers From Space is full of images of suspicion. The FBI checking fingerprints. At a gas station Dr. Martin overhears a police bulletin giving his own description, momentarily flashing back to Briggs' staring eyes. Briggs asks Dr. Martin's wife (Barbara Bestar), "...Has he made any new friends' lately, you know, people not in the usual group?" His immediate superiors, Col. Banks (James Seay) and Dr. Kruger (Frank Gerstem), stop smiling when Dr. Martin leaves Bank's office, and their voices fill with distrust (on the wall of Col. Banks' office is a portrait of President Eisenhower, which stands over every scene set there, watching).

Behind all this looms the specter of the atomic bomb.

But just as we're beginning to share Dr. Martin's indignation, he starts to act strangely, like one of those dreams where you find yourself doing things you know you shouldn't. We see him hovering in corridors trying not to be seen. Going into classified files. Driving alone at night with a beautiful film noir shadow across his face. We in the audience find that without our knowing it, by being the object of suspicion, we are actually worthy of suspicion. Even Invasion of the Body Snatchers let us identify with only untainted people.

The script by William Raynor, Clothier's photography, and Manuel Compinsky's eerie music sometimes combine to give us scenes of eerie beauty. In one sequence, Dr. Martin, like a combination of Oppenheimer and Julius Rosenberg, puts a piece of paper under a rock in Bronson Canyon. An arm pops out of nowhere and grabs Dr. Martins's hand. As it pulls Dr. Martin back, the camera tilts up and we see it belongs to Briggs (How did he get there? The FBI must be everywhere!). There is a cut to a closeup of Briggs speaking directly into the camera. "Dr. Martin. What are you doing with this? Any special reason for placing it under this rock?" His voice is controlled and suspicious. All of the frame darkens out except for Brigg's eyes.

All this builds to the beautifully photographed scene of Dr. Martin's interrogation. It begins with a low-angle shot from Dr. Martin's POV looking up at his immediate superior Dr. Kruger, Col. Banks, FBI agent Briggs, and his doctor Maj. Clift: every authority figure in the film, all staring down at us (the sound recording is much superior to Phantom, allowing actors to be composed for pictorial effect rather than audibility). Behind them is only a blank gray wall, nothing to distract us from their eyes. They prepare to inject Dr. Martin with "sodium amatol" which will "...deprive his mind of any imagination."

TOP: Dr. Martin's interrogation begins with a low-angle shot from Martin's POV looking up at every authority figure in the film staring down at us from KILLERS FROM SPACE; BOTTOM: The "people" of KILLERS FROM SPACE looking upward...reminding us that all insecurity and distrust comes from "outside."

As Dr. Martin counts backwards from one hundred, we cut to closeups of Kruger and Banks, staring at us. Then back to the POV shot of everyone staring at us. Briggs pushes a microphone towards us, and the questioning begins.

If you have not yet started taking this movie seriously, forget it. After this point you're not going to. Because in almost the next shot we get to see the space men, and in one moment all the seriousness, gravity, and atmosphere these filmmakers have worked so hard to achieve go right out the window.

This is because the Killers From Space have got to be some of the stupidest looking aliens in the history of moving pictures. They wear dark tights with mittens and cummerbunds, rather like The Purple Monster in an old Republic serial. When they speak their own language, the sound track is run in reverse. For makeup they wear bushy eyebrows and over their eyes are glued what look like halves of ping-pong balls with irises and veins painted in. [Actually, they were pieces of thick plastic, but they sure look like ping-pong balls.]

How could anybody hope to get away with this? Well, maybe the costumes didn't look quite so ridiculous back when Captain Video was live. Maybe not.

After this point, Killers From Space is a totally different movie. However, if you don't tune out your brain altogether, it still has things to offer.

TOP: The moment we see the space men from KILLERS FROM SPACE, all the seriousness goes out the window; BOTTOM: Peter Graves standing in front of a back projecton screen, reacting to a spider, from KILLERS FROM SPACE.

For one thing, it's fun. There is an extended sequence of Dr. Martin running through Bronson Caverns crawling with space men while Compinsky's music throbs, running again and again past the same arch of rock photographed from different angles to make us think we haven't been here before.

Then the music stops and we watch Peter Graves standing in front of a back projection screen, reacting to projections of various magnified lizards and spiders and insects. The effects are not even as ambitious as Bert I. Gordon's (the budget would only allow one day in front of the process screen), but they lend the scene a truly dreamlike unreality. Monsters add a lot to fifties SF movies and Killers From Space would be poorer without them.

But this movie has more to offer us than monsters. The principals are all solid professionals. Gersten, Seay, Pendleton and Menken form a wonderful ensemble, working together every bit as cohesively as the authorities they represent.

Killers From Space re-introduces us to a character we haven't seen in a long time: The Scientist Hero. In spite of its McCarthy era suspicion, Killers does not rely on the military to save the world. It's hero is Dr. Martin. Note a scene between Dr. Martin and the lead space man (John Merrick), worth quoting at length:

DM: Wait a minute, all this equipment...

DENEB: Our Nuclso storage units. To date we have accumulated several billion electron volts as a result of your atomic explosions.

DM: Several billion? I, uh, a chain reaction at this point could release enough unstable isotopes to -- to create a new and powerful element. Might be impossible to control.

DENEB: True. An element that will never be known by your scientists. I can assure you the strength of this new element will...

DM: Why this is a powderkeg—could go off at any minute.

DENEB: I assure you Doctor we have everything under our complete control.

DM: What force could possibly be strong enough to harness th- you control your whole operation by electricity. Of course, no generators, no generators. That means you're getting your power from somewhere on the surface it must be passing through here.

DENEB: You have heard enough, Doctor Martin.

The space men treat him with respect and even fear. With no other weapons than "a pencil, some paper, and a slide rule" and the knowledge he gains from simple observation, Dr. Martin figures out how to repulse the invaders. Ludicrous maybe, but there was a time when movies reflected this kind of faith in scientists.

Only two and a half years separate Killers From Space from Roger Corman's It Conquered the World. Both feature military scientific research, mind control, stupid-looking space creatures, and Peter Graves. But changes have already begun.

The world of Phantom and Killers is a web of scientists police military, and intelligence organizations working together to maintain national security. Killers doesn t have a single human character who isn't an insider of that world. Even a gas station attendant acts like an agent of the police. All insecurity and distrust come from outside.

The late fifties world of It Conquered the World is already more fragmented. Society's parts no longer work together to protect Suspicion comes from within as well as without, and only those who suspect its scientists and generals and police officers are allowed to survive. It Conquered the World and other Corman films (as well as those of the same years by the likes of Edward L. Cahn and Bert I. Gordon) are filled with misfits beats, drunks, and vacuum cleaner salesmen living on the outside.

Most importantly, Wilder's "B" movies would like to be official "A" product. They yearn for respectability and are seriously damaged by their low-budget independent production. By the time of Corman (and Cahn and Gordon), the low budget is a liberating force that frees filmmakers from the restraints of respectability or "niceness" or even logic. By the end of the decade, "B" movies themselves had evaporated, replaced by exploitation movies.

Admittedly, Corman is a better filmmaker than Wilder. He holds off revealing IT, showing us only a piece here and a piece there, familiarizing us so that hopefully we will not explode into gales of laughter when we finally see his giant carrot from Venus. For all that can be said against him, the pieces of Corman's movies all fit together. Wilder's Planet Filmplays even at their best feel lopsided, full of extraneous material and sequences that seem to belong in different movies.

At least movies and TV furnished plenty of space visitors to pattern Phantom and Killers after. 1954's The Snow Creature was Hollywood's very first monstrous visitor from the Himalayas. Lacking a firs model, Wilder's third Planet Filmplay seems to take touches of King Kong and Them! via He Walked by Night, then veers off in strange directions.

The Snow Creature begins much the same as Phantom, with shots of clouds and lightning (this time with some mountains and superimposed falling snow) from which the title falls. Then the customary stock footage and narration start up.

We listen as the leader of an expedition into the Himalayas introduces all the main characters and sets up all the important subplots. In a densely packed four minutes we meet Dr. Frank Parrish (Paul Langton), photographer Peter Wells (Leslie Denison), Sherpa guide Subra (Teru Shimada), his wife Tala (unidentified), and brother Leva (Rollin Moriyama). We see Subra covetously watch Wells drinking scotch and express his love for Talta. The expedition is outfitted at Subra's village, they set off, and they start climbing the mountains. This all happens without one world of dialogue. Just voice-overs by Parrish and impressive music by returning Manuel Compinsky.

A full four minutes pass before we hear the first exchange of words, and longer before the first actual conversation.

For long stretches throughout the first half of The Snow Creature, all we see are long shots of the expedition wandering in the snow. Whole minutes go by without dialogue, without even a closeup. Unlike Killers where we watched with the eyes of Dr. Martin, here we follow the characters from a detached, distant position. Audiences who like to get involved with their leads will just get bored by watching from such a distance, but it yields some unexpected benefits.

Since that first quickie conversation, there has been no dialogue save the Sherpas talking untranslated. [No dialogue was written for these scenes, but the Japanese actors standing in for Sherpas were allowed to ad-lib in Japanese.] We hear almost as much non-English dialogue as English. One result is that we come to view the Caucasians as almost as alien as the Sherpas. Parrish and Wells treat Subra as something less than human, but the film does not. It never feels the need to translate the Sherpas and never plays them for comedy.

Covered with artificial snow, Bronson Canyon stands in quite nicely for the Himalayas. Wilder's preference for shooting outside the studio begins to pay off in The Snow Creature. Unconfined by the painted backdrops of The Crawling Eye (1959) or even the more elaborate interior sets of The Abominable Snowman of the Himalayas (1957), Wilder's explorers are constantly shown dwarfed by the bigness of their surroundings, which mixes with the sparse dialogue and unceasing wind on the soundtrack to evoke real isolation.

Before the expedition gets anywhere, a snow creature pops up back at the village, picks up Tala, and carries her off into the night. It just walks up to her, like... well, like a man in a furry suit and picks her up. The Creature doesn't act like it's going to do anything in particular with her, it just nonchalantly picks her up and walks away.

What we can see of the Yeti (unidentified, definitely not Paul Sands according to Myles Wilder) never looks or moves like anything other than a man in a furry suit. The few shots we get of its paw show a snug mitten. Yet Killers From Space seems to have taught W. Lee Wilder a lesson: If you can't make it look good, make it look vague. Most shots of the Yeti show it walking straight into the camera from one-shot to closeup against a black background, only its shaggy outline illuminated. This same generic shot (probably against the very same black background, if not indeed the very same clip of film) is used again and again in the heights of the Himalayas as well as the streets and sewers of Los Angeles. Sometimes with superimposed snowfall, sometimes without. Often he walks forward, is stopped by a freeze frame, then backs up as the footage runs in reverse.

Keeping the monster unseen for creative reasons is usually accomplished nowadays by rapid editing. The Snow Creature is totally different in that we are given ample opportunity to stare at the Creature, but you still can't see much. Things keep getting in the way: shadow, frosted glass, sides of beef. Sometimes simple distance is enough. This does not make the creature more frightening, but it does give him a different feel from any monster of the past thirty years. Wilder actually achieves some of the mystery sought by Val Guest in The Abominable Snowman, without Guest's annoying cheating.

There are also a female and a baby snow creature, who die within seconds of our first sight of them. We never see them dead, and their one shot lasts barely long enough for them to register at all. On television without a rewind switch, you're likely to miss them altogether the first time around. These two are totally irrelevant to the plot and may as well have not even been included for all the difference they make.

Floyd Crosby's photography here is the most visually interesting of the three films, without any of the drama of Killers. He lights the walls of Bronson Caverns from such an angle that their natural texture creates patterns of light and shadow unevoked by either the flat illumination of It Conquered the World or the total shadows of The Brain from Planet Arous.

The Yeti is captured and kept in a refrigerated cabinet with a glass window in front. While the actors stand around talking, the Creature's outline can always be seen moving behind the frosted glass. It's hard to take your eyes off him.

As we switch locale from the Himalayas to California, The Snow Creature becomes a different movie. Myles Wilder's script drops every human we've met so far except Parrish, whom we never got to know very well to begin with. The subject of the movie changes to

A rare glimpse at the unidentified Yeti of SNOW CREATURE. In addition to no facial makeup whatsoever, the fur only covers the front of his arms, legs, and torso.

the Creature's immigration status. Is it a snow creature or a snow man? A host of new characters (including dear Rudolf Anders) debate the issue at surprising length.

Abruptly, the Creature decides to break out of his cage. All the new characters vanish and the mood swings again into a conventional monster flick. The Creature wanders around L.A., his arms spread out at his sides, stopping every now and then to pick up women. What he does with them, the movie doesn't give us a clue.

From here The Snow Creature does not seem interested in Paul Parrish, but stops periodically to glance at numerous bit characters who do their bit and disappear. Among them is an unidentified airport attendant who does not vanish before saying his one line, a description of the Creature's escape: "He stawted to move in thet thing, then he stawted to shake it. An it fell. He got out and I stawted to run foah my lifa. A sight I'll nevah fogget. He come at me an I un..."

These bit parts are so short, acted sometimes by such barely passable performers, that we in the audience are kept just as detached from the story as we were in the Himalayan sequence. These Americans should feel more at home to us, but their every actions come across as alien as the Sherpas. Evaluating the acting in The Snow Creature is like critiquing performances in a documentary. Good, bad, or indifferent, the actors are what they are. The film simply presents them to us, to take them or leave them as they are.

One weirdly written vignette is photographed from so far away, we never even see the actors' faces. As the camera tracks across the blackness of a deserted street at night, we hear a pair of voices:

She:	Don't...Don't...Don't do it, please. Don't.
He:	Now get out of here.
She:	You don't understand. Give me a chance to explain. Please...
He:	I'm sick of listening to your words.
She:	But...But...Please...uh...
He:	Now you stay away from me. And if I never see you again, it'll be too soon. Now get out of here.
She:	But...

That's all they say. We don't even see them until the third line. These strange creatures pause between every line, never connecting with each other's words, like something from another world. Or another movie.

The only new character that sticks around is Lt. Dunbar (Bill Phipps), a police officer who leads the search for the Creature. Dunbar has a wife who is about to have a baby. We never see her, though we do meet Parrish's wife (briefly). Almost all the leads in Wilder's Planet Filmplays are married whether it affects the story or not. Here in the Spielberg age when nothing strays across the action which does not directly advance the plot, it is refreshing to see such realistic clutter.

Looking through a window, Parrish is inspired to search for the Creature in the storm drains. This shot and a montage of the public being informed by radio and TV echo similar scenes in Them!, though an inspiration could as easily have been He Walked by Night (1948). Screenwright Myles Wilder had seen every science fiction movie as it came out. "I was eighteen," he explained in an interview.

At last the Los Angeles Police Department stalk the Creature in the wonderfully photogenic sewers of Los Angeles. Parrish goes along to make sure the Creature is kept alive for study. Most 50s' sf monster movies had a scientist along to keep the monster alive for study. It never was.

Except for Parrish and Dunbar, the search is carried on by faceless, uncharacterized bodies wandering the sewers. Intentionally or not, the cops look strangely reminiscent of the nameless Sherpas on the mountains. Unlike the rough walls of Bronson Caverns, the L.A. storm drains are smooth and flat, so Crosby paints them with blobs and lines and curves of white light in front of which the police often walk in black silhouette. This approach takes advantage of high-contrast (and probably cheaper) film stock, and shows more imagination than the otherwise superior sequence in Them! [Climbing down the drain, an officer's hat falls off. He bends down to retrieve it before starting his search. This sort of offhand realistic detail isn't often achieved when you print more than one take.]

The Snow Creature pops up at the village, picks up Tala, and carries her off into the night. The Creature does not act like it's going to do anything in particular with her.

Some sewer footage is repeated a couple of times to pad the running time.

Perhaps totally unintentionally, all that accumulated distancing makes ordinary movie dialogue seem strange. It drains the intended humor out of the irrelevant last lines in the film and gives them an off-the-wall quality which is really quite funny. These are the words chosen to end a movie about the Abominable Snowman:

Dunbar:	Say, Doctor, what's your first name?
Parrish:	Frank.
Dunbar:	Maybe I'll name my kid Frank. Frank Dunbar. Sounds great.
Parrish:	Thanks.
Dunbar:	I don't know. I'm not too sure I like it.

And while it may have brought unexpected strengths, that distancing could also be a fatal weakness. The Snow Creature, drained of drama, may have been different, but no one remembers it today. Beyond production values, what distinguishes Them! is that by connecting it's giant ants to the unforeseeable consequences of nuclear tests, Them! was tied to it's audience's concerns in the real world. For all it's unconventional treatment, the Yeti isn't tied to anything. The Snow Creature is just another monster movie.

1955 saw the release of The Big Bluff, the final Planet Filmplay. In spite of a script by Fred Freiberger, it was totally non-genre. W. Lee Wilder would move on to other projects, occasionally veering towards fantasy in The Man Without a Body (1957) and Bluebeard's Ten Honeymoons (1959), but never again towards science fiction. He died in 1982.

Bill Raynor would script Target Earth! in 1954. He and Myles Wilder would become collaborators, finding considerable success producing and writing for television on such series as MacHale's Navy, Get Smart, and Welcome Back Kotter. Shortly before Raynor's retirement in 1984, they would collaborate one last time on The Dukes of Hazzard.

In the sixties, the three Planet Filmplays saw considerable play on television. Too well done to be camp, not polished enough to compete with major studio releases, they never achieved classic status. As the seventies wore on, and the prejudice against televising low-budget black and white movies grew, they appeared less and less. Today they are almost forgotten, save as memories about, "The one about the eyes" or "The one with the hairy guy in the sewers."

Paradoxically, this obscurity has made them easily obtainable on videotape and has made the time ripe for a re-evaluation of the Planet Filmplays of W. Lee Wilder.

Revisiting "The Horror Chamber Of Dr. Faustus"

BY

GARY J. SVEHLA

Between 1959 to 1962 the world of the horror film was characterized by Hammer Film Productions, their atmospheric, garish reconstructions of the classic Universal monsters: Dracula, Frankenstein, werewolves, and The Mummy, among others. Dressed in rich period detail, bathed in lavish Technicolor, and inundated in visual atmosphere, Hammer Films were always energized and entertaining. Simply put, they were fun.

But in 1960 Alfred Hitchcock's Psycho thrust a new type of horror picture upon the ever-increasing market: the psychological horror thriller. Filmed in stark shades of black-and-white, somber in tone, dreary in world vision, Hitchcock's Psycho was not fun in any sense of the word. Psycho was slow-paced yet riveting by nature of its dank atmosphere and insightful view inside well-crafted characters. While Hammer horrors were garish, brash, loud, and keenly dramatic, Psycho, on the other hand, was more subtle and quietly disturbing.

But important strides were being made in non-English-speaking areas of Europe concerning the advancement and progression of the horror film. Mario Bava was preparing to burst upon the scene via his Italian masterpiece Black Sunday, the film that gave birth to Italian horror cinema. But quietly released in France, 1959, a full year before Psycho, was another horror film masterwork: Les Yeux Sans Visage [translated: Eyes Without A Face], directed by Georges Franju (who died almost unnoticed within the past year). The film was not to reach American shores until March, 1962, when it was slightly trimmed, dubbed, and retitled The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus, released on the top-half of a double-bill with The Manster. While Hammer was descending into inspired formula as the schlock giant monsters of the fifties were being transformed into the classic Vincent Price Poe adaptations of the sixties, Georges Franju created a brilliant horror opus which almost was lost in the shuffle. Its style approximates Hitchcock's Psycho style except Franju's tone here is even more serious and darker than Hitchcock's (for remember, Hitchcock always incorporated at least some black humor into the proceedings). Franju's world is one filled with frustration, sadness, and infinite, unrelenting mental horror. There is little hope in The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus, but there is beauty!

The opening sequence summarizes both the mood and visual style of the production. Shot during night time as a small foreign car speeds through the suburban Paris landscape, the audience views what the driver of the car sees: the car's headlight illuminating the ominous trees that sweep across the range of vision. Against this darkened backdrop comes the white title lettering of the credits. After the credits are finished the audience sees the face of the driver of the automobile an intense face trying to clear the foggy front windshield. As she looks into her rearview mirror, the audience sees what she sees: the slumped figure of a person bundled up in a heavy overcoat and large hat obscuring the face. Suddenly bright lights appear from behind and the female driver pulls over to the side of the road to allow this other car to pass. Looking in the rearview mirror once more, the figure in the back seat almost totally slumps to one side. It is now apparent that this pathetic person is dead.

The woman driver pulls up to a secluded section of the Seine River, unnoticed by any other vehicles or spectators. With much effort the driver drags the body from the back seat of the car, naked legs and bare feet protrude from the shiny raincoat retaining their rigidity, as the body is dragged through the mud to the river itself. It is apparent that the young female body is naked under the overcoat, adding a morbid sense of erotic appeal to the proceedings.

Quickly the body is plopped into the river and immediately submerges. Now the woman's cold, worried face slightly breaks into a half-smile, her job completed, as she returns to her car.

The intensity of this initial sequence is achieved mainly through the stark black-and-white photography of cinematographer Eugen Shuftan who likes to work with contrasting tones in his photography. For instance we have the blackness of the night contrasted to the pin-pointed headlight beams on tree limbs. We have the blackness of the Seine banks contrasted to the white flesh of nude legs and feet being dragged along. Here all is seriousness and tension. The only sense of levity or lightness is the rinky-tink musical leifmotif created by Maurice Jarre which etches itself into the viewer's ear almost immediately by nature of its catchy and bouncy melody. The music is almost carnival-like in feel which itself is contrasted to the bleak visual imagery seen on screen.

The next sequence introduces our chief character, a true tragic hero in the Shakespearean sense, Professor Genessier (Pierre Brasseur). Chief of surgery at a small hospital clinic about 20 minutes outside of Paris, the professor is a teacher/lecturer as well as a gifted surgeon. Today he lectures on a new technique of grafting tissues and organs from one human being to another. Using powerful doses of X-Rays to destroy antibodies he tells his spellbound audience (composed chiefly of elderly women) that in order for such patients to survive they must have their irradiated blood drained from their body. At the end of the lecture, the professor is detached, emotionless, lost in his inner-most thoughts. One woman proclaims, "How he's changed since his wife's death!" The professor's spellbound aura continues as he receives a telephone call instructing him to proceed immediately to the morgue to identify a corpse that might be the body of his missing daughter.

At the morgue Police Inspector Parot (Alexandre Rignault) is speaking to the resident doctor about this being a strange case. "When his daughter disappeared from the hospital her face was still only an open wound...first the car accident and then the severe facial burns...then all the time under water with the rats...think of the rats." Another man, Tessot, has been called because his daughter also has been missing for over a week.

Continuing, Parot adds more bizarre factors concerning the case. "Odd she was found stark naked under a man's coat. The Professor's daughter was depressed at being disfigured, but depressed enough to drown herself? Why in freezing cold weather would she strip beforehand? And that enormous wound instead of a face???? The face is disfigured. Only the eyes are intact."

Arriving at the morgue, Professor Genessier is briefly introduced to the inspector and the doctor, and in a wonderful subjective sequence, is led immediately to investigate the body. All three men are walking down a long corridor towards a room labeled Identification Room. The audience sees what they see. No music erupts from the soundtrack. Only the echoing footsteps of clopping leather against stone floors can be heard which create a haunting tension. The door of the Identification Room swings open to reveal the form of a human body on an examining table draped underneath a sheet. The doctor holding a corner of the sheet up for Genessier is met with a calm, collected, "That's my daughter."

Leaving the building immediately, Professor Genessier is approached by a weary, hyper, concerned, and partially relieved Mr. Tessot, the other father paged to come to the morgue. "Are you certain that was your daughter. Are you certain!'" Tessot pleads. "Very certain," the professor calmly mutters. Genessier remains stoic, never flinches or changes his expression, always maintaining his stone-cold countenance. "It's strange that you should look to me for comfort. After all, you still have hope!" the surgeon reminds Tessot, exiting.

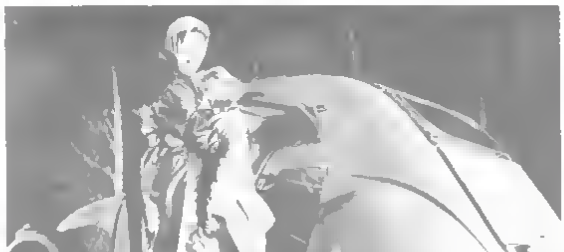
Next, a short sequence occurs whereby the mysterious woman from the initial sequence the female who dumped the corpse into the river, is now seen in the city of Paris trying to act inconspicuously but in actuality is eye-balling several young female college students, apparently searching for a specific "type."

The next sequence is at the Genessier family mausoleum for the funeral of the professor's daughter. Continuing the gloomy mood which this movie has been constantly displaying, the weather is overcast and about to rain, on sun is shining. A silent procession marches past Professor Genessier. Inspector Parot, the same investigator we met at the morgue before, attends the funeral showing his respect. "The Professor's had bad luck. He lost his wife four years ago, and now his daughter! He's got fame and fortune, but what good does it good it now?" As each mourner passes by, the Professor politely shakes hands, his eyes emotionlessly following each individual. His gaze is dazed as he looks straight ahead but off into space. He appears to be both sad and detached at the same time.

Standing next to the Professor in line is Jacques (Francois Guerin), a doctor who works under Genessier at the clinic, a man who also was Christiane's finance. By his side stands Louise (Alida Valli), a woman who is described as being Genessier's "secretary," although she may also be his lover. Strangely enough, Louise is also the same mysterious female driver who disposed of the corpse earlier in the Seine and who was last seen eye-balling young ladies in Paris. Suddenly diverse elements of the plot seem to be coming together rapidly.

As the final mourner passes by, young Jacques, realizing that the Professor might desire some time alone politely exits. After he leaves the Professor turns to Louise stating, "I want everything in order," as he turns and goes inside the family burial vault looking at all the flowers. Louise, the only participant who expresses any emotional dishevel, nervously demands "Let's go I can't take this any more." The Professor, displaying authoritarian arrogance, slaps Louise telling her, "Be quiet!" In anger the woman audibly sobs

TOP: The disfigured Christiane (Edith Scob) stands at the top of the stairs wispfully wondering; BOTTOM: Louise (Alida Valli) disposes of a body into the Seine from the eerie beginning of the movie.



turns, and walks brusquely for the car. Genessier follows her, reaching out to her as she makes her way to the car.

The car returns to the family residence, a large sprawling mansion in back of the hospital clinic. The Professor pulls into the garage, exiting the car, as the sound of many dogs barking can be heard in the background.

Even the most repetitious and hackneyed horror movie plots can be revitalized and made to appear "fresh" depending upon the creativity of craftmanship executed by the cast and crew. It can not be ascertained as of yet, but the basic plot of The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus is a cliched plot premise used primarily in "B" horror films many times before. But Georges Franju and company never allow their production to become clithe or formula. As should be obvious by now, Professor Genessier keeps his deformed daughter under house arrest desperately attempting to perform experimental surgery to restore her distorted features. The failed experiments are dumped by Louise into the Seine. The person just buried is not Genessier's daughter but simply one of his experimental guinea pigs. Franju thus far has successfully transcended a "programmer" style plot into something quite artistic.

As Professor Genessier enters his home and walks up elaborate stairs to a small room from which music is emanating, the viewer is transfixed by a huge white bird cage housing several white doves. A young lady wearing a white robe is sprawled out upon a sofa, face down, a copy of her death notice by her side. Her father castigates the girl. "Must you go digging into everything!" Christiane (Edith Scob) is justifiably upset to read of her own death. Her father attempts to reassure her. "This death announcement is simply a substitution of names...because the girl died right after the operation. So I took one more risk. I made believe it was you!" For the first time gentleness and passion can be sensed in the Professor's voice as he reaches out to the daughter he so obviously loves. "If they think you are dead, they won't pry. They won't try to find out what we're doing." Genessier is upset that Christiane is not wearing her sculpted face mask. "You must get use to wearing it. You'll only have to wear it until we meet with success. Don't cry, darling...." For the first time a sense of humanity erupts from the formerly stoic countenance of Genessier. He then caresses his daughter rubbing her back and neck.

Suddenly Louise enters abruptly and Professor Genessier immediately returns to his brusque and arrogant airs directed at his daughter. "You have no reason to doubt me. Everyone else knows what I'm worth. You'll have a perfect face again!" He exits leaving Louise alone with Christiane.

But this brief sequence has revealed the "tragic flaw" of the now sympathetic surgeon Professor Genessier. In a less subtle script with less sensitive direction Genessier would simply be another "mad scientist" villain, but his character offers so much more. Thus far

[l. to r.]: Professor Genessier speaks to Inspector Parot (Alexandre Rignault) and his young detective assistant.

he has been like the tip of an iceberg: only one small aspect of his personality being displayed. Now, alone with his daughter, another aspect of his personality becomes apparent, another side showing the doctor to be more complex than originally believed. For he too, just like Christiace, is wearing a mask. Christiane's external mask is one of beauty to hide her hideousness underneath. Genessier's "psychic" mask is one of harshness and arrogance hiding vulnerability and doubt underneath.

Simply put, the character of Genessier displays all the pressures which our culture places upon doctors and other men of authority and power. We place such people on pedestals and treat them as semi-gods forgetting thet doctors are subject to confusion, doubt, and even human error. But as Genessier reminds his daughter (but in actuality himself): "Everyone else knows what I'm worth!" The pressures of living up to other peoples' expectations of who he is has pushed his past the brink. And now his greatest challenge and ultimate failure is restoring the face of his beloved daughter. To live up to this image of greatness, he cannot allow himself to fail.

Contrasted to the detailed persona of Professor Genessier is his daughter Christiace, a highly stylized caricature who operates moreso on a symbolic level than a realistic one. As the sequence continues, Louise is alone in the room with Christiane. Holding her mask, "I've taken the mirrors away." Christiane responds, "But I can see my reflection in the window panes. My own face scares me. And my mask scares me even more!" Louise continues, smiling, with hope illuminating her entire face, "Trust him. He's succeeded with me!" Christiane retorts, "But you had a face...a little damaged, but not destroyed like mine. He's lying because he knows it's his fault." Louise confusedly adds, "But it was a car accident?" Christiane continues, "But he has to dominate everybody...even on the road. He was driving like a maniac! I almost died. Why did he save me? I wish I were blind and dead!" Louise hugs and reassures Christiane, hands her the mask, which she carefully places on her face. For the first time the viewing audience sees Christiane wearing a beautifully crafted hard-shelled life mask which seemingly captures the beauty of her face. Only her piercing round eyes gaze forth from under her mask, emotion-evoking eyes, eyes of profound sadness. After Louise brushes her hair, Christiane glides (angelic, she appears to float from point A to B, always with a detached air about her) throughout the rooms of the house and finally arrives at the house telephone. She dials the number of Jacques, her finance, listens as he answers yet never says a word. In frustration Jacques hangs up Christiane's longing to reach out to her lover realizing she can never go back to his, at least in her current state, only heightens the frustration she must feel. As Christiane blankly stares off into space—she looks at a huge hanging portrait of herself when she was beautiful—graceful white doves fly off the tips of her hands in the painting.

But Louise is fast at work rounding up a new recruit who will sacrifice her face for the cause of science! Spotting a young girl alone in line at the theater, Louise offers her a free ticket telling the young girl thet a friend stood her up. The next day the two are having lunch, Louise revealing she has good news concerning Edna's (Juliette Mayniel) search for a room to rent. "Let me drive you there now. The owner is a friend of mine."

Almost immediately Edna senses something is amiss. "But it's so far away (from Paris)." Subjectively, the car pulls slowly up to a train crossing area. The car pulls to a tentative stop as the train speeds by violantly. "Here's the train thet will take you to Paris in less than 20 minutes," Louise reassures her..."Aren't you a little lonesome, so far from your family?" Edna appears afraid as if she realizes she made a mistake by coming with Edna.

As expected, Louise's car pulls up to the Genessier house, dogs barking in the background. Exiting the car, Edna pulls her heavy winter coat tightly around her chin as she looks around nervously. "Those dogs...how many are there?" Louise answers, "You'll be very well protected." As they approach the front porch, the interior lights flash on, stopping Edna in her tracks. Louise gently pushes her on with a tap on the shoulder.

Inside, Edna introduces Genessier by a false name, and he immediately offers the women sherry before taking them on a tour of the room. Edna wants out now. "I don't know. I'll have to think it over. The suburbs aren't so convenient for me." Edna sits at the far end of a coach as Genessier prepares the drinks. "I have to get

Christiane goes to the kennels to quiet down the restless dogs. She is gentle, kind with them.

In the basement laboratory the curious Christiane stands over the unconscious unwilling bearer of her new face. Notice the victim's arms are strapped.

back to Paris early tonight...to meet a friend!" As the Professor serves the drinks, he swiftly produces a chloroformed towel which he drapes over Edna's nose and mouth. Only the girl's frenzied wide-eyed terror can be seen as she drifts into unconsciousness. Edna and Genessier immediately carry her down into his secret laboratory. Christiane has been observing all of this from the staircase above, following the procession downward to the lab from a safe, unnoticed distance. Christiane overhears her father declare, "We'll start after dinner. But this time I'll have to remove a much larger graft. All in one piece...without any rips."

As Louise and Genessier return upstairs, Christiane enters the laboratory and stands over the unconscious body of Edna who is strapped securely to the operating table. Hearing the dogs carry on, Edna enters the kennel area directly in back of the laboratory. As she enters Christiane notices the cage of white doves standing in contrast to about ten large dog cages, each cage housing a large dog (which the Professor utilizes for his experimental research). Several of the dogs stand up on their hind legs, their slobbering heads stretching out of their metal containers. Christiane pets several gently telling them to quiet down. She turns out the lights and leaves, returning to the lab. There she walks over to a small mirror, removes her mask, and approaches the form of Edna on the table. Christiane fondles her "new face" by stroking the face with her fingertips, awakening Edna who screams as her groggy vision clears to reveal the hideous deformed face before her. For the first time the audience sees the scarred face of Christiane, in soft blur in the semi-darkness, as the young girl's sad eyes longingly stare. These piercing eyes without a face hold the viewer transfixed as Christiane peacefully backs away and the scene fades to black.

The resulting operation sequence, quite realistic and graphic for American audiences in 1962, garnered the film its share of publicity back in the sixties. Donning surgical mask and gloves, assisted by the steady hand of Louise, Genessier draws thick pencil lines around the perimeter of Edna's face and small circles around her eyes. Picking up a scalpel, there is a tense moment of hesitation as sweat beads on the Professor's forehead as he simply stares down at the blade. Then he proceeds to cut. He starts employing metal clamps to lift and separate the cut portion of the face from the rest of the skin of the head. Blood drips ever so slowly from the surgical seams. Slowly, ever so slowly, the face, in one piece, is lifted from the head of Edna. As it is lifted, the scene blurs and fades to black.

The next morning, outside, an old man brings the Professor a new dog for his research. "People are all alike. They love animals when they're small. But when the animals grow up and eat too much, they abandon them. I don't believe in doing things half-way," the doctor preaches as he uses a noose on the end of a long stick to subdue the dog guiding it to his new home in the kennels. Unlike Christiane's gentleness, Genessier is strict and yells at the dogs to settle down. When they do not quiet down for his, he becomes visibly upset. Symbolically, this kennel sequence displaying Genessier's relationship to his dogs parallels his relationships to people. He must always be in control, he feels put upon to cure other peoples' ills (to take in their abandoned pets), and he expects even animals to obey his every command.

Louise greets the Professor with happy news. 'She's happy this time. She has faith in you. I let her see the healing this time. I changed the bandage. The skin is clean...perfect." To which Genessier answers "I'm so worried. I have hope. .an accomplishment like that would be beyond price." Now turning his attention to Louise, "You've done so much harm to achieve this miracle. You harmed yourself, too." Louise lovingly smiles into the Professor's face and states, "I'll never forget that you gave me my face." To wish the doctor answers, "I almost forget." Louise, who always wears a heavy pearl necklace, raises it slightly to reveal a slight scar left from the operation. He kisses her hands. Changing the subject. Louise asks "What have you decided to do about Edna?" Perplexed and unsure, Genessier responds, "Take care of her, feed her. I'll decide later on." Moral decisions are never easy ones.

Another subjective shot looking through the window peering in on the form of Edna lying in bed. The room swings open as Louise brings in a tray of food, but Edna surprises the unaware visitor by hitting her solidly over the head with a blunt object, knocking her unconscious. Edna, who is ready to run outside changes her mind when she hears Genessier's car pull up to the garage and instead speedily flees upstairs. Edna, climbing the elaborate stairs, vanishes above. As Genessier is informed by a groggy Louise that Edna has escaped he rushes upetairs to hear a loud scream. Entering the room of the scream's origin, Genessier sees an open window and the crushed, sprawled body of Edna lies in the driveway below, her eyes blank and open in death. This time both Genessier and Louise drive to Genessier's family mausoleum there, using a pick axe, open the vault and thrust Edna's body into the darkness below, then reseal the opening. Louise, waiting outside the crypt, watches a slow-moving airplane, one lone light on its wing, cut across the night sky.

Meanwhile, back at police headquarters. Inspector Parot is interrogating a friend of the now missing Edna. The only information is that Edna had made a new friend as of late, a lady who wears a thick pearl necklace. "Very high and tight, like a collar.' Such a reference immediately harkens back to the imagery of Genessier collaring the dog which he takes into the kennel. There all the dogs wear collars and are under the tight control of Genessier. Emotionally, Louise is also "collared" to the Professor and wears her collar in a clever juxtaposition.

Parot is trying to piece the puzzle together, speaking to a young detective. "All pretty young girls with blue eyes. And all stu-

During a tender moment, the "cured" Louise comforts the depressed Christiane.

dents, the same age, the same looks. And they all disappeared mysteriously."

The young detective interrupts, "Speaking of blue-eyed girls...what should I do with the one over there?" referring to another college-aged beauty who has been picked up for shop-lifting. Parot orders, "Give her a lecture and let her go. But get her address. It may be useful," referring to a plot he is concocting.

For the first time Christiane sits at the dinner table without a mask, her original beauty restored resembling a real-life transformation of her face mask. "You now have a beautiful face. Now you can begin to live," her father declares. The Professor realizing that Christiane Genessier is officially dead and buried suggests she take a trip, get a new passport, a new name. "A new face...a new identity." Louise quite correctly describes Christiane's face as being angelic. "Angelic! I'd hardly say that. What do I see when I look in the mirror? Someone who looks like me, coming back from far away..."

"And Jacques?" Christiane asks, probing the most difficult question of them all. The Professor states, "That's a problem. I'll speak to him. He loves you very much. He'll be happy." Genessier is sensitive and concerned, but at the same time he carefully chooses his words realizing the inherent problems involved by involving an outsider into their little secrets. Immediately thereafter, the Professor receives an emergency phone call to return to the clinic. But first he carefully examines Christiane's face. "You're not using makeup?" She responds she is not. The Professor leaves, "It is nothing."

Exiting with Louise, the Professor's looks are grim. "It's a failure." He is once again solemn, speaking without emotion, drawing heavily upon his cigarette, looking directly ahead.

Cut to a frozen head shot, a medical "mug" shot, of Christiane, her face still lovely. Then as a series of gradually deteriorating head shots are flashed across the screen, each shot showing larger and uglier sores forming upon the face, each shot showing Christiane's all-consuming mental anguish, the Professor's calm scientific description of this deterioration is voiced-over the powerful images of failure. "A week after the healing seemed complete, spots of pigmentation appeared...decaying of the graft...ulcerations develop, along with a loosening of the skin." In the very next sequence, Louise goes up to Christiane's room, carrying her rigid mask, as the dejected young girl sleeps on the floor alongside her bed.

Genessier, back in the lab, one of his dogs on the operating table, mutters, "Success with the first dog...anything is possible. One must be satisfied with such ironies." Not only are Christiane's dreams shattered. This remains the ultimate failure for the haughty surgeon.

In utter desperation, Christiane once again dials the phone number of Jacques, with whom she now feels so estranged from, and instead of only listening until the hang-up, she longingly whispers, "Jacques" twice. Louise, out of nowhere, abruptly appears hanging up the receiver, "Are you mad! Who are you calling? Do you realize how reckless that was?" Christiane's sad eyes are quietly pleading, to no avail.

Christiane, revealing the full extent of her shattered hopes and dreams, states, "I know the dead are supposed to keep quiet. But let me be dead for good. I can't take this any more! I don't dare look at myself or touch my own face. I'm afraid to feel all the sores and cracks. My skin's like a raw hide." Louise embracing the pathetic figure responds, "Trust him. He'll succeed." Having given up hope and accepting the reality of the situation, Christiane screams, "You're lying. He'll never manage it. He'll keep experimenting on me, like on his dogs. I'm his human guinea pig. I want to die! Help me, please. He has hypodermic needles. The shots he gives his dogs...when everything goes wrong. You've got to kill me. I can't go on." Christiane passes out and slowly falls to the floor.

In the next sequence Jacques speaks to Inspector Parot, "I'm sure I heard Christiane's voice!" Parot responds, "You think you did. Over the telephone, no less...did you mention it to the Professor?" Jacques answers, "He's sure the corpse he saw was his daughter." The Inspector suggests that someone may have been playing a bad joke on him. But briefly flipping through the files Parot mentions all he has are leads that go nowhere. For instance, he mentions, a mysterious woman with a high pearl necklace. Immediately a sense of recognition goes off in Jacques eyes, but he reveals nothing. "This reminds me of someone."

Meanwhile, Louise is back in Paris, sitting in her car, watching the young college age girls who flitter past, trying to find another Christiane look-alike with blue-eyes.

But later, Jacques and Inspector Parot put a wild plan into operation. Recalling the blue-eyed college student shop-lifter who was recently freed, the young detective, under Parot's guidance, instructs the girl, Paulette (Beatrice Altariba), that his superiors felt his "punishment" was far too lenient. "This means prison?" Paulette inquires. Suddenly, Parot's voice rings forth, "You could do us a small favor," proposing a "deal." Without explaining why, Parot orders the girl to bleach her hair blonder, complain of headaches, and get admitted to Genessier's clinic. Parot calls Jacques at the clinic making sure he's on the lookout for Paulette's admittance the next day.

Conducting her hospitel rounds, Genessier calls upon the bedridden Paulette the next day who complains of severe headache pain that comes and goes. He orders her to have an electro-ceplogram, an outmoded means of measuring human brain waves looking for irregularities.

Next the Professor calls upon a very sick little boy, about six-years-old. Genessier holds up fingers asking, "How many?" Each time the boy guesses wrong. Outside the room, the boy's concerned mother asks, "Doctor, can you save him." With concern in his eyes, the doctor responds, "Of course. Have faith!"

This almost superficial sequence is very important because it only highlights the ever-increasing pressure put upon the human surgeon. With almost rude arrogance he answers the mother, "Of course. Have faith!" realizing full well that the little boy will probably die, but not even to himself can Genessier admit his own frailities and human limitations. He is revered as a god, so he must become one. In almost classical outline the tragic flaw is again revealed...Genessier's inability to accept his human shortcomings. In his deluded mind Genessier can do almost anything.

Proving that everything that happens in this movie is ominous, the next sequence highlights the brain-scan test, at first conducted in regular room light, but soon conducted in the dark, a nurse holding a large strobe light up to Paulette's face. "Close your eyes. Now, open them. Again. Close your eyes..." As the test is being conducted, Genessier enters the room taking a close, long look at Paulette's face.

In one of the most revealing sequences of the movie, Professor Genessier, sitting mentally and physically exhausted at his hospital desk, his head slumped into his cupped hands, he is rudely shaken by an emergency: one of the patients is bleeding. With listless authority he sends Jacques to attend to matters. Genessier, bone-tired, sits, stares, and rubs his eyes. Examining Paulette's charts, he orders her immediate dismissal: "There's nothing wrong with her."

He casually mentions freeing another hospital bed for any real emergencies which may occur.

Before exiting, Paulette goes to the admittance desk, asks to borrow the phone, and tells her mother she is coming home this evening. Once outside the hospital gates, heading for a bus stop, the easily recognizable car of Louise passes by, stops, and picks her up (the rinky-tink leitmotif again returning).

Franju, never wasting a frame of film, next cuts to the sedated figure of Paulette lying on the operating table, Genessier marking circles on her face with his thick marking pencil. As he prepares to cut, Louise hastily interrupts: "Two men are asking about you over at the clinic!" Realizing the police are calling, he frustratingly pauses and immediately walks over to greet the men. Paulette is left unconscious on the operating table. The camera's angle slightly shifts to reveal Christiane, reposed on her eloquent sofa, alone in the laboratory with Paulette (what a sofa is doing in an operating room is anyone's guess).

At the clinic Parot and the young detective inform Genessier that Paulette's mother phoned telling them her daughter did not come home that evening as she telephoned she would. Parot tells the Professor that she is in a little trouble and that the police must question her immediately. Genessier coldly tells them, "I'm afraid you're too late. Once they go out that door, my patients no longer belong to me!" Such a declaration only reinforces Genessier's sense of control he feels he must have over the patients.

Meanwhile, Paulette awakens on the operating table, large metal clamps holding bandages to her head, her entire body strapped to the table. She moans and cries out, trying to release herself. This noise attracts Christiane who, armed with a raised scalpel, floats over to the figure of Paulette, a vacant but determined expression in her eyes. Paulette screams thinking Christiane is attacking her, but the depressed, deformed young girl only uses the blade to cut Paulette free. Suddenly Louise enters, Christiane defiantly raising the scalpel against the woman who only prolongs her suffering. Protecting Paulette who is now freed from her bonds, Louise continues to approach, but Christiane, calculatedly, without emotion or concern, thrusts the blade into Louise's neck (inbetween her thick pearl necklace). Louise stands dazed for several seconds, puzzlement and pain in her expression, quietly whispering, "But why!???" With tears in her eyes, she slumps backwards against the laboratory wall, sliding like a broken rag doll to the floor, a huddled mass of dead flesh. Paulette frantically rushes up the stairs to apparent freedom.

Christiane slowly drifts into the kennels, releasing all the doves and the dogs in cages. A few of the birds fly around the white form of Christiane, one or two sit quietly on her arm. At the same time, the Professor is returning to his laboratory to complete his operation not realizing what has happened. As he approaches his garage, an army of crazed dogs rush outside surprising the surgeon, pouncing upon him. Within several seconds they are all over the screaming medical man, trying him literally to pieces.

Approximating the portrait of herself hanging in the house, Christiane now drifts slowly outside, the doves flying around her, making the once mentioned description of her "angelic" appearance come true. She walks into the woods, distancing herself from the camera, as she proceeds from a medium shot to a long shot. She never flinches, changes her direction, or even looks about. Like a model posing for an unseen audience, she simply continues to walk onward, the doves circling close to her.

The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus does not provide any "tidy" or upbeat ending. The audience must assume that Paulette escapes to freedom. But even if our "villains" Louise and Genessier lie dead, punished for their crimes, what will become of the dreamlike waif Christiane? Will she just keep walking until found, or will she kill herself? And what about Mr. Tessot who still does not know the whereabouts of his missing daughter, the girl who apparently was dumped into the Seine at the film's beginning. Will he ever know the truth. Georges Franju has crafted an uncompromising morbid slice of life where the sun never shines and happy endings do not exist. Franju is not just obsessed with the world of reality, he is obsessed with an existentialist world of existence where there can be no kindness, relief, or satisfaction. Mankind creates its own personal vision of hell. Not since the nourish visions of producer Val Lewton at RKO during the forties (The Seventh Victim, Cat People, Bedlam, etc.) has the horror genre been invaded with such an air of pessimism.

TOP: Genessier (Pierre Brasseur) chloroforms the innocent Edna (Juliette Mayniel) whose eyes register the horror; BOTTOM: After her face is surgically removed, the pathetic Edna jumps to her death unable to live with her disfigurement.

The ending of the film makes another interesting comparison complete. Throughout the film, the character of Genessier appears to always be steeped in brutal reality while the character of his daughter, Christiane, appears to be the angelic dreamer, always dressed in white, always acting as though she exists on a distant, subconscious plane. But in reality the realistic exterior of Genessier reveals him to be the dreamer, always holding up his facade that he has all the answers and will be able to cure his daughter's disfigurement. He exists in the world of unreality. On the other hand, Christiane comes to accept the ugly reality of her situation praying that she may die so all this pain might be over. But since her external appearance is always dreamlike and detached, she physically seems to be the least realistic while Genessier appears to be the one most in contact with reality. But in truth the opposite is true.

But one of the primary themes that Franju is concerned with is the ideal of beauty itself. Even though Christiane's face is horribly scarred and terrifying to behold, the viewer comes to accept her as her symbolic embodiment: as a dove, a creature both beautiful and frail. Even wearing her sculptured herd-shell mask, her sad eyes

Professor Genessier prepares to administer an electro-ceplogram to healthy Paulette (Beatrice Altariba) who is helping the Paris police.

peering out from beneath, Christiane is never less than an intriguing figure. Usually wearing ornate white robes which only accentuate her beauty, Christiane's soul is pure and her virginal glow shines through. The fact that the culture cannot accept this inner beauty but will only notice the scarring of her face, the most superficial aspect of her "being," is more an indictment of social mores rather than a defect found within Christiane herself. On the other hand, Franju's creation of the character of Genessier only highlights the other extremes. Externally, he is god-like, revered as a great man, respected and even worshiped by those he surrounds. But his internal soul is diseased, damned, and overridden by doubts and frustrations. His inner soul is ugly and deformed while his outer presence reeks of prestige. Christiane's inner soul is beautiful while her outer shell is deformed. Simply stated, each individual is basically unhappy and unable to function because of both the pressures others put upon them and because of the pressures each places upon himself/herself.

The basic horror motif inherent in The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus is that of "defective" individuals struggling to fit into a cold, aloof society. Just as the hounds symbolized, people care only about themselves. When the pups grow, demand more food, and thus cause too much trouble for the individual, the dogs are then cruelly discarded. The seemingly kind Professor Genessier only takes on the "burden" of caring for the dogs because he uses them for cruel medical research. In other words, he only "cares" for self-motivated reasons and his "caring" offers another variety of mistreatment.

The audience does not know if Genessier's all-consuming desire to restore his daughter's face is motivated by guilt ("he was driving like a maniac"), a father's love for his daughter (his most tender moments are in her presence), or by the adulation and demands put upon the doctor by an adoring public. It really does not matter. The point Franju is making is that demands which we place upon ourselves or are placed upon us by others (real or even imagined) make our life miserable and may even destroy it. It is not enough that Genessier is a gifted, talent surgeon; he is a man haunted by insecurity and failure. He can never be satisfied although the extent of his talents in the medical field should be enough to insure personal satisfaction and inner peace.

And Christiane, afraid to touch her own face, afraid to look in the mirror, afraid even to look at herself wearing her mask, has all the advantages of life: material wealth, the love of a father, the love of a finance (whether her disfigurement would be a deterrent to her relationship with another doctor, Jacques, is never to be known). What she lacks is the inner strength to realize that she still possesses wealth and beauty even with her face destroyed. Pressures, whether real or imagined, concerning the society's inability to accept her deformity (reinforced by her father's treatment of her: secluding her away from the rest of the world only emphasizing the fact that she would be immediately rejected by the world outside, which may not necessarily be so) cause her to give up on life and wish only to die. Yet at the same time, freed from her bounds of parental intervention (the demise of both Louise and her father at the end), Christiane is as free as the doves which surround her at the ending of the film. Yet, the question remains, is Christiane free enough to accept herself for who she is, free of the fear that society will ultimately reject her?

Whether physical or psychic, being "free" appears to be the only way to perhaps achieve happiness, for ultimately, no one save Christiane (and, of course, Paulette) ever achieves this state of freedom, and since the film ends so abruptly, Franju leaves open-ended the eventual fate of Christiane. Louise, her face restored by Genessier, must be free of his emotional control in order to again begin her new life. Genessier must be free of the misconception that doctors are infallible. Christiane must free herself from the notion that only her external beauty matters as far as her acceptance into society is concerned. Edna, like the doves or dogs "captured" and "confined" inside cages, had to free herself from the spider's web created by Louise. Even after her face was removed, she did not have to commit suicide by jumping out the window. Certainly, other ways of being free also existed for her. Even the dogs and doves are free at the end. Franju seems to be making the pessimistic point that the individual cannot be free simply because we remove the chains we put around our own lives. If Christiane is indeed insane at the end of the picture as many critics have commented over the years, this insanity either signifies her broken spirit caused by the ever-tightening chains she finds suffocating her life, or it can signify the freedom her spirit has achieved via the dashing of those societal confines which the "sane" mind imposes upon the individual. But then again, I do not see Christiane as insane (how can one substantiate such a presumption?)...I only see her as being free. Now that she is finally free, she must now exercise the power to live.

And pity poor Professor Genessier. In life he had to face frightened patients and parents/spouses alike. Their final hopes were in him. Imagine the pressures of living up to these expectations: some patients saved, many lost. And would the ultimate hell for Genessier be the constant repetition of the same surgical procedure, luring innocent young students to his laboratory, drugging them, cutting away their face, grafting the tissue onto his daughter's face (her beauty restored momentarily), only to abruptly ulcerate and rot away. The same procedure repeated; the same failure ultimately resulting—always the same results. This day, the next day, forever! This mental anguish and psychological torment characterizes the nadir, the bleakness, and the horror to be found within The Horror Chamber of Dr. Faustus.

VIDEO TAPES OF FANEX 2 ARE AVAILABLE! Tape One: "The Best of FANEX 2" includes the first annual FANEX AWARDS ceremony where the guests appear and John Agar gives his Guest-of-Honor Speech. Also included are bits and pieces from some of the better panels. Tape Two: "Drive-In Movies" with Fred Olen Ray, Sam Sherman, Bill George, Dawn Wildsmith, and Tim Ferrante. Also, "Filmmaking on a Shoestring" with Fred Olen Ray, Sam Sherman, Jay Schlossberg-Cohen (Md. Film Commissioner and director of Night Train To Terror), John Ellis, Peri Lumis (director of Red-Neck Zombies), and Charlie Ellis. Each tape is roughly two hours long and each costs $12.50 including postage. All proceeds go to FANEX 3. Send to: FANEX, P.O. Box 6220, Baltimore, MD 21206.

MEET AUTHORS BILL GEORGE AND DONALD FARMER who will premiere their latest book collaboration, INVASION OF THE SCREAM QUEENS, at FANEX 3 next September 9-10. Be among the first people in the nation to own this amply illustrated look at those "Scream Queens" who make horror films so much fun. George and Farmer will gladly autograph your copy!

HOLLYWOOD MOVIE POSTERS, Ronald V. Borst's fabulous Hollywood movie shop, has been inadvertently referred to in the pages of MidMar by its former title. We apologize. Hollywood Movie Posters, 6727 1/2 Hollywood Blvd, Hollywood, CA 90028.

BITS 'N' PIECES, the official fanzine of the Horror & Fantasy Film Society of Baltimore, edited by Nathan Miner, is available for $2.50 (postage included) from FANEX, P.O. Box 6220, Baltimore, MD 21206. The current issue features an in-depth interview with Samuel Sherman.

I kept staring across the brunch table: finally I realized whom Ms. Foster looked like. Betty White, of course, she looks like Betty White! Ms. Foster gave a grimace to my observation. "Please don't tell me that," she said laughing. "Do I look that bad?" On the contrary, Susanna Foster is a "Classy Dame" and I mean that with utmost sincerity. For readers of Midnight Marquee who might not know, Susanna Foster is most remembered to fans of the macabre for her ingenue roles in two important Universal Pictures during the 1940s: The Phantom of the Opera (with Claude Rains) and The Climax (with Boris Karloff). Ms. Foster and I spent the afternoon and evening talking about a wide variety of topics; she's got a great sense of humor and she wears her honesty on her sleeve for the world to see.

Winans: Could you please tell us about your family and the early part of your life before moving to the West Coast?

Foster: I was born on December 6, 1924, in Chicago. My father was in stocks and bonds before the Depression and the stock market crash. During the Depression we were very poor. I remember my mother making me clothes out of blankets. On one occasion my sister had scarlet fever; we didn't have money to pay the bill and the city was going to cut our heat off, but my father rigged the gas lines to steal gas from our neighbor. It was very hard for him to do, but what was he to do, let us die? Shortly after this incident Roosevelt started giving assistance to those people who were in desperate need. My mother spent a lot of time with me. By the time I was four I was able to read and write. My mother loved to read and she would stay up all night with her books. Both my parents loved the arts. My father played the violin. Sometimes my mother would get me up at three o'clock in the morning and ask me if I wanted a cup of tea with her; we would sit and talk for hours. Our father was so good-natured; mother wasn't into cleaning or for that matter cooking. While she taught us Shakespeare, he would come home after walking all day trying to sell door-to-door and cook dinner. As a whim she would get us up in the middle of the night screaming, "Get up, God damnit...we are going to clean this house!" She was tyrannical and wacky, but as I look back on it, I realize she was going through a lot of stress and a personal hell. Father was the stable force, and as he would say, Mother was a great administrator.

Winans: We know you were a child star. How did that all come about?

Foster: The first time I was on stage was in Minneapolis. My mother called the Minneapolis Star newspaper; she told them she had a daughter that looked just like Mitsie Green, the actress. Of course I looked nothing like her, but I was given the task of giving her a presentation during her personal appearance. There was a lot of interest in child singers at this period of time and my mother would take me to the Palace Theater in downtown Minneapolis. The Palace had stage shows and one day my mother took me to meet Carl Johnson...he ran the shows. When we got there the stage manager said he was next door at the bar. We proceeded next door to the bar and my mother said, "sing," so without hesitation I started to sing an aria from some opera. I had a natural talent; Mr. Johnson liked what he heard and he came to my house to coach me. I sang at the Palace at the age of eleven and I was a big success because I was so young and I could hit all the high notes. Merle Potter was a movie critic from St. Paul and he gave me good reviews, which helped me get work on the local radio stations. They made a record of my voice and we sent a copy to William Koenig at MGM; he sent a talent scout named Al Altman to see me; he gave his stamp of approval and I was on my way to Hollywood at the age of twelve. MGM had just let Deanna Durbin go and she became a star overnight in Three Smart Girls. They had made a mistake and were looking for a fresh new talent. When I got to Hollywood I did a screen test with a scene from Ann of Green Gables

The youthful "Suzanne Larsen," child actress, soon to become Susanne Foster the adult star.

Actress Susanna Foster as she appears today. Any resemblance to Betty White is coincidental.

and I did another scene from the same play with Jeanette McDonald because the studio knew she was my favorite singer who performed "Oh Sweet Mystery of Life." They kept telling me that my hair was the same color as Garbo's and thet they were going to make me into a little Garbo. Louis B. Mayer wanted me to he an actress, but he said I needed an agent because my mother was ruining my career. The studio sent me to the William Morris Agency; they kept pressing me to do the lead in National Velvet. I turned the part down because I only wanted to sing and ride my new bike.

Winans: What did Louis B. Mayer mean when he said your mother was ruining your career?

Foster: My mother was good for my career at first but she made tremendous waves. I got fired at the ripe old age of thirteen! Nick Nafack called me into his office and said, "Kid, you can't sing and you can't act; go back to Minneapolis and forget about show business!" My mother was waiting downstairs in the new Dodge we had just bought; I had lots of pride so I didn't cry but my mom did. That's when I grew up! Arthur Rosenstein was my teacher at MGM and he had me singing four ranges above my middle range; this was ridiculous, I should have been singing in my middle range with high notes for effect.

Winans: Why did you change your name from Suzanne Larsen to Susanna Foster?

Foster: In those days people made associations with ethnic names; in my case they thought that Swedish names gave the aura of "sex" which is hardly the image I was trying to convey. MGM called me Suzanne: my mother's doctor for some reason called me Suzanne after hitting me co the rump when I was born. The name stayed with me until after I left MGM. Actors were changing their names because they weren't musical. Names had to have a sense of rhythm. My mother remembered a distant relative named Davis Foster and the studios thought that Susanna Foster was better. I don't know how the rumor got started, but people thought I was related to Steven Foster and that I got my name from "Old Susanna."

Winans: What happened after MGM?

Foster: After MGM I went around to open auditions; Paramount was making a picture called The Star Maker. After I sang, Leroy Prince, a dance director, followed me out to the street and he told me he liked what I had done. He set up an audition for Andrew Stone who was producing The Great Victor Herbert. I got the part and there was a lot of stink about it at the studio because they had Linda Weir under contract. I did two more films with Paramount: There's Magic in Music—it was Mary Martin's first film—and Glamour Boy with Jackie Cooper. The last year I was at Paramount I was seventeen, and when it came time to pick up my option in August, the studio wanted me to remain under contract at the same salary. I was known as a loud mouth in those days and I told William Michael John that I was quitting because I didn't like the way I was being pushed around.

Winans: How did you get the part in Phantom of the Opera?

Foster: My voice teacher at the time was teaching W. S. Van Dyke's wife voice and I got invited to a party at the director's house. At the party I met Nelson Eddy. He was such a nice gentleman, and around the same time I met Arthur Lubin through Ed Brestrait who wrote for The Hollywood Reporter. Ed couldn't see very well and he was crippled; I would visit him at least once a week for dinner and we would sit around his piano and sing songs he had written. Things just seemed to fall in place. When Lubin heard me sing at Ed Brestrait's house, I was called to Universal to do an audition for George Wagner (the producer) and Ed Ward (whom I had known at MGM). Ed Ward and I had worked at a convention where he conducted the

music. I took an A flat above high C and Wagner seemed to enjoy it very much. Lubin did a very strange screen test with me; he and David Bruce interviewed me, as if I were on a television talk show. Lubin told me later that he wanted the studio to see my natural personality. The studio signed me to a seven-year contract and I was given top billing over Claude Rains because he was borrowed from another studio. I was very happy we were shooting in color, and I believe Phantom won an Academy Award for color that year. We started in December of 1942 laying the music tracks; then we started shooting on January 17, 1943.

Winans: Could you relate to us the difference in personalities between Rains and Karloff?

Foster: Claude Rains was a very reserved man. I guess it was the British in him, but he had a vicious twinkle in his eye. He was so cute, no wonder he was married four times. He sure had the appeal! When you did a scene with Rains you got such a response. Karloff was a good actor but I found him to be just a cold bore; I don't know what was wrong but Boris would never talk to me on the set. One of my favorite people was Frank Puya, he played the conductor in Phantom; Frank was Italian and we would talk all the time on the set about music. He was such a good character actor.

Winans: Jack Pierce was head of the make-up department at Universal. Can you tell us anything about him?

Foster: When I was at MGM, I hated the way the Westmores made me up; they kept putting me in lots of heavy eye make-up. At Universal I worked with Jack and, as far as I'm concerned, the Westmores weren't in the same league. Jack said he had learned a great deal from Lon Chaney, Sr., but his favorite person was Karloff. I remember Jack taught me how to apply my make-up when I was doing Phantom; sometimes I would be in a rush because I was late getting to the studio. Jack would stop me on the lot to tell me he had seen the rushes and thought I was in a bit of a hurry for some reason. He knew if I did the slightest change. In my opinion Karloff was the only actor to ever break through the heavy make-up for the Frankenstein monster. There was something tragic in Karloff's eyes that added to the pathos of his performance. The Studio and Jack conjectured about the design of the scar that Rains was to wear because the United States was at war and Americans were coming home burned. Out of consideration for the soldiers, the studio decided to have the make-up look less ghastly. Jack designed the mask to look like Rains because he had to wear it through most of the film and the audience had to relate the mask to what he would look like without it.

Winans: What was the most difficult scene for you to do in Phantom?

Foster: I think the most difficult thing to do when you're making a movie is building up and sustaining emotion because when you are constantly cutting for this or that reason, it's hard to keep the intensity level up. It took three months to shoot Phantom of the Opera; Lester Horton staged the opera scenes and I couldn't dance. I would tell him I had no sense of rhythm and he would tell me he didn't want to hear any excuses. Lubin's angle for the unmasking scene was done rather well; you see more of my reaction to Rains' face. Universal didn't know how to deal with the character of the Phantom; would he be a would-be lover or were they going to play him as a father figure? They finally decided to write the role as a mystery man with no particular reason why he had this fascination with me. I understand that the current production on Broadway is being played as a romance, which is very valid.

Winans: Did you ever have any reservations about doing the film The Climax?

Foster: After Phantom the studio gave me a bonus and a sizable increase in salary, but I never had any reservations about anything! I was happy at Universal; I had my own dressing room on the lot and the atmosphere was very pleasant and warm. The only mistake Universal made was trying to keep me a little girl. I wasn't! I was a young woman and, as a matter of fact, they had to reshoot a scene during The Climax because I was showing too much cleavage. Stan Green, the casting director, called me into his office and told me that Donald O'Connor and I would be the next Judy Garland and Mickey Rooney; I won't tell you what I thought because it's OBSCENE...I did think he was nuts because I was mature for my age. I don't blame Universal for anything. They did give me a job when I needed one, but they really didn't know what they were doing.

A Belgium poster from Universal's THE CLIMAX, where Foster is given billing over Karloff.

Winans: When you were working on The Climax, what did you like the most?

Foster: The last song, and I hated Wagner for cutting it in half; it was used when the set was burning. I wanted to finish the song! Universal changed the name of the film; it should have been called The Magic Voice, based on an old stage play written in the 20s. There was an awful song in the original play, which we didn't use. The Climax is really Trilby; I met Paulette Goddard in Palm Springs when I was young and she told me I looked like her friend Marian Marsh. It's a strange twist of fate that I should play something so similar in character. One of the scenes that seemed like it would take forever was the hypnotic ball sequence. It took three days to film.

Winans: Turhan Bey did several horror films for Universal. Do you have any stories to tell us about working with him?

Foster: I had such a crush on him! You might say I was in love with him. He was in town recently and we went to dinner and the American Cinema Awards together. He refuses to do any television or talk shows because he has a complex about the loss of his hair. I told him he should be working. He's such a handsome man and he's got beautiful skin. There's a distinguished look about him. Turhan went back to Vienna. I think he's still saddened by his mother's death in 1986. She was such a wonderful woman. They had been through a lot

together; they were refugees during the war. When Hitler took over Austria, Turhan and his mother had to leave. Not only is he Jewish, but he's also Turkish, Czech, and Hungarian. He believes in reincarnation and karma. He told me I would see my son in another life.

Winans: What does the future hold for Susanna Foster?

Foster: I haven't been able to get any work as an actress and I haven't wanted to sing since the death of my second son. I can't turn my emotions on and off. Maybe if I got happy again and my life would change in some way I would feel like singing again. Even if you're singing a sad song, the urge to sing comes from the joy of singing, not sadness. I would like to get my pension from the Screen Actors Guild, but they told me I was six months short to qualify. I called Jackie Cooper and told him the situation. He said he was doing several projects this year and he would use me in something. With the pension I could help my son and my grandchildren, maybe go back to New York to live.

Special Thanks to Ron Borst for allowing me the opportunity to use his extensive photo file and Donna Taylor at DISC Insurance for the loan of a tape recorder and her patience in my returning it.

A moody sequence from Universal's THE CLIMAX showing Boris Karloff menacing Susanna Foster.

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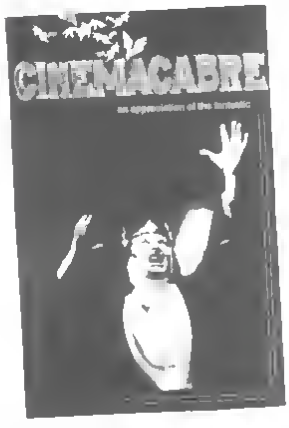

NUMBER SEVEN

Number Seven features:

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Rosemary's Baby shocked many—and not all Catholic—for the intercourse between a human female and the father of the Antichrist. In a way, it was the first picture to actually show a "monster" knocking up the leading lady. Putting the real fear of Satan into film, it even acted as a guiding influence on several vampire movies of the early seventies. In Laurence Merrick's variously PG (the common release version), "R," and gay porn Guess What Happened To Count Dracula?, the most contemporary Drac up to that time offered success to another struggling actor named Guy in return for possession of his girlfriend. No debt was due Ira Levin for what else transpired. This Guy tried to renege when true love superseded his ambition and he ended up like the heroes of Count Yorga, Vampire, which the Merrick effort was a crude forerunner of in style. That classic veered from its original nudie conception when Robert Quarry convinced producer Michael MacReady and director Bob Kelljan it would work better if kept clean.

Not so tame under the sheets—and often dispensing with them altogether—were the subsequent Sex vampires that practiced the pre-AIDS doctrine, "If It Feels Good Do It!" Mostly it was girl on girl or the female undead seducing warm-blooded studs. Whatever the permutation, sex in horror sold if it involved vampires or devil worshipers. To understate its theme and at the same time arouse interest in its outcome, the ads for Rosemary's Baby showed a baby carriage resting atop a godforsaken craggy hill...symbolic of the landscape of hell...and asked us to pray for the cursed event.

Nothing so mincy was the key campaign illustration of Grave of the Vampire. The title character held in front of his fanged face an infant also sporting two vicious canines. The child was blonde and round-faced in all copies of the pressbook art except Ad Mat 401, Gv 4, Col X 9. That showed the kid with an older angularly sinister face with long black hair swept across his forehead. Maybe that face was for papers that found the other concept too distasteful. Another image showed the Daddy vampire exposing his teeth as he ripped off a latex-thin mask covering his visage. All advertising carried the blatant blurb: "Father and Son Related by Blood!!! Everyone's Blood!!"

The producer, Daniel Cady, and director, John Patrick Hayes, were another MacReady-Kelljan team who raised their sights from peep shows to a better class of grindhouse. In 1971, Cady and Hayes made the unknown Now I Lay Me Down To Die, where Edmond O'Brien played a pseudo-Elmer Gantry who died and came back as the slave of his daughter. 1972 was the year they shot Grave of the Vampire (a.k.a. Seed of Terror) and Garden of the Dead. The latter, filmed first was about a prison farm formaldehyde factory. Some of its inmates became addicted to the stuff and escaped in a truck loaded with barrels of the same. The truck overturned, the cons were killed, and when the spilled formaldehyde oozed into their mass grave, the men returned as zombies whose passion for the chemical was equaled only by vengeance and lust for the wife of a good prisoner. Photosensitive to the degree that a searchlight melted one of them down, the zombies were felled by gunfire when the girl offered herself as bait.

The logic sundering plot of Garden was intriguing because it attributed miraculous properties to the fluid that undertakers pump into the real dead—what Bela Lugosi allegedly drank for liquor during his farthest gone days. Cady and Hayes made something different compared to all the other Living Dead imitations, no

cannibals in this one...and the cast was a nearly All-Star assortment of obscure but busy sleaze character actors: John Dennis, Erik Stern, Marland Proctor, Phil Hoover (the prison was named Camp Hoover), John Dullaghan, Tony Vorno, Jerome Guardino, and standout Russ Meyer heavy, Duncan McLeod. Schlock director Lee Frost, whom Hoover and Proctor worked with often, did a brief acting turn. Garden of the Dead originally ran eighty-five minutes and Premier Video distributes the full uncut version. However, a short fifty-nine minute tape from Silvermine has sold more units. That one is stupidly titled Tomb of the Undead.

Garden of the Dead and Now I Lay Me Down To Die were two of the links in the short chain of Cady-Hayes horror devoted entirely to monstrous resurrection. Their blue chip entry Grave of the Vampire was the best for having originated in the mind of a talented writer, David Chase, whose novel The Still Life was its basis. The look, feel, and sounds of Grave—more than a single comparison item—were very much like those of a Count Yorga picture and equally resembled The Night Stalker.

Grave of the Vampire, which Chase adapted to the screen with additional material by Hayes, made its hero a tragic half-breed like Adrian, the grown son of Rosemary and Guy Woodhouse in the depressing 1976 made-for-TV Look What's Happened to Rosemary's Baby—beating out the conclusion to a story sequelitis should have avoided. The Yorga-type vampire movies had an on-going love affair with fast and sexy L.A. In Grave, the Big Orange could have been Dubuque or Dubrovnik since its scope sliderule was time, not geography. More biographically defined than Yorga, the villain of Grave who led three non-lives under as many aliases was older by two centuries than Janos Skorzeny, his peer in malevolent globe-trotting. If he, Yorga, and Skorzeny, had all decided to settle in Los Angeles, two of them would have to leave town. The "dark house" of the triumvirate would have been sure to put up a tenacious fight.

1940. In a dark cemetery, the misty crypt of Caleb Croft exhales the labored breathing of an entombed heart that beats with determination to get out. At a nearby university, coed Leslie Hollander and her boyfriend Paul duck out of a raucous frat house party. At their "special place," the cemetery, Paul presents Leslie with a family heirloom engagement ring. Eagerly accepting, she maneuvers Paul into some slow but heated foreplay in the back seat of his car. Meanwhile, Croft—showing the interment of several years-awakens and exits the crypt. He see the car, espying startled Leslie and Paul. Ripping off a door, Croft drags Paul outside, throws him atop a high gravestone, and snaps his spine, quenching one lust. To slake the other, he pulls Leslie into an open grave and rapes her. As the sun begins to rise, Croft makes a mad dash for the nearest shelter. He finds it in the basement of a woman's home, where he beds down for the day.

Lt. Panzer and Sgt. Duffy question Zack, an old wino who was asleep by the rear gate of the cemetery, when he heard Leslie's screams and saw Croft leaving the grave. Panzer makes an issue about when the sun came up and defends Zack against Duffy's faint notion that the wino committed the crimes in an alcoholic rage. Recovering from the rape, Leslie shares a hospital room with mystical Olga, another patient of Dr. Ford. Panzer shows Leslie some mug shots, surreptitiously adding a photo of Croft that greatly upsets her. A rapist last arrested in Boston, he escaped the same night. The chase led to the subway system where Croft was accidentally electrocuted on the third rail. The body was shipped to California and placed in the crypt. Olga becomes Leslie's friend and protector. The lady house owner is listening to a scary radio program in her kitchen. Sensing something in the basement, she ventures downstairs. She strikes a match, illuminating Croft's glaring face. Croft slays the woman.

Dr. Ford tells Leslie she is pregnant. Thinking Paul was the father, she refuses an abortion for what Ford terms a malignant, life-threatening parasite. Panzer joins Leslie and Olga as they move into the summer home of Leslie's late parents. Still persistent in him theories about Croft, Panzer spots Croft standing by a car parked down the street and follows him back to the cemetery. Opening the heavy lid of the crypt, Panzer is silenced when Croft knocks him out and slams the lid down on his head.

Midwifed by Olga, Leslie gives birth to a lifeless, sickly-gray infant. It rejects breast-feeding and grows weak until Leslie accidentally cuts her finger on the blade of a knife. Drops of blood spill on the face of the baby, who hungers for its real "milk." Accommodatingly, Leslie makes a small cut on one breast and the baby acts on her move. Later, Leslie extracts arm blood with a syringe, using a bottle. The child, James Eastman, grows up a stranger to other children.

Prematurely aged by the sacrifice of her own youth and vitality, Leslie dies. Now full grown, James tracks Croft to a university where he is now Adrian Lockwood, a night school professor in the occult. Lockwood has a clandestine meeting with a young woman who is taken aback by his boldness. She defends herself with a broken bottle he turns on her own throat. In the class are James and two roommates: Anita Jacoby and English Lit instructor Anne Arthur. The evening's subject, brought up by James, is Croft. Anita mentions a rare book, Mysteries of New England by C.J. Boyd, with information on him and his earlier incarnation Charles Croyden. A seventeenth-century nobleman hounded by the Church of England, he and his wife Sara fled to Salem. After a series of gruesome murders, Sara was burned at the stake for vampirism. Croft escaped. C.J. Boyd links him to Caleb Croft. The book is available in a local library. After class, Lockwood has an intimate encounter with Anne—who reminds him of Sara.

Lockwood tries to procure the book, but the spinster librarian, Miss Fenwick, won't allow him. Seductively, she lets down her hair, then reverts to her officious self. Enraged, Croft kills her. While Anne is out of their apartment, Anita throws a small party, telling James she agrees with Boyd's conclusions. Anne appears. Tired, she goes with James to his place to fix dinner. Anita realizes who Sara was. The usual diet for James is raw meat. Loosened up by wine and loneliness, he and Anne go to bed. In his study, Lockwood has a psychic vision.

Looking for Anne, Lockwood joins Anita, who knows he is Croft and Croyden and desires to serve him as a vampire. Feigning cooperation, Lockwood slashes her throat. Anne returns to the apartment for a

The more "tasteful" ad campaign depicting the older, angularly sinister youthful vampire

shower, finding Anita's body in a corner of the stall. Through the glass door, she sees Lockwood. Her screams bring James.

James, Anne, and some other students: Sam, Brain, Carol and Tex (Tex is a girl) are invited to Lockwood's mansion the following evening for a seance. Carol carries a crucifix in her purse. Realist Sam pockets a .45. Using Anne as a medium, Lockwood tries to return Sara in her body, but she is possessed by Anita, who incriminates Lockwood. He casts Anita out before Anne faints. James takes her upstairs. Lockwood locks the seance room doors. Sam is skeptical of what Lockwood is until Lockwood attacks the group. James hears Sam firing his gun in vain and breaks into the room, where all the others lie dead. When James tells Lockwood he is his son, Lockwood reacts with lyric comprehension. He tries to bite James, who develops a sudden surge of strength. Lockwood throws him against a lit fireplace and goes after Anne. Extinguishing his burning clothes, James collars Lockwood with a chain he wraps around his neck and breaks off from a table one of its legs. Sentenced to death by James, Lockwood curses him before he is impaled.

Anne approaches James, wracked by convulsions, who urges her to run. Now a full vampire, he makes her flee as he ascends the stairs.

From Dracula to Salem's Lot, vampire films with a prior literary reputation have usually been huge successes. No one seems to know anything about The Still Life—which Dan Cady must have bought from David Chase for a song—except for its connection to Grave of the Vampire itself. If Grave had been done by a major or large independent studio instead of hole-in-the-wall Clover Films (the outfit that made Cady and John Hayes' skinflicks), it would have gained luster and better distribution. The standing product enjoys some small cult favor due almost entirely to the writing of Chase, who has no other low-budget film credits. Grave of the Vampire was as distinctive a fledgling exercise for him as Invasion of the Bee Girls was for Nicholas Meyer. William Smith, coincidentally, was the star of both. Grave also counts as one of his better credits.

Chase saw Caleb Croft as Everyvampire—smooth charmer, morose romantic, ruthless survivor, and a sex fiend who attacks from the crotch as well as the mouth. Or at least he did in the late thirties and early forties. Why rape? Those infected by vampires become undead, but through penile fertilization a male vampire could beget an extension of his actual genetic self. Was Croft in reproductive heat or was he merely impatient about getting laid? The former is doubtful. Just out of moldy hibernation, he was bound to be eager to make up for his long celibacy. In the setting of his return and the two young victims it attracts, Grave co-opts the cemetery topography of Night of the Living Dead. Barbara and Johnny of that film are rewritten as lovers who are more a bobby-sox version of Paul and Erica in Count Yorga, Vampire, whose violated love nest on wheels was a VW bus. Croft replaces the zombie who killed Johnny by knocking his head against a gravestone. The one that Grave's Paul is thrown against is like a sacrificial slab, suspending his limp frame as though one of the stakes of Vlad the Impaler. Not with a lean, precise lunge, Croft takes Leslie like a caveman, dragging her into an open plot reserved for someone naturally dead which he dirties by an act of reverse necrophilia.

Chase is meticulous about some things and haphazard about others. Forgetting that vampires are visible only to the naked eye, he allows a photographic image of Croft, validating the discrepancy in how the reaction of Leslie confirms Panzer's suspicions. Seemingly mindful that other vampires would cramp his space, Croft usually kills first—often with a sharp instrument—then sucks in (maybe he does it to hide teeth marks too). Almost providential is his appearance so near the home of Leslie and his cognizance of Panzer is if intuitively he knows their lives have hearing on his. If Panzer was so definite about Croft, why didn't he arm himself with a cross or garlic? For clarifying the Croft crimes in Beantown and adding to his legend in the yet unpublished Mysteries of New England, Panzer joins the live-up-to-halftime martyr heroes whose experiences and deaths contribute to later term development—the closest example at hand being Jonathan Harker in Horror of Dracula.

Bad experiences with medicine bond Leslie and Olga. Olga hates doctors because her husband died from pills. Leslie sees James as her lost Paul living on in him until enlightened of his actual needs. Slavishly, she misapplies her maternal instincts at cost to her youth, her sanity, her life. At this stage of James' growth, her madness is correct. Once he can eat solid food, his appetite is pacified safely. This and resistance to sunlight are small solace to the boy who watches with sad envy as other kids play, his solitude underscored by a haunting nursery song Leslie sang to him during his first meal.

Adult James is akin to a narc with a vendetta who has his own private monkey. His knowledge of Croft is related in a brief tense-shifting narrative that describes his search as the tale segues to the university. In the halls of academia Croft preys on new student bodies, exerting as teacher a spell on those fascinated by his subject. The name change from Croft to Lockwood is a sign that he is more careful about picking assumed names. Caleb Croft had the same initials as Charles Croyden and the first two letters of his surname. Fugitives tend to adopt aliases with a telltale interchangeability about them.

Croft is at his most misygonistic with the women he kills as Lockwood. The first who taunts him is addressed once as Sara. Is the name coincidental or does she hold a level of significance dashed by the lost enchantment of Croft?

Even more uppity is the prim teacher Fenwick, who is also a block to the acquisition of the Boyd book. Croft gains no sympathy by these killings, but we understand them.

The misty crypt of Caleb Croft exhales the labored breathing of an entombed heart.

After snapping the spine of her boy friend, Caleb Croft pulls Leslie into an open grave and rapes her.

Director John Hayes catches Croft in his dormancy to treat his return as a consciousness fighting atrophy.

A purpose that has consumed James his entire adult life has left him with little time for anything else. By avoiding sex he is bound to seem strange, and his reticence makes his outsider mystique attractive. It turns on Anita, who may be trying to read into James what sort of appeal he would have as a true vampire. Also reserved, Anne finds in James an appealing Similar when his sublimated humanity comes forward, touching her genteel desire. Their sex is a discovery of normalcy he enjoys, but as James contemplatively regards the throbbing jugular vein of sleeping Anne, it is plain to see he has to fight a regression to "liquid," like an alcoholic forever drawn to temptation. Anne, Croft has concluded, is the perfect encapsulation of the essence of Sara, and since her heart belongs to his unrealized son, this creates unconscious generational competition.

Anita is a miniskirted Kay Caldwell, the morbid southern belle of Son of Dracula, who was willing to give up all allotted days of ordinary life for eternal undead nights. Count Alucard initiated the transmogrification, but that was what Kay wanted on her terms, hoping to transmit it to the average man she never gave up loving The wish of Anita to cross the threshold comes from a fatal attraction to Croft himself. Croft can't afford any short unwanted relationships, let alone eternity with a vixen who crashes his privacy, holding over him his past while regaling him with off-putting endearments.

The climactic seance is a lift from the start of the first Count Yorga film. Anne is the vulnerable Donna and Sam is the second man in Grave drawn from its Paul for his cynical participation. Not only by James, Croft receives his defeat from the spirit Anita, whose attempted residency of Anne tries to steal the body he wants for Sara. A vampire cannot silence a ghost and as one Anita returns in a condition he made happen—not expecting her shade to short circuit his grand design. Finally, what we've been waiting for..the face-off between James and Croft...a whole monster at threat to a half-counterpart who can only best him by surrendering to chromosomes that refuse to be denied any longer. Almost commensurate with Croft's

James Eastman (William Smith), the vampiric son of Croft, attempts to find his long-gone father.

curse, the final transformation of James provides a Yorga-ish ending more sensible than the rest because it was inevitable from the start. Croft is perpetuated in his own killer—who would not be alive without Croft.

Cheap color processing and a deep vacuum for a soundtrack dilute the film, leading it down, adding also a quality of muted disquiet. Instead of holding off the face of Croft until after he rises, Hayes catches him in his dormancy to treat his return as a consciousness fighting atrophy, struggling against the repositorial permanence his incubating graveyard berth was made for. Especially if it is self-willed, resurrection is hard. A plagiarism of Yorga, the makeup by Tino Zacchia finds a few atmosphere players crawling over it in several lizards and a spider that climbs up Croft's hand. For the assault on Leslie and Paul, Croft shows all the monster he can be and the still cameraman can thank Hayes and cinematographer Paul Hipp for lining up good poses. In a swing away from vampire ad sexism, it is male Paul who offers the most photogenic corpse as the sole Croft victim in promotional print.

Croft's run from the sun down a residential street is shoddily day-for-night looking, the music as hammy as an old library score. The only humor is the kitchen radio show, a camp recreation of the hand-wringing histrionics of "Inner Sanctum"...its villain also a vampire. All the "wet" blood is shed by Leslie herself. The drops that sprinkle the lips of baby James moisten the mouth of a tyke whose visible features appear older than early infancy. The shadowy filmed-from-the-back James who is of grammar school age is made up to resemble how William Smith may have appeared as a boy.

The seventies part of Grave is felt to be a let-down. Plainess of texture in the forties' portion was consistent with the drab look of the era. The later scenes resist Mod except for the party, whose dancers move geriatrically. When Croft kills Fenwick, his home-in closeup is a tilted head angle that freezes—just like the Yorga fang shots. The Croft mansion interiors help Grave regain some gothic flavor. They were done at Fremont Place, an old-money domicile in L.A.'s mid-Wilshire district. The house had also been used in The Unearthly and Daughter of Dr. Jekyll. Its owner was a retired, controversial clergyman who held deeds on several other homes in the neighborhood.

The James Eastman-Croft battle follows the choreography of a long, sprawling street or saloon brawl and stays away from the appearance of a fantasy conflict except when Croft shows his teeth. The wooden stake is no amazing weapon in itself. Wouldn't one just as effectively kill a living human? In his final gesture, Croft breaks off the end he holds in his hand and tumbles downstairs, only there is no decomposition. Zacchio gave William Smith a different set of

Caleb Croft (Michael Pataki), now Lockwood, displays his savage personality.

The climatic battle sequence between father and son. Croft is perpetuated by his vampiric son

fangs...the tusky type so prevalent in Mexican horror. On any actor they stink and Smith is directed to manifest James the Complete Vampire with a silly gaping expression. And do we need another one of those "The End or is it?" titles.

The Michael Caine of the seventies' action schlock, Smith is a quickie maker's dream-star, usually tough and not the least bit embarrassed to show tenderness or introspection. Lacking the box-office recognition of Smith, Pataki likes to stretch in ethnic roles, although nothing about Croft suggests his purported English heritage. Pataki surpassed Smith in horror, first playing a victim of Count Yorga in The Return of. After Grave, he was a smarmy deputy in the scientifically vampiric The Bat People. Going for the gold in what admittedly was his kitschiest shocker, Pataki played both the actual Prince of Darkness and a modern American descendent in Dracula's Dog, receiving acceptance in one film as Transylvanian royalty and an average suburbanite. Although the ads read "Starring Michael Pataki," the name of celebrity visitor Jose Ferrer received more prominent letters. Pataki has directed a few movies, the best, another horror film, Mansion of the Doomed.

Dan Cady's favorite and most often used actor was dynamic unknown Eric Mason, whose collected oiliness and panting, flowery elocution often cast him as upscale Latinoes (on an episode of Barnaby Jones, he was credited by his real name Ernesto Maceas). The stuff for a convincing vampire in some other film, Mason gave an impassioned, concentrated performance as Panzer, who, if not a hero by actual accomplishment, at least boldly carried the spear of determination. Throwing herself deep into the most hapless female character since Casey Anderson of Beyond the Valley of the Dolls, mousy, fragile Kitty Vallacher was required to endure some pretty thorough-going abuse as Leslie, managing later to convey devotion to the seed of the vampire Croft as if the rape itself had never happened. Coarse Lieux Dressler wasn't exactly a happy delight as the manic harridan Olga, but as she gobbles her fill of screen space, it is plain to see why Dressler left Claudia Jennings stalled at the green light in Truck Stop Women.

Lyn Peters was quiet refinement and thawable ice as Anne—maybe the least interesting femme of the plot but the one who was the safest emotional investment. Mentioned in a review for her resemblance to Julie Christie, Diane Holden—who must have been aware of the fact—was both blithely and calculatingly decadent as Anita, who tried to "vamp" the wrong man. Jay Alder, brother of the more distinguished, also late Luther, put studied believability into the nuances of on-the-wagon Zack.

David Chase later became the story consultant and a writer for Kolchak—The Night Stalker, whose guest cast included Bill Smith, Eric Mason, and Lieux Dressler. Their horror stature based on one great sleeper and an interesting failure in Garden of the Dead, Dan Cady and John Hayes parted amicably. Hayes made the unmemorable End of the World, then returned to porno, becoming one of hard-core's acquisitions of unluck by slumming legitimate talent. Cady cleaned up in Blaxploitation with The Black Alley Cats, Black Samson with William Smith, Sweet Jesus Preacher Man featuring Smith and Mike Pataki, and Black Starlet, a thoughtful study of racism on the Hollywood casting couch that co-starred Eric Mason and Diane Holden. The white girlfriend of its heroine lived in an apartment decorated with Dan Cady movie posters. One was the ad for Grave of the Vampire which, if I were Cady, I would consider my "baby."

The Gorgon: Music by James Bernard

Randall D. Larson

When Hammer Film Studios rose to popularity in the late 1950s, the horror genre took on a distinctive new look, characterized by richly-colored set design and a bold emphasis on sensuality and violence. Equally distinctive was the kind of sound Hammer achieved in their films, a style of music scoring which was as richly Gothic as their spooky visuals, as furious as the enraged creatures who stalked frightened victims, and as elegant as the white-robed ladies who floated with evil intent through echoing catacombs of ancient castles. Music for Hammer films conjured up ornate, spectral visions and strident, fluid action, brimming with aggressive trumpets, crashing cymbals, melodious French horn or woodwind interludes, and frantic, pounded timpani.

A variety of composers have contributed to the music for Hammer horror films, but none have had the prolific output or the intrinsic effect as James Bernard, whose more than twenty scores for Hammer horror films have established him in the genre as one of the finest composers of horror film music.

James Bernard was born in 1925 and received his education at Wellington College in Berkshire, England. He was interested in both music and acting from an early age, but began to study music in earnest after he received famed composer Benjamin Britten's favorable response to a piece he had written for a school music competition. During World War II, Bernard joined the Royal Air Force, where he became acquainted with John Hollingsworth, an RAF sergeant who was then conducting the Royal Symphony Orchestra and who would later become Hammer's music director.

When the war ended, Bernard received a thorough musical training at the Royal College of Music, after which he was hired to score radio plays for the BBC. There, he renewed his friendship with Hollingsworth, who conducted many of Bernard's scores and eventually asked him to compose the music for Hammer's The Quatermass Experiment, in 1955. That score launched Bernard on a successful career as a film composer for Hammer as well as other studios. At Hammer, Bernard went on to score films like The Curse of Frankenstein, Horror of Dracula, The Hound of the Baskervilles, The Devil's Bride and many others, all of which demonstrated his capable sense of drama, suspense, terror, and poignant characterization.

"Film music is, in my opinion, most effective when it is basically simple, even if it sometimes demands elaborate orchestrations," Bernard said in an interview in the fanzine Fantasmagoria (#2, 1972). "A single melodic line played by a solo instrument...can be immensely telling in a cinema, whereas a lot of clever counterpoint, particularly if mixed with natural sounds or speech, will be totally ineffective. In horror films, I am always pleased when there is an opportunity for a love theme, or at any rate something romantic, as a contrast to the main horror theme. Unrelieved tension and horror in music can become a bore!"

Horror in Dracula in particular showed Bernard's penchant for leitmotif filmscoring—that is, the interaction of various musical themes (which are associated with specific characters or ideas in the film), to subtly comment on and support the interrelation of characters and story ideas as the score and film progress. For example, in Horror of Dracula, Bernard created a theme for the vampire (thet familiar, crashing, 3-note DRAC-u-la ostinato) and a theme for Van Helsing and the "good" people of the story. In the film's climax, where Van Helsing battles Dracula in the castle, Bernard repeatedly shifts from the Dracula theme to the Van Helsing theme as the fight takes place, each theme gaining ground on the other as each opponent briefly gains the upper hand: only when Dracula is vanquished in the sun's rays does the Van Helsing theme overcome the Dracula motif, resolving in a quietly victorious conclusion.

A similar score provided an even more complex thematic interplay. Although extremely underrated as both a film and a score, Terence Fisher's The Gorgon, an unusual terror tale which transported Greek mythology to contemporary Europe, featured one of Bernard's best compositions. With its unusual and original "monster," it is both a first-rate horror film and an affecting tragic romance as it tells of an unfortunate woman afflicted with the possessive influence of a murderous gorgon. Bernard's excellent score captures these contrasting elements and serves the film very well. It's also his most

TOP: The American title lobby card from Hammer's THE GORGON. LEFT: The beautiful Belgium poster from Hammer's THE GORGON.

complex score, containing no less than five distinct themes which frequently interact to complement and symbolize the undertone of what's occurring on screen.

The Gorgon tells of the spirit of Megaera, one of the Gorgon sisters (along with the better-known Medusa), who has taken possession of Carla, a young village girl in Transylvania's Vandorf, causing her to undergo hideous transformations during the full moon, becoming a snake-headed Gorgon and turning all who look upon her to stone. Dr. Namaroff (Peter Cushing) secretly knows about the curse on Carla, whom he employs as a nurse in order to shield her from its effects. But he is unable to control her completely, and she, transformed into the Gorgon, causes the petrifying deaths of several village people—as well as several outsiders who are investigating the deaths. Eventually, Paul Heitz (the brother of one of the victims) and Prof. Meister (Christopher Lee) discover the truth and reveal Carla as the Gorgon—but not before Paul has fallen in love with her and succumbs to the Gorgon's gaze.

The film is a superbly-paced horror film ripe with suspense and likable characters, and a poignant tragedy of doomed love ruined innocence, and ageless evil. Terence Fisher's direction captures all of these elements very well, and Bernard's music underlies them eloquently.

The score's instrumentation is simple and conventional: there are no electronics or strange musical effects; this is characteristic of Bernard. As usual, the brass section dominates the score, supplemented by strings (often vibrato) and percussion. Woodwinds and strings perform the more sympathetic music while the horror chords resound from brass and timpani, and the eerie suspense music is often heard from voice, Hammond organ and strings.

The score begins over the pre-title Columbia Pictures logo, replacing its usual fanfare. The music is a surging, pulsating dissonance for brass, strings, and timpani, melting into a subdued motif for female voice and shimmering strings, driven on by occasional timpani pulses. This is the Gorgon Theme, nicely evocative and mysteriously foreboding- it is associated with the Gorgon and recurs whenever the Gorgon appears or its presence is implied or suspected. A fine mood of impending horror slowly builds through eerie string and rolling timpani figures as Namaroff sees Sasha's body in the hospital and realizes she has turned to stone. A similar suspense motif is heard as the scene cuts to show Bruno, Sasha's boyfriend, dangling from a tree limb, an apparent victim of suicide.

The second major theme is a sad melody first heard from strings and woodwind, at the inquest implicating Bruno in Sasha's murder and his own suicide. Overtones of the same plaintive woodwind theme are heard as Mr. Heitz, Bruno's father studies the case and becomes convinced that his son was innocent, that the village is covering up the truth, and that one of the legendary Gorgon sisters is responsible. We will call this the Legend Theme, as it is usually associated with the legend behind the Gorgon, as opposed to her immediate presence.

Echoes of the Gorgon theme are heard later as Mr. Heitz researches further into the legend. Drawn to the mysterious castle, the cerebral moaning of the siren-like voice builds an eerie mood of suspense and impending doom- as he heads for the castle, the moon comes out from behind the clouds and, for a moment, the Gorgon Theme is heard in a dramatic arrangement of brass, strings, and timpani. Spooky, oscillating high strings over the sounds of rushing wind accompany his exploration inside the ancient castle then an upsurge of brass and timpani over the organ and voice Gorgon theme as he sees the off-screen creature. A continual descent of brass figures accompany his pained return to his rented room now half-man, half-stone. This latter action music becomes a third motif, which I will call the Fate Theme, since it is associated with the terrible fate of those who view the Gorgon. It first recurs when Mr. Heitz, already suffering the consequences of having viewed the Gorgon, writes a letter to his other son, Paul (Bruno's brother), detailing what he has learned and what has happened to his. The theme continues its fateful descent, its strained basso echoing through Heitz's efforts to move, to write what he must before it's too late.

When Paul arrives in town the next day and confronts Dr. Namaroff, the doctor denies the allegations. As he ushers Paul out, a slow viola descent, similar to the Fate Theme recalls his father's fateful departure from the castle. The music segues to a high woodwind intonation of the Legend Theme as Paul returns to his father's rooms.

An interesting variation of the Fate Theme is heard when Paul, still muddling over the Gorgon legend, walks outside and sees the reflection of the Gorgon beside him in a pool. Organ tones pulse like a slow heartbeat, then a viola ascent (a variation of the Fate theme) accompanies Paul as he, avoiding looking at the Gorgon, races up the stairs into the house. This is a notable counterpoint to the earlier scene—his father looked at the Gorgon and descended into

Pausing organ tones are heard as Paul (Richard Pasco) wakes and notices the Gorgon's mirrored reflection coming for him--building to a pulsing suspense rhythm as he turns and looks at her.

Profesaor Meister (Christopher Lee), left, portrays a hero to Dr. Nameroff (Petar Cushing), right, in a dramatic confrontation sequence.

death. Here Paul survives his close encounter and runs toward an eventual victory; even when Paul sees the Gorgon's face in the mirror in the house and runs back downstairs, the music reiterates its ascent—hopeful, not bleak.

Later the Fate Theme does indeed descend with Paul as he, after a sad parting from Carla in the castle, goes down the same hill that his father did. This time the music is the same, for by this time Paul's fate is less hopeful, and in fact his journey down the hill will lead him to an encounter with Ratoff, one of Nameroff's henchmen.

The fourth motif is the Love Theme an unabashedly lilting melody for strings first heard when Paul discovers Carla trespassing in his rooms. The romantic melody lends a strong emotional depth to their first meeting, his suspicions melting in obvious attraction, and suggests the emotional bond which has developed between them.

An interesting interplay of themes occurs as the scene when Paul re-reads his father's letter after Carla leaves. The scene cuts to Nameroff's house as Carla recites the same letter, which she secretly memorized, to her employer. Initially the Legend Theme underscores her dialog, but suddenly the Love Theme intrudes and overcomes the former theme for a few moments. The Legend Theme returns as Carla recites, "So hideous was the Gorgon, that whoever looked upon her was petrified"—at which point suspenseful strings quietly echo the Gorgon Theme. The presence of the Love Theme here suggests the soon-to-blossom love between Paul and Carla, while also forewarning that it will always be subordinate to the legend and the reality of the Gorgon.

After Paul's close encounter with the Gorgon, he is taken, delirious, to Nameroff's hospital. When he protests his enforced stay there, Nameroff holds up a mirror so he can see his haggard appearance (of which Prof. Meister will later remark, "You look as if you've been in your grave and dug your way out"). The music comes in with sepulchrally low brass chords, as if emphasizing his evident close brush with death, while raspy woodwinds pipe a phrase from the Legend Theme, reinforcing the legendary Gorgon as the source of his near demise.

While still delirious and in the hospital, Paul has a nightmare, and scenes of his thrashing in the bed are accompanied by a rolling, surging dissonance of wild strings and thundering timpani; Paul wakes up screaming, and when Carla rushes in to comfort him, the Love Theme swells in sympathetically.

Later when he leaves the hospital and unearths his father's grave in an attempt to learn the truth about his demise, low organ under monotonous, staccato violin plucks accompany his action. Bernard uses a Hammond organ, building to a dramatic climax in the fashion of Bach's Toccata & Fugue in D Minor, as Paul reaches the buried coffin lid. The organ notes are broken by a slight melody of violins as Carla joins him, and then the organ descends ploddingly, lower and lower, like a dead man shuffling down the steps of a dungeon, as Paul opens the coffin and sees the petrified form of his father.

The Love Theme is heard in a very pretty arrangement when Paul insists on taking Carla away from the terrors in Vandorf, but the music sours as Carla says that she can't leave; she loves him, but she cannot explain why she must stay in Vandorf. The camera cuts to the rising moon, and Bernard brings in a strain of the Gorgon Theme on violin, a subtle commentary—although Paul (and perhaps the audience also) doesn't know it yet, Carla is the Gorgon, and the music cryptically underlies and explains her vague statement. The music segues to the Legend Theme, heard here from strings, as Paul muses in his room about what Carla said, the music again subliminally connecting Carla with the legend of the Gorgon.

Later, Paul meets Carla by the old castle and once more entreats her to let him take her away. Paired woodwinds play off of each other over sustained organ tones, invoking the Legend Theme as they meet; a harp opens up the theme as they embrace and the melody resolves prettily. Plucked string bass and a souring of the tune conclude the scene as Paul says he can't leave yet because he and Prof. Meister must find Megaera. Hearing this, Carla pulls away and runs off, crying that she can never see him again, the love theme descending into turmoil and confusion and mirroring the lovers' frustrated emotions.

An interesting suspense motif for atonal, plucked bass and timpani is heard when Prof. Meister secretly goes through Dr. Nameroff's files in an attempt to learn about Carla, suspecting she is the Gorgon. Vague echoes of the Legend Theme reinforce the purpose of his burglary, then a low, hollow woodwind whispers as we see Nameroff approaching. The Legend Theme and this atonal suspense motif play off each other for the duration of the scene, creating an effective ambiance of apprehension.

There is a brief flurry of rapidly-whipped strings and snare drum (what I call Bernard's "Dracula Chase" style, as the device is most memorable from the climax of Horror of Dracula) as Carla struggles with Ratoff outside the house; when Paul and Prof. Meister arrive the Love Theme accompanies their rescue as they bring her inside. But the variation is strained—Prof. Meister has told Paul his suspicions that Carla is Megaera (or her spiritual home) and they've just argued about it, Paul adamantly defending Carla; this is reflected in the tense quality heard in the theme here, in the repeating of certain phrases and the unresolved nature of the melody. Only when Paul and Carla speak of their love does the melody soften and is purely heard.

A fifth motif is heard late in the film, as Paul and Prof. Meister argue about the best course of action to subdue the Gorgon. This new

Paul and Nameroff confront each other in the old castle armed with sword and candelabra.

motif, which might be considered a Rescue Theme, is a weaving and growing viola melody which grows out of the Fate Theme and suggests Paul's urgent need to help Carla (whom Meister is now convinced is the Gorgon, though Paul refuses to believe it). As Paul secretly leaves the house and heads for the castle, this motif develops into a flurry of energy which recalls the previous suspense motif heard when Carla struggled with Ratoff.

Meister follows Paul to the castle, accompanied by the same music, which segues to the eerily intoned Gorgon Theme when the camera cuts away to an atmospheric shot of the full moon, before returning to the Rescue Theme again as the scene shifts to Paul's arrival at the castle. Calling out for Carla, he instead confronts Dr. Nameroff, who had also gone there in search of her. The two of them engage in a sword-vs-candelabra fight, the Gorgon Theme intruding on the frantic battle dissonance as we see the Gorgon, clinging to the shadows behind them. Paul is knocked unconscious, and Nameroff, seeing the Gorgon's reflection, heads up the stairs with his saber at the ready—the Gorgon theme wisping through the soundtrack from solo woman's voice. Nameroff's attempts are in vain, for he accidentally looks at her and bumbles down the stairs, turning to stone, accompanied by the downward swirling Fate Theme.

Pausing organ tones are heard as Paul wakes, sees Nameroff's granite corpse, and notices the Gorgon's mirrored reflection coming for him—the Gorgon's voice theme joins the organ in a pulsing suspense rhythm as Paul turns and looks at her, then Meister rushes in with a sword and hacks off her head. Paul, his body hardening as he slumps to the floor, sees the snakes shrivel from the Gorgon's head and her ugliness dissolve into Carla's beautiful face—the strings rise eerily during the transformation and become a sad rendition of the Love Theme, dying out to a sustained single high note as Meister says, "She's free now." The music swells up again, dramatically, as Paul dies.

The End Title is a typical array of low surging bass and percussion, culminating in the Gorgon Theme for slow organ over the "Columbia" logo, the film ending in a sad, almost tragic musical depression, the omnipresent Gorgon chords intoning their doomsaying voice over all.

The Gorgon remains a horror score with a lot of depth. James Bernard does not simply provide eerie sonic wallpaper, does not just concoct a variety of suspenseful music and shock chords to be inserted at random—which had tediously often been the case in horror film music—but he invests The Gorgon score with a sensitivity toward character relations which is remarkable in its subtlety. Phrases of themes play through otherwise nonthematic suspense passages, recalling feelings or associations which those themes represent, and through all of this Bernard creates a score which is intrinsically connected to the film, its characters, its ideas, and the music work in often subtle or subliminal ways to comment on or understate developments in the plot or between the characters. This approach has been James Bernard's forte, and The Gorgon remains one of his best efforts in genre filmscoring.

John Agar the man who defeated Tarantula, poses with Gary J. Svehla at FANEX 2, November 1989

[FROM THE EDITOR, continued from page 3]

of tradition or historical past when enjoying art (books, records, and movies). It's akin to listening to modern bands like Guns 'N' Roses and denying the fact that everything they deliver is directly influenced by The Rolling Stones and Aerosmith. It's making believe that Robert Englund is the only horror film personality the genre has ever produced, Boris who?

When I was a kid the current Hammer Film Productions were the best. But from reading Forrest J Ackerman's Famous Monsters and Calvin Beck's Castle of Frankenstein I devoured the rich history of the monster-film genre and actually craved the opportunity to view those cherished treasures from decades past. Nothing was more exciting than going to the Colony Theater to see Horror of Dracula, yet I yearned to be able to stay up late enough Saturday night to see the original Dracula on Shock Theater. Even in my pre-teen days I realized what I was seeing had evolved from cinematic history past. Perhaps I'm getting old, but my jaw dropped two-feet when I encountered some of the adolescent horror film fans at FANTACON last September. Ask them about Hammer Films and receive a genuine blank look. Don't even try to relate atmospheric horror from a classic Universal to these close-minded individuals. So many of these younger fans have absolutely no sense of the past.. and this is sad. Ask these "buffs" for a title of an old classic and be greeted with The Exorcist. Narrow-minded Type A people accept "the past" rejecting "the now" and "yet to come." These newer Narrow-minded Type B people accept "the now" and the "yet to come" but have rejected "the past." But if the "yet to come" changes direction (and most assuredly it will), these adolescents will have only "the now" of their youth to remember. And that's pure "tunnel-vision."

But here's the cure...you're holding it in your hands. A horror/science fiction film magazine which respects the rich traditions of the past while exploring the current and future trends yet to come. And that's why Sue and I, along with the Horror & Fantasy Film Society of Baltimore, produce our own convention every fall, FANEX. Our second convention last year honored John Agar, a terrific, warm human being. But FANEX 3, to be held next September 9-10 here in Baltimore (see our ad this issue), honors the rich tradition of the horror/science fiction genre past [Jeff Morrow and Zita Johann] and present/future [Fred Olen Ray, Dawn Wildsmith, Ted Bohus, Dave DeCouteau, Donald Farmer]. FANEX has been described as an "intimate" convention produced by fans for fans. We attract about 500 people so the stars do not feel intimidated. I do not know how many years FANEX will be able to continue, so readers are encouraged to see the pages of this magazine come to life at FANEX! We need your support and patronage.

But for now, keep an open mind to all areas/eras of the fantasy film genre. Most of all help keep Midnight Marquee the open forum it was created to be. See you all next November!

Gary J. Svehla

TID-BITS OF TERROR: HORROR GLEANINGS

REMEMBRANCES OF THE GREAT ONES

BY DON G. SMITH

As a life-long devotee and collector of horror/science fiction film memorabilia and literature, I have always enjoyed meeting those individuals who have made important contributions to our collective nightmare. Through attending conventions, writing letters, and just traveling about, I have had the opportunity to meet such notables. What follows is a gleaning from some of those encounters.

JOAN WOODBURY ON BORIS KARLOFF:

Joan Woodbury is best known for her performances in such films as Eight Girls in a Boat, Eagle's Brood, Paper Bullet, and many westerns. Few know that Miss Woodbury also appeared in Bride of Frankenstein. As a mere teenager on the set of Bride, she had the privilege of meeting Boris Karloff, complete in monster make-up.

"Karloff was a wonderful, kind man," she recalls. He would use a lesser: two upright boards with a head rest. Because of the heavy clothing and make-up he had trouble sitting. Even though I was very awed by him at first, I went up and asked him if he would please pose with me for a picture. We walked outside—there were no flash cubes in those days—and posed with me. I still have the picture at home in my scrapbook."

Today, Miss Woodbury is still quite active as an actress. She and her husband run the Valley Players Guild in Palm Springs and frequently star opposite one another in the productions. She is a warm, intelligent woman who has strong opinions about the social and political issues of our time and who enjoys speaking with fans of all types of films. Watch for her the next time Bride of Frankenstein plays on your local television station. She plays the little queen in the bottle, one of the crowning solo achievements of Dr. Pretorious.

OLIVER DRAKE ON LON CHANEY, JR.

Oliver Drake, the producer of The Mummy's Curse, Weird Woman, and countless westerns was a personal friend of Lon Chaney, Jr. When I caught up with Mr. Drake at a film convention a few years ago, he was most happy to talk about Lon, but he vowed me to secrecy concerning a few of the stories he told. What I can relate follows.

"I produced Lon on one of his first pictures." Drake said. "I can't remember the title anymore. It was about that time that I introduced him to his second wife. Shortly after that we had a personal blow-up and he didn't speak to me for about four or five years. We patched it up later and got together for The Mummy's Curse. Lon was never hard to work with. He drank about a bottle of bourbon a day. Started in the morning and didn't quit till he went to bed. But he was never drunk on the set. It never interfered with his acting."

ELYSE KNOX ON LON CHANEY, JR.

For many years there has been a question as to whether or not Lon Chaney actually appeared as the Mummy in The Mummy's Tomb. According to Blackie Seymour of Pentagram Library, Dick Foran could never recall seeing Chaney on the set. After all, who could tell who was really behind that hot rubber mask and suit? In a letter to Elyse Knox, the female lead of The Mummy's Tomb, I asked if she could clear up the mystery once and for all.

"Lon Chaney, Jr. certainly did play in Mummy's Tomb," she wrote. "Even with the rubber mask, his make-up took a long time and was very uncomfortable. Because he had to carry me through graveyards etc., he was very happy I weighed considerably less than other leading ladies."

MYRNA DELL ON LON CHANEY, JR.

Anyone familiar with the life and career of Lon Chaney, Jr. knows that some filmmakers do not share the good opinion of Lon expressed by Oliver Drake and Elyse Knox. One such person is ex-western star Myrna Dell. "He played my father in a film," she said. "He wouldn't stand in the background for my close-ups, so I refused to stand in the background for his. I didn't like him!"

OLIVER DRAKE ON JOHN CARRADINE

Besides being a friend of Lon Chaney, Oliver Drake also was a friend and admirer of John Carradine.

"When I made The Mummy and the Curse of the Jackal," Drake said, "I asked Lon to play the part of the mummy, but that was at the time of his operation for throat cancer, so he couldn't do it. His voice was croaky. The part did not call for him to speak, but he just felt he couldn't do it. Anyway, that file gave me the chance to work with John Carradine. Of course, I knew John from way back. He is a real professional. Let me give you an example. We were shooting The Mummy and the Curse of the Jackal in Las Vegas. John was playing a detective. Because some construction started at our shooting site, the script had to be re-written so we could shoot at night only. When John arrived, he knew his part as usual, but everything had been re-written. He had at least eight pages of new dialogue to learn. With just a few hours left before shooting time, John went back to the hotel for a bath. When he got back to the set he had learned all of the new dialogue and was ready to shoot. In that short time he mastered every word, every mannerism for close-ups. It was amazing. Unfortunately the film will probably never be released. It is held up in litigation right now and its future doesn't look good. That's too bad. It's a fine picture."

The passage of time has proven Mr. Drake wrong on two points.

First, when The Mummy and the Curse of the Jackal was released recently on video cassette we learned that John Carradine did not play a detective. We also learned that the film itself is a rather abysmal mess.

JOHN CARRADINE ON STAGE

Within the last fifteen years I have had the pleasure of seeing three John Carradine stage performances, the first being a 1968 poetry reading which he gave as part of Southern Illinois University's freshman convocation series. Since attendance was mandatory for freshmen, much of the audience, evidently unfamiliar with Carradine's rich career, seemed polite but unappreciative. The actor's powerful voice was in fine form that afternoon. Upon delivering a poem he would clasp his hands and bow slightly to the applause. It would have been difficult for anyone to believe that the impressive performer on stage had just finished filming the wretched Astro Zombies.

Those who associate John Carradine with his role of Dracula in such films as House of Frankenstein and House of Dracula, with his haunting performance in The Grapes of Wrath, or with his Shakespearean theatrical roles may not realize that he is quite adept at comedy—certainly much more so than Billy the Kid Vs. Dracula would indicate. Those who have seen him in comic theater such as I did in Camelot and A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum appreciate a side of the actor unknown to many. During the latter play, his painful arthritis condition was evident in his shuffling walk, which was slightly reminiscent of his shuffle in the film Voodoo Man. But as Oliver Drake remarked, John Carradine is a real pro. The audience roared all night, and Carradine enjoyed thunderous applause at the end of the performance.

John Carradine was a real professional. In a short period of time he relearned eight pages of new dialogue while taking a bath.

VINCENT PRICE ON STAGE

Vincent Price frequently returns to his hometown of St. Louis, Missouri to perform on stage. In recent years he has appeared twice under the stars at Forest Park's Muny Opera. At those times Price could be seen sitting in the park studying his lines for the part of Fagin in Oliver and for the part of Satan in Damn Yankees. During his lunch breaks he was most happy to talk with fans and autograph material. Then when he had finished his sandwich, he would excuse himself and return to work. Those familiar with Price only as a horror actor have missed the comic flair of this entertaining performer. A prime example of his versatility and professionalism was experienced by those fortunate enough to have gotten a seat at Southern Illinois University for his sold-out performance of Diversions and Delights. In his one-man-show as author and lecturer Oscar Wilde, Price gave an unforgettable performance. Even as a throng of people in an adjoining hall cheered and applauded some other activity, Price retained his unflappable composure until the break, at which time the performance was delayed until the nearby proceedings had ended.

A LETTER FROM INGRID PITT

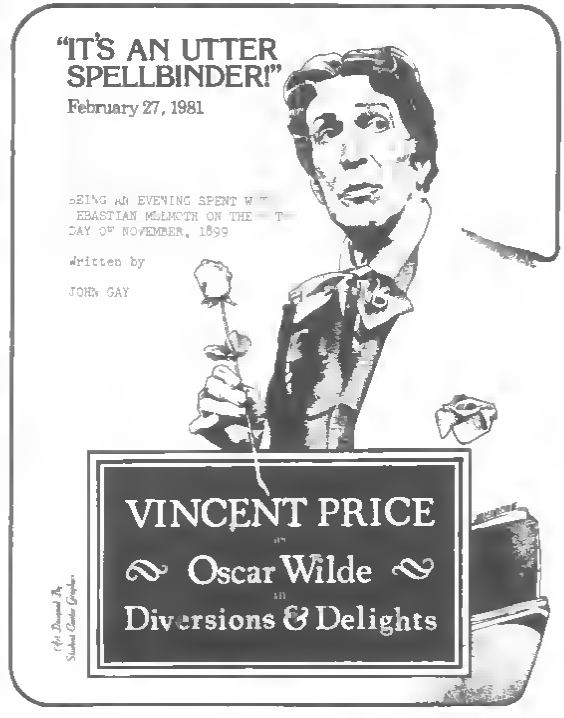
One of the strangest and most welcome letters I ever received was from Hammer femme fatale Ingrid Pitt. Having written to her concerning her appearance at the Second Famous Monsters of Filmland Convention, I received my reply one year later. Dated July 6, 1977 and mailed from London it read:

Dear Don,

I suppose I have to write you the whole story...I mean why it took over a year to respond to your super letter to me... I only write to you now because I am totally mad and rather meticulous. Please, if you should meanwhile have come to hate me, dispose of my letter and the photograph and forget the whole thing.

It happened this way: After I was in New York, as you might know, I had to rush back to South America to finish my film. After that I

Vincent Price, in his one-man show as Oscar Wilde, gave an unforgettable performance.



went to Australia with Henry V. When I came back 4 months later there had been a revolution in South America throwing out the Peronistas, and my Company was in jeopardy. So, I went back to Buenos Aires and straightened out my affairs which took me almost a year because I made another film there also, at the same time. Anyway, I come back to England and go straight into another play. Shall I go on? Hammer had telephoned a few times, I knew that, but what does that mean if they don't leave a message. And after a year even a message becomes nondescript.

I went the other day—when Hammer House stopped existing—purely to pick up some bits and pieces, when they hand me a box full of letters...

Can you or can you not forgive me? Do it—I am full of remorse and I will never let anyone wait for over a year again—IF I CAN HELP IT. What is time really—measured in light-years, nothing at all.

You speak of my next film. I shall do Los Descamizados next, The Shirtless Ones, the life of Evita Peron. Just finished a play which your Grace Kelly made so famous: Dial M for Murder, and I begin another play, a comedy this month... Thank you again for writing to me.

Needless to say, I have not come to hate Ingrid Pitt for her late reply. The care and concern she takes in those who support her career is rare and appreciated. My best to the lovely Ingrid Pitt—always!

A PHONE CALL FROM ED WOOD, JR.

In January, 1978, I was awakened very late at night by a phone call. Upon answering, I was both surprised and delighted that the director of Plan Nine from Outer Space, Bride of the Monster, and Glen or Glenda had called. About a week before I had written to Mr. Wood expressing my interest in his work and in his relationship with Bela Lugosi. "I'm glad to know that the old boy is still remembered," Wood said, referring to himself. "I'll let you in on a little secret. The flying saucers in Plan Nine were actually Cadillac hubcaps." When he discovered that I collect and deal in horror film advertising memorabilia, he asked if I could get him posters from any of his films. I gathered that he wanted them in regard to the book he was writing on Bela Lugosi. I told him that I would do my best. Before he hung up he told me that he would be moving soon. I had no idea at the time that he was in deep financial trouble. A few days later I received Mr. Wood's autograph along with a note saying that an autographed photo would follow. Soon afterwards, I located a poster from Bride of the Monster and phoned Mr. Wood. He seemed very irritable and preoccupied. I never heard from him again. A short time later he was dead. I recall from our phone conversations that he took pride in Plan Nine from Outer Space. He didn't think it was a bad film. While I have nearly 300 autographs of horror/science fiction film personalities in my collection, Ed Wood's autograph is one that I treasure most. While he was not a talented director, he loved the genre and tried to do something worthwhile. That is more than can be said for the many directors today who churn out abysmal horror films with nothing more in mind than to exploit and degrade. Yes, the old boy is still remembered. And he will be for a long time to come.

STEPHEN KING AT THE ST. LOUIS ARCHON

Stephen King was among the guests at Archon VI, held in July of 1982 in St. Louis. I caught my first glimpse of Mr. King as I sat in the audience at the beginning of the opening festivities. King stood in the midst of a gathered throng amassed at the doorway. He was beardless and wore a tee-shirt and slacks. He obviously was having a good, informal time, and he appeared to be a very unassuming individual. When introduced, he grinned widely and raised his arms in classic Richard Nixon style. The speaker said that Mr. King's baggage had been lost by the airline and that what he was wearing was all that had arrived. Rows of chairs were arranged on a raised platform, and King took his place there. He took the praise that was heaped upon him with smiles, usually assuming airs of playfulness just to show that he did not take fame too seriously. He drank four Stroh's beers during the introductions, clapping his hands and nodding his head in approval as all the other guests were introduced. Three ladies sat on the left of the stage. One was a convention

Producer Oliver Drake claimed that Lon Chaney, Jr. drank about a bottle of bourbon a day.

Joan Woodbury, who played the little queen in the bottle in BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN, felt that Boris Karloff was a wonderful, kind man.

organizer; one was the fiance of one of the other guests. I do not recall the identity of the third, but they all got a big kiss from Stephen King as he ascended the platform. At least two of the ladies received their kisses with obvious relish. The third was shy and a little shaken.

After introductions, two tickets were auctioned off for the Saturday night banquet. The winners would be given seats at the head of the table with Stephen King. Both tickets went for around $60. A father bought one of the tickets for his son who was obviously elated. When the tickets were claimed, King assumed a frightened pose, covering his head and cowering. Then his features immediately returned to normal—a smile on his face and a Stroh's in his hand.

After the introductory session ended, Stephen King and Robert Bloch held a discussion on the subject of horror. King said that he found writing for a living a most wonderful experience. He does what he loves to do—tell stories—and people pay his for it! Certainly he is grateful to those who buy his books and who let him live the life that he enjoys most. In one chilling moment he pointed out statistics showing that one out of every hundred people are dangerously mentally unbalanced. Thus several people in the audience could be expected to fill the bill. That scares Stephen King. He reminded the listeners of sections from The Dead Zone when the main character senses that the owner of an overcoat is nearing a mental collapse. During the panel discussion, King drank four more Stroh beers.

The next day, he was a bit late for his "reading," explaining as he walked slowly to the platform that he was hung over and that he was about to attempt a reading to 400 hung over people. As he sat wearing a Creepshow tee-shirt, he explained that his luggage had arrived from the airport. He read from what he called his "Wip" (work in progress). It is called The Cannibals, a horror tale of an apartment building complex sheltered mechanically from the outside world. The technology fails, creating a situation in which the inhabitants must turn upon one another in order to survive.

As King read from the opening chapters, he dwelled a great deal upon food as he built the main character and the setting. But as he pointed out, "You know thet the main course is coming." The audience chuckled. After the reading I asked his which writers of dark fantasy he liked to read for pleasure. "There are a lot of them," he said. "Bloch" (cheers from the audience). I can always re-read The Scarf and The Dead Beat. There's Coyne. And there's a very good writer named Michael McDowell. I loved The Amulet." What scares Stephen King? "Dying," he answered.

There were many other memories of Stephen King from the Archon: the ghoulishly funny story he told at the banquet, the autograph sessions, etc. But I was glad to see Stephen King drink Stroh's beer throughout the convention. As a Stroh's drinker who takes a lot of ribbing for my taste in beer, I felt vindicated.

ROBERT BLOCH AT THE ST. LOUIS ARCHON

The author of Psycho was master of ceremonies at Archon VI. As part of his duties he sat in on panel discussions and gave a very rich lecture on the history of Weird Tales Magazine. Bloch was one of the few professionals at the convention who considered H.P. Lovecraft a fine writer. But it was Bloch's untiring sense of humor that carried the day. One particular moment continues to make me chuckle. As my wife and I were heading up to our floor, Robert Bloch stepped into the elevator and joined us for the ride. "You know," I said, "we get the Thriller television show where we live, and it seems that every other week they show a program written by you." The elevator stopped at Bloch's floor. "Everybody's got his problems," he said, and walked out.

The next issue of Midnight Marquee, #39, will be available in November 1989. The deadline for article submissions will be July 14 or sooner. Since MidMar is now published twice a year, we need twice as many articles and art. Tentative articles for #39 include: "The Attack of the Killer Popcorn" by John Parnum (delayed from this issue), "Fearing the Dark: The Val Lewton Legacy" by Ed Bansak, "The Looking Glass: Horror on Karloff's Thriller" by Jay Allen Sanford and "Terror From A Child's Point of View" by Gary J. Svehla. The 48-page issue will sell for the usual $3.50 via 4th class rate.

FORGOTTEN FACES OF FANTASTIC FILMS

by Jim Coughlin

Many of the roles associated with horror films have become hackneyed and clichéd over the years due to numerous repetitions and lack of novel characterizations. A film like Young Frankenstein succeeds partly by lampooning such characters as the hunchbacked assistant, one-armed police inspector, eccentric servant, etc. It is interesting to trace the origins of such roles within the horror genre to see how the characters were intended before they became standard plot devices and parodies of themselves. The Invisible Man (1933) introduces the weak-willed former associate of the monster-to-be, who becomes an unwilling accomplice in the fiend's grandiose plan to wreak havoc. The character was Dr. Kemp, as craftily enacted by William Harrigan.

William Harrigan came from sturdy theatrical stock, being one of the children of Edward "Ned" Harrigan, of "Harrigan and Hart" fame, and Annie Theresa Braham Harrigan, actress and daughter of composer David Braham. William was born in New York City on March 27, 1894. His stage debut came in "Dan's Tribulations" and at age five he was seen with long golden curls in his father's famed "Reilly and the 400." Before the age of ten, William had toured the country in Ned Harrigan vehicles like "Old Lavender." When it came to theatre, the elder Harrigan was a stern taskmaster. Be once had young William study the every move of a mediocre actor. Before William could regale his father with the techniques he had learned, he was instructed, "Remember all those things and never do any of them!" Another time Ned had William play an entire performance without moving his arms from his sides in order to emphasize the value of face and voice in acting.

Young Harrigan branched out from his family to play Jimmie Larkin in "Artie" (Oct. 1907) and Dempsey in "The Regeneration" (Sept. 1908). With his father, William was seen as Bryan Desmond in "His Wife's Family" (Oct. 1908). Theatre (Feb. 1909, p. 69) wrote of "Billy" Harrigan, "The boy has a youthful preponderance of animal spirits. His smile is unctuous. He sees comedy points and develops them." His father had taught him well.

William Harrigan continued acting while attending New York Military Academy. At the time he aspired to go to West Point. William toured Australia with the Charles Millward theatrical troupe, but his performing days were later interrupted by the entrance of the U.S.A. into World War I. Harrigan rose to the rank of captain in the 3rd Battalion, 307th Infantry, 77th Division of the U.S. Army. He helped lead a relief column to aid the so-called "Lost Battalion" who were cut off from the Allied forces for five days. Page one of the N.Y. Times (8/24/18) read, "Captain Harrigan Leads Raid...Party Under Late Actor's Son Takes 14 Prisoners." The article described William as "the hero of this effort," but he received a series of wounds and spent the next four months in French hospitals. He was sent stateside to recuperate and was sailing on Long Island Sound one afternoon when he decided to dock near the residence of George M. Cohan in Great Neck, NY. Cohan remarked, "You look pretty fit, Bill. Pretty near ready to work again?"

Cohan aided Harrigan's return to the stage by providing him with the role of Joe Conway in "The Acquittal" (Jan. 1920). William then went on to play James Gilley in "Bought and Paid For" (Dec. 1921). Bob Cooley in "Polly Preferred" (Jan. 1923) with Edward Van Sloan, James Darlington in "Schemers" (Sept. 1924), and Johnny Powell in "The Dove" (Feb. 1925). Harrigan received critical acclaim for his lead portrayal of William A. Brown in Eugene O'Neill's "The Great God Brown" (Jan. 1926).

Although Harrigan had appeared with Arnold Daly in the silent film An Affair of Three Nations (1915), his first prominent screen role was Jack Costigan, who runs the nightclub in which Gilda Gray performs, in The Cabaret (1927). The bulk of Harrigan's work, however, continued to be in the theatre. He played Eddie Carpenter in "Sandalwood" (Sept. 1926). William headlined the vaudeville bill at the Palace in July 1927 and "scored with a zoop" (Variety) doing many of his father's numbers in a sketch entitled "Memories of Harrigan and Hart." As Robert Buchanan, newspaper editor and colleague of reporter Dwight Frye, Harrigan starred in the ill-fated "Ink" (Nov. 1927). The N.Y. Times noted that William was "more agreeable than his part."

Following two failed marriages (to Dorothy Langdon, wed 1915-divorced 1919, and musical comedy star Louise Grody, wed 1920-divorced 1922), Harrigan found a stabilizing influence in his life in third wife Grace Culbert, whom he married in 1925. She was flexible enough to stand by his whether William was on stage in New York or London, or off shooting a film in Hollywood.

On screen, Harrigan was Johnny Brown, one of a pair of acrobat/friends who both fall in love with Mae Clarke, in Nix On Dames (1929). He portrayed "Good News" Brophy in Born Reckless (1930), directed by John Ford, and was Danny Madden, friend of ironworker Victor McLaglen, in On the Level (1930). Men on Call (1931) included Harrigan as a Coast Guard captain who befriends down-and-out Edmund Lowe.

Noteworthy stage roles for Harrigan during this period were: Jim Grove in "Washington Heights" (Sept. 1931), the Irish Commandant in "The Moon in the Yellow River" (Feb. 1932), and Richard Regan in "The Animal Kingdom" (April 1932). Another critical success for William was his portrayal of Chief Inspector Tanner opposite Emlyn Williams in the suspenseful "Criminal at Large" (Oct. 1932) by Edgar Wallace.

Harrigan was briefly under contract to Paramount, appearing for that studio in three consecutive productions. He was Jim Richards, the gangster/husband of Sylvia Sidney who breaks out of jail, in Pick-Up (1933). As Peter Lawton, William was an unscrupulous mobster who has himself admitted to the hospital to silence Gloria Stuart in The Girl in 419 (1933). Disgraced (1933) had Harrigan as Captain Holloway, whose daughter (Helen Twelvetrees) tries to protect him after he kills her rotten fiance.

James Whale was busy preparing H.G. Wells' The Invisible Man for the screen, when Universal contract player Chester Morris, slated to play Dr. Kemp, balked at sharing top-billing with Claude Rains and left the picture. William Harrigan was called in as a replacement for Morris and production on The Invisible Man (1933) ensued.

Early on in The Invisible Man, Kemp (Harrigan) is seen consoling the sweetheart (Gloria Stuart) of Griffin (Claude Rains), who has mysteriously disappeared. Kemp opines, "He meddled in things man should leave alone," revealing Griffin's penchant for working behind barred doors and drawn blinds. Dr. Cranley (Henry Travers), the mentor of Griffin and Kemp, later learns that Griffin had been experimenting with "Monocaine," a drug that draws color from whatever it touches. The drug also made a dog insane during one experiment.

William Harrigan's return to the Broadway stage as Charlie Chan opposite Dwight Frye as Ah Sing in KEEPER OF THE FLAME (Oct. 1933).

William Harrigan as Dr. Kemp from Universal's THE INVISIBLE MAN (1933). Here Claude Rains reveals, "I must have a partner...We'll begin with a reign of terror..."

Kemp is sworn to secrecy by Cranley as they search Griffin's lab for further clues.

That night, Griffin sneaks into Kemp's quarters and threatens to kill him if he tries anything. Kemp is instructed to gather a surgical bandage, gown, glasses, etc., and to draw the blinds. Once attired, Griffin reveals the nature of his experiments to Kemp, adding, "I must have a partner...We'll begin with a reign of terror..." Kemp is horrified, but is coerced to drive Griffin to the village in order to fetch a notebook left behind at the inn. Griffin secures the book, kills an inspector, and orders Kemp to drive home. Kemp waits until Griffin is asleep, phones Cranley with what he has learned, and then contacts the police. Cranley and Flora (Stuart) arrive, followed by the police. As Griffin is forced to exit he vows to kill Kemp for his betrayal at "10 p.m. tomorrow night."

Kemp informs the police of the death threat and the fact that Griffin is "the invisible man." The Chief of Detectives (Dudley Digges) talks of setting a trap in Kemp's study, but at 9:30 p.m. they escort Kemp from his house to the station. Dressed as a policeman, Kemp is snuck out of the station and gets back in the car, only to realize that Griffin has been in the vehicle all along. Kemp pleads for his life as Griffin ties his up, describing to his former colleague how he'll meet his death. Griffin stops the car, gets out, and releases the brake. The car plummets over a cliff and bursts into flames, with Kemp tied inside.

Harrigan turned in a decent performance as Kemp in The Invisible Man. It is really a thankless, unsympathetic role opposite the fine special effects of John P. Fulton and the bravura acting of Rains, but Harrigan held his own. The character of the unwilling accomplice-turned traitor later became fairly common in horror films.

Harrigan's return to the Broadway stage was significant (to horror film fans—not to critics of the time) in that he played Inspector Charlie Chan opposite Dwight Frye as Ah Sing in "Keeper of the Keys" (Oct. 1933). After a series of successful Chan films, this was the first attempt to translate Earl Derr Biggers' detective to the stage. Chan is called in to solve the murder of a prima donna at a hunting lodge in Nevada. The N.Y. Daily News (10/19/33) noted, "Harrigan's study of Chan is very good. Particularly in the consistency of his speech and accent. Dwight Frye, elaborately made over as an ancient Chinese, is effectively weird. Neither of the boys could conceivably get by the gatekeeper of a Tong headquarters, but they do very nicely as Occidental imitations."

Also on Broadway, Harrigan was Ben Weston in "The Dark Tower" (Nov. 1933). He journeyed to London to portray Augustus McNeal in "She Loves Me Not" (May 1934). Back in the States, William played Philip Frampton in "All Rights Reserved" (Nov. 1934), Jerry Morse in "Portrait of Gilbert" (Dec. 1934), and Didier in "Paths of Glory" (Sept. 1935).

During the mid-to-late-1930s, Harrigan was at the peak of his film career. William had a sympathetic role as McKay, the racketeer who put James Cagney through law school, in G-Men (1935). When the retired McKay is forced to play reluctant host to former gangster cronies at his hideaway in Wisconsin, he is accidentally killed by Cagney when the G-Men raid the retreat. Harrigan was seen as Updyke in Stranded (1935) and Jonesy in The Melody Lingers On (1935). Silk Hat Kid (1935) had William as Brother Joe Campbell, who runs a settlement house for wayward youths. In His Family Tree (1936), Harrigan changed his name from Murphy to Murfree in an attempt to win a mayoralty race and hide his Irish background. His pubowner-father (James Barton) arrives, making Murfree's past public knowledge. Nonetheless, the Irish vote comes through and father and son are reconciled. Frankie and Johnnie (1936), based on the popular song with Helen Morgan and Chester Morris in the leads, had Harrigan as Curley. William was "Doc" Evans, jewel-thieving partner of Robert Gleckler, in Whipsaw (1936). Over the Goal (1937) included Harrigan as football coach Jim Shelly. William played the chief inspector who helps break the spy ring headed by elderly Zeffie Tilbury (of all people—remember her as the biddy in The Werewolf of London?) in Federal Bullets (1937). Harrigan had smaller roles as Powell in Exiled to Shanghai (1937), about newsreel photographers, and Blake in Hawaii Calls (1938). As the drunken, abusive, one-armed Mr. Rogers, who beats son Jimmy Lydon in the early going of Back Door to Heaven (1939), Harrigan made quite a dramatic impact.

Throughout this period, Harrigan kept finding time to return to his main love, the stage. Harrigan portrayed Arthur Curtis in "Among Those Sailing" (Feb. 1936), Andrew Rodman in "Days to Come" (Dec. 1936), and Stuff Nelson in "Roosty" (Feb. 1938). On the road, he was seen in "Away From it All" (June 1938) in this author's hometown of Carmel, NY, and "Once Upon a Night" (Sept. 1938) in Wilmington,

During the mid-to-late 1930s, Harrigan was at the peak of his film career, sometimes portraying men on the opposite side of the law.

Harrigan's final screen appearance as Gus, the veteran cop, who advises his rookie partner (George Montgomery) not to go strictly by the book, in STREET OF SINNERS (1957).

Delaware. "The Happiest Days" (April 1936) featured Harrigan as Alfred Chapin and "A Passenger to Bali" (March 1940) had him as the Scottish mate, Mr. Slaughter. William played Quigley in "Snookie" (June 1941). Harrigan then toured (1942-3) in "Death Takes a Holiday" and "Mary of Scotland" as Bothwell. A critic wrote of his performance in the latter, "He cannot make the slightest movement on stage without creating an effect of significance and emotional power." Back on Broadway, Harrigan took to the bench as Judge Bently in "Pick-Up Girl" (May 1944) and Judge Harvey Wilkins in "Dear Ruth" (Dec. 1944).

Harrigan's film work began tailing off in the 1940s, with only one screen appearance between 1939-1947. And that was a low-budget PRC musical, Follies Girl (1943), in which William played Jimmy Dobson. The Farmer's Daughter (1947), starring Loretta Young, included Harrigan as Ward Hughes. William was Judge Berle Landquist in Desert Fury (1947), a western crime drama featuring an early screen appearance of Burt Lancaster. Harrigan played Father Vail in the story of Mother Cabrini (Carla Dare), entitled Citizen Saint (1947).

Harrigan's career received a much-needed boost when he auditioned for and won the role of the Captain in "Mister Roberts" (Feb. 1948). Most people associate the eccentric captain with a penchant for potted palm trees with James Cagney (marvelous in the screen version), but Harrigan made the part his own on stage, playing the Captain for three years and 1158 performances. William considered the Captain a "serio-comic" character, comparing the portrayal to the "art of walking a tightrope." He felt the actor had to maintain an emotional balance and be ready at any time to shift "from instilling dread to evoking laughter" ("Mister Roberts" souvenir program notes).

Flying Leathernecks (1951) had Harrigan on hand as Lt. Cmdr. Joe Curran, the wise "Doc" who tries to advise John Wayne and Robert Ryan. In Steel Town (1952), William played John "Mac" McNamara, the father of Ann Sheridan.

Harrigan's next two films had a fantasy angle to them. Francis Covers the Big Town (1953) featured Harrigan as Chief Hansen, who had Donald O'Connor arrested on a murder rap. Of course, the talking mule saves the day by taking the witness stand and clearing O'Connor. Roogie's Bump (1954) was a low-budget effort from Republic that tried to capitalize on the popularity of the Brooklyn Dodgers by using real-life players like Carl Erskine and Roy Campanella in the cast. Harrigan portrayed Red O'Malley, the ghost of a former baseball great, who appears to Roogie Rigsby (Robert Marriot) and helps with his skills to the point that the lad reaches the major leagues with the Dodgers.

On Broadway, Harrigan was seen as His Lordship, the Bishop of Oriel, in "The Wayward Saint" (Feb. 1955). He then recreated his role as the Captain for a revival of "Mister Roberts" (Dec. 1956) at the New York City Center.

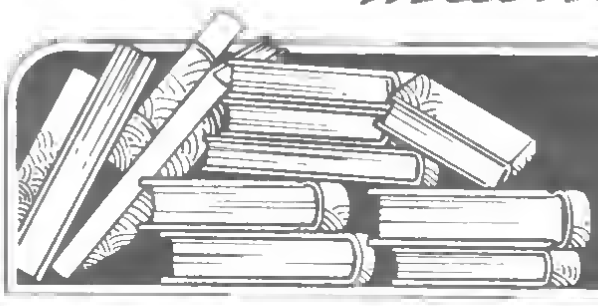
William Harrigan's final screen role was that of Gus, the veteran cop who advises his rookie partner (George Montgomery) not to go strictly "by the book," in Street of Sinners (1957). He then made his last appearance on Broadway as the First Interrogator and a member of Congress in "A Shadow of My Enemy" (Dec. 1957), which closed after only five performances. The acting days of William Harrigan, a member of AEA, SAG, and AFTRA, were over.

Harrigan spent much of his retirement reading and pursuing other interests. In July 1962, four years before his death, William taped his recollections of his life and career. He also recorded his renderings of his father's and David Braham's songs, such as "The Mulligan Guard."

William Harrigan died at the age of 71 on February 1, 1966, at St. Luke's Hospital, New York City, following surgery. On Feb. 2, members of the 307th Infantry Post of the American Legion held a memorial service for Harrigan at the University Funeral Chapel on Lexington and 52nd Street. The funeral mass was celebrated at 10 a.m. on Feb. 3 at Our Lady of Peace Roman Catholic Church on 237 East 62nd Street. The following Friday, Harrigan was buried with full military honors at Arlington National Cemetery, Arlington, Virginia.

Harrigan was survived by his wife Grace, brothers Philip and Nolan, and sister Nedda Harrigan Logan. Nedda, a fine actress and the wife of the recently deceased Joshua Logan, appeared in many Broadway productions and films like Charlie Chan at the Opera (1936) and Thank You, Mr. Moto (1937).

Despite being a member of a prestigious theatrical family, having had a career on Broadway spanning six decades, and appearing in many important films, William Harrigan has been all but neglected by modern reference books. His portrayal of Dr. Kemp in James Whale's classic adaptation of H.G. Wells' The Invisible Man and lesser genre roles in Francis Covers the Big Town and Roogie's Bump warrant Harrigan's inclusion in a journal like Midnight Marquee, with the hope that wider recognition for his fine career is still to come.



BOOK REVIEWS

by Gary J. Svehla

DIRECTED BY JACK ARNOLD by Dana M. Reemes. 260 pages, digest-size cloth. Available from: McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. Price: $24.95 (plus $2.00 handling).

Jack Arnold is now being recognized as one of the visionaries of the fantasy film genre during the 1950s. Perhaps since most of Arnold's greatest works were considered secondary "B" productions [Creature From The Black Lagoon, Revenge of the Creature, Tarantula, It Came From Outer Space, Space Children, and The Incredible Shrinking Man to name most], critics never bothered to give serious thought to Arnold's wonderful fantasy film output. Distancing ourselves 20-30 years away from these projects, now is the time to recognize the obvious...thet Arnold's direction and visual interpretstions were far more than mere product!

And interestingly enough, here all of Arnold's films are documented, even his large array of non-genre works [High School Confidential, The Mouse That Roared, etc.]. Arnold is interviewed and tells stories about the behind-the-scenes production activities throughout the text (often repeating some of the same stories he told Cinfantastique, among others) which make the reading all the more involving because of Arnold's active participation.

Included is the usual complete filmography as well as a few surprises. Arnold was preparing a large-scale return to direction in the early '80s by remaking The Lost World complete with stop-motion dinosaurs. Here the text includes actual story-board drawings and the script outline for several special effects sequences. Also included is the screenplay outline for an Arnold film that was never made, A Circle of Wheels, a film thet was very dear to Arnold's heart.

So while this may not he the final word on the complete filmic works of director Jack Arnold, it is by far the most comprehensive volume available. For any fan of Arnold's and '50s' science-fiction films in general, this is an essential book to purchase. It is a delight to read.

ROGER CORMAN: THE BEST OF THE CHEAP ACTS by Mark McGee. 260 pages, digest-size cloth. Available from: McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. Price: $24.95 (plus $2.00 for handling).

We can consider this book the sequel to Mark McGee's earlier Fast And Furious: The Story of American-International Pictures, one of the most revealing looks ever of the low-budget "B" movie factory. In Roger Corman: The Best of the Cheap Acts McGee returns to tell the nuts-and-bolts story of one of the most fascinating contemporary movie producers/directors of the modern era.

Interestingly structured, the book's first 86-pages are devoted to the "history" of Corman's career, complete with quotes from all the screenwriters, performers, studio brass, etc. who were creatively involved with the various projects. McGee's style never takes the Corman career too seriously and his analysis is filled with humorous reverence.

But the majority of the book is jammed-filled with a definitive filmography of all the Corman product which includes complete credits, synopses, and "Behind the Scenes" documentation of what really happened there on the set during production. As could he expected, the space devoted to behind-the-scenes is the most expansive and interesting for any lover of Corman cinema.

In fact, what makes this volume so fabulous is the surprising amount of creative people who volunteered to speak honesty about working with Roger Corman. The strange incidents recounted and stories shared make this book so utterly fascinating. Again, not just for fans of Corman, but for any fan of the '50s' science-fiction/horror, this is another essential book to buy. It will raise a smile or two on every reader's lips only emphasizing the point that this era of innocence in filmmaking is gone forever.

THE COLLECTOR'S GUIDE TO MONSTER, SCIENCE FICTION, AND FANTASY FILM MAGAZINES by Bob Michelucci. 215 pages, digest-size paper. Available from: FantaCo Enterprises, Inc., 21 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 12210. Price: $9.95 (plus $3.00 shipping).

People will be attracted to this profusely illustrated price guide for one of two reasons: a) to remember the covers of all these monster magazines from the days of our youth and b) to get insight as to what those boxes of magazines in storage up in the attic are worth on today's market. Whatever the reason, The Collactor's Guide is one very attractive price guide. The year each magazine was first and last published is well documented. A small glossy full-color center section reprinting some of the rarer magazine covers appears. The beginning of the book features short, interesting articles about collecting monster magazines, one of which is written by the dean of editors, Forrest J Ackerman.

But the only flaw is the inconsistency by which semi-professional magazines and fanzines are listed or not listed. Amateur magazines such as Ted Bohus' slick SPFX are documented, as well as a brief mention of the mimeo issues published of Cinefantastique. But why not the pivotal Horrors of the Screen or the longest running monster magazine of all time, Gore Creatures/Midnight Marquee? If Michelucci wanted to limit himself to the pros, fine. But if he wanted to list all the magazines published on the genre, he failed miserably. The obvious answer would have been to ignore completely the amateur publications and devote the volume solely to professionally published magazines

Other than this flaw, the book is handsomely mounted and quite attractive. I heartily recommend it for all lovers and collectors of monster magazines everywhere. But come on Bob! Let's see Volume 2 [The Fanzines] before too long!

MORE CLASSICS OF THE HORROR FILM: FIFTY YEARS OF GREAT CHILLERS by William K. Everson. 256 pages, full-size cloth. Available from FantaCo Enterprises, Inc., 21 Central Avenue, Albany, New York 12210. Price: $19.95 (plus $3.00 for shipping).

Published in 1986, this sequel to William K. Everson's original volume (published in 1974) is almost as relevant as the first book. For those not already familiar with Everson's name, he is one of the foremost experts on the cinema of the obscure, those nostalgic chestnuts thet have vanished from even the syndicated TV screen. In fact, many of the titles discussed here in More Classics have never been released to television! One pivotal chapter says it all: "An Affactionate Look at the Schlock Horror of the Thirties and the Forties."

Illustrated to the maximum with tons of obscure movie stills, Everson evaluates seldom discussed movies such as the Spanish-language version of Dracula, Terror Aboard, Secrets of the French Police, Among The Living, the Lugosi Monograms, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, etc. Everson even ends the book by analyzing horror films of the last ten years, but his heart definitely belongs in the decades of esoteric cinema past.

The casual reader who enjoys Fangoria and recent horror movies might not be interested in Everson's insightful coverage of almost forgotten gems from the past, but for the devotee of the genre both past and present, Everson's current volume is highly recommended and is a must-have by anyone's definition.

INTERVIEWS WITH B SCIENCE FICTION AND HORROR MOVIE MAKERS: WRITERS, PRODUCERS, DIRECTORS, ACTORS, MOGULS, AND MAKEUP by Tom Weaver. 412 pages, digest-size cloth. Available from: McFarland & Company, Inc., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640. Price: $29.95 (plus $2.00 for shipping).

Tom Weaver, a name known in the letter column of Midnight Marquee, has been a regular columnist for Fangoria magazine providing one of the only reasons why nostalgia movie fans should purchase the industry-leading splatter-zine: interviews with all-but-forgotten genre personalities from mostly the decade of the 1950s.

Within the pages of Fangoria readers could enjoy Weaver's interviews with the likes of genre personalities from John Agar to Robert Clarke to Richard Gordon to Mel Welles. Unfortunately, sometimes Fangoria had to shorten the interviews because of space considerations. However, here, Weaver reprints the "uncut" complete interview. Also, in many cases, Weaver recontacted the various personalities and updated information to make the older interview more up-to-date.

Simply stated, this volume is a tremendous must-have for any genre fan who simply loves the "Bs" and their major personalities. Almost 30 genre stars are interviewed in-depth with each interview becoming a major chapter in itself. Even for those fans who own a complete collection of monster magazines, it is definitely nice to have all these interviews collected together, updated, and stillustrated in a handsome hard-bound format. Bravo for Weaver!

An examination of the Spanish language version of DRACULA (Universal 1931) is one highlight of William Everson's most entertaining sequel.

[LETTERS continued from page 46.

caught up in Ray's enthusiasm and obvious affection for this lovable brute. I was warmly surprised to find that Hatton did not lead the pathatic life so widely rumored. (You know, I strongly feel that Ray should consider a screenplay based on Hatton's life; in the wake of Mask and Elephant Man, I feel Hatton's dilemma and subsequent discovery of true love would touch many movie goers. If he uses this idea, however, I'd appreciate a small commission for the proceeds—it could prove to be another Rocky blockbuster.)

"Diary of a Slasher" was a sheer delight to read, especially for fans who may not know much behind-the-scenes process to movie-making realities. Lundquist's diary reminded me well of my own former reasons for leaving the acting profession—a decision based primarily on the desire to eat regularly.

Wise, Chambers, Mank, Luttman and yourself offered engrossing information on fascinating topics. Each author was pure enjoyment to read! And how surprised I was to discover the amount of coverage you lent to Vertlieb and McDaniel in their bemoaning of the contemporary popularity of the slasher-movie genre (i.e., Faces of Death, etc.). Is it possible, Gary, that you are finally seeing the light on the classic atmosphere vs color slice-and-dice debate? If so, you've made my day—and restored your dignity and stetus as a professional and respected fan-about-town. The philosophical comparison between the rise in splatter popularity and subsequent decline of social values, morals, and morale was well taken. And if, indeed, you still maintain your misguided preference for such movies, at the least it speaks well of your character in printing other viewpoints uncontested.

Great job, Gary; keep up the good work, maintain the personal touch and best of luck for going twice-yearly (if ont more) for another 25 years! Who knows? You may find MidMar eventually unexpectedly responsible for restoring that lamentedly lost feeling of brotherhood and family within the ranks of fandom...

Blessings on ya.
Terry Roark
Lancaster, PA

Gary:

Just a small note to say thank you. I've just read your 25th anniversary issue; it was my first time reading your fine publication and it won't be the last!!

I was also very happy to see MidMar show intelligent writing and ont trying to drown us with gore and blood soaked pictures, (as David McDaniel put it, "a sea of intestines"). Discovering MidMar was like finding the classic movies on TV. (My favorite being The Thing! What a movie!)

It's great that someone like yourself (and staff) takes the time to remember the classics, (and not so classic). All I can say is I wish someone would make a horror movie instead of trying to make a buck!!!

Once again, thanks Gary. I'm glad I found Midnight Marquee. Karloff Lives!

David Kraus
Springfield, MA

Dear Gary:

I've read 80% of MidMar #37 so far and have to tell you that is the best mag you've ever done! It's a strange blend of material between the tons of nostalgia, Sherlock Holmes (Bravo!), the Spanish Dracula (double Bravo!), The Prisoner, and snake movies! Few zines offer this mandatory variety. Keep it up!

But the first 75 pages (a zine in itself!) was a real treat! Thanks!

Best.
Raymond Young
Lynbrook, NY

by Gary J. Svehla

Movies in MIDNIGHT MARQUEE are rated on a four-point system: 4 [excellent], 3 [good], 2 [fair], and 1 [poor].

THE BLOB: 2.0

Of all the recent remakes of classic science fiction or horror movies, it seems logical that director Chuck Russell's remake of The Blob should have been the most successful. Even though the original The Blob is a classic low-budget romp, it has always been hampered by its very low budget. Today in the '80s with state-of-the-art special effects, the new Blob should have artistically blown the original to smithereens. But such is not the case. What went wrong?

First and foremost, the original Blob held its fair share of surprises; the remake repeats these startling plot developments in almost a virtual sequence by sequence remake. Again we are treated to a scene depicting the certain death of innocent teens who are spared because they luckily hide in a deep freezer. We have another sequence with the monster inside a movie theater (now showing a generic slasher picture instead of the classic schlock Daughter of Horror) again killing the projectionist. At the end the slithering ameba is frozen and rendered harmless. These aspects were fresh and surprising back in 1958; today they are redundant. I am ont against remakes of classic horror projects, but at least be original enough to recast the original in a new light, to impose some creative redefinition on the original work (i.e. Cronenberg's The Fly or John Carpenter's The Thing).

And even the special effects, while infinitaly superior to the original, lack the charm and crude effectiveness of the original. While the monster first appears similar to the 1958 Blob, it quickly metamorphoses into something akin to Carpenter's The Thing only reminding the viewer of just how important a film that neglected masterwork remains. And by the end of the movie the Blob changes into an expensive looking variation of Caltiki, The Immortal Monster.

The bottom line is this. If filmmakers do not have anything new to add creatively to the original mix, then why not leave the original alone? Just what is the purpose of doing a remake that offers nothing new?

MONKEY SHINES: 3.0

Director George A. Romero, trying to break away from his splattar image, pretty much came up short creatively with his Creepshow series which was geared for the kids. Monkey Shines, on the other extreme, attempts to place Romero in the mainstream of moviemaking by making a film which parallels what director David Cronenberg did with The Dead Zone: that is, make a classy, intelligent, and adult-oriented horror film. Even though the film disappeared from Baltimore theaters in only three weeks or so and met with lukewarm critical reception, I found Monkey Shines to be a better than average thriller and one that should open new doors for Romero.

For once Romero seems comfortable making a character dominated movie rather than one that gains its energy from visceral shocks and gross-out effects sequences. While the writing (the screenplay is also by Romero) has a few holes and the acting is not as polished as the script probably requires, Romero has crafted a film where the viewer actually cares about the major people. For instance, the lovemaking sequence between the quadriplegic hero and his girl friend steams with erotic intensity yet is sensitive at the same time.

And Romero tha Freudian is revealed in full fruitstion. The likable hero, dealing with a frustrating existence as a dependent cripple, gets his hostility and anger under firm control. However, his servant/pet monkey, altered by mad experimentation at the hands of his Herbert West-clone friend, becomes his living, breathing "id" daring to do all the horrible things he as civilized man keeps repressed and hidden. Only when the handicapped hero comes to understand this simple fact that underneath we are all savage and then acts upon this knowledge (thus, cruelly destroying the fiend by using his teeth to bash the monkey to death) does he become free of "the monkey on his back" and ultimately finds peace of mind. Not very subtle yet extremely affecting, Monkey Shines produces a more mature artist in Romero that remains loyal to his earlier horror film roots. Now if his audience is willing to accept a more mature Romero, only then will his career be allowed to grow creatively.

A RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT: 3.0

Larry Cohen, last time out, produced half a satisfying movie with Island of The Alive: It's Alive III. Much to my surprise, Larry Cohen outdoes himself with this fine vampire opus, A Return To Salem's Lot. Forget the Stephen King novel and the original Tobe Hooper TV movie, for Cohen's look at a community of vampires is totally original (being based upon characters created by King as the original story comes from the fertile imagination of Cohen himself).

And while Cohen dares to break the rules of recent vampire epics thet refuse to call vampires by their mythic names, that neglect to incorporate religious ritual into their plots by bringing back the concept of the church offering sanctuary to the living (that vampires must rest in their coffins during the daylight hours and that a wooden stake through the heart can end the vampire's existence); Cohen also offers the fresh concept of the humanity of the vampire colony which looks at human existence as barbaric and savage. The colony breeds cattle as sources of blood, allowing the animals time to replenish the blood which they claim is much more humane than savagely slaughtering them which the human society does. In order thet the truth be told about the society of vampires, the vampires recruit Moriarty, an anthropologist, into documenting their true existence. This premise is quite original and features the most interesting aspects of the production.

But these noble creatures of the night ultimately become vile and evil showing their true colors when Moriarty joins forces with Van Helsing-esque Nazi hunter/killer (director Samuel Fuller). Fuller turns in an energized supporting role and steals the show away from the gifted Moriarty. A Return To Salem's Lot is intelligent and visually mesmerizing at the same time. It has a few flaws along the way, but this is Larry Cohen's most satisfying feature since The Stuff, tha real remake of The Blob!

PHANTASM II: 1.5

Our veteran readers will remember that I was one of the few critics who did not appreciate the dreamlike menagerie of horror let loose in Phantasm almost ten years ago. For the same reasons I dislike this remake/remodel of the original concept here masquerading

under the pretense of a sequel. A few startling sequences of creative visualization manage to amuse me throughout. The return of "The Tall Man" is pleasantly realized, but once again, a film that follows no logic nor order and tries to pass out this nonsense all in the name of dream-sense is cheating with the audience. I can appreciate some of the dream concepts for their walloping impact, but when taken together as a whole, I feel the parts just do not and up and I feel cheated. The idea of substituting three flying spiked balls for one does not produce a greater impact. The flying spiked balls were original in the first film; here they are rehash. Ultimately, I was laughing at the film when I was supposed to be terrified. The ending of the film, for example, might have been startling ten years ago but today is just one washed-out cliche, as is the entire film.

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4: THE DREAM MASTER: 3.0

What an accomplishment! After two sequels a lawyer-turned-director, Renny Harlin, manages to continue the integrity of this intriguing cinematic series by creating something intelligent and original involving the Freddy Krueger premise. As stated two issues ago, I felt that Chuck Russell's second sequel, The Dream Warriors, was almost as good as Wes Craven's original, and while Harlin's The Dream Master falls below Craven's original, it is almost right up there with Chuck Russell's third installment.

Why is The Dream Master so riveting and involving? Simply stated, the creators of Elm Street 4 was willing to take creative chances by permitting a script to be passed which is both challenging and intelligent for a formula "B" production. I dare say that much of the teenage audience that this film is intended for will not understand the subtleties of the story and may come away not even liking this latest Freddy Krueger installment. But I admire the vitality of the overall production Instead of relying upon the same premise of having adolescents join together in their dreams to defeat Krueger, the first third of the film manages to kill off the surviving Dream Warriors. As each Warrior is slaughtered (very imaginative in some of the best realized dream-murders in the entire series; I especially enjoyed the drowning death featuring the seduction of an adolescent by a nude model swimming inside his waterbed) an aspect of that person's personality becomes merged with the shy, shrinking-violent personality of the new female heroine. By the end of the picture she has become transformed from an ugly duckling recluse into a kick-ass Rambo inspired killing machine. Okay, a little hokey, but the subtlety by which this transformation is depicted is visually clever and earns my respect.

Unfortunately, Robert Englund, the horror star of the '80s, is literally reduced to standing in the shadows and delivering one-liners. In fact probably the stunt department appeared in Krueger makeup longer than Robert Englund ever did. But in spite of the characterization of Krueger, The Dream Master offers foremost an intelligent script, delivers a fast-moving visually dominated roller coaster ride, and entertains throughout. I was amazed that Part 4 of anything could manage to keep the quality level up (especially after the dismal artistic failings of Part II, best left forgotten!).

PUMPKINHEAD: 3.0

After being relegated to the back-burner for one year when DEG went under, finally, Stan Winston's debut directorial effort hit the theaters at Halloween. Pumpkinhead is a superior horror fairy-tale which boasts one of the most innovative screen monsters in a while. The production's cinematography is excellent creating a dense EC comicland of nightmarish terror and foreboding mood. The film's set-pieces, mostly outdoors, are cinematically intriguing: the witch's house, the burial ground where the bones of the demon lie, the wooded stalking grounds of Pumpkinhead, etc.

Lance Henriksen (Aliens, Near Dark), long neglected as the major horror star/personality of the 80s, turns in a powerful, sensitive performance. Only his rapid progression from vengeful father to guilt-ridden nice guy seems forced and too sudden. But Henriksen is a screen presence to keep one's eyes on as far as genre stardom goes.

Even though Pumpkinhead is a thinly disguised rehash of most slasher films (monster stalks and slaughters teenagers one-by-one), it is refreshingly different is that the accent is upon mood and atmosphere and not visceral violence. Stan Winston's world is a bogeyland of childhood horrors come to life. His close attention to character, psychological motivation, an outstanding monster, and atmosphere makes his debut film one of the better efforts of the year. It is thoroughly involving and entertaining: what a shame it sat on the shelf for over a year!

THE LADY IN WHITE: 3.5

Director Robert LaLoggia raised the money for this independent production by selling penny-stock, not the easiest method to raise production money. So make no mistake that The Lady in White is a personal vision movie, not your standard by-the-numbers Hollywood product. And while the film is flawed, it is nevertheless a tremendous success and a powerful, original horror picture. The film is rich in character and character interaction which creates a warm, involved scenario to wrap around the horror and atmosphere. The film at times reminds me of Hitchcock's style with protracted matte sequences showing villains hanging onto ledges overlooking furious waters below. Also, Hitchcock is evoked in several other sequences involving dramatic stabbings and villains that simply refuse to die. The creative link between Hitchcock and LaLoggia rests upon both director's care for detail and utilization of subtlety over the sledge-hammer approach to movie-making.

The Lady in White is emotionally powerful cinema building to a crucial assassination which occurs about three-quarters through the movie. As one friend noted, the film loses its innocence after that point which it never regains. But as is true of most films which detail adolescence, this movie shows a young boy's maturing from innocence to maturity...there's no turning back. But let us not forget that The Lady in White is a ghost story first and foremost, and it is the subtle special effects created by Ernest Farino and Gene Warren, Jr. that create the marvelous, ghostly mood prevalent throughout. It is only at the movie's conclusion whereby the special effects hit a false note simply by nature of their overindulgence that the film slightly goes awry. But this film is one of this

The rules of vampirism in RETURN TO SALEM'S LOT mark a return to accepted mythos. as Allen K's drawing from HORROR OF DRACULA reminds us

year's sleepers, an excellent reminder of what horror films once were and could be in the hands of the dedicated artist.

HALLOWEEN 4: THE RETURN OF MICHAEL MYERS: 1.5

Imagine that after being incinerated at the conclusion of Halloween 2 thet Michael Myers would be alive and well with only a few bandages on his face and hands ready to return in 1988! But when producers smell money, usually logic, creativity, and artistic risk go out the window! Thankfully, outside of a brief music credit, the name of John Carpenter appears nowhere in the credits.

Rapidly rolling from one cliche to another, the plot does not develop as much as it remembers the best moments from the first two productions. Along for the ride is hack Donald Pleasence who has gotten more ridiculous than ever, but to his credit, he reprises the role of Dr. Loomis with more respect than is deemed necessary.

One or two mood-evoked scare sequences are created in the course of the 90-minute recap much to my surprise, but the return of Michael Myers leads up to a foreshadowed "surprise" ending which was ripped directly from the Friday the 13th series, no less. Hey, why limit one's "influences" to merely one film series. The four writers that get screenplay credit probably worked in the executive board room mulling over scripts of earlier, superior horror movies. The reason for four writers is quite obvious. One writer sat at the word processor while the other three turned the pages and read aloud from the scripts of better by-gone deys, or so it would seem when looking at the final product.

CHILD'S PLAY: 2.5

A few years ago director Tom Holland burst upon the scene with Fright Night, a wondrous Hammer-esque tribute to the vampire cinema. The movie was filled with black humor, warmth, and deadly menace concocting the perfect blend for 80s' horror However, Holland's latest film, Child's Play, while quite ambitious and visually impressive, still seems derivative and hollow. The concept of employing a doll possessed by a serial killer's soul as the main source of evil is promising, but the plot itself becomes quite silly in having to explain how Mom Catherine Hicks is able to buy the doll from a sleazy vendor in an alleyway right after the serial killer dies in a special affects overkill sequence in a toy store. Too much of the plot is contrived wasting too much time on the Angel Heart style voodoo. True, "Chucky" is a wonderful villain when he's in action, and the little boy fleeing for his life does a wonderful job of projecting both loneliness and warmth. But it's that silly framing story that seems unrealistic and hokey. The basic plot weakens the overall effect.

Simply stated, Chucky is not enough to make the movie work. Tom Holland and crew have a terrific villain but they scrimped on how to best showcase him via the plot. Fright Night this is not!

HELLBOUND: HELLRAISER II: 3.0

After all these years since the demise of Hammer Film Productions, it is refreshing to see the return of the British horror film via the talents of ace macabre writer Clive Barker. As mentioned throughout reviews of so many modern horror films in Mid Mar, their chief flaw appears to be a weak, unimaginative plot. Here, Clive Barker's imagination is helping to return thet creative vitality to the horror film genre once again.

Hellraiser, Barker's debut as director, always promised more than it delivered. The story, complex and serious, was mature and adult in that the lead characters were older, middle-aged people undergoing the horrors of adult life: discovering that your wife is having an affair with your brother. The innocent deughter was there for "youth appeal" but Hellraiser was always a prestige production (although heavy on the blood and gore!) appealing to a higher level than the Freddy Krueger Nightmare On Elm Street sequels. But Hellraiser had its problems too. The overly talky plot setting up the action devoured the first half of the movie. True, there were always just enough kinky horror sequences to hold our interest throughout that first half, but it wasn't until the second half that the movie kicked into gear.

And in Hellbound another first-time director, Tony Randel, is able to begin his film almost immediately after the first film ends using a few brief flashback sequences to remind the viewer of what has gone before. Thus, Randel is free to begin his installment at break-neck speed and keep the movie rolling without the distracting lulls that both created the prestige sense of the original yet perhaps lost some of the commercial appeal (teens with short attention spans want action constantly!).

Story-wise, Hellbound avoids the complexities of the Barker plot from Hellraiser yet intensifies and improves upon the Barker visualization of hell. The horror in the original was more Earthbound dealing with the horrors of reanimating corpses in the family attic, innocent victims being lured to their bloody destruction by temptress Clare Higgins, etc. Here, in Hellbound, the earthly horrors take a back seat to the visually mind-boggling image of Hell, here depicted as a dungeon of infinite mazes ruled over by a giant menacing puzzle. The chief horror is not provided by the original four Cenobites who return for more pain and pleasure, but by the newly created psychiatrist Cenobite, a David Lynch Dune-like creation that floats a foot or so above the ground, being controlled by a huge snake-like hand from above (interestingly enough, the viewer never sees who or what the arm from above leads to). The controlling "devil" in snake form causes the psychiatrist to sprout snake-like extensions to his own human hands which in turn end in sharp razors or knives making the Cenobite absolutely horrifying, unlike anything ever seen in movies before (a Clive Barker goal).

Unfortunately, Hellbound relies almost totally upon this world of visual horror and the rapid-fire pacing to carry the movie. The beautiful crafting of an intricate Clive Barker plot is here neglected for a more traditional modern horror film approach that relies upon action and visual effects rather than the written word. So even if Hellbound packs a greater visceral punch, a certain degree of subtlety is lost.

Still, Hellbound is one of the more creative horror films to appear in the past year making it a horrifying descent into hell. And youthful Ashley Laurence again makes a most impressive vulnerable heroine to counter Clare Higgins' wonderfully menacing villainess.

The re-animated boy-toy Chucky may be an excellent movie villain, but overall CHILD'S PLAY presents a meandering plot.

SCARECROWS: 2.5

So many video-release movies are absolutely worthless, not worth the 90-minutes it takes to watch these dregs of the motion picture industry. But once in a while a low-budget production surfaces that rises above the cesspool.

Scarecrows, derivative and simplistic, becomes one of the best shockers in the Evil Dead school since, well, The Evil Dead. The plot is very basic simply setting up a situation in which the horror can occur. Several nasty bank-robbers hijack a plane (manned by an innocent pilot and his sexy young daughter) when one of the robbers parachutes out of the plane carrying all the stolen money. Immediately the plane lands in an isolated stretch of country "American Gothic" with an abandoned farm house becoming the center of operations. There the deserted, overgrown corn fields are watched over by hideous looking scarecrows which are not quite dead.

The concept of demon-scarecrows who come to life, a wonderful motif for the horror genre, surprisingly has seldom been tapped (one exception is "The Hollow Watcher," one of the best episodes of Boris Karloff's Thriller TV series). Here the zombie-scarecrows brutally murder their victims slitting their torsos open stuffing their innards with straw. Then the newly dead victims return to life as terrifying zombies ready to kill.

Not much of a plot, but the movie, once it explodes (and unfortunately it takes a little too much time), becomes an unrelenting comic-book tale of not-so-innocent victims being graphically slaughtered by these rural demons. Only when the young female innocent is threatened does the audience care about the victim. While Scarecrows never establishes the fervor of The Evil Dead nor does it surmount the originality of Basket Case, it nevertheless is a promising production produced by a team of enthusiastic newcomers. It certainly is worth a $2.00 rental.

THE KISS: 2.5

This virtually ignored theatrically released horror film is both highly original and unduly derivative. Yes, it's one of those movies where the "parts" are greater than the whole. Allow me to explain.

This movie's premise is quite original: "evil" is passed on from one generation of female to another via a "wet" kiss. Thus, the young inductee must literally be "seduced" to evil by allowing the older female to initiate such an action. Remember, we are talking women kissing women.

Two young sisters are separated at a prepubescent age in India where their father works. One of these sisters becomes the recipient of "the evil" and grows into her adult years becoming one of America s top fashion models. The other sister, also in her thirties, has married living a generally care-free middle American life raising a 15-year-old daughter (Meredith Salenger). Yet suddenly one day the "innocent" sister dies a horrible death run-over and mutilated by an out-of-control automobile. Suddenly, after many years of absence, the "evil" sister, sultry and erotic Joanna Pacula, arrives to console her brother-in-law (whom she wastes little time in seducing providing some torrid lovemaking sequences) and niece (whom she intends to seduce and thus pass on her "evil" via the kiss). In the film's most adventurous and erotic moment, debut director Pen Densham shows us how the innocent Salenger is able to feel the erotic sensations experienced while Pacula and her father are making love, thus transforming the young innocent into a state of adult "experience" allowing the young niece to be more receptive for the evil seduction. Very subtly handled and never overdone, I dare say that the majority of the audience watching this film never actually realizes why Salenger goes into deep trances, her body writhing, subtle moans erupting from her lips. It is one of the most erotically charged sequences in this or any year (ask "Mr. Eroticism," Bill George).

But unfortunately, the film succumbs to the "product" mentality of most modern horror films: "the kiss" becomes a parasitical creature that must pass from Pacula's throat to the throat of Salenger (remind you of Cronenberg or The Hidden?); the gore becomes overdone (trapped under the car, Momma's leg just happens to flop off). In other words, an atypical plot becomes pedestrian submitting a cleverly violent death paced to occur at precisely the right time to avoid too many trips to the candy-stand.

Of particular note are the performances by both Pacula and Salenger. Like Amanda Donohoe (the "snake woman" in Russell's Lair of The White Worm), Pacula's performance is rich in nuance and is erotically charged. Salenger, not just another teenager-in-distress, offers some realistic dialogue and emotion in those sequences where she confides in the middle-age neighbor lady next store who becomes Salenger's new "mother" after the death of her real one. For a "B" movies, these mother/daughter sequences ring true.

Simply stated, kinky originality runs rampant in parts of Densham's The Kiss. It is far superior to the general ilk of "little" horror films which see theatrical release for a week and then vanish (soon to be found in all the corner video stores). This is one to see.

Director Frank LaLoggia successfully recreates the ghostly horrors of childhood in THE LADY IN WHITE. The eerie atmosphere terrifies us.

THE LAIR OF THE WHITE WORM: 3.5

It is always interesting when a mainstream director tackles a genre film, and after the visually interesting but vapid Gothic, British eccentric Ken Russell is ready to delve further into the realm of the horror film. Horror film purists, beware! This film has the look of a 1960s' Hammer Production directed by Terence Fisher on acid! It is the first film since David Lynch's Blue Velvet that totally baffled me upon my initial viewing mentally forcing me to inquire: what the hell is going on here?

The answer is quite a lot! The film starts out mysteriously as a "who-dunnit" patterned after Hammer's Five Million Years To Earth, focusing upon a huge monster skull found dating back to Roman times. The story soon evolves into a mythic Paganism vs. Christianity "who's in control" tale patterned after The Wicker Man. But ultimately the film becomes a slyly sardonic, black-humored send-up of the garish, lush Hammer productions circa The Vampire Lovers and Lust For A Vampire with its overt sexual tension (add a touch of The Devil's Bride with the idea of villains who pose as wealthy and respectable members of the community).

The film is never less than interesting carrying the viewer along a phantasmagorical journey through the warped fantasy world where were-snakes seduce English boy scouts, a mongoose is always one's secret weapon, and one never touches green glop spewed all over crucifixes hanging on the walls. Lair of the White Worm always plays fair with its own rules adhering to the logic established. The film is weird, imaginative, hilarious, scary, and always atmospheric. It is Ken Russell's tribute to the glorious days of Hammer horrors, and it is one of the most imaginative genre films of the last year. Brimming over with so many allusions, subtle touches, and in-jokes a second viewing is almost required to absorb the full impact. Hopefully, Russell's script of Dracula will someday be filmed.

What, on Mid-Marvelous "film of the year" award this issue? Since MidMar now appears twice a year, I will only award this honor once each year, and I still feel that Near Dark is the best for 1988.

midnight marquee

GRAVE DIGGINGS

Dear Gary:

Look at this! In one single issue you have Florey's original Frankenstein script, the Spanish Dracula, and the definitive Rondo Hatton bio. Hey, when in your life did you ever find three fresh, informative articles about classic Universal horror in one place? I was wondering if there was anything left to write about. That alone is worth the fifteen bucks. But here you've got everything from Robert Wise atmosphere to Dario Argento splatter, from San Sherman to Bernard Herrmann, from Sherlock Holmes to The Amazing Colossal Man, Quatermass, Karloff, The Prisoner, Ackerman, Beck, vampires, snakes and slime. Does American Film show half this much scope? Does Film Comment cover half as much territory? Was Cahier du Cinema ever half as much fun?

Update on A Hazing In Hell:

Joyce gave a screening of the first final cut for the cast and crew. Imagine our surprise when they flashed the title: Pledge Night. Joyce and Paul (the director) wanted A Hazing In Hell, but the distributor felt Pledge Night was more commercial.

I was surprised at how well it turned out. A lot of people cared about the work they did, and when their contribution is on screen, the movie shines. I was pleased with a lot of my own work. The lucky accident of shooting our exteriors in the blizzard gives the film a nice atmosphere. As Acid Sid, Bill Kempe improvised some of his dialogue, which turns out to be some of the cleverest lines in the movie. It is always a low budget slasher movie, but for a low budget slasher movie, I'm pleased with the result.

Then the movie was handed over to the censors. To get an "R" rating, a lot of the most offensive violence was taken out. Unfortunately, most of my best performance comes during the most violent shots. Gone is my eggbeater scene, except for a long lead-in, during which I am very tense and wooden. Gone is me studying the condition of death (sigh). Gone is a lot of special effects work. After all the agony Robert Lentini had to put up with to swallow a worm and have cockroaches poured over his face, the movie cuts away just before the worm falls in his mouth and just before the roaches touch his face. Now nobody will ever believe that Bob actually went ahead with it.

Though there'd been hopes of a drive-in release, Pledge Night will be released directly to video stores. I don't know when this will happen.

Arthur Joseph Lundquist
New York, New York

Gary:

I read "The Amazing Colossal Glenn Manning" with a contented smirk. The Amazing Colossal Man was one of those films that was seemingly on TV every other weekend when I was small, and I have a certain fondness for that film and (God save me) The Giant Gila Monster, another TV staple.

Forry's open letter to all of us was most touching. In reading it, I found myself reminded of the intense anxiety attacks I had every month waiting for the next issue of FM to appear at the local corner store. It was FM as a matter of fact which first introduced me to the whole monster movie/monster mag/fandom universe (Me and about a million others I presume). His comments, coupled with Raymond Young's observations on the differences in the fandom of the past and present, especially in regard to the magazines, made me more than a little nostalgic for that bygone innocent age of fandom.

And the fanzine listing! More memories. Black Oracle arriving in those tiny manila envelopes; Free 8 x 10s with Photon and Cine Nostalgia. And although everybody else is probably saying this, "I remember a few others too," like Alpha & Omega, Pulse, Comikaze, Procrastination.

In the course of preparing my Jason and the Argonauts article for MidMar #37, I had written Ray Harryhausen to see if he could answer the question of Jason's re-used musical passages. My letter, however, was very much delayed in reaching him, and his reply unfortunately did not reach me before deadline time. His kind reply was brimming with praise for Bernard Herrmann, a man for whom Harryhausen had much respect. He said he was aware of the re-used music in Jason, and indicated that Mario Nascimbene had indeed been considered for Jason, but, as Mr. Harryhausen recalled, Herrmann became available at the last minute. Therefore, he cited lack of time as the most probable cause for the musical "resurrections."

Speaking of resurrections, a rather large one was totally missed by me until recently. The entire scene of Jason's fight with the Hydra is backed by music Herrmann had written two years earlier for the undersea battle with the giant squid in Mysterious Island. This music is pretty well buried under the effects in Mysterious Island, but can be heard clearly on the British LP of the score (Cloud Nine Records, CN 4002).

Also, Cloud Nine recently released a compact disc (ACN 7014) with excerpts of all four of Herrmann's Harryhausen film scores. Included are three segments from the original 1963 recording of Jason: The Prelude, the entire Skeleton Fight sequence, and the End Title.

I would like to thank Ray Harryhausen for his gracious reply, and Christopher Husted of the Herrmann Archives at the University of Southern California for his research assistance.

Once again, a masterful job on #37. A great balance of old and new. And above all, I think this issue displayed a lot of the love and enthusiasm that's been missing from fandom in general lately...Fandom is still alive.

Jim Doherty,
Chicago, IL

Dear Gary:

Forry Ackerman complained about "certain" four-letter words. Not all of them, just some of them. It seems odd that Forry, an avowed atheist and one-time naturalism advocate, would have any verbal squeamishness, but apparently he does. We resemble our parents more than we like, I suppose.

Dave McDaniel's "More Slime than Substance" decries the use of graphic gore and violence, longing for a return to the days of more subtle filmmaking. While there's no denying some filmmakers achieved remarkable dramatic effects through hints and implications, it's a mistake to think filmmakers as a whole preferred this way of making movies. One of the earliest known films is The Execution of Mary Queen of Scots which features a graphic on-camera beheading. I remember reading a book on stunt men some years ago (I think the title was The Stunt People but I may be confused) that showed a silent film crew preparing a stunt that would supposedly show a man's legs being cut off on-camera. There was a surprising amount of sex,

nudity, and graphic gore in Hollywood prior to the creation of the Hayes Office and the Breen Code.

Make no mistake about it, the "subtle" style of filmmaking was a response to restrictions placed on the film industry from without. In the 1920s and '30s various moral watchdogs decreed themselves arbitrators of American taste, the most pronounced example being Prohibition.

Theater owners and distributors, fearing these moralists, put the pressure on the producers. Since the major studios often controlled all three levels of the film industry, it is no surprise the production arm quickly found itself at the end of a long leash held by the distributors and exhibitors.

There were small independent filmmakers, mostly of exploitation films who openly defied such codes. Though their output was small, it has been very well documented.)

And Dave is mistaken if he thinks James Whale or Terence Fisher held themselves in check for reasons of taste. They held themselves in check because they knew how much they could get away with and when and where they could challenge the censors. Remember, Fisher's classic Hammer horror films were considered excessive gore fests when first released (remember, too, they were often filmed in three versions: Blood-but no-sex version for America, sex-but-little-blood for England and Katy-bar-the-door for Japan).

Dave also seems bothered by lesbian vampires (or maybe it's vampire lesbians) Several of the films he cites (Blood and Roses, The Vampire Lovers, Daughters of Darkness, and Vampyres) are among the very best of the vampire genre. Despite his claims that he's not a prude (I will grant he's not sanctimonious), Dave's objections are clearly based on his uncomfortableness with bisexuality, homosexuality and sexual deviancy. But that's what people go to vampire movies for!

Steve Vertlieb's "Texas Chain Saw Rip Off" is not so sincere. The message I got between the lines was that The Texas Chain Saw Massacre affected Steve more than he cares to admit, so to deny that effect he decries the film and calls it worthless.

Arthur Joseph Lundquist's article was fun and informative, but the poor lad got screwed. Thirty dollars a day to have a major role in a theatrical feature?!?!

I liked Dennis Fischer's overall favorable article on Dario Argento, but must point out a couple of mistakes and misconceptions. First of all, in four of Argento's earliest films (his pure mysteries: The Bird with Crystal Plumage, Cat O'Nine Tails, Four Flies on Grey Velvet, Deep Red), the killer's face is seen quite clearly after the first crime—only the audience doesn't know it's the killer's face!

In Cat O'Nine Tails, Karl Malden's character is not merely a blind crossword enthusiast he makes his living writing crossword puzzles. Argento does show us how he accomplished this: Using a braille Scrabble board (with letters and bumps on each tile), Malden writes his puzzles then photographs them and sends them to his editor.

All the other articles were fun and interesting, please don't think my lack of comments mean a lack of appreciation. MidMar is still a joy to behold after all these years and I look forward to your 50th anniversary issue.

Buzz Dixon
Northridge CA

Hey Gary!

Congratulations on your 25th anniversary issue. It was so gratifying to see the face of Evil Ed from Evil Dead II on your cover along side the great Boris Karloff. As co-writer of Evil Dead II and fan of Midnight Marquee, I couldn't imagine that you'd grace your 25th anniversary issue with a monster I co-created. Thank you for putting out the only 1st class horror magazine around. Your article on Burn, Witch Burn was terrific—I can't wait to see the film! (I have the book Conjure Wife but am more curious to see what Richard Matheson and Chas. Beaumont did in the screenplay). I recently completed a horror film for Empire Pictures entitled Intruder. I wrote and directed and Sam Raimi co-stars. Anyway, continue the great work for you truly have a love of the horror genre and it shows in your work.

Scott Spiegel

Dear Gary:

Just a short note to let you know how much I enjoyed the 25th anniversary issue. The walk down memory lane was the finest thing I've read in any fanzine. If that doesn't start a flood of new fanzines, nothing will. Sure, some of it was a wee bit syrupy, but your definitive account of the ups and downs of producing a fanzine has encouraged me no end. I'm sure a few tears will be shed around the country as this piece of pure nostalgia is read and re-read. Once again the generation gap caused me to skip a couple of articles that I just couldn't get into (mythology in music, forgotten faces). But apart from those I read the others thoroughly: the diary of a slasher and the 2 Ray Young articles were a lot of fun to wade through. There were a couple of surprises in the zine listing, especially seeing Mr. Szurek's name under a couple of one-shots. But the thing that really strikes me is that MidMar has been coming out for 25 years and it still is a fanzine. It hasn't lost its roots. The arrogance found in those other glossy publicity rags is thankfully lacking; you might have your head in the clouds sometimes but it ain't ever up your ass.

Oh yeah, before I forget, here's the $5 I owe you. Let's just say that your anecdote about Gene Simmons shook me up a little. Because when I'm big and famous I don't want you publicly castigating me in MidMar saying "that p—k from NZ never sent me the fiver for the postage costs." Keep up the great work and I hope to see issue #38 next September.

Yours gratuitously,
Ant Timpson (Violent Leisure, editor)
New Zealand

Dear Gary:

Congratulations on the Fantaco/MidMar 25th Anniversary issue: a magnificent achievement. By the way, in the Ernest Thesiger article I was surprised to learn that The Ghoul was "filmed in Guam." I think it was actually produced by the Gaumont company (frequently abbreviated as "Gaum"). I have to confess that the slight but hilarious misreading just about made my day.

Otherwise MidMar #37 was a stunning issue. My favorites were the Spanish Dracula, Karloff/Richard Gordon, and Rondo Hatton pieces. Original research triumphs again, and in the case of Rondo Hatton, provides a deeply moving narrative.

Dan Erwine
San Diego, CA 92103

Much to the dismay of his parents, nephew Jack Bassett enjoys dressing up as a monster and scaring the heck out of his friends and family

Gary:

By some fluke, I picked up one of two copies of MidMar #37 that showed up in a local comic shop. The massive Canadian price of $21.00 gave me pause but the massiveness of the issue, its intriguing contents, and the nostalgic tug overcame my wallet.

The most intriguing aspect of the issue was the contrast between the old & new films exemplified best by the cover illustration—the old films has ACTORS & STORIES (mostly), the new films have PUPPETS & NO STORIES (mostly)—and Steve Vertlieb's article (reinforced by Arthur Lundquist's film diary).

I wouldn't be surprised to learn that Steve's scenario of "future horror film" exists underground somewhere but I hope it does not come to pass in the mainstream. Two recent films that may lead us back from this madness are Hellraiser & Robocop, both gory but the worst of the violence was offscreen and was part of the story: and they both had ACTORS (Peter Weller was particularly impressive).

Having had a rapist/slasher shatter my real life not too many years ago, I have on desire to see them as "entertaining" films (beyond seeing just enough minutes of Texas Chainsaw & Friday 13th to confirm they are the worst of trash, alternating boredom & nausea).

Anyway, it's been some years since I've read MidMar (#33 in 1984) and only scattered issues of CFQ & Filmfax due to poor distribution & waning interest. Didn't realize how much I missed them, and now that my life is heading in a better direction (including a new career), it's time to renew my friendship with film fandom.

Tim Hammell
Canada

Dear Gary:

Ackerman's essay was readable but slight. I must say, tho (& I'll probably get crucified for this), that after a while I get tired of listening to AE's incessant claims of sainthood! OK, Forry, so you don't smoke, drink, or do drugs, and you never say the F word, and neither does yr wife (ont to mention yr affection for Bobbie Bresee having nothing to do with her body, even tho you met her in the Playboy Club)...very commendable. Now, couldn't you just get on with being good old Mr. Monster, before you alienate somebody?? Not all of yr fans are perfect, ya know. Best part of the Beck interview was his opinion of Mr. Warren, an opinion no doubt shared by many. However, Cal was not immune to Capitalist urges: the two orders I placed with Gothic Castle never arrived & my inquiries were never answered! At least Captain Company shipped their orders, tho they sometimes took months doing so. I'd give a nickel to know how many other monster fans fell victim to the dreaded Mail Fraud Beast.

TEXAS CHAIN SAW RIPOFF: I knew when I drew the heading that I'd take exception to this one. Steve Vertlieb may find it "difficult to imagine a more wretched, repulsive and witless excuse for a motion picture," but this only proves that he hasn't seen SALO (The 120 Days of Sodom), which, by the way, is tops on my video want-list. Actually, TCM's effectiveness derives from its relatively non-graphic approach: it shows the audience practically nothing compared to more recent snuff films which Steve would've been better off complaining about. I do agree with the basic point being made here, & would love to see a more traditional approach to horror films become popular again. Fat chance.

THEY CONQUERED THE NEWSSTANDS and FANZINES OF A LIFETIME were both very enjoyable and informative; too bad the Fanzine section didn't include a price guide, as I'd like to know what some of mine might be worth (especially FXRX, which I suspect is worth plenty).

I enjoyed Quatermass and Glenn Manning, being a big '50s fan anyway, tho both were a trifle wordy. I wish some company would release these films on video, as they would certainly sell if competitively priced.

A fine issue overall, & worth the price, especially considering the massive size. However, FantaCo Enterprises deserves a swift kick in the ass for cutting corners on the printing, which is grayish & clearly ont up to yr previous high standards. It's hardly surprising, as FantaCo has always put marketability before quality in their books, but disappointing nonetheless...presumably you'll return to yr usual printer next ish.

Here's to another 25 years!
Robert Knox
Laconia, NH

GRAVEDIGGINGS RE: #37

I was very impressed with the overall quality of #37: it was the first MidMar I felt compelled to read cover-to-cover in many a year.

If there was a fault with the issue, it would have been in what I felt was a poor clustering of contents: I'd much rather have seen the personal reflections scattered throughout rather than lumped wholesale as the first 3rd of the entire issue. I can't help feeling it would have had considerable more appeal to potential novice browser/buyers.

Don't get me wrong. I truly appreciate the personal touch of editorializing you flavor MidMar with; it contributes greatly to its unique appeal. The reader feels more as tho they're listening to a friend rather than merely reading a magazine. I think that element of personal touch lent greatly to the appeal of FM and FJA in years past, and is pricelessly indispensable.

The meat of issue #37 really began with the CoF/Beck interview. I only wish you'd have published his address so ye many former fans could have written to express our concern for his health and our encouragement for his resurrecting CoF.

And how delightful to hear from FJA, who is still so like the proverbial father/friend image. How nice, considering his wealth of excessive detailed knowledge, that he continually chooses to write from the heart.

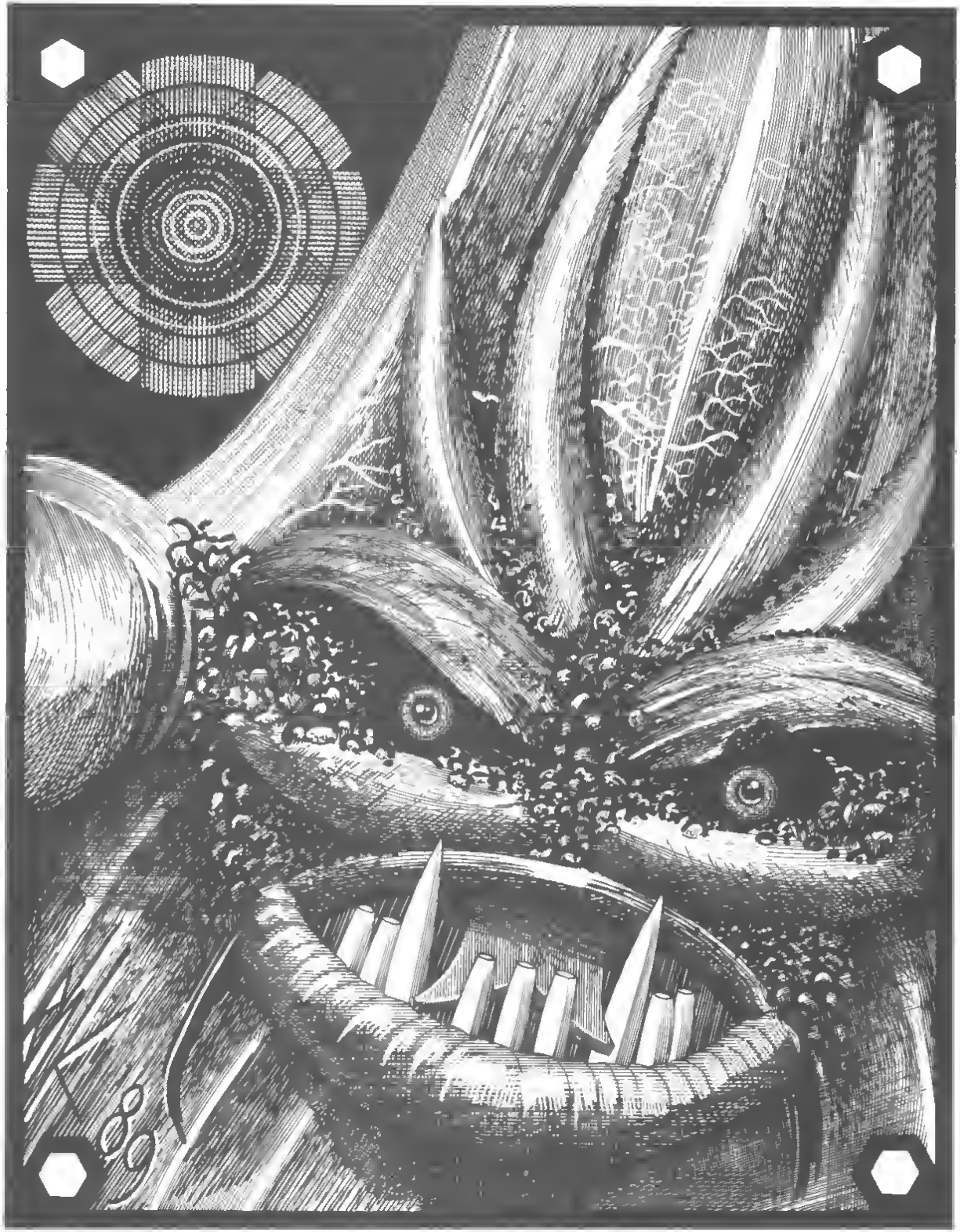
And, Lord, what artwork graced the pages of #37! Daniels and Robinson are utterly fantastic; you are truly fortunate to have such tremendous talent at MidMar's disposal. (If only you have chosen one of their works for the back cover, at least. I didn't feel "Pumpkinhead" deserved the status one bit; it certainly wasn't in keeping with the theme of 25 yrs of great horror.)

Duvoli's work on The Haunted Strangler and Corridors of Blood was outstanding. Strangler was the first movie I ever saw in my life, best as I can recall; I saw it again for the 2nd time only weeks ago, after having read an excellent article on it in FilmFax. (How especially nice to hear mention of the nearly forgotten The Brighton Strangler, which I enjoyed despite its utterly corny climax—"Don't shoot! Applaud, applaud!") And I had all but forgotten Karloff's Corridors of Blood. It was an exceptional performance.

Equally outstanding was Ray's exhaustive investigative piece of Rondo "The Creeper" Hattoo. I remember him well, and was absolutely

[Continued, see LETTERS page 39.....]

Bill Bassett, nephew of Gary & Sue Svehla, follows in the MidMar tradition of horror!

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