

FIFTIES (1951-1960) M-R
All reviews by Michael J. Weldon

M (51) D Joseph Losey, S Norman Reilly-Raine, Leo Katcher, P Seymour Nebenzal
 As in the famous original, a quiet man (David Wayne) is busy killing little girls. He whistles a classical tune and decapitates a doll at his apartment. Since the cops are harassing his many operations while searching for the killer, a gang leader (Martin Gabel) mobilizes the underworld (and his cab company) to catch him. Eventually, a drunken counselor (Luther Adler) "defends" the cowering killer. This hard-hitting, atmospheric remake has excellent cinematography by Ernest Laszlo (D.O.A., KISS ME DEADLY...) and standout performances by Wayne and Adler (Stella Adler's brother). The L.A. locations include the Long Beach Pike amusement pier (GORILLA AT LARGE, INCREDIBLY STRANGE CREATURES...), the Bunker Hill cable car and steps (THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN, MY GUN IS QUICK, KISS ME DEADLY...) and most important of all, the amazing Bradley Building (DOUBLE INDEMNITY, I THE JURY...), designed by the grandfather of Forry Ackerman (!). The assistant director was Robert Aldrich. Also with Howard da Silva and Steve Brodie as police detectives, Raymond Burr as the raspy voiced Potsy, Jim Backus as the hyper mayor, Karen Morley, Walter Burke, Jimmie Dodd, and Frank Moran. The Columbia release was banned by The Ohio censorship board as not being of a "moral, educational, or amusing or harmless character." The ruling was later reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court, but M still never airs on TV. While it was being filmed, original M star Peter Lorre was back in German making his disturbing DER VERLORENE. This was the last American project of Nebenzal, who had produced PANDORA'S BOX, THE THREEPENNY OPERA, THE TESTAMENT OF MABUSE and Fritz Lang's M. Soon afterwards, the following were blacklisted: Losey (who restarted in Europe), Da Silva (acted on stage) and Morley (retired).

MANIA (Cinema Dementia, 59) D/S John Gilling, P/Cine. Monty Berman, P Robert S. Baker

(THE FLESH AND THE FIENDS) Violent and gruesome for the time, this graverobber classic is still worthwhile for some great acting. 1820s Edinburgh Dr. Knox (Peter Cushing with one eye shut) is arrogant and harsh but is inspiring and kind to his students. He's passionate when debating a reverend on the existence of the soul and mocking other doctors then daring them to sue him. Hare (Donald Pleasence) makes incredible faces and jumps up and down in excitement while watching Burke (George Rose) kill but is afraid of rats. After the pair's indiscriminate killing for profit spree is ended, Burke escapes hanging by giving evidence against Hare, but his eyes are burned out in an alley. Meanwhile poor medical student Chris (John Cairney) falls hopelessly for the complex wild bar girl Mary (Billie Whitelaw) which is contrasted to Dr. Mitchell (Dermot Walsh) courting Knox's proper niece Martha (June Laverick). Other characters are Mrs. Burke (Renee Houston) and the "daft" young Jamie (Melvyn Hayes). The impressive epic crowd scenes are from David Lean's OLIVER TWIST (48). The Burke and Hare story was also the basis for THE GREED OF WILLIAM HART (48), written by Gilling, and THE DOCTOR AND THE DEVILS (85). MANIA was released in America in '61, then again (cut) as THE FIENDISH GHOULS in '65. This is the U.S. TV version.

(MESA OF) LOST WOMEN (Englewood, 53) D Ron Ormond, D/S Herbert Tevos, P G. William Perkins, Melvin Gordon

Ron and June Ormond (PV #26) were hired by Howco to film around Tevos' incoherent unfinished "Tarantula" footage. Lyle Talbot narrates the still incoherent but oddly fascinating feature. The now feeble minded Dr. Masterson (Harmon Stevens) escapes from an asylum where he had been committed after a visit to the secret cave lab of the mad Dr. Aranya (Jackie Coogan) in the "Mexican

desert of Death." Aranya had created "spider women" led by Tandra Quinn, who stares real good and does a sultry dance in a bar. He calls his several dwarfs (one is Angelo Rossitto) "puny, unimportant things." After a ride in a small plane with an asylum attendant (George Barrows, who usually acted in gorilla suits), there's time for the pilot to be part of a love triangle, a giant tarantula puppet attacks, then Masterson blows everything up. His story is told in a series of flashbacks by a couple (Robert Knapp and Mary Hill) found wandering in the desert by Richard Travis and Chris Pin Martin ("Ay Cramba!") to a doctor (Allan Nixon, who somehow received 2'nd billing). Samuel Wu is an Asian servant, and look hard and you'll see Ed Wood regulars Dolores Fuller (PV #22) and Mona McKinnon as spider women, and Jerry Warren regular Katherine Victor. The cinematographer was Karl Strauss (ISLAND OF LOST SOULS, MURDER BY THE CLOCK...).

MISSILE TO THE MOON (Englewood, 59) D Richard Cunha, S H. E. Barrie, Vincent Fotre, P Marc Frederic

Yes, it's the even cheaper remake of CAT WOMEN OF THE MOON (PV #15), featuring those surreal, slow moving rock men, lots of laughs and some amazing hair styles. The short Tommy Cook (star of TEENAGE CRIME WAVE) and Gary Clarke (from HOW TO MAKE A MONSTER) are escaped cons who hide in a rocketship and end up on the all female moon along with Richard Travis (MESA OF LOST WOMEN) and Cathy Downs (THE AMAZING COLOSSAL MAN). Cook, whose character is "as subtle as a sledge hammer," says "Don't think honey, just be beautiful" to his new space babe. Downs is tied up and threatened by "the dark creature" (giant spider) in the "extermination chamber" (very fake cave). The conniving hypnotizing killer Alpha (Nina Bara from the SPACE PATROL show) takes over from Queen Lido (K. T. Stevens from JUNGLE HELL). With "international beauty contest winners" including Marjorie Hellen as Zeema, Laurie Mitchell, and Marianne Gaba (Playboy's Miss Sept. 59). There are some jumps in the print.

MONSTER FROM GREEN HELL (Englewood, 58) D/editor Kenneth G. Crane, S Louis Vittes, Endre Bohem, P Al Zimbalist

It's too bad this movie is so bad because the buzzing monster wasps (of various sizes) are pretty cool and I love those big eyeball closeups. Jack Rabin, Irwin Block, Paul Blaisdell and Wah Chang all worked on the FX. Much of the footage (safari, elephant stampede, Zulu attack) is from the big budget STANLEY AND LIVINGSTON (37) and characters are dressed to resemble the (19'th Century) ones seen in old sepia tinted long shots. Jim Davis stars as a doctor who is sent to The Congo to investigate and Barbara Turner is the daughter of an old doctor (Vladimir Sokoloff) there. Joel Fluellen is the philosophical and faithful black Arobi and Eduardo Ciannelli is an Arab with a whip who leads the bearers (actually slaves from old footage). It all ends at the Bronson caverns. The music is by Albert Glasser. Zimbalist also made TARZAN, THE APE MAN and WATUSI, using African movie stock footage. Turner married Vic Morrow. Their daughter is Jennifer Jason Leigh.

NATURE'S PARADISE (SW, 57) D Charles Saunders, S Denise Kaye, Leslie Bell, P Frank Berns

England's first nudist movie was backed by Americans Subotsky and Max J. Rosenberg, who later formed Amicus. Flashbacks show how office worker Joan (Anita Love) talks her friend Pat (dancer Katy Cashfield) into joining her at a nudist colony. Mike (American Carl Conway, later in MY BARE LADY) joins just to meet Joan and they eventually marry. Several women spend a lot of time on a trampoline. Others strike classic poses during a beauty contest. Naked people swim and play badminton. Unlike in most of these movies, the main characters sit around (naked) and talk a lot and they like to run instead of just stroll around. It all ends with a bizarre (dubbed in) camp fire singalong. It was shot at the St. Albans Spielplatz reserve and The Duke Of Bedford's Woburn Abbey home. There's a flashback inside a flashback and a poster for THE UNASHAMED. The

letterboxed widescreen color tape also includes two American color sound nudie shorts. **DOUBLE TROUBLE** stars the Bennett twins (from Doris Wishman and Barry Mahon movies) and in **HOT ROCKS**, three hungover women decide to take a sauna.

NIGHT OF THE GHOULS (Englewood, 58) P/D/S Ed Wood Jr.

(**REVENGE OF THE DEAD**) The intro to this 69 min. oddity features Criswell, who then narrates (a lot). After some comedy from Kelton the cop (Paul Marco) in the minimal police station and a "juvenile delinquency" scene from Wood's unfinished **Hellborn** (56), including Conrad Brooks, we finally get around to the bizarre flashback of the "ghost chaser" Lt. (Duke Moore), who only wants to go to the opera. It's sort of a sequel to **BRIDE OF THE MONSTER** with only Lobo (Tor Johnson) returning, and Kenne Duncan as the phony mystic Dr. Acula. The amazing seance sequence (like a magic stage show from the 1800's) includes skeletons, a floating trumpet, a slo/mo spirit guide (who looks black) and a speaking corpse. Valda Hansen is the (fake) "white ghost," Jeannie Stevens is the "black ghost" (in scenes from Wood's TV pilot **The Final Curtain** - 57) and John Carpenter is the captain. I love Lobo's mutant face (makeup by Henry Thomas) and Wood putting himself on a police wanted photo. Ronnie Ashcroft was an assistant director and William C. Thompson was cinematographer. I first saw this once-lost film in the early 80s at the Fangoria offices thanks to Uncle Bob. This recent video release has irritating new credits.

NIGHT OF THE QUARTER MOON (Fang, 59) D Hugo Haas, S Frank Davis, Franklin Coen, P Albert Zugsmith

(**FLESH AND FLAME**) Compared to other Haas movies, this Cinemascope MGM release is a slick, big budget epic. Chuck (Barrymore), a traumatized former Korean war POW meets and marries Ginny (Julie London) in Mexico. Since he's a member of the rich, famous Nelson family, they make headlines back in S.F. When his mother (Agnes Moorehead) discovers Ginny is part black, she has Chuck drugged, arrested, put in a sanitarium and starts divorce proceedings! A black lawyer (James Edwards from **HOME OF THE BRAVE**) takes Ginny's case. Nat "King Cole acts and sings "To Whom It May Concern" and Cathy (niece of Bing) sings "Blue Moon." With the gorgeous Anna Kashfi, the always fun to watch Arthur Shields, Dean Jones and Edward Andrews. The casting of Jackie Coogan, Ray Anthony, Charles Chaplin Jr., Woo Woo Grabowsky and an unbilled Frank Gorshin is pure Zugsmith. So is the fact that London is seen nearly naked while swimming, talks about swimming naked and agrees to strip in court. The screenwriters later wrote **THE TRAIN**. The print is panned and scanned.

PERILS OF THE JUNGLE (Sinister, 53) D George Blair, S Frank Taussig, Robert T. Smith, P Walter White Jr.

Ohio born wild animal trainer Clyde Beatty stars in what seems to be two episodes of an unsold TV kids' series narrated by a man showing 16mm footage to his nephews. Beatty (as himself) helps out an animal dealer (Phyllis Coates) who has to contend with cliché bad guy Gorman (John Doucete). Beatty uses his famous whip and chair to tame lions during a fire and the native "boys" say "Yes, Bwana." The second story involves a narrow escape from a native king in a skull mask. Only 63 mins. long and from Lippert. Blair also made **SABU AND THE MAGIC RING** (57). Beatty's next (and last) role was in **RING OF FEAR** (Warners 54), set in his own circus and co-starring Mickey Spillane!

PHANTOM FROM 10,000 LEAGUES (Sinister, 56) P/D/edit Dan Milner, S Lou Rusoff, P Jack Milner

Ted Baxter (Kent Taylor) finds a radiation scarred body on the beach, a victim of a man in a suit sea creature. The beachcomber tourist in polka dot trunks is really

Oceanographer Dr. Stevens who has created a death ray. The Paul Blaisdell created monster looks like a lion/dragon/fish/man. Things explode, the FBI investigates, characters talk a lot and a mike boom is visible. With Cathy Downs as the daughter, Michael Whalen as a Professor who experiments on turtles, Helene Stanton as a spy, and Phillip Pine. The pathetic ARC (pre AIP) release was shot on Catalina Island. Milner directed FROM HELL IT CAME (57) and Downs and Whalen were both in MISSILE TO THE MOON (59). This was on a double bill with Corman's DAY THE WORLD ENDED.

PICKUP (Fang, 51) P/D/S/star Hugo Haas
 Horak (Haas), a middle aged Czech widower railroad man falls for and marries the gum chewing, gold digging Betty (Beverly Michaels), who had just been evicted. He loses his hearing (the doc says it's "psychosomatic") but when he regains it, pretends to be deaf as she tells her lover (Allan Nixon) that "that old spider makes me sick." This leads to tragedy and murder and it's sorta like THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS TWICE from the husband's point of view. Michaels looks great, especially wearing a beret, riding side saddle on a merry-go-round, and she's fascinating to listen to as she spews out her bored, disgusted, insulting dialog. With Bernard Gorcey (Leo's dad). From Columbia. Hugo (who had first directed in Hungary) and Michaels returned in GIRL ON THE BRIDGE and she went on to star in WICKED WOMAN, BETRAYED WOMEN and the Hammer film BLONDE BAIT before mid 50s retirement.

THE PLAYGIRLS AND THE VAMPIRE (SW, 60) D/S Piero Regnoli, P Tiziano Longo (L'ULTIMA PREDAL DEL VAMPIRO) The group of beautiful women trapped in a remote place plot is similar to HORRORS OF SPIDER ISLAND (59), THE VAMPIRE AND THE BALLERINA (60) and THE BLOODY PIT OF HORROR (66) and like those, this is a true sexy shocker. Most of the "playgirls" stranded in a castle wear see through nighties, Lyla Rocco does a strip tease, and after Katia (Maria Giovannini) becomes a vampire, she spends the rest of the movie wandering around naked. She's usually seen in the dark or just from the neck up, but it's still pretty outrageous for 1960. This is the uncut American theatrical version (Fanfare/Richard Gordon released it in 63). Lyla Rocco stars as the reincarnation of a lover of the vampire Count Kernassy (Walter Brandi who also plays his descendant and gets to fight himself). There's lots of thunder and lightning, a memorable nude staking scene and the Count has a weird disintegration scene.

THE PURPLE GANG (JFTH!, 60) D Frank McDonald, S Jack Dewitt, P Lindsay Parsons

In Detroit during the 20s "Honeyboy" Willard (Robert Blake) declares that "People are like sheep" and "Fear makes the world go round." By the time of prohibition he's running a phony protection racket. He joins forces with three brothers led by Eddie (Joe Turkel) who smuggle booze from Canada, and Capone sends Killer Burke (Paul Dubov) to help. Gangsters, bad cops and innocent citizens are machine gunned and the pregnant blonde wife (Elaine Edwards from THE BAT) of Lt. Harley (star Barry Sullivan) is shoved out of a window. Honeyboy says "No liquor, no junk, no broads while I'm running the show," and battles the Mafia members trying to muscle in on his territory but Blake's claustrophobic character gets more and more psychotic. He puts his best friend and right hand man Hank (Marc Cavell) in a coffin and fills it with cement. He freaks out and sobs when jailed. This is strange to watch knowing that Blake has been behaving the same way recently in real life. Drugs (marijuana and heroin) are sold out of a flower shop. A U.S government narcotics agent introduces the Allied Artists release, one of several movies inspired by the then popular UNTOUCHABLES TV show. It's based more or less on real characters. Everything was shot on sets, 30s footage was edited in and Sullivan narrates and thinks out loud. Also with Susy Marquette, Jody Lawrence, and Nestor Paiva. DeWitt also wrote CELL 2455 DEATH ROW (55) and A MAN CALLED HORSE (70). The print (with an added Warner Brothers logo) is excellent.

QUICKSAND (Englewood, 50) D Irving Pichel, S Robert Smith, P Mort Briskin
 Dan (Mickey Rooney who narrates) is a Navy Vet auto mechanic who wants the new "blonde babe" waitress Vera (Jeanne, sister of James, Cagney). She wants a \$2000 mink coat. QUICKSAND is a perfect title as every stupid thing Dan does pulls him deeper in dept and in danger until he's on the run for murder. Nick (Peter Lorre) who runs the Joyland pinball parlor on a (real) pier wants Vera back and Helen (Barbara Bates) is Dan's nice, pretty, lovesick former girlfriend. Also with Minerva Urecal (from several Monogram Lugosi movies), Jimmy Dodd (soon to star on THE MICKEY MOUSE CLUB), Ray Teal (BONANZA sheriff), Jack Elam and Red Nichols and his band. Rooney and Lorre (both shorter than most of the women in this movie) had planned to make several features together but this film noir was it. Pichel directed DESTINATION MOON the same year.

RING OF FEAR (Fang, 54) D/S James Edward Grant, S Paul Fix, Philip MacDonald, P Robert M. Fellows

In PV #28 Mickey Spillane tells how he and his real life cop friend Jack Strang were hired by behind the scenes producer John Wayne to play Spillane and his creation Mike Hammer in this circus mystery. The new ringmaster is the devious "hopeless schizophrenic" killer Dublin (Sean McClory, the real star), who has escaped from a mental hospital. He blackmails an alcoholic old clown (B western sidekick Emmett Lynn) to help cause deadly accidents while trying to eliminate the husband (John Bromfield) of his trapeze artist former love Valerie (Marian Carr). Circus owner Clyde Beatty (as himself) and his cranky manager (Pat O'Brien) hire Spillane and his friend (never called Hammer) to hang around and investigate. Many actual Beatty circus acts and parades are seen and Beatty (who had starred in 30's movies) tames large lions and tigers. It's a fun movie with a mostly Irish cast, but this is a b/w TV print of the Cinemascope Warnercolor release. Also with Gonzalez Gonzalez (kangaroo boxing comic relief) and Kenneth Tobey. McClory (from Dublin) later starred in VALLEY OF THE DRAGONS and blonde beauty Carr (here in a leopard print swimsuit) was in KISS ME DEADLY and THE INDESTRUCTIBLE MAN.

THE ROCKET MAN (Fang, 53) D Oscar Rudolph, S Lenny Bruce, Jack Henley, P Leonard Goldstein

Orphan Timmy (George "Foghorn" Winslow) is sent to stay with Amelia (Spring Byington), a small town widow Justice Of The Peace. Big Bill (Emory Parnell), a corrupt politician that she had sentenced for drunk driving, sends Tom (John Agar) to buy and close the orphanage. Charles Coburn is the town mayor (and plumber) who wants to marry Amelia, and her daughter (Anne Francis) falls for Tom. The plot becomes politicians, banks and loan companies vs. good simple (Christian) people. With all the homespun characters and plot details, it's easy to forget that Timmy, a space TV show fan, has been given a ray gun by a (real) spaceman. In the inspirational payoff scene, a Theremin is heard while the ray makes Big Bill tell the truth at a town meeting. He says he stands for "booze, bribes and wild parties!" and calls the voters "a bunch of suckers!" Knowing this was written by Lenny Bruce makes it even better. With Beverly Garland and Stanley Clements. The print of the (very rare) 20th Century release has jumpy spots.

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