

FIFTIES (1951-1960) A-C
All reviews by Michael J. Weldon

ATOMIC WAR BRIDE (SW, 60) D Veljko Bulajic, S Cesare Zavattini
 (RAT, WAR) This excellent Yugoslavian (actually Serbo/ Croatian) movie is brilliantly chilling, grim - AND humorous. Cheerful optimistic nice guy John Johnson (Antun Vrdoljak) is excited about his marriage to blonde Maria (Ewa Krzyzewska) but their wedding is interrupted by a bomb attack. Martial law is declared, radiation suits are passed out, and he and other men are ordered into the service. People in a bomb shelter are horrified while watching the live results of their country's first strike atomic missiles (equipped with cameras) on a large TV screen. (This is uncomfortably like watching Desert Storm or the hunt for Bin Laden). John is put in front of a firing squad for leading a peace march and "instigating revolt." When H bombs start to hit, the president, denying all blame, buries his head in the dirt. John finally makes it back to his apartment where Maria dies in his arms from radiation. Actual WWII ruins are used for the devastated WWII city. The dubbed b/w print (released here by Medallion) is panned and scanned. The star, also a screenwriter and director, became a member of the Croatian Parliament in the early 90s. His Polish co-star had been in ASHES AND DIAMONDS (58). The Italian scriptwriter had many credits including the story for THE BICYCLE THIEF (48) and the director (from Montenegro) had been an assistant to Fellini and DeSica. His THE DAY THAT SHOOK THE WORLD (75) was released here by AIP.

BEAT GENERATION (VSOM, 59) D Charles Haas, S Richard Matheson, Lewis Meltzer, P Albert Zugsmith

(THIS REBEL AGE) Angry sexist L. A. police detective Dave (Steve Cochran) and his partner Jake (Jackie Coogan) are after the "Aspirin Kid" rapist. They don't realize that the perp is arrogant rich Nietzsche quoting Stan (Ray Danton) who uses jive talk and poetry to fit in at a beatnik club and is busy training an eager young partner in crime (Jim Mitchum). When Dave's new wife (Fay Spain) becomes a victim and discovers she's pregnant, she consults a pro life doctor (William Schallert). Jake (who appears in drag) is married to Mary (Irish McCalla) - imagine Uncle Fester with Sheena, Queen Of The Jungle (!). 2nd billed Mamie Van Doren (who was in seven Zugsmith productions in a row) is Georgia, a near victim. Fragments of singing from Louis Armstrong (he also does the very good theme song), Cathy Crosby, and Dick Contino, and some beat poetry from Maila (Vampira!) Nurmi break up the shocking (for the time) drama. Also with Ray Anthony (Mamie's husband), Maxie Rosenbloom, Norman Grabowski, Guy Stockwell, Charles Chaplin Jr., and a young blonde Regina Carroll who dances. Zugsmith and Haas made GIRLS TOWN and THE BIG OPERATOR, both with many of the same actors, the same year.

BECAUSE THEY'RE YOUNG (60) D Paul Wendkos, S James Gunn, P Jerry Bresler
 Neil (Dick Clark), the bitter new history teacher at Harrison High, is a former football star who cares for his unhappy nephew (little Stephen Talbot from LEAVE IT TO BEAVER). Neil blames himself for the car accident that killed the kid's parents. He eventually finds happiness with the sexy secretary (Victoria Shaw) of the thick headed principal. Meanwhile, we see how the parents are to blame for how mixed up their kids are. Griff (Michael Callan) is a working class kid who goes bad. He and Warren Berlinger both want Ann (the always interesting Tuesday Weld) and cute Roberta Shore wants jock Doug McClure. Chris Robinson is the leader of a JD gang that disrupts the dance where Duane Eddy And The Rebels play "Shazam!" (a great moment) and James Darren sings. The theme song (by Eddy) was a #4 hit. With Philip Coolidge as Griff's dad and the singing voice of Bobby Rydell on the radio. The Columbia feature, based on a book by John Farris,

has been shown on AMC. Clark also has roles in *THE YOUNG DOCTORS* (61) and *THE KILLERS THREE* (68). Now he copies Regis Philbin.

BLONDE IN BONDAGE (Sinister, 57) D Robert Brandt, S Peter Bourne, P Tom Yunger

Larry (Mark Miller), a NYC reporter, is sent to Stockholm to investigate "Swedish morals." Every woman he meets seems to come on to him (two street hookers even fight over him) but he ends up trying to save Mona (Anita Thallaug), a sad bitter stripper kept strung out with morphine shots by her sinister manager/dealer Max. Max (who drives a Citroen) even makes her perform in a sideshow atmosphere tent show out of town. Hero Larry is beaten and left on railroad tracks to die but local women always help him out. Mona never actually strips on stage and her nude swim scene seems cut and or obscured by darkness. The jazzy music includes a theme song called "Shock Around The Clock." It's a rare DCA release (filmed on location, in English) but the sound on the print is pretty dodgy. Brandt later worked on Joe Sarno's *INGA*.

BLOOD CREATURE (Cinefear, 58) D Gerry De Leon, S Harry Paul Harber, P Kane W. Lynn, Eddie Romero

(*TERROR IS A MAN*) On a remote South Sea island, a panther man (Flory Carlos), surgically created by Dr. Girard (Francis Lederer) escapes and kills local natives. Ship wreck survivor Fitzgerald (Richard Derr) arrives and falls for the doctor's blonde beauty nurse wife Frances (Greta Thyssen). The creature (always covered in bandages) resembles the one in *CURSE OF FRANKENSTEIN* until its scary face is revealed. The main characters talk a lot, it rains a lot and Frances lounges in her bathing suit. With Oscar Keese as the brutal assistant Walter and Lilio Duran as servant girl Selena. Lederer starred in *RETURN OF DRACULA*, Derr in *INVISIBLE AVENGER*, and Thyssen in *THE BEAT OF BUDAPEST* all the same year. Hal Roach's Valiant first released this here, with a warning bell gimmick, then Hemisphere re-titled and re-issued it in 63. DeLeon's *MAD DOCTOR OF BLOOD ISLAND* (68) and Romero's *THE TWILIGHT PEOPLE* (71) were other Dr. Moreau inspired Filipino horror movies.

BLOODLUST! (Cinema Dementia, 59) P/D/S Ralph Brooke

Crown Int. released this low budget *MOST DANGEROUS GAME* rerelease in 61. Two young couples on a treasure hunt find themselves in "an unbelievable nightmare" on the island of Dr. Balleau (Wilton Graff). He has the bodies of his victims covered in wax for death scenes in a (big fake looking) cave. For the time shocking scenes include servants in quicksand and mutating in a vat, and a bloody crucifixion. The females are very good screamers but unintentional laughs come from rubber masks used for real faces. The visitors are Johnny (Robert Reed of *BRADY BUNCH* fame!), who towers over short blonde judo expert Betty (June Kenny from *ATTACK OF THE PUPPET PEOPLE*), Pete Garwood, and Joan Lora. Walter Brooke (later in *THE RETURN OF COUNT YORGA*) is the "alcoholic" secret lover of Balleau's wife (Lilyan Chauvin - see above review). Richard Cunha was cinematographer and Brianne Murphy was production Mgr. Graff, who looks sinister enough but is kind of boring, was in several Inner Sanctum movies and *VALLEY OF THE ZOMBIES* (46). The print is excellent.

BOP GIRL (GOES CALYPSO) (57) P/D Howard Koch, S Arnold Belgard, P Aubrey Schenck

It's rock (pop and even jazz) vs. calypso as Bob (Bobby Troup), a serious professor, takes notes and uses an applause meter at nightclubs, proving that "rock and roll is past its peak." He also falls for the sexy Jo (Judy Tyler dubbed by Marni Nixon), making his fiancée (Margo Woode) jealous. Tyler sings several numbers including "Rovin' Gal" with Johnny Olen's Bill Haley type rock band and "Calypso Boogie." The Goofers (a comic trio with a band) do one song while swinging upside-down and "Rock And Roll Until I Die" in coffins (!). The black acts are Lord Flea (the only real calypso singer here) who does several numbers with The Calypsonians, and R+B quartet The Titans who do the very impressive "It's So

Hard To Laugh” (on Vita Records, owned by Korla Pandit!). The Mary Kaye Trio does “Fools Rush In” (she also plays guitar) and Judy Harriet sings “Hard Rock Candy Baby.” During the credits Nino Tempo (from THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT) and his band do a hot honkin' sax instrumental. Lucien Littlefield (ONE FRIGHTENED NIGHT) plays the older professor. Les Baxter provided the other music for the U.A. feature. Tyler (JAILHOUSE ROCK) died in a car accident just before the release. Also see: CALYPSO HEATWAVE and CALYPSO JOE (below). These now rare Calypso features were released at the height of 50s rock and roll mania, also a time when top LP seller Harry Belafonte's "Banana Boat" went to #5. The directors all also made horror and sci fi movies.

BRIDE OF THE GORILLA (Englewood, 51) D/S Curt Siodmak, P Jack Broder
The unlovable Barney Chavez (Raymond Burr) causes the death of his South American plantation boss Van Gelder (Paul Cavanagh) so he can marry the man's neglected blonde former dancer wife (Barbara Payton). Al Long (Gisela Werbisek), an old servant, curses Barney and he becomes a “jungle demon,” actually a man (Ray “Crash” Corrigan) in an ape suit. The college educated local police commissioner (Lon Chaney Jr., good in an atypical role) and the family doctor (Tom Conway) both eventually suspect that the new groom is behind some (offscreen) killings. Siodmak, of course, had written THE WOLFGANG ten years before, but the logic of this (only 65 mins. long) Realart release (a gorilla in S. America?) is closer to a JUNGLE JIM or BOMBA movie. And like them, it's padded with lots of wild animal stock footage. One difference is that Woody Strode got to play an educated police officer instead of a native with a spear for a change.

BROOBA (Tropic Twilight, 55) D Jukichi Suzuki, P Hidemasa Nagata
In 1955 the 40'th Anniversary re-issue of BIRTH OF A NATION helped encourage another rebirth of the KKK. Hollywood offered the world Darryl Zanuck's UNTAMED (heroic South African Boers vs. savage Zulus), TARZAN'S HIDDEN JUNGLE, AFRICAN MANHUNT, WAKAMBA!, two JUNGLE JIM movies, two RAMAR OF THE JUNGLE movies, LORD OF THE JUNGLE (Bomba), and the ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN AFRICA and PANTHER GIRL OF THE CONGO serials. Kids also watched SHEENA, QUEEN OF THE JUNGLE, JUNGLE JIM and CAPTAIN SAFARI on TV. Occupied post WW2 Japan obviously needed their own version of a white supremacist jungle movie, so Daiei (with help from our State Dept.), filmed this in the L.A. County Arboretum! The Jane character (Yuko Yashio), her distinguished father, a mean trigger happy hunter, and a scared comic relief idiot, fly to Kenya. Only the airline stewardess speaks English and three characters relate flashbacks. While on safari, Brooba/Tarzan (Yoshiro Hamagushi) saves her from a (man in a suit) gorilla and she teaches him how to cook meat. Brooba, who lives in a treehouse with a Cheeta clone, also battles a huge (real) snake and rides elephants while screaming “Broooda!” Black natives go “Yama Yama” and tie the intruders to stakes. One chief pleases the foreigners by having his daughter bow on her knees to them. Lines of dozens of topless women dance. Members of a more savage tribe (with skulls on poles) flee in terror when Brooba and his lions arrive and destroy their village. Their chief (who speaks with dubbed in broken Japanese) is former football star Woodrow Wilson “Woody” Strode (then a regular on JUNGLE JIM). I wonder how many of the American citizens playing natives had been drafted into our (segregated) armed forces to serve our white officers in the Pacific? I wonder how much they were paid for BROOBA and if they had separate (but “equal”) eating and bathroom facilities on the set?

CALYPSO HEAT WAVE (57) D Fred F. Sears, S David Chandler, P Sam Katzman
Variety headlines scream “Calypso sweeps nation!” and Calypso Johnny (Johnny Desmond) is a top singing idol. An over bearing cigar chomping jukebox gangster (Michael Granger) says “Rock and roll was last year!” as he takes over the Disco record company. His sexy untalented girlfriend (SATAN IN HIGH HEELS star Meg Myles) wants to record (an idea from THE GIRL CAN'T HELP IT) and Johnny hides

out (and sings to former Little Rascal Darla Hood!) on his boat. The Hi-Los (a white vocal group with incredible voices), The Tarriers, a folk group with lead singer Alan Arkin (!), and The Treniers (also in THE GIRL CAN'T...) do two numbers each and R+B singer (later famous writer) Maya Angelou does "Run Joe." Paul Langton owns Disco, Merry Anders is his press agent girlfriend and young Joel Grey is a short employee who dances. Also with Mac Niles And The Calypsonians, George Stone, DJ Dick Whittington (still on in L.A.), and Gil Perkins. Desmond (Giovanni Desimons) was a big band singer who had 18 post war solo hits. It's from Columbia.

CALYPSO JOE (57) D/S Edward Dein, S Michael Dein, S Mildred Dein, P William F. Broidy

This one (from Allied Artists) has lots of calypso and some good dancing (by The Lester Horton Dancers). Stewardess Julie (Angie Dickinson, who looks wonderful in a slinky silver dress), has comic romantic complications with a rich Brazilian former boyfriend (Stephen Bekassy) and an egotistical TV commercial star (Edward Kemmer from SPACE PATROL). She makes stops in Rio and Trinidad and goes to nightclubs. Julie's hip talking friend, adviser and spy Joe (Herb Jeffries) sings in clubs, in an airport, and even on the plane, sometimes backed by The Calypsomaniacs (and with some wild sexy dancers). The best of his many numbers is "The Devil Is A Woman" with black nightclub dancer Lady T in a devil costume, and a pre-credit number with shouts of "Go! Go! Go!." Other songs are by Lord Flea and His Calypsonians (again), The Easy Riders (three white folk singers doing calypso standards), and The Duke Of Iron. Laurie Mitchell (QUEEN OF OUTER SPACE) is the blonde NYC roommate. Jeffries, a singer with Duke Ellington and a 40s black cowboy movie star, was the son of an Irish mother and a dark skinned Latin father. He married stripper Tempest Storm! Calypso songs were also in ROCK BABY ROCK IT! (56), UNTAMED YOUTH (sung by Mamie Van Doren!), THE UNKNOWN TERROR (with Sir Lancelot), the British ROCK AROUND THE WORLD (with Lord Flea) - all 57, and SWEET BEAT (58). The next time several studios cashed in on the same musical trend it was the twist.

CASANOVA'S BIG NIGHT (Par., 54) D Norman Z. McLeod, S Hal Kantor, Edmund Hartmann, P Paul Jones

In 18th Century Italy tailor's assistant Pippo (Bob Hope) tries to impersonate Casanova so he can score with the grocer Francesca (red haired Joan Fontaine). The actual famous lover (Vincent Price) has a swordfight (with John Hoyt), then flees his creditors. His valet Lucio (Basil Rathbone, who narrates) and Francesca force Pippo to continue his impersonation in Venice and romance Princess Elena (Audrey Dalton) so they can collect their money. The main bad guys are The Doge (Arnold Moss, familiar from many TV shows) and his assistants (John Carradine and Raymond Burr). Everybody wears wigs and Hope and Fontaine appear in drag. The funniest scene has a bearded prisoner in a dungeon named Emo (Lon Chaney Jr.) with an escape tunnel scam. At the end when Pippo is about to be decapitated, he offers an alternative ending by Bob "Orson Welles" Hope. If only the rest of the movie had the same wild spirit. The character actor cast is amazing though. Besides the four famous horror stars you can have fun seeing if you can spot Hugh Marlowe (Elena's brother), Natalie Schafer (her mother), Primo Carnera (her big guard), and Hope Emerson, Robert Hutton, Frieda Inescort, Frank Puglia, Paul Cavanagh, Henry Brandon, Douglas Fowley, Nestor Paiva, Lucien Littlefield, Fritz Feld, Skelton Knaggs, and glamour girls Joan Shawlee, Marla English, Kathryn Grant, and Arline Hunter. There's also an unidentified black servant boy. Famous top notch behind the scenes people include Edith Head, Wally Westmore and John Fulton. Hope, who may live to be 100, continued to star in movies for nearly 20 more years.

COSMIC MONSTERS (Englewood, 57) D Gilbert Gunn, S Joe Ambor, Paul Ryder, P George Maynard

(THE STRANGE WORLD OF PLANET X). Clocks stop and the TV goes off in a British pub (which closes at 10) after the opening research accident bomb blast. Freak storms and tidal waves make the news. Meanwhile, the fact that Michele (Gaby Andre), the new French computer operator assistant of Canadian scientist Gil Graham (Forrest Tucker) is a woman, seems to be a much bigger problem. A little girl finds a giant egg and meets a bearded bum in the woods who calls himself "Mr. Smith" (Martin Benson). He's really an alien who warns that a new hole in the ionosphere is causing dangerous cosmic rays that will drive people mad and "mutant spider/ants" will attack. After too much talking, there's a visual payoff as Michele is trapped in a giant spider web, a soldier's face is eaten, giant insects surround a school, and countless more attacks in the woods. The alien has a ray gun and a flying saucer, and Theremin music is heard. DCA released this 75 min. feature with THE CRAWLING EYE (also starring Tucker). It was based on a British novel and TV series. Andre was later in GOLIATH AND THE DRAGON.

CRIME WAVE (JFTH!, 54) D Andre DeToth, S Crane Wilbur, Bernard Gordon, P Bryan Foy

Steve Lacey (Gene Nelson), a short ex con who served time at San Quentin, lives with his wife Ellen (Phyllis Kirk) and works as an airline mechanic. Three newly escaped cons kill a cop during a botched gas station hold up and decide to hide out at Lacey's apartment while planning a bank job. Tough, fast talking Lt. Sims (Sterling Hayden) is determined to find them. Doc Penny (Ted DeCorsia) is the brains of the small gang and Hastings (Charles Buchinsky/Bronson) is the idiot brute with his eyes on Ellen. Lacey is a good guy who reports to his parole officer but he's "no fink." The wounded Morgan (Ned Young) goes to a disgraced ex con doctor (Jay Novello) working as a vet. The 73 min. b/w Warner release, shot on location in Glendale and L.A., has a great stark realistic look and Hayden is good as usual. Also with Timothy Carey in an early role as a menacing con, Dubb Taylor as a gas station attendant, Fritz Feld, and Hank Worden. The print is excellent. The DeRoth/Wilbur/Foy team had just done the very different HOUSE OF WAX (53). Uncredited writer Gordon was blacklisted. Star Nelson became a director.

CROSSROADS AVENGER (SW, 53) D/S Ed Wood Jr, P Lew Dubin

"Famous insurance investigator" the Tucson Kid (Tom Keene, in westerns since '29) is framed for the murder of a local sheriff. He eventually clears his good name and convinces the not-too-bright deputy (Tom Tyler, in westerns since '25) that the local boss (Lyle Talbot) is the real bad guy. His gunmen are played by Kenne Duncan, (in westerns since '35), Bud Osborne (in westerns since 1916), and Wood regular Don Nagle. One says to Tyler, "as far as making a deputy, you'd make a good spittoon cleaner." Harvey Dunn plays Zeke, a helpful "old coot," and Wood rides by as a pony express man. The 25 min. color TV pilot is all cliches, but was no worse than most cheap kid appeal western TV shows of the period. It was shot 100 % outdoors. If it had sold, Wood might have become a TV director and we may never have heard of him.

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