

The Drink Tank 425

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**Playing at Bucknall Elementary:
*Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein***

An Editorial by Chuck Serface

In the 1970s

, the Moreland School District owned copies of two films without educational content, both in 16 mm. The first was *American Graffiti*, a version our academic masters unprofessionally edited to the point of unwatchability. Our principal at Castro Junior High School, now Moreland Middle School, trotted this out each semester to reward students with acceptable grade-point averages. I sat through it once during my two-year tenure at Castro (1977 – 1979). From then on, I worked hard to miss the academic mark for entry into these showings. We were children living in the expanding Silicon Valley, for shit's sake, near San Francisco, arguably the most liberal American city ever. We could handle edgy content. Had our august administrators not been so fearful of parental wrath and avoided splicing that poor roll unmercifully, I'd have attended Harvard . . . well, okay, maybe.

The second film I never missed seeing. I parked front and center every time Bucknall Elementary offered Saturday showings for, I think, about a buck. Our parents popped corn in old-school oil machines -- so much better than air-poppers and microwave packets -- and loaded this into huge grocery bags. Sometimes, we'd even receive extra money for goodies at the Stop-n-Go Market down the street. So prepared, we'd fill the multi-purpose room at Bucknall to, once again, watch Count Dracula (Bela Lugosi), the Frankenstein Monster (Glenn Strange), and the disgraced scientist Dr. Sandra Mornay (Lenore Aubert) invade La Mirada, Florida, only to be thwarted

by a the Wolf Man (Lon Chaney, Jr.), the insurance agent Joan Raymond (Jane Randolph, the good scientist Dr. Stevens (Charles Bradstreet), and two fumbling baggage handlers, Chick Young (Budd Abbott) and Wilbur Gray (Lou Costello). The invaders' goal? The brain of Wilbur Gray! You know I'm talking about *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*.



Hey, kid on my lawn, hear me out. Back before VHS and later innovations, we prayed for opportunities to see our favorite Universal Horror films. Bob Wilkins would air them periodically on *Creature Features*, or they might surface through other televised venues and theater revivals. We couldn't hack the Internet or purchase Blu-rays. I was fifteen before seeing *The Ghost of Frankenstein* from start to finish. We scanned commercials, advertisements, announcements, connected through oral grapevines, and adjusted our schedules accordingly. Woe upon poor suckers who missed their chances. Now Peacock, the NBCUniversal streaming service, features many within their library. No more walking ten miles each way in the snow for us, at least metaphorically.

“YOUNG PEOPLE MAKING THE MOST OF LIFE - WHILE IT LASTS.” DR. LEJOS

“You went to all that trouble for *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*,” you ask incredulously while scuffing holes into my Kentucky Bluegrass with your kicks, you whippersnapper? We’ve come far with horror movies. Hollywood has replaced Dracula, the Frankenstein Monster, the Wolf Man, and the Mummy with a far more nefarious bunch: Freddy Krueger, Jason Voorhees, Pinhead, and Michael Myers, for example. We have Predators and Xenomorphs too. Indeed, why bother?

Abbott and Costello Meets Frankenstein stems from tradition. Great filmmakers, both American and European, contributed to a phenomenon that would define how we view monsters still today. Current directors, makeup/FX artists, and actors react to and learn from the combined creative output of legends including Lon Chaney, Sr., Carl Laemmle, Karl Freund, Tod Browning, James Whale, Curt and Robert Siodmak, Jack Pierce, Vera West, Colin Clive, Claude Rains, Lionel Atwill, Basil Rathbone, Evelyn Ankers, Ilona Massey, Elena Verdugo, Dwight Frye, Edward Sloan, Lon Chaney, Jr., Ernest Thesinger, Elsa Lanchester, Boris Karloff, and Bela Lugosi.

When *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* hit the screen in 1948, the Universal Monster line had fallen victim to its tropes and to the restrictive Hays Code which squelched much potential. *Abbott and Costello*, then, is the endpoint of a loosely interrelated cycle, a subset within the larger Universal Monster oeuvre that eventually brings together Dracula, the Frankenstein Monster, and the Wolf Man. Lugosi only played Dracula twice on-screen while Karloff donned his flatheaded Frankenstein Monster makeup three times. Both actors portrayed other roles across releases, however. The viewing order of what’s sometimes called the “Monster Mash” is as follows:

Dracula (1931)

Frankenstein (1931)

Bride of Frankenstein (1935)

Dracula’s Daughter (1936)

Son of Frankenstein (1939)

The Wolf Man (1941)

The Ghost of Frankenstein (1942)

Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (1943)

Son of Dracula (1943)

House of Frankenstein (1944)

House of Dracula (1945)

Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein (1948)



Bud Abbott and Lou Costello really were funny guys, and their capstone to an era, both a satire of and an homage to this multi-film narrative, deserves respect. What better way for Universal to end something that had nowhere else to go than with self-referential humor? In 2007, *Readers Digest* named *Abbott and Costello Meets Frankenstein* a Top 100 Funniest Movie of All Time. If this doesn’t impress you, maybe knowing that the United States Library of Congress has deemed it worthy for preservation in the National Film Registry will? The deciding factor for such an honor must have been seeing Bela Lugosi trade his famous black cape for a classic smoking jacket. At a special Halloween viewing, my classmate Heidi Schietzle offered perhaps the most cogent criticism related to Glenn Strange’s Frankenstein’s Monster when she leaned into me and asked, “Why isn’t Herman Munster being funny like on TV?”

Whether fans love or hate the concept, most realize that Universal Monsters is one of the first franchises to come out of Hollywood. So, pop some corn, fire up your big-screen equivalent to our now antiquated projectors, and hopefully understand that it's all about nostalgia. Fifty-five-year old Chuck loves feeling like he's ten again. Indulge an old boy, would you?



**CHICK YOUNG:
PEOPLE PAY MCDUGAL CASH TO
COME IN HERE AND GET SCARED.**

**WILBUR:
I'M CHEATIN' HIM. I'M GETTIN'
SCARED FOR NOTHIN'.**



The Silent Monsters: Universal's Pre-Talkie Horrors

by Christopher J. Garcia

It didn't start with Dracula; it started with Lon Chaney, Sr.

Universal was an upstart, a smart one. Early in its run, it gave a prime role to a wunderkind: Irving Thalberg. In the history of film, only three approached his genius at managing the production side: Robert Evans, Adolf Zukor, and Thomas Ince. Thalberg understood a tight script and a firm budget were the keys to creating a great picture. He did spectacle incredibly well and wasn't nearly the skinflint that a lot of Hollywood's early producers were. He spent when he had to. While he was at Universal, he began to understand how to best make use of the people he had under contract, and the first great star he made into a legend was Lon Chaney, Sr. and the picture most responsible was *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*.

Quasimodo is often forgotten as a Universal monster, largely because it's not really nice to call him a monster, but the film certainly was made along the lines of the later Universal Monster pictures. The cinematography is amazing, the sets incredible, and the fact that they re-created the city to such detail is all down to Thalberg telling them to do it. The images so many of us have of fifteenth-century France, or Europe in general, were brought to us through those influenced by the images in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, or at least by those who were influenced by the influence of it. It was a masterpiece of makeup. Chaney was legendary for doing amazing makeup and here he was great at creating a face that was both grotesque and oddly relatable. That's a difficult trick, but one that the entire Universal Monsters concept hinges on. His performance was pure gold, and you can tell he felt this was his big break. Chaney also owned the film rights to the picture, which probably helped him want to make it a bigger hit.

Thalberg fought for this picture and was also probably instrumental in keeping Chaney from getting the director he had wanted: Erich von Stroheim. That would have been interesting, but honestly, other than Tod Browning, who would have created a very different film than was delivered by Wallace Worsley, I can't think of anyone who could have improved it.

The next big entry is arguably the most beautiful of all silent film: *The Phantom of the Opera*. The use of two-strip Technicolor is an absolute marvel, and the understanding of the costume and makeup departments to deal with the challenges allowed the whole production to shine. It is a great film, and Chaney was insanely good in it. Mary Philbin is also fantastic and that her name is not nearly as legend in the Universal Monsters histories is rather sad. The key to *Phantom* is simple: the terror is brought to life on the underground, while the colorful world is the one of stage and of masques. It's an incredibly smart film.

They followed that up with a thriller called *The Cat and the Canary*. It's an absolute classic, but it feels less like a Universal Monster film than a straight-ahead thriller. It is much like *Halloween 3* in that respect, and both are excellent examples of making a bit of a stretch. This is also a film that is great because of the director. German Expressionist Paul Leni does an amazing job with a story that could easily be a comedy. In a sense, it was a 1920s version of *Scream*.

You'll notice that Lon Chaney's name isn't there, and that's because he had moved on to MGM, and was about to make *London After Midnight*, the lost film I want to see more than all but four others (they are the Gotch vs. Hackenschmidt wrestling match, *Hollywood*, *Cleopatra*, and the full version of *Greed*), and he wasn't around, which is why they went with a very different formula. A formula they would return to with their next masterpiece: *The Man Who Laughs*.

Conrad Veidt was a star from having been in *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* and would be a star for most of the rest of his life. He was an amazing actor and knew how to emote. When he made the transition to sound, he did so brilliantly. Paul Leni directed the film based on the novel by Victor Hugo. Again, it's a lot about the make-up used by Veidt as Gwynplaine, a nobleman's son who is disfigured as a part of the punishment for his father. This is very much along the lines of *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, only slightly more melodramatic, and with Leni's eye providing an amazing sense of pathos. There are also few directors who understand a love story as well as Paul Leni.

The Last Warning, kinda a sequel to *The Cat and the Canary*, was what followed, and it wasn't as good as the original, but it was also Paul Leni's final film before he passed in 1929. It's largely a forgotten film otherwise, but it was pretty good.

The last of the pre-talkie Universal Monster ancestors was *The Last Performance*. Veidt is a magician, and he apparently went into it with gusto. In a way, the reviews seem to indicate that it was a Val Kilmer-esque turn, where you could say he was over-acting, but really, he was just acting with everything he's got. Mary Philbin is even better here than she is working alongside Chaney. It's a great performance and one that I wish was better-known. It's a film that never gives much a chance to land, and it's just cut too tight. That happens, and without Leni or Browning at the helm, it's not elevated.

It was less than a year later before *Dracula* changed everything. These films, slightly re-cut with added sound elements, got re-released after *Drac* and *Frank* were big hits. It's one of the reason why these survive in multiple versions. Still, it's great to see these are still available to view on DVD, and *The Last Performance* is a Criterion film. It's worth picking up, and any of the versions of *The Phantom of the Opera* is worth grabbing . . . including the one they sold at Walmart that used 1930s classical records as a score!





Comparing the Two Universal Draculas

by Kathryn Duval

I've always loved Bela Lugosi as Dracula. After all, he gave us the phrasing and accent that most of us imitate when we pretend to be a vampire. Who could forget how his immortal line with the dramatic pause: "I never drink . . . wine."

To most of us, Bela with his Hungarian accent and haughtiness is the very essence of Dracula. However Universal had another Dracula. It was common at the time Dracula was made to film a foreign language film at the same time using the same sets and a translated script. This Spanish language Dracula was lost for many years, and only rediscovered in the 1970s.

Watching them back to back as I did recently, it became clear to me that the acting and cinematography are much better in the Spanish version. They are missing Bela of course, but aside from that it's a better film.

I suppose one reason may be that the English language version was filmed earlier each day so that the Spanish cast and crew had the opportunity to review the filming of the English version before starting theirs. They could see what worked well and what needed improvement. The lighting and camera angles are more sophisticated.

Where I found the difference the most striking was in the scene where Mina, already bitten and changing, talks with her fiancé as they sit on the terrace in the evening. The Spanish Mina, renamed Eva and played by Lupita Tovar, is much more convincingly under Dracula's spell. Her moves are much more sensual, much less stiff than in the English version. Eva seems much more real in her flirtations than the English Mina.

Another difference is the hints of anti-Semitism in the English language version. When Dracula first appears, he wears a large necklace with a Star of David. Since it's so large, it seems to purposely draw the eye. Being that the film was made in 1931 when anti-Semitism was widespread in Europe, I wonder if the audience was supposed to identify the monster as Jewish. Is it to emphasize that the monster as an outsider? Or is it darker, meant to hint at the blood libel rumors, that Jews drink blood for ritual purposes?

Sources say that it was a personal possession of Bela Lugosi's. Something he wanted to bring to the part. A legend grew that Bela Lugosi was buried with the medallion. Another (definitely false) rumor was that it was based on a real medal awarded to Vlad the Impaler, the actual Dracula. In any case, it is absent from the Spanish version.



The Spanish version has a slightly longer running time. The Spanish crew had less time to film and a smaller budget, but they used the time well to make the film more artistically effective.

Despite the better artistic qualities of the Spanish version, it is the English version and Bela's performance that created the essential image of Dracula used over and over again in popular culture. The cape, the tuxedo, the stiff posture with the mysterious accent captivate us.

The performance by Bela Lugosi, first in the theatre and then in the classic Universal movie, defined him forever. Sequels were made, but Lugosi refused them worried he would be typecast. And he was. He is forever the essence of Dracula.

Every Halloween, I put on Bauhaus to listen to "Bela Lugosi's Dead." The haunting lyrics always move me, especially the second verse:

The virginal brides file past his tomb,
Strewn with time's dead flowers,
Bereft in deathly bloom,
Alone in a darkened room,
The Count!

Yes, Bela Lugosi's dead, but his performance as the undead will live forever in our minds.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com



This Is How You Reboot: *The Mummy* (1999) by Christopher J. Garcia

I know purists hate it, but *The Mummy* from 1999 was the best adventure pictures in about forever.

How could it not be, with top-notch actors, great source material, a tone that was so perfect for the time, and the spectacular use of effects all combined to make it into one of the best cinematic thrill rides of recent-ish years? It reestablished the mummy as a much smarter, and more fun, concept,

Because, if you've seen the original Boris Karloff version of *The Mummy* in recent years, you'll be aware that it hasn't exactly aged well.

The early talkies are troublesome, because they lack nuance or, even worse, they are nothing but nuance. Here, Karl Freund does a great job with the script, but the film actually called for a slightly looser form, and while the repeated shots of KARLOFF staring into the audience are disquieting, overall the effect of the film is something between typical and tedious.

Okay, that might be a little unfair, they were still hammering down the edges of the genre for film, but it's still my cup of tea.

Ultimately, what the 1999 remake had was a seriously fun tone mixed with timing that was impeccable. Oh, who am I kidding; it was all about the casting.

Give that same script to just about anyone and it's nowhere near as effective. They had three actors - - Brendan Fraser, Rachel Weisz, and John Hannah -- who were all exactly perfect for what they were doing. Hannah has a comedic timing that is smart, and he's very much a genre actor. Weisz is one of the great actors of the last thirty years, and here she's so good at switching between being the brains, the damsel in distress, and comic foil/love interest. Brendan Fraser could give a master class on being a swashbuckler. Literally no one has ever buckled swash in both comedic and thrilling directions as well as Fraser. He's got the looks, the build, but most importantly, he's got natural charisma. There's chemistry between him and Weisz, and more importantly, there's the fact that he can take the silly serious enough to make it seem real.

That is the mark of a great genre actor.

If you look at a film like *Blast from the Past*, a terrible concept made into a very fun little film entirely by Fraser's charm, you can see that he takes things seriously, and when he's required to go the other direction, he leans, not leaps, and that allows him to make a much more impressive impact.

The 1990s was the start of what we saw so thoroughly in the 2000s. There were remakes everywhere, and this one was easily my favorite. The film took the source material, applied a modern sense of thrill to it, and then laid on aspects that are the markers of the modern genre. Evelyn Carnahan is a much more modern heroine. She is the smartest member of the entire team, but she also has a serious toughness to her.

She is also arguably the most beautiful woman to ever appear on screen.

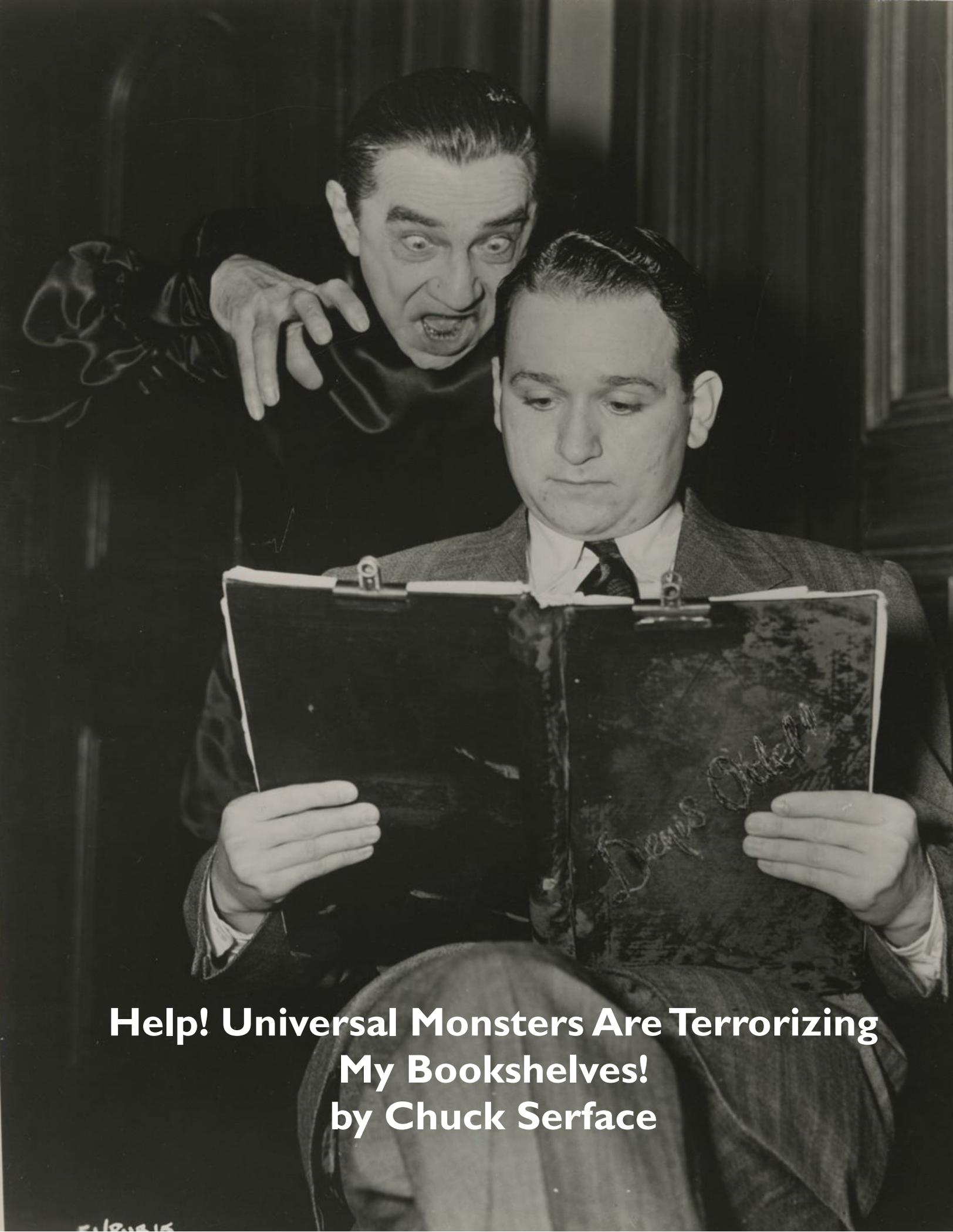
The movie isn't dealing with the technical limitations, and while many remakes made the mistake of thinking that it is the technology that justifies the existence of a remake, but it's further down the list. The ability to tell a story with smarter effects is key, and as much as *The Mummy* uses CGI to amp up the impact of various moment, it still uses the actual setting by filming on location and the cinematography. Since *The Mummy* with Karloff was directed by one of the greatest cinematographers who ever lived (and the man who perfected sitcom lighting!) it is gorgeous and moody, but the cinematography in 1999 was far grander. There is a grandeur to so many shots, and you have a far more intimate, and at the time frightening, sense from the 1932 version. The shots in 1999 were meant to make the adventure grander, in fact less intimate, and that allows the actors to fill bigger situations. Fraser, never one for subtle, does an amazing job filling the role. Arnold Vosloo does the same, even when he's CGI'ed, he's bigger than the scene.

He is also sexy in it. I'd switch.

This is a film that takes the Universal Monster idea and shows its versatility. It uses a script that is much smarter than the genre would make you think, and it lets the monster become charismatic, the heroes be all heroic, and the setting enhances tone. *The Mummy* does that, and it does it in a way that is neither homage (though there are certainly moments that likely started as fan service) nor pastiche, though it rides that line pretty much to the near. It's a wonderful movie experience, one that brings back that feeling of 1930s film in that it screams to be seen on a big screen.

The reason to remake a Universal Monster movie isn't because you could make it better, but because the original idea is so damn good. Not all stories are infinite wells to be drawn from, but the Universal Monster stories are so primal, so essential, they can handle it. Much like *The Thing*, the idea can handle multiple interpretations, even with drastically different approaches, and that's what makes them so important, and why I am sure they're always gonna be retold.





**Help! Universal Monsters Are Terrorizing
My Bookshelves!
by Chuck Serface**

5/18/15

Books based on or related directly to Universal Monsters have been appearing for decades. Many read like lighter versions of Kim Newman's *Anno Dracula*, bursting with Easter eggs from other sources within the Universal library and beyond. I'll discuss a few to show you how writers and publishers have drawn inspiration from these classic films.

The Dark Horse Universal Monsters Series by Various Authors



Dracula: Asylum by Paul Witcover

Frankenstein: The Shadow of Frankenstein by Stefan Petrucha

The Creature from the Black Lagoon: Time's Black Lagoon by Paul Di Filippo

The Wolfman: Hunter's Moon by Michael Jan Friedman

The Mummy: Dark Resurrection by Michael Paine

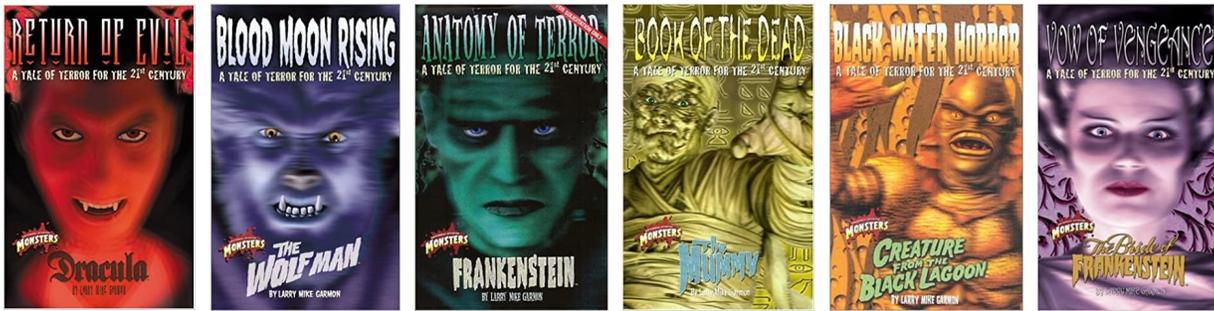
The Bride of Frankenstein: Pandora's Bride by Elizabeth Hand

Dark Horse Publishing engaged certain authors to write novels not only based on the Universal monsters, but starring them. In essence, these stand-alone books read like an expanded universe for the Universal Monster franchise. No one will ever argue whether they're canon or not, however, as they do with *Star Wars*, because who cares? Not the point!

The series ended after six books, with the most notable contributors being Paul Di Filippo, who wrote *The Steampunk Trilogy*, and the prolific Elizabeth Hand. We see Count Dracula arise during World War I, trapped beneath Seward's Sanatorium where he wreaks havoc on staff and patients alike. The Frankenstein Monster follows his maker to London, where he encounters Jack the Ripper who hopes to gain immortality through the methods of Henry Frankenstein. Scientists time travel to the Devonian Age to discover the origin of the Creature from the Black Lagoon's species. Lawrence Talbot the Wolf Man meets a group that possibly could cure his lycanthrope . . . or could they. Michael Paine goes with Imhotep/Ardith Bey, not the later Kharis. Finally, Elizabeth Hand guides the Bride from laboratories to Weimar Germany, giving the modern Galatea more life than she experienced in *The Bride of Frankenstein*.

The quality varies from book to book, and readers annoyed with the shaky continuity and sketchy science rampant throughout the films will feel similarly here. Each author wilfully dives into plot irregularities -- it's Universal Monsters tradition!

Universal Monsters by Larry Mike Garmon



Dracula: Return of Evil

The Wolfman: Blood Moon Rising

Frankenstein: Anatomy of Terror

The Mummy: The Book of the Dead

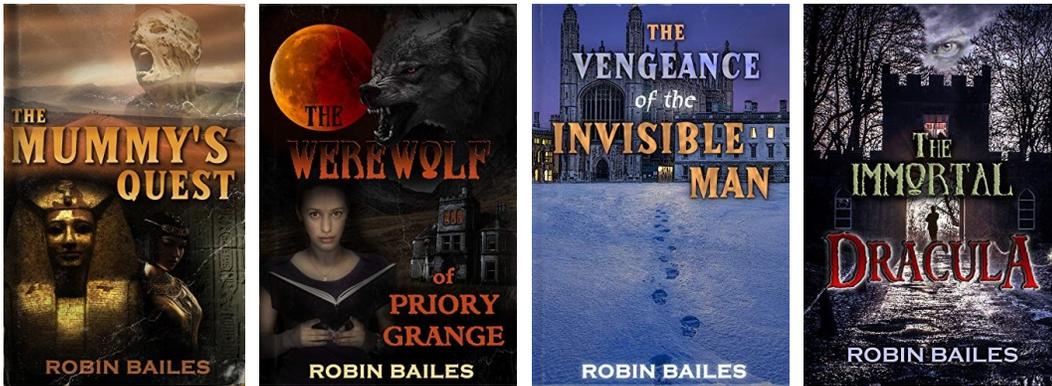
The Creature from the Black Lagoon: Black Water Horror

The Bride of Frankenstein: Vow of Vengeance

Three teenage interns at Universal Studios-Orlando – Nina, Joe, and Bob – play Universal Monster movies on an innovative digital projector that displays three-dimensional holograms. However, a storm hits, the projector breaks, but the teens continue with their lives . . . until much later when they discover that somehow the storm has released the monsters into the real world! Over six novels, they encounter each monster until finally the last story when the trio must face them all collectively. How will our intrepid teens clean up their mess, and what will happen once Universal discovers that they'd not only used their technology without permission, but damaged it too?

Garmon intends these stories for intermediate readers (ages ten to twelve), so the violence is relatively light, and we receive no explanations about how a storm could bring projected holograms to life. The feeling throughout is like watching Saturday morning cartoons from the 1970s, replete with meddling kids confronting monsters of the week and providing good fun for weirdos of all ages.

The Universal Library by Robin Bailes



The Mummy's Quest

The Werewolf of Priory Grange

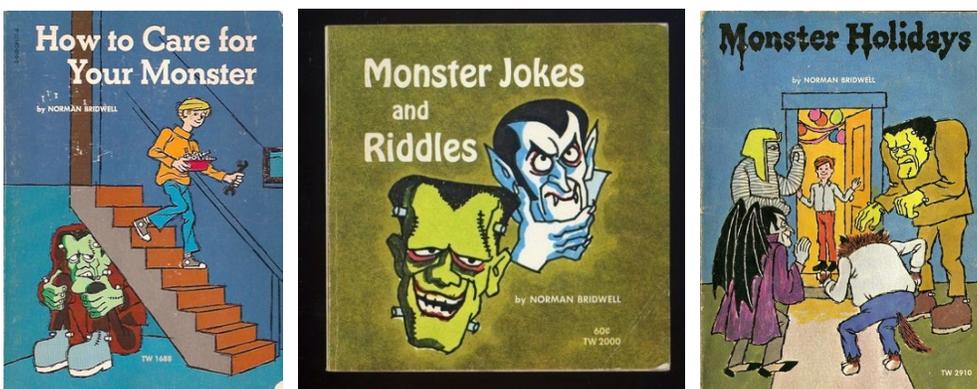
The Vengeance of the Invisible Man

The Immortal Dracula

Each novel in Robin Bailes's self-published Universal Library stands alone, but he suggests reading them in order, because, I'm hypothesizing, an author has got to eat. All are set in contemporary times, and while nods toward the original Universal phenomenon abound, the characters are loosely-based types only. Bailes identifies his style as "horror/comedy," quite appropriately given the tone many Universal Monster movies share.

Bailes has written four novels so far, and I imagine upcoming efforts might include the Frankenstein Monster, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, maybe the Bride of Frankenstein somehow? I'd even read ones based on Quasimodo and Erik the Phantom, and, yes, Gwynplaine from *The Man Who Laughs*. If you're going to have an expanded universe, really expand it by including Universal's silent era.

Monster Books by Norman Bridwell



How to Care for Your Monster

Monster Jokes and Riddles

Monster Holidays

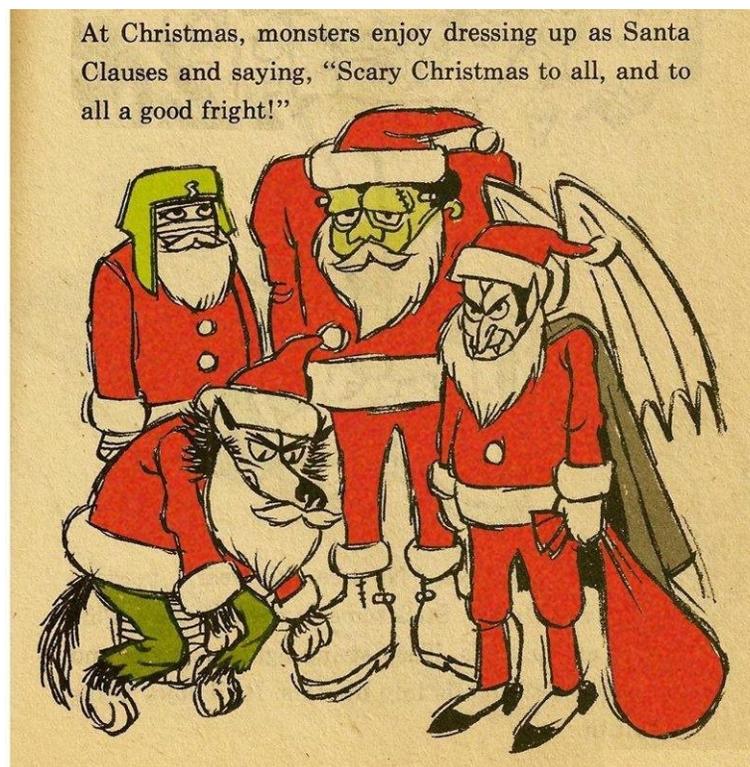
Recently, I posted on Facebook about a book from my childhood with which I'd reconnected, *Moon Man* by Tomi Ungerer. A friend commented, mentioning a Scholastic release called *How to Care for Your Monster* by Norman Bridwell, famous for *Clifford the Big Red Dog*. I remembered owning *Monster Jokes and Riddles*

and a little Google magic revealed that Bridwell had produced a third volume as well, *Monster Holidays*. I immediately found copies on eBay, nicely rounding out my collection of past favorites along with Elizabeth Starr Hill's *Pardon My Fangs* and *Fangs Aren't Everything*.

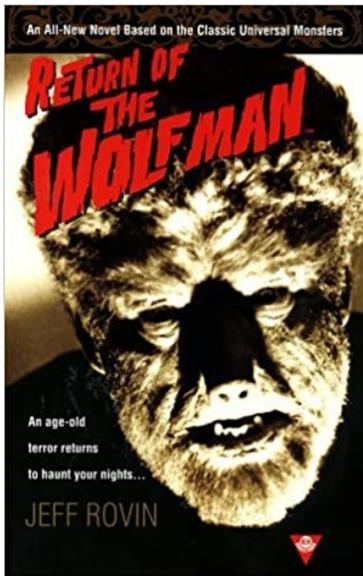
Bridwell doesn't directly reference the Universal monsters, but he sticks with the classic types: a vampire, a Frankenstein-esque construct, a werewolf, and a mummy. I'm especially impressed that Bridwell depicts his mummy wearing a nemes and uraeus like you'd find on a bust of Tutankhamen. His vampire's batwings are a nice touch as well.

As for the text, well, it's what you'd expect for something aimed at elementary readers. The following are examples, the first being advice from *How to Care for Your Monster*, the second a joke from *Monster Jokes and Riddles*, and the last an image from *Monster Holidays* showing our friends getting into the Yule spirit:

1. "Why would a werewolf walking on the beach remind you of Christmas?"
"He would have sandy claws!"
2. "So don't bother to fix up the guest room. Your vampire will be happier in a damp corner of the cellar, with his own special bed to lie in when he goes to bed at dawn."
- 3.



The Return of the Wolf Man by Jeff Rovin



Jeff Rovin begins *Return of the Wolf Man* by summarizing the denouement of *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, the last film in a “Monster Mash” cycle featuring Dracula, the Frankenstein Monster, and the Wolf Man. Why is Rovin doing this? Because his novel’s a sequel to *Abbott and Costello*, also set in La Mirada, Florida but decades later and packed with references to films from the entire Universal Horror collection. Of course, all the monsters survived their previous encounter, even if in stasis. My favorite detail involves Dracula, who through the years has been living on an island “between Key West and Havana,” running a plantation with zombie slaves much like those from *White Zombie*, another horror classic starring Bela Lugosi. I see what you did there, Jeff Rovin.

Alas, Abbott and Costello’s characters receive only faint mention, but Rovin’s merciless with McDougal, the abusive bastard who ran the local Chamber of Horrors exhibit and who constantly belittled Wilbur Gray (Lou Costello) throughout *Abbott and Costello*. I won’t reveal spoilers, but the word “comeuppance” well describes his fate. The glorious tropes remain as well. Lawrence Talbot the Wolf Man continues with his melancholy pronouncements, the Frankenstein Monster shambles erratically, and Dracula schemes about turning others into his slaves, particularly the Monster.

Current prices for this out-of-print volume range between “Really?” and “You must be kidding!” Although loaded with nostalgic continuity porn, the story’s . . . silly. If you’re interested, I’ll lend you my battered old paperback. Put your money instead toward classic comic books.

