

THIRTIES (1931-1940) J-N
All reviews by Michael J. Weldon

(JOAN LOWELL) ADVENTURE GIRL (34) D Herman Raymaker, S Ferrin Frazier. Titles tell us that this “incredible, lurid and exciting” film is a reenactment of what Lowell actually experienced on a sailing trip from Manhattan to Guatemala with her 76 year old explorer father. The whole movie is silent with her narration. The no bra female “sailor, navigator, skipper and cook” saves ex-marine Bill (Bill Sawyer) from drowning during a storm, then on land, a mongoose (not found in Central America) saves her from a “fer-de-lance” snake. Leaving dad, the dog and the other guy on board, Joan and Bill head for the ruins of an ancient city hoping for some easy riches. After a cat fight with the “Mayan Princess” she’s condemned to be burned alive in public for defiling a sacred idol. Everyone in the entire large town chases after her. The stars escape, then nearly die when a gasoline fire they started surrounds their raft. It’s 100 % bullshit but you can bet that most 30s viewers accepted it as fact. Some people would today. The star was aka Helen Trask, who had acted in several mid 20s silents. The locals are shown as “hoodoo” pagans, when in fact the whole country had been Catholic for a very long time. The government of Guatemala (then run by one of the harshest dictators in the world) is thanked for it’s co-operation. Cinematographer Harry Squire went on to shoot 50s Cinerama movies. The Van Beuren Production (for RKO) has been on TCM.

JUNGLE BRIDE (Sinister, 33) D Harry O. Hoyt, Albert Kelly, S Leah Baird, P I. E. Chadwick

Four shipwreck survivors discover some supplies and soon have a pretty nice cabin on an uninhabited island off the coast of Africa. Blonde Doris (Anita Page) thinks Gordon (handsome Charles Starrett, from MASK OF FU MANCHU) committed a murder that her brother was blamed for. Her reporter boyfriend Franklin (Kenneth Thompson) intends to hand Gordon over to the authorities to face the chair. Gordon’s likable card trick playing buddy Eddie (Eddie Borden, who played Moon Mullins in the 20’s) helps convince Doris that Gordon (who sings) is innocent and they fall in love. With two comedy relief chimps, a pre code glimpse of Page’s breast, and an exploding model ship. The sinking cruise ship footage is from a (sped up) silent film and looks a lot more expensive than the rest of this 63 min. Monogram feature. The print is very good. Hoyt had directed THE LOST WORLD (26).

KING OF THE JUNGLE (33) D/S Max Marcin, D Bruce Humberstone, S Philip Wylie, Fred Niblo Jr.

In Paramount’s answer to Tarzan, the Lion Man (Buster Crabbe) wears a very short and tight leopard skin loincloth and growls like a lion. Natives working for a cattleman (Douglass Dumbrille) steal his lion cub friends and shoot his substitute lion mother so he frees the cattle. Soon he’s captured in a pit, bought by a promoter (Sidney Toler) who names him Kasper, and taken to San Francisco. Cops chase the “naked lunatic” in Lincoln Park but Ann (Frances Dee), a teacher, helps him when he shows up in her house drinking from the fish bowl. She plays Chopstix for him, teaches him English and they fall in love. A big fire at the circus causes an incredible destructive stampede by elephants who turn over a double deck bus. Crabbe playfully wrestles with real lions and lions battle with a steer and a tiger. The animal footage is all very good and was all new, unlike the stock footage used in most MGM Tarzans. Also with Irving Pichel as the circus owner, Nydia Westman as Ann’s best friend, Warner Richmond as a circus worker whose arm is torn off, Sam Baker as Gwana, Robert Barrat, and Patricia Farley. It was the first star role for Crabbe, who went on to the TARZAN THE FEARLESS serial (33) and other jungle movies. Three Stooges producer Jules White was the assistant director. Wylie wrote MURDERS IN THE ZOO (also shot by cinematographer Ernest Haller) and ISLAND OF LOST SOULS the same year. Humberstone later directed

50s Tarzan movies. I first saw this on TV as a kid and was really impressed by the elephants. The sound was bad on the rare print I saw recently.

LEGONG, DANCE OF THE VIRGINS (Foothill, 35) D Henri De La Falaise

This interesting exotic obscurity made in Bali stars an "all native cast." It's silent with title cards and a musical score. A pretty native girl loves a guy who plays in the local band, but he falls for her sister, so she eventually leaps to her death. The minimal plot and some of the narration is probably colonial nonsense, but the clothes and large scale parades are breath taking. Men dance in elaborate monster masks and costumes, "shake with frenzy," then pretend to kill themselves with daggers. With cock fights, a cremation ceremony and a brief bit of exploitable nude bathing. LEGONG followed the similar BALINESE LOVE (31) and ISLE OF PARADISE, VIRGINS OF BALI, and GOONA GOONA (all 32). The print (from Thunderbird Films) is too dark. A depressing recent TV documentary showed that Bali is now far from the paradise it was when these images were captured.

MASSACRE (Cape Copy, 34) D Alan Crosland, S Ralph Black, Sheridan Gibney

This extraordinary First National release must be the only pre - 60's feature to take a serious look at the horrible condition of modern day American Indians. Chief Thunderhorse (Richard Barthelmess), a cynical wild west rodeo star with a long hair wig, phoney broken English, and a blonde society girlfriend, returns to the reservation to see his dying father. He uncovers a plot by Federal administrators to rip off tribal funds. During his father's funeral, his 15 year old sister is whipped and raped by the brutal Indian sheriff (Charles Middleton, who actually was part Indian). The other lying corrupt authority figures are Dudley Digges (who calls the whistle blower a Bolshevik), Arthur Hohl as a doctor, and Sidney Toler as an undertaker. The enlightened hero eventually gets violent, falls for an Indian secretary (Ann Dvorak) who always knew what was going on and takes the scandal to a headline making Senate hearing. As insightful and believable as most of this is, the message is pretty much ruined by the fact that the faithful black servant (Clarence Muse) is ridiculed, called a woman's name, kicked and exploited by huckster documentary filmmakers. I guess fair treatment for two minorities at once was too much to ask. This is what you get when Hollywood teamed the writer of I AM A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG (Gibney) with the director of THE JAZZ SINGER! Also with Douglass Dumbrille, Claire Dodd, Tully Marshall, William V. Mong and Iron Eyes Cody. The little known MASSACRE inspired David Friedman's JOHNNY FIRECLOUD (PV #10) and probably the BILLY JACK movies. 66 (!) years later, reservations (and Hollywood) still have many of the same problems.

MEN MUST FIGHT (33) D Edgar Selwyn, S S.K. Lauren, C. Gardner Sullivan

During WWI nurse Laura (Diana Wynyard) falls for romantic young pilot Jeff (Robert Young) but he's soon shot down. She then marries more business like pilot Ned Seward (Lewis Stone) who back home in America rises to become the very wealthy Secretary of State. His job doesn't stop Laura from being a feminist anti-war speaker though. When she gives a speech broadcast on television ("War must stop or we'll stop making men for you!") angry pool playing viewers smash the TV (a first?) then lead a (FRANKENSTEIN style) mob as they storm the Seward's Manhattan mansion. When war breaks out, son Robert (Phillips Holmes), a pacifist chemist, refuses any part, humiliating his father who decides to angrily tell him that his real father died fighting. Robert's fiance Peggy (Ruth Selwyn, the director's wife) even dumps him. This prophetic MGM feature takes place in the future (1940s) where dirigibles and picture phones are common. It even shows German and Japanese armies. During mass air raids, a bridge and tall building (the Brooklyn Bridge and The Empire State Building) are completely destroyed! They're obvious models but it's still shocking to see in a movie this old. Robert

comes to his senses, marries and becomes a flyer - so it's not really a pacifist movie after all. Also with May Robson as the grandmother, Hedda Hopper as Peggy's mother, Robert Greig (butler), and Luis Alberni (cook). Holmes died while in the service in 1942, during an air collision in Canada. 1933, by the way, was the year that *The Shapes Of Things To Come* by H.G. Wells was published. This has been on TNT.

THE MIRACLE MAN (32) D Norman Z. McLeod, S Waldemar Young, Samuel Hoffenstein

In Paramount's remake of their 1919 hit, Doc (Chester Morris) leads a group of con artists in San Francisco: Helen (Sylvia Sydney), the gnarled fake cripple Frog (John Wray), and sarcastic pickpocket Harry (Ned Sparks). Before the story really gets going, Doc nearly brutally kills the dark skinned Italian Chinatown merchant/crook Nikko (Boris Karloff) for looking through a keyhole at Helen. They then go to a small town planning to get rich from the "rubes and boobs" who believe in the healing powers of the old "Patriarch" (Broadway actor Hobart Bosworth). The scene of The Frog pretending to be healed was copied exactly from the original with Lon Chaney and was also copied (by James Cagney) in *THE MAN WITH A THOUSAND FACES*. It's basically a tale of faith, and eventually, even the most hardened criminals become law abiding believers. The trouble is, the characters are much more fun to watch when they're still hateful cynics. With Virginia Bruce as a crippled woman who is really cured, and Irving Pichel as the atheist father of a crippled little boy.

MISTRESS OF ATLANTIS (32) D George Wilhelm Pabst, S Ladislaus Vajda, Hermann Oberlaender, P Seymour Nebenzahl

(*L'ATLANTIDE*) At a French Foreign Legion post de Saint-Avit (Gibb McLaughlin) tells how he came to kill Capt. Merchange (John Stuart) in flashbacks. During a camel caravan a mysterious masked Arab leads the hero to the underground lost caverns and tunnels of Atlantis, ruled by the "magnificent beautiful goddess" Queen Antinea (Brigitte METROPOLIS Helm). She plays chess, consults a black fortune teller, has a pet leopard and mesmerizes lovesick men who become delirious smoking "keef." A laughing (gay?) French servant tells a flashback inside the flashback about Antinea's mother, a blonde can-can dancer. Eventually Saint-Avit escapes with the guidance of a servant woman (black Moroccan Florelle Tela Tscha). *MISTRESS* is slow moving but features some wonderful close-ups, impressive sweeping camera work, and a giant stone Antinea head. This is the 87 min. English language version (a 39 roadshow release in America without credits). German and French versions also starred Helm but had different support players. All were filmed in Morocco and Berlin. It was remade as *SIREN OF ATLANTIS* (47) and *JOURNEY BENEATH THE DESERT* (61). Pabst is known for his classics *PANDORA'S BOX* (29) and *THE THREEPENNY OPERA* (31). Stuart was later in *BLOOD OF THE VAMPIRE* (58) and *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED* (61).

MURDER BY THE CLOCK (Fang, 31) D Edward Sloman, S Henry Myers

The conniving blonde Laura (Lilyan Tashman) tries to convince her wealthy mother-in-law's strong idiot son Philip (Irving Pichel) and/or her sculptor lover (Lester Vail) to kill her drunken husband Herbert (Walter McGrail). Then she tries to seduce the tough police detective (William "Stage" Boyd) who is determined to solve a series of murders. Meanwhile old Mrs. Endicott (Blanche Frederici from *THE CAT CREEPS*) is afraid of being buried alive, so has a loud horn installed in the huge family tomb in the private graveyard (connected to the mansion by a secret passage). Karl Struss was the cinematographer of this impressive looking, complicated Paramount feature (based on a play). Also with Martha Mattox (from *THE CAT AND THE CANARY*, *THE MONSTER WALKS...*) as the old maid, Regis Toomey as a comic relief cop and Sally O'Neil as a young Irish maid. Of the main stars, Boyd, a former NYC gang member and bootlegger, went to minor studios

and serials (THE LOST CITY) after a scandal in 33 (concerning gambling and white slavery!). He and Tashman (also in THE CAT CREEPS) both died in 35. Pichel (also in DRACULA'S DAUGHTER) worked as a director (MOST DANGEROUS GAME, DESTINATION MOON...) before being blacklisted in the 50s.

MURDER IN THE MUSEUM (Sinister, 34) D Melville Shyer, S F. B. Crosswhite, P Willis Kent

The museum of the title is a small main street freak show, in the P. T. Barnum tradition. It's run by the magician Professor Mysto (Henry B. Walthall in one of his last roles). When a city councilman who had been "shooting his mouth off about dope peddling" is assassinated there, his niece (Phyllis Barrington) and a reporter (John Harron) both investigate. In one scene, they go upstairs and drill a hole in the floor to spy on the museum below. Attractions (all suspects) include a "living" woman's head, an armless artist, a Mexican knife thrower, "kootchie" dancer Fatima, a gypsy, and Bozo the cannibal. "Elvo, The Sheep Headed Cannibal" growls but is kept hidden in a box that viewers had to look down into. This was when fake cannibal attractions were common (see the Our Gang KID FROM BORNEO short). Patrons lured in by a barker also are offered stereo views (they would have been nudes) and a Punch And Judy puppet show. The awkward Progressive roadshow feature was re-released (as FIVE DEADLY VICES) in the late 30's with footage of strippers added.

NANCY STEEL IS MISSING! (37) D George Marshall, S Hal Long, Gene Fowler, P Nunnally Johnson

Victor McLaglen, often cast as gung-ho soldiers, plays Dannie, a brawling, brooding vet who hates war and millionaire munitions manufacturer Steel (Walter Connolly). He goes to work for him as a waiter, kidnaps his baby daughter Sheila for ransom, then is sent to prison for an unrelated assault charge. While there, a Cockney inmate (Carradine) starts a riot and goes out of his way to make life hell for him. He also talks too much to his wily cellmate Prof. Sturm (Peter Lorre). A black inmate leads the others in singing the national anthem. Dannie yells "Suckers! Ha! Ha! Ha!" When released 20 years later, he collects Sheila (June Lang) who had grown up with caring foster parents (Jane Darwell and Granville Bates) claiming to be her father. He even goes back to work for the grieving Steele (as a gardener) and lives on his property with his devoted "daughter." Then the Prof. complicates matters by showing up with a scheme to collect a reward. With Robert Kent, Kane Richmond and Mary Gordon. This odd movie makes the rich arms dealer much more sympathetic than the poor war hater, but it managed to break the production code which banned kidnappers on screen (it was just after the Lindberg case conviction). Original director Otto Preminger quit during production. THE WHISTLE (21), starring William S. Hart, had a similar script.

NATION AFLAME (Silvermine, 37) D Victor Halperin, S Oliver Drake, Rex Hale, P Edward Halperin

Adams (Harry Holman), a jovial fat ex mayor who quotes P. T. Barnum, is run out of town for conning locals. Frank Sandino aka Sands (Noel Madison) convinces him to form The Avenging Angels, a secret society of night riders who boycott "foreign vultures." Eager members pay \$25 each for their initiation and black robes and hoods. The leaders also make big money on the side by renting members as strike breakers. Soon a woman's auxiliary and a youth division are formed. Adams becomes Governor, taking orders from the womanizing power mad speech making "Archangel" Sandino. Mona (Lila Lee), a young members

disapproving wife, is forced to join. The ex DA boyfriend (Douglas Walton) of Adams daughter Winnie (Norma Trelvar from THE UNHOLY THREE) investigates when a crusading newspaper editor is whipped to death. There's also a "love nest orgy" sex scandal and an assassination. Several other movies about the (thinly disguised) KKK completely ignored blacks, but this one goes a step further by blaming American hate groups - on a foreigner! The credits proudly proclaim that it was based on a story by Thomas Dixon, "author of BIRTH OF A NATION" - ! With Lee Phelps, Snub Pollard, and C. Montague Shaw. Madison (aka Noel Mason) was in COCAINE FIENDS and also directed. He was the half brother of James Mason. This is the best movie by The Halperins (WHITE ZOMBIE) I've seen. Writer Drake ended his career directing the rape western RIDE A WILD STUD (69) in Vegas. The print of this Treasure Pictures release has some jumps.

NIGHT LIFE OF THE GODS (35) D Lowell Sherman, S Barry Trivers, P Carl Laemmle Jr.

An extremely rare and forgotten Universal fantasy comedy, this was based on a novel by Thorne Smith (as were the popular TOPPER films). He hated it and legally had it suppressed. Hunter Hawky (a deadpan Alan Mowbray), is an eccentric rich scientist who invents a ring with a ray that turns people into statues. After he uses it on his boring relatives in upstate New York, he goes to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and tries it on statues of ancient gods. Soon eight revived gods including Apollo (Ray Bernard aka Crash Corrigan), Diana (Irene Ware from THE RAVEN) and Bacchus (George Hassell) are loose in Manhattan. The human to stone FX (by John Fulton) are excellent. The story starts like a sophisticated madcap comedy with lots of insults and sarcasm and switches to slapstick as Neptune (Robert Warwick from DR. X) starts a fish fight. Hawky also gets drunk and meets a leprechaun with a very foreword daughter (Florine McKinney) who claims to be 900 years old. Also with Peggy Shannon as the adoring niece, Douglas Fowley as her boyfriend, Gilbert Emery (from DRACULA'S DAUGHTER) as the butler and William "Stage" Boyd as a detective. The director (who had been a silent actor) died the same year it was produced (in 34).

NIGHT WORLD (32) DHobart Henley, S Richard Schayer, P Carl Laemmle

It's amazing how much entertainment used to be packed into some brief "minor" Hollywood "B"s. This multi character Universal drama, set in Happy's nightclub on 53rd St. in the winter, plays like a Robert Altman movie. Even the bit parts are memorable. Michael Rand (Lew Ayrers), a drunk thanks to a family scandal, meets and falls for sympathetic chorus girl Ruth (Mae Clark). Club owner Happy McDonald (Boris Karloff) is a charming but violent womanizer with mob ties who says "Never give a sucker an even break." His wife (Dorothy Revier) is having an affair with the show director (Russell Hopton) and he won't let the "philosophizer" doorman (Clarence Muse) off work to visit his wife who is dying in a hospital. Michael's selfish bitch mother (Hedda Hopper) admits that she murdered his father. George Raft is a tough gambler who wants Ruth, Jack LaRue is a hopped up killer, and a gay character manages to plug FRANKENSTEIN. Sexy dance numbers (choreographed by Busby Berkeley) concentrate on legs. The intro shows Times Square neon and marquees and actual NYC speakeasies. The score is by Alfred Newman. Also with Robert Emmett O'Connor (cop), Harry Woods (gang leader), Bert Roach (big comic drunk), and Louise Beavers. Originally 70 mins. long, it was cut to only 58 mins. before release. Clark, who had just been in FRANKENSTEIN with Karloff, is so good here that you have to wonder why she ended up in serials. Schayer also wrote TRADER HORN (31) and THE MUMMY (32).

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