



**UNIVERSAL**  
100TH ANNIVERSARY

**CLASSIC  
MONSTERS**  
THE ULTIMATE COLLECTION

# UNIVERSAL PICTURES

## 100 YEARS OF CLASSIC MONSTERS

WRITTEN BY SCOTT ESSMAN



With the 100th anniversary of Universal Pictures conjuring several reflections upon the studio's wealth of content, one collection of films merits further investigation: the Universal cycle of monster pictures, among the finest cinematic achievements in American movie history. Depending on one's definition, Universal's classic horror period can be seen as running from 1925 to 1958, though more traditional viewers have cited the subset period of 1931 to 1945 as representing the studio's finest output within the genre.

Just as soon as Universal founder Carl Laemmle, a former Midwestern haberdasher, consolidated several distribution enterprises into one operation in 1912, several key elements were in place for the greatness to come to the fledgling studio in the ensuing decades. Two key players did their first work as actors at Universal in the 1910s, doing their own makeup to fully transform themselves: Lon Chaney and Jack Pierce often worked out of Universal's bullpen, "getting chosen to play Indians,

cowboys, pirates, Asian characters, or virtually any part called for on a silent short at the time.

Even after leaving Universal in 1918, Chaney returned to make the smash hit *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* at Universal in 1923. Although the grotesque titular character was a makeup landmark, *Hunchback* was never considered a horror film and Quasimodo not a horror character; that honor not bestowed upon Chaney for his next Universal film, made with him as a loaner from the newly formed MGM Studios. *The Phantom of the Opera* in 1925 was another unbridled hit, with Chaney's unmasking as the named Phantom resonating as an all-time classic moment in cinema.

Thus was set in motion the classic trademark for a studio which was nonetheless long regarded a second-tier operation. Speculation that Chaney would have returned to Universal for additional horror films in the sound era has been widely disputed. His death in 1930 ended any such possibilities, but by then, new faces in the

Universal upper echelons set the studio on a new course within horror. Carl Laemmle Jr. had been promoted to the head of production by his father as a 21st birthday present in 1927, which left him running Universal City's denizens and personally selecting such projects as *The Man Who Laughs*, a late silent hit. However, it was starting in 1931 that Universal produced two films starting a trend which defines the studio to this day. The famous films that brought to life classic storylines are the responsibility of many brilliant individuals among the craftspeople at Universal who brought the films and their characters to life were Vera West, costume designer, John P. Fulton, visual effects pioneer, and Jack Pierce, the legendary makeup artist. Each of them, in fact, was unique in that he/she worked on every one of the films from *Dracula*, in 1931, to *House of Dracula*, the last film in the cycle, in 1945. Without question, their consistency in styling and attention to detail gave those films their hallmark. With Pierce and West attending to the specific characters in the films, Fulton's role was more obscure he was tasked with developing the technology necessary to realize the films memorable "transformation" sequences and fantastic imagery. Without a doubt, West, Fulton and Pierce were all necessary to the films' construction.

Starting at Universal, costume designer Vera West worked at the studio until 1947, designing gowns" (according to many of her credits) and many of the famous monster costumes in the late 1920s, 1930s and 1940s. West headed the costume department from 1928 the same year that Pierce started as makeup department head and designed the notable costumes in *Dracula*,



*Frankenstein* and *Bride of Frankenstein*. Of this first group of films, *Bride of Frankenstein* truly gave her the opportunity to showcase her considerable talents, allegedly honed on New York's Fifth Avenue before she came to Hollywood. In addition to the iconic costumes for the Monster and the Bride, West designed Una O'Connor's lavish dress and shawl for her Minnie character, the laboratory attire for Colin Clive and Ernest Thesiger as Dr. Pretorius and the outfit worn by O.P. Heggie as the blind loner who briefly befriends the monster. West went on to design

costumes in *The Wolf Man*, *The Phantom of the Opera* and the numerous monster sequels of the late 1930s and early 1940s. She mysteriously drowned in a swimming pool at her home shortly after leaving Universal with Pierce and John P. Fulton in the spring of 1947. However, her legacy as one of the top fashion and specialty costume designers of the studio era remains intact and warrants further study by fans of the genre.

John Fulton was born in Nebraska in 1902 and began his career after his family moved to California in 1914, observing early silents in production. By the time he graduated from high school in 1920, Fulton worked as a surveyor for the Southern California Edison Company. In the 1920s, he worked as an assistant cameraman at Universal, then as a camera operator. By the dawn of sound film, he was a full-fledged cinematographer.

It is likely that Fulton learned his mastery of what was then called "trick" photography at an optical house, where he worked as a technician in the 1920s. He must have caught the attention of Carl Laemmle Jr., whose father had made him head of production at Universal in 1927. Laemmle wanted to produce film versions of the acclaimed horror novels, and *Dracula* was first on the slate. Thus, in 1931, Fulton personally established the special effects department at the studio, first creating a believable matte shot for the film. Fulton's insistence on formulating realistic effects was again put to use in 1935's *The Bride of Frankenstein*. The comically twisted use of "miniature" people in the first sequences with Dr. Pretorius offered a chance to again use mattes and opticals to help the suspension of disbelief. Fulton also worked with the

**"THE ERA OF UNIVERSAL MONSTERS REPRESENTS A TIME WHEN HORROR MOVIES WERE CINEMATIC ARTWORK, AND AUDIENCES DIDN'T NEED BLOOD AND GORE TO BE SCARED OUT OF THEIR SEATS. A TIME WHEN THE MONSTERS THEMSELVES WERE ALSO VICTIMS. THIS IS THEIR UNDYING CHARM."**

**--- MIKE HILL, CLASSIC MONSTER SCULPTOR AND ARTIST**

miniature department for the film's finale in which the Frankenstein castle is destroyed.

On May 5, 1889, Jack Pierce was born Janus Piccolous near Athens, Greece. He must have been crushed when, having moved from his first American city, Chicago, to Los Angeles to play professional baseball, he was told that he was too short. He only stood at 5'6". Not long after his dream of a career in sports faded, Janus chose to Americanize his name and married an American woman, Blanche Craven. His family subsequently rejected him, but in the first decade of the 20th century, Southern California was the land of opportunity, and 20-ish Jack Pierce quickly began his ascent in the fledgling motion picture industry. As Jack Pierce slowly forged a film career in Hollywood during the 1910s, one aspect of filmmaking especially called to him. Though he had been a stuntman and bit player on early film crews, Pierce wanted to take his performing skills to the next level.

By the early 1920s, Pierce had been working in the business for nearly 15 years, but his acting career had failed to blossom. At Universal, he formed a relationship



with Lon Chaney who was a contract player at the studio until 1918. Chaney, of course, was the master of transforming himself to suit a film role, and Pierce surely developed his trade using Chaney's tutelage, at least to some degree. From 1916 to 1924 Pierce worked diligently at Universal as a stuntman, actor and assistant director and moonlighted as an actor at Vitagraph where he created his own makeups to become many widely different roles. In his mid-30s, Pierce's acting aspirations were dashed and he turned more seriously towards makeup artistry. Jack Pierce's skills as a makeup artist were gaining due attention in the mid-1920s. Although the struggling actor, now in his mid-30s, managed to get

regular work in Hollywood, his skills as a cameraman and assistant director were more in demand than his abilities as a performer. In 1927, Pierce was hired by Universal rival Fox Pictures to create the featured makeup for *The Monkey Talks*. Pierce worked diligently to create a believable animalistic ape appearance for actor Jacques Lerner.

When that Fox film was released in the spring of 1927, many reviews took particular note of Pierce's superb makeup concept and Lerner's realistic appearance. That same year, Carl Laemmle Jr. became in charge of production at Universal and gave Pierce the position as head of the makeup department. Surely, when Carl

Laemmle Jr. took the reins as head of production at Universal Studios, the seeds for a unique genre in motion pictures were planted as the classic monster movie was born as he wished to continue to produce quality films from great horror novels such as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. Looking back on key cinematic moments from the 20th century, there is no denying the impact of these horror films on the motion picture landscape.

From 1928 to 1930, Universal attempted to make a film version of *Dracula*, ostensibly with Lon Chaney creating the title role, though the reality was

create the looks for Helen Chandler as Mina and the Count's brides. The shooting and editing process, done by John Fulton, was one of the first to include trick photography; at the beginning of the film, when the coach carrying Renfield to Dracula's castle pulls up and we see the castle atop a hill, the effect is a "glass shot" that Fulton expertly blended into the production. No real castle actually existed - the image of the castle is actually a painting on glass that Fulton filmed in such a way that it appeared to dwarf the actors.

In addition to the masterful work created for

**"I GREW UP WITH THESE MOVIES AND LOVE THEM STILL. IT'S HARD FOR ME TO ACCEPT ANY OTHER VERSIONS OF DRACULA, FRANKENSTEIN AND ALL THE REST BECAUSE TO MY MIND THE UNIVERSAL VERSIONS ARE DEFINITIVE. LIKE ALL GREAT CLASSICS, THEY STAND THE TEST OF TIME."**

**--- LEONARD MALTIN, FILM HISTORIAN AND AUTHOR**

that Chaney was under contract to MGM at the time. In 1930, Universal tried desperately to re-cast *Dracula*, eventually recruiting stage star Bela Lugosi. Lugosi was dedicated to making himself into the cinematic version of Count Dracula; Jack Pierce was relegated to designing a green greasepaint for the character (through Max Factor's organization), and likely designed the widow's peak hairstyle in concert with hairstyling department head Lily Dirigo.

Instead of working on the title character, Pierce, Dirigo, and costume designer Vera West collaborated to

these films, including Jack Pierce's landmark makeups, John P. Fulton's stunning visual effects, and the remarkable direction of filmmakers including Tod Browning, James Whale, and George Waggoner, many less heralded people worked to create the monsters' unmistakable sounds. With their ultimate dedication in place, during the fledgling sound film era of the early 1930s, many of these craftsmen were unknowingly helping to establish the groundwork of an entire era of moviemaking. While Fulton used his tricks to bring the story to life, Milton Carruth was the official editor of the film, who brought outstanding cutting to the



scenes. Note the close-ups of Lugosi cleverly edited into the proceeding. The film's sound is just as important, and its sound team was made up with recording supervisor C. Roy Hunter and sound mixer William Hedgcock with additional Foley provided by Jack Fole. Though much of *Dracula* is shot in virtual silence, with no underscoring or deluge of sound effects, Béla Lugosi's inimitable accent is perfectly captured, as well as the myriad sparse effects that do occur throughout the story. Moviegoers marveled as Hunter and Hedgcock blend the howling of wolves with Lugosi's unforgettable line, "Listen to them... children of the night."

And in point, those lines alone made Lugosi an international superstar. He is a mesmerizing Count Dracula, carefully combining his body language, hand gestures, and facial expressions. And his Hungarian accent, though one might suggest that it worked against him initially, gives the character an added menace. Dwight Frye as Renfield gives a chilling performance that goes from staid clerk to haunting lunatic and Edward Van Sloan became a memorable Van Helsing (both would reprise similar roles in *Frankenstein* later in the year).

Director Tod Browning, who had guided Lon Chaney Sr. in a series of memorable performances, lets Lugosi loose at just the right moments, such as when Van Helsing tries to show him his own reflection in the mirror. Nonetheless, Charles D. Hall's wonderful castle art direction appears stogy to most modern audiences, almost like a filmed play. As opposed to *Frankenstein's* only dated element being the lack of musical score, much of *Dracula* moves slowly.

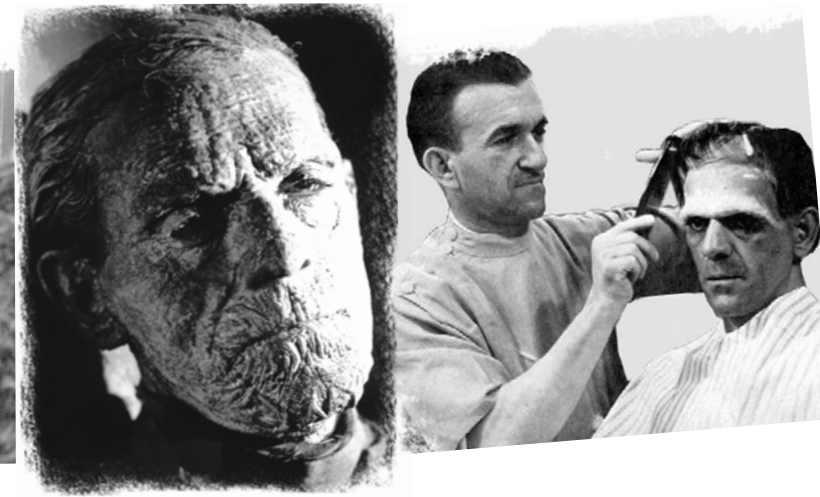
At nights after *Dracula* was filmed at Universal, a separate crew filmed a Spanish language version on the same sets, an innovative decision which opened the film up to new markets. Of course when it was released in February of 1931, *Dracula* was an unqualified smash, and the Universal brass clamored for a follow-up.

*Dracula* and *Frankenstein* were both released in 1931, only nine months apart, and without the benefit of dramatic underscore, set new standards in many moviemaking categories. *Dracula* is often criticized for its slow pacing and stogy underpinnings, but Lugosi's performance, perfected on Broadway in the late 1920s,



is indelible and haunting to this day. Surely, Jack Pierce's work as makeup department head of Universal at the time cannot be overstated, though he did not have the chance to create anything elaborate for Béla Lugosi as Count Dracula, the actor putting the kibosh on Chaney-esque makeup concepts. Pierce reserved the complete makeover for Boris Karloff on *Frankenstein*, planned just a few months after *Dracula* mandated that the studio follow it up as soon as possible. When director James Whale was brought onto the picture, Pierce had the license to test different makeups which ultimately required both Laemmle Jr. and Whale's approval.

Surely, Laemmle Jr. or "Junior Laemmle" as he was known around the lot, was responsible for many production decisions that led to Universal's early horror cycle. In addition to the aforementioned films, he was bright, visionary, and astute enough to also team Pierce



and Karloff in films at the time such as *The Black Cat* (1934), *The Raven* (1935), and *The Invisible Ray* (1936). Junior was also instrumental in other horror classics at the studio including Whale's *The Old Dark House* in 1932 and the brilliant 1936 *Dracula* sequel, *Dracula's Daughter*. One can only speculate what choices Junior would have made had he stayed on at the studio in the late 1930s and early 1940s. Alas, he never again gained control of production at a studio. He lived out his final 40 years virtually without any connection to the movie industry. In the summer of 1931, James Whale was assigned to direct *Frankenstein*, casting Boris Karloff and allowing Pierce to design a new makeup concept for the actor. For Pierce's first *Frankenstein* film — there were six eventual sequels for which he would create a monster — he described the process of assembling the character. "The wig was made with a cotton roll on the top to get the flatness and the

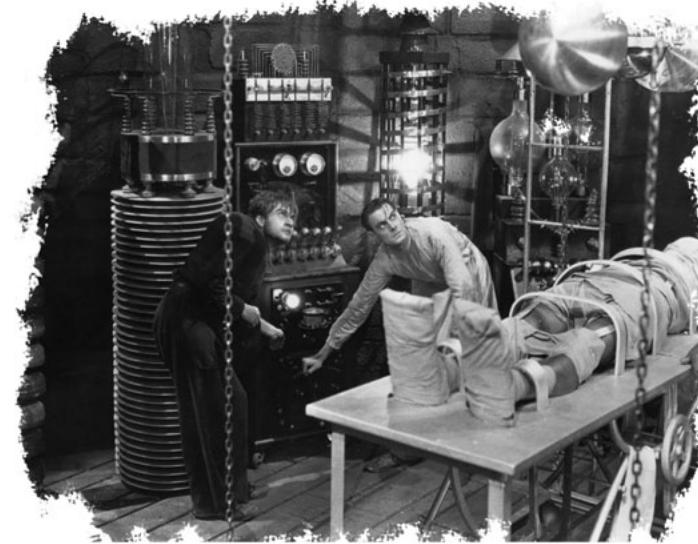
circle that protrudes out from the head," he revealed. "Instead of giving [the character] a round head, you get a different edge around the sides. The entire head was built new every day. The large gash on the top of the forehead, that's where you open the head to put the brains in there, the artificial brain. It took three hours each morning. Then the electrodes were put on his neck. The makeup was sky gray, originated by me through Max Factor's organization."

Of course the part of the monster went to the iconic Boris Karloff. Most fans know that Boris Karloff was born William Henry Pratt on November 23, 1887, in Camberwell in south London. Pratt was born into a large diplomatic family. He graduated from both Merchant Taylor and Kings College and passed the exams for the counselor service, although he had already determined to follow his passion to become an actor. When he chose to emigrate from Britain, he reportedly flipped a coin and Canada won out over Australia. After working in manual labor, he attempted stage work, with little early success. In



**"THE CLASSIC UNIVERSAL MONSTERS PROVIDED THE FIRST ARTISTIC INSPIRATION I REMEMBER AS A CHILD. IN PARTICULAR, COUNT DRACULA, FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER AND THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON CONTINUE TO RESONATE AS THE SPECTRAL APPARITIONS THAT INSPIRE ME IN MY CREATIVE PURSUITS TO THIS DAY. MY LOVE AND SYMPATHY FOR THESE MISUNDERSTOOD CREATURES ARE THE FOUNDATION FOR EVERY FORM OF CREATIVE EXPRESSION I HAVE UNDERTAKEN IN MY TWENTY-FIVE YEAR CAREER AS A CREATURE DESIGNER IN HOLLYWOOD."**

**--- MIKE ELIZALDE, ACADEMY AWARD-NOMINATED MAKEUP ARTIST**



1917, a touring stage company brought him to California where he continued to struggle in Los Angeles' limited theatrical circles. By 1918, he found work in films, even getting small parts, ironically, at Universal.

Supposedly, one of the working actors who Karloff befriended at Universal City was Lon Chaney. After doing dozens of films, James Whale supposedly saw him in the Universal commissary while he was making *Graft*. Universal had their monster. Not only was Karloff in three *Frankenstein* films as the Monster, and in *House of Frankenstein* (no longer playing the Monster, he played Dr. Niemann), he also returned in other horror favorites such as *The Old Dark House*, somewhat underappreciated in the canon of Universal films. At the time, in addition to the noted teamings with Lugosi, Karloff also appeared in Universal *The Tower of London* (1939), and even helped them with the publicity for *Abbott and Costello Meet*



*Frankenstein* even though he did not appear in the film.

Much of *Frankenstein's* suspense must be credited to editor Clarence Kolster. Many sequences in *Frankenstein* have now become classic screen moments - witness the first "creation" sequence, often repeated and imitated in countless sequels and updates, but never measuring up to Kolster's version. The same is true for his dynamic cutting in the scenes where the Monster confronts, first, little Maria by the lake, and later, his maker's bride on her wedding day. Watch for a quick cut of Karloff's shocked face watching little Maria and another quick cut of her unsure innocent face playing with her cat when she sees Karloff. After the exploits of *Frankenstein*, Kolster went on to edit Whale's *The Old Dark House* in 1932 before embarking on an active career as a picture editor in the 1930s and 1940s. By the 1950s, Kolster was less active and retired in 1958; he passed away 14 years later. Yet



in his 36 years as an editor, Kolster's impact, particularly with *Frankenstein*, is surely cemented in American popular culture.

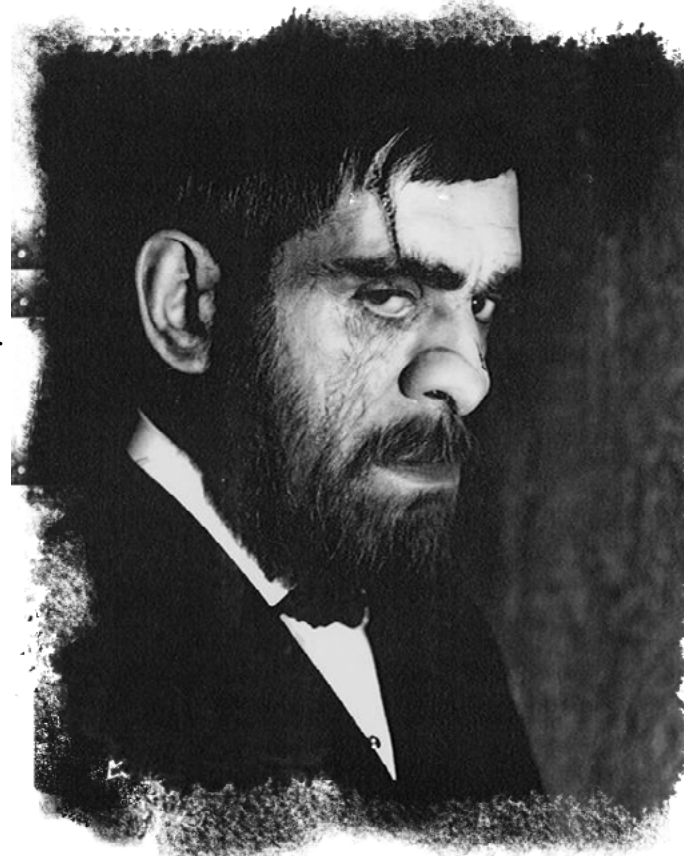
*Frankenstein* is marvelously cast, and much of that is owed to James Whale, who chose many ex-patriate Britons. In addition to Karloff, Whale selected Colin Clive to play the Monster's maker, Henry Frankenstein. It should be noted that in the Mary Shelley novel, Dr. Frankenstein's first name is Victor and his friend's name is Henry, but for reasons unknown, screenwriter John L. Balderston (adapting the stage play by Peggy Webling) switched the first names so Henry is Dr. Frankenstein and John Boles plays his friend Victor). Casting Clive was a brush stroke of genius. Clive, in his short life, embodies the spirit of the mad scientist like no other before or since, with the possible exception of his counterpart in *Metropolis*. Mae Clarke ably plays Elizabeth, Henry Frankenstein's fiancée, but might be overacting in scenes,

especially towards the latter half of the film. Van Sloan and Frye might be holdovers from *Dracula*, but they fit in well to the proceedings herein. And the other smaller supporting roles are all well-filled. Surely, *Frankenstein*, now more than eight decades onward, is still a classic on every level and eclipses *Dracula* on that level alone, while the 1931 *Dracula* might play to classic horror fans alone.

Just as compelling as Whale's direction and Pierce's makeup magic on *Frankenstein* are less heralded elements, such as costume design, art direction and cinematography. Vera West was Pierce's counterpart as Universal's longtime head of costume design and contributed the gothic period designs in the film. Charles D. Hall was the studio's head art director and built the timeless sets for the film, including the watchtower-bound laboratory set for the opening half of the film, most vividly seen during the climactic "creation" sequence. In that scene, properties person Kenneth Strickfaden

provided the amazing electrical equipment that decorates Hall's lab. Such equipment was so critical to the believability of that set, when Mel Brooks chose to recreate the scene in 1974's *Young Frankenstein*, he sought out Strickfaden and reused much of the same equipment. Hall's many sets include facades on the Universal backlot – look for the Court of Miracles exterior that still stands at Universal in 2012. His other sets built on a soundstage include the mountainous area where the Monster traps Henry and the climactic windmill set. Certainly, Hall had more to work with in *Frankenstein* than in *Dracula*, but the dynamic combination of elements makes the former film more exciting and timeless.

Of particular importance, Director of photography Arthur Edeson undershoots Karloff's creature in nearly every moment, an approach that has influenced legions of films, both within the horror genre and otherwise. In one more obscure example, witness



how Edeson shoots Karloff's first entry as the Monster as he turns around in the doorway to the castle-tower interior. In 1932, with Boris Karloff as a demonic butler character, Morgan, Universal produced James Whale's *The Old Dark House*. In this quintessential haunted house movie, the story concerns an isolated mansion visited by strangers on a rainy night. The fantastic cast also included Ernest Thesiger, Raymond Massey, Gloria Stuart, Melvyn Douglas and Charles Laughton in his first role. Karloff is the very picture of menace in this wordless performance, again in a makeup specifically designed for the film by Jack Pierce. Based on the novel "Benighted," by J.B. Priestly, the movie was adapted by R.C.

Sheriff and Benn Levy and is one of Whale's lesser known films when compared to his two *Frankenstein* outings and *The Invisible Man*. It is a rare treat for the uninitiated and one of the first of many films to come framed in one house set apart from society. Universal knew what they had with Karloff as an actor who could be thrilling and



threatening in virtually any fantastical part.

Therefore, in the same year, “Papa” Karl Freund, the director of photography from *Dracula*, was brought in to direct *The Mummy*, loosely based on the discovery of King Tutankhamen’s tomb in 1922 (as well as a remake, plot structure wise, of *Dracula*). Freund gave *The Mummy* a pacing and characterizations that makes it still a classic for horror audiences. The film does transport its viewers not only to modern Egypt, but to a time when ancient Egypt was alive and vital. While often not spoken in the same breath as *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy* deserves due attention from serious cinema students.

Boris Karloff was called upon to realize three

characters for *The Mummy*. Im-Ho-Tep as he was in ancient Egypt, his resurrected human form, Ardath Bey — who appears in most of the film as a wrinkled Egyptian prince in mortal form — and as Im-Ho-Tep, the decrepit still-mummified demon who comes to life when eager young archeologistm Ralph Norton (actor Bramwell Fletcher) reads from the Scroll of Thoth. Though the mummified Im-Ho-Tep was only on screen for a few brief moments at the outset of *The Mummy*, the impact of his appearance still remains. Freund chose to show the character first as a lifeless entity in his sarcophagus, later opening his eyes when the spell is read, and then in a horrific shot of his clay-caked hand grabbing the sacred

scroll. In fact, the full-frame image of Karloff reaching for the scroll was deleted from the final film—all that we see on screen is Im-Ho-Tep’s left hand and Fletcher’s horrified reaction and hysterical laughter as bandages trailing after the departing Mummy disappear out the door. Certainly, Karloff’s eight-hour ordeal to get into the makeup proved worthwhile, and it is likely that he only worked a day or two at most in the full Im-Ho-Tep incarnation. In a classic still, Pierce attends to Karloff, who is sitting under the

so that they wouldn’t unravel. Then after that, I had to put the burned bandages on. After that, I put the clay on. When he gets out of the sarcophagus, he starts to walk, [so I created the character so that] the bandages would break and the dust will fall off exactly as a mummy that’s been buried for 3,500 years. It was an hour and a half to take it off.”

Karloff worked the remainder of the production as Ardath Bey, a far simpler Pierce design, stalking the

**“THE CLASSIC UNIVERSAL MONSTERS CHANGED MY LIFE. JACK PIERCE’S MAKE-UP ON BORIS KARLOFF IN THE 1931 FRANKENSTEIN IS ONE OF THE MOST ICONIC IMAGES EVER. A CLOSE SECOND IS HIS MAKE-UP ON ELSA LANCHESTER FOR THE BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN WHICH IS ONE OF THE GREATEST FILMS EVER. BELA LUGOSI PERFORMANCE AS COUNT DRACULA SET THE STANDARD FOR WHAT A VAMPIRE SHOULD BE. LON CHANEY JR’S PERFORMANCE ALONG WITH JACK PIERCE’S MAKE UP MADE THE WOLF MAN A CLASSIC. THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON IS THE BEST MAN IT A MONSTER SUIT EVER. I’LL TAKE BORIS KARLOFF IN JACK PEIRCE’S MAKE-UP OVER A CG MUMMY ANY DAY. I WOULDN’T HAVE HAD MY CAREER AS A MOTION PICTURE MAKE-UP ARTIST IF THESE FILMS DIDN’T POINT THE WAY.”**

**--- RICK BAKER, SEVEN-TIME OSCAR WINNER FOR MAKEUP ARTISTRY**

massive arc lights of early studio soundstages, while Mrs. Karloff serves up some tea.

It was with the Im-Ho-Tep makeup that Jack Pierce faced his greatest challenge to date. “The complete makeup, from the top of his head to the bottom of his feet took eight hours,” Pierce explained. “The bandages on the body had to be put on. Then I had to seal them with tape

grounds on which his rest was disturbed, searching out his high priestess, Anknesenamun, perfectly played by Zita Johann. Given Karloff’s already distinct eyes and brows, Pierce accentuated those traits and added his personal cotton-collodion-fuller’s earth mixture to give Ardath Bey the wrinkled texture of a man who has awakened from a 3,700-year slumber. For his considerable





accomplishments in *The Mummy*, Pierce received a Hollywood Filmograph award – a precursor to the Oscar given to Hollywood craftspeople – Presented to him by Karloff, the statue stands as the lone official recognition of Pierce by his peers.

John Fulton's use of opticals caused Karloff's eyes to glow with a deathly white in an extreme close-up as Ardath Bey. Further uses of Fulton's techniques are visible when the Mummy meets his death at the film's end, one of the early uses of "lap dissolves." The horror film was another one for the books with every cinematographic element coming together rightly. *The Mummy*, which only later gained a reputation in the same standing as not only

*Dracula* and *Frankenstein*, but *The Wolf Man*, spawned four sequels at Universal in the 1940s to say nothing of the Stephen Sommers' films at the end of the 20th century, also at Universal, but which bore little resemblance to the 1932 classic.

In 1933, Carl Laemmle Jr. asked James Whale to direct a film version of H.G. Wells' classic novel, *The Invisible Man*. As with *Frankenstein*, Whale's casting is impeccable here. Not only was newcomer Claude Rains a perfectly demonic *Invisible Man* character, all of the smaller parts, such as Una O'Connor as the innkeeper, and the many townspeople were ideally performed. Whale might have preferred this film to *Frankenstein*, and he peaks with



the many "invisible" scenes, such as when Rains finally removes his bandages, glasses and nose on film. Even though these effects sequences were rough by modern standards, at the time, John Fulton's effects wizardry was groundbreaking and became a sensation.

Of note, until the title character is shot leaving a burning barn in the snow, we have never seen his real face. Finally, dying in bed, we get a reveal of Rains, who would

go onto many great performances, including Universal's color remake of *The Phantom of the Opera* in 1943. As with *The Mummy*, Universal would not produce sequels to *The Invisible Man* until the 1940s, after the Laemmles departed the studio. However, *The Invisible Man* is one of Universal's best original productions right along with *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *The Mummy*, and *The Wolf Man*.

Fulton's groundbreaking work on 1933's *The*

**"THESE CLASSIC FILMS ARE THE REASON I FELL IN LOVE WITH MOVIES IN THE FIRST PLACE. THEY HAVE NEVER, AND WILL NEVER, BE EQUALED IN THE MAGIC THAT THEY UNLEASHED ON US ALL. I WANTED TO LIVE INSIDE THE WORLD OF THESE FILMS. THEY ARE AS AMAZING TO ME TODAY AS THEY WERE THE FIRST TIME I LAID EYES ON THEM."**

**- ROB ZOMBIE, DIRECTOR OF HOUSE OF 1000 CORPSES, HALLOWEEN REMAKE, OTHERS**

*Invisible Man* earned him the industry nickname, "The Doctor". With the first scenes of the invisible man's disrobing, revealing the background behind him, Fulton certainly made his mark. While today the effect would be executed with relative ease, using digital technology, Fulton's clever use of mattes and live-action photography provided an astonishing pretense of invisibility for Claude Rains character. He also worked closely with the physical effects department to aid in the lifelike images of objects flying through the air on their own. Released in 1933, *The Invisible Man* would prove among the most challenging of Whale's films, with equal contributions by editor Ted Kent and Fulton. In 1934, Pierce also created Karloff's makeup in *The Black Cat*, and a year later Pierce worked with Karloff again creating his character's look in *The Raven*. In 1936, Pierce did makeup for the final Karloff/



frightening likeness which included no less than five facial stages of man-into-wolf transformation on film. Hull's performance as Dr. Glendon as an accursed man is reminiscent of the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde

Lugosi pairing at Universal, *The Invisible Ray*. In addition in 1936, Pierce created the makeup in *Dracula's Daughter*, a sequel to 1931's *Dracula*; the film was the last horror picture that the Laemmles produced. Pierce worked on James Whale's *Showboat* that year, a final bow for the father-son production team.

Back in 1932, plans were abandoned to create a film based on the legends of werewolves. Karloff was pre-cast as the title character, and Pierce went as far as designing an extensive lycanthrope makeup for him. However, the project was again put off until 1935 when it was reconfigured as *Werewolf of London* starring Henry Hull. Though Hull rejected a complete masking of his face by the makeup, Pierce devised a strategically



more so than the loup-garou stories that emanated from France, but Universal's production team, including Pierce, cinematographer Charles Stumar, and director Stuart Walker get maximum value from their brief 75-minute screen time. Hull's makeup transformations largely occurred off camera filmed on sets at Universal City. Though *Werewolf in London* is the lone man-to-wolf film made during the Laemmle era, it stood as the best of the shape-shifting films at any studio until Universal made the more elaborate production of *The Wolf Man* in 1941 \ where Lon Chaney Jr. played the cursed Larry Talbot with even greater bravado than Henry Hull.

In 1935, after a long delay, Universal launched *The Return of Frankenstein*. The title was later changed when Laemmle chose to name the picture after the most original new character in Universal horror films. Pierce brought a "bride" to the screen in the form of actress

Elsa Lanchester. Only appearing at the end of the film, and then for only a few minutes, the image of Lanchester as *The Bride of Frankenstein* remains as iconic as the 1931 visage of the first Monster. With augmented lips, eyebrows, and eyelashes, plus her amazing shock of hair — ostensibly put up in a wire cage with asymmetrical electric wisps of white — *the Bride*, with her birdlike motions and subtle chin scars, and angular shoulders manages to simultaneously attract and repel. Both beautiful and horrifying, Lanchester's brief, quirky appearance on film as the Bride is one of Pierce's simplest but most clever manifestations.

When *Bride* finally arrived in 1935, Karloff returned as the Monster, with Colin Clive reprising his role as Henry Frankenstein, and behind the camera, Whale, Fulton, West, and Pierce back in their key craftsperson roles. Cinematographer Arthur Edeson, who had

beautifully shot *Frankenstein* and *The Old Dark House*, did not return for the sequel. Those reins went to John Mescall. Of course, with Edeson's style as a template, Mescall's work on *Bride* was equally stunning, with the film being called the 41st greatest piece of cinematography in the 20th century by the American Society of Cinematographers.

*Bride's* innovative music would be created by Franz Waxman, a pioneering score with unique musical themes created for different characters and motifs throughout the film, creating a template for many Hollywood scores – not just in horror films – to come. The production design was handled by Charles D. Hall, who had so memorably designed *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925 version), *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Invisible Man* and *The Black Cat* for Universal but would strangely never again design a classic horror film. Hall's integrated sets are instantly visual icons throughout the film, shot on Universal stages and in key exteriors.

The last piece to the *Bride* puzzle was its editor. Of all the monster movie editors, none was more prolific than the aforementioned Ted J. Kent, A.C.E.. An in-house editor at Universal for over a quarter century, Kent's monster tenure spanned no fewer than five ownership changes at the studio. Though research dictates no clear reason for the change, Universal assigned Kent to James Whale's follow-up to *The Old Dark House*, which had been competently edited by Clarence Kolster. No doubt, both Universal and Whale were enamored with Kent's work, and he cut three of Whale's last several films with Universal, including *Show Boat* in 1936 and *The Road Back*

**"THE WORK OF TOD BROWNING AND JAMES WHALE WAS SO BEAUTIFUL, SO RICH IN MYTHIC AND COMPELLING STORYTELLING. I LOVED THEM AND LOVE THEM NOW. MY OLDER BROTHER AUGUST TOOK ME WITH HIM WHEN WE WENT TO THE MOVIES, AND SOMETIMES MY TWIN UNCLE CLARENCE AND EDDIE, AND THEY WERE MORE FRIGHTENED THAN I WAS. BUT I WAS FRIGHTENED."**

**--- FRANCIS FORD COPPOLA, DIRECTOR OF BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA, THE GODFATHER, APOCALYPSE NOW, MANY OTHER CLASSICS**

in 1937. But the one film that elevated Whale's reputation beyond that which his earlier films offered him was a picture he didn't even want to make.

By 1935, the idea of *Bride of Frankenstein* didn't appeal to the man who was wary of being labeled a horror director. Nonetheless, many consider Whale's long-overdue sequel to be superior to the original *Frankenstein* with its mixture of unforgettable sequences, demonic characters, and wistful comedy. From the outset, the appearance of the Minnie character, unforgettably played by Una O'Connor (seemingly reprising her Jenny role from *Invisible Man*), adds a light comic tone notably absent from the first film. Additionally, the inclusion of Ernest Thesiger as Dr. Pretorius introduces more light elements than were present in the initial movie. Arguably, these

comic enhancements elevate the film beyond the first movie, though purists often point to the serious tone throughout the 1931 film as a reason for its superiority.

The addition of Pretorius, Minnie, and certainly the hermit, played memorably by O.P. Heggie, gave *The Bride of Frankenstein* many touchstone moments. Heggie's turn as the blind man holed up in a cabin in the woods and who is kind to the Monster, remains one of the great sequences in any horror film of the period, if not all-time. Gene Hackman's hysterical spoof of the character in Mel Brooks' *Young Frankenstein* notwithstanding, the blind hermit's treatment of the Monster certainly added a pathos and likeability to the character that might have been missing from the first film.

Jack Pierce altered Karloff's makeup from the first film. Having survived the windmill fire, the Monster is now burned and his hair is singed off. Pierce would realize a new subtlety in horror film makeup, showing the Monster's burns healing and his hair growing back over the course of the picture. Combined with these crucial additions to *Bride* was the decision to allow Karloff's Monster to speak. Though in the next film, 1939's *Son of Frankenstein*, the Monster's tongue was once again silent, Karloff's utterances, however brief, also stand as classic moments in *Bride*. Of those, his query to his potential mate, "Friend?" is as heartbreaking and tragic as any moment in a like film as has been on screen. Gilbert Kurland was in as sound



recordist, though uncredited. His mastery of the craft can be heard in the many instances where Karloff's Monster speaks, giving the character a new level of pathos. For the grand finale, when Elsa Lanchester's bride comes to life, Kurland processed her shocking "hiss" when she senses that her brief life is soon ending (Lanchester based this hiss on the sound swans make when they feel threatened).

Undoubtedly, Whale's direction, however infused with a light tone (was his poking fun at his own previous work?), is steadily crisp in *Bride*, but would be his last



film in the genre. Oddly, despite's *Bride's* many artistic and commercial successes, after *Show Boat*, his days as a director exclusive to Universal were numbered. When the Laemmles were forced out of the studio they had created that same year, Whale spent the late 1930s and early 1940s also directing for Warner Brothers, MGM, and United Artists before his career suddenly and inexplicably fizzled when he was just in his early 50s.

In 1937, with the Laemmles in financial trouble, Universal changed ownership to a man named Charles Rogers. With Rogers as the new owner, Universal changed its focus, heading towards romantic comedies and dramas, but Pierce did undertake some interesting projects in the late 1930s. Pierce honed his beauty makeup skills on actresses such as Deanna Durbin and created Vincent Price's straight makeup for his first film, *Service De Luxe* in 1938. Pierce and Karloff collaborated again on 1939's *Tower of London*, a period drama. Though Karloff's bald appearance was the result of shaving his head, Pierce gave him a useful character makeup and treated his eyebrows in a decidedly groundbreaking fashion for the executioner character Mord. In the same year, *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* played on a double bill at a Los Angeles theater and broke house records, getting Universal to re-think the company's horror franchises. Universal decided to capitalize on the enterprise by quickly making *Son of Frankenstein* at the end of that year, released on January 13, 1939. Boris Karloff reprised his role as the Monster and Pierce designed and created Béla Lugosi's most unique horror character in many years with Ygor. In fact, *Ygor*, who returns in *Ghost of Frankenstein* in 1942, is widely regarded as Lugosi's finest performance since *Dracula* and one of his finest ever on film. Controlling the now-silent Monster, Ygor steals the film from more than capable co-stars Basil Rathbone (as the actual "son" of Dr. Henry Frankenstein), Lionel Atwill (as Inspector Krogh), and even Karloff himself. One other star of the film is the film's gothic interior sets, again created on stage at Universal. Designed by Jack Otterson, director Rowland V. Lee shoots the sets with keen eye and



makes them a "character" in the film. Frankenstein's lab is rethought as a platform high above a sulfur pit, and Ted Kent intercuts carefully selected shots in this environment. One of the best scenes in the film, done in near silence, occurs when Karloff, in shaggy vest, confronts Rathbone only to realize that he is Henry's son. Karloff being directed by Lee to play the scene in total silence also manages to express his displeasure with being a Monster.

These moments are a suitable capstone to Karloff's trilogy of performances as the creature.

With the dawning of a new decade came Lon Chaney Jr., Universal's new Karloff—a versatile actor who could enliven their many monster franchises. From 1941 to 1944, Chaney Jr. would appear in sequels to *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *The Mummy*, and *The Wolf Man*, in addition to making several original films. Jack Pierce's first collaboration with Chaney Jr. was *Man-Made Monster* (1941), in which they presented a man invulnerable to electricity. Then, following the success of *The Wolf Man* later that year, Chaney Jr. was cast in three Mummy sequels playing the doomed Egyptian prince Kharis: *The Mummy's Tomb* (1942), *The Mummy's Ghost* (1944) and *The Mummy's Curse* (1944). All featured the actor in a heavily modified version of the original Mummy makeup that Pierce had fashioned for Karloff. Chaney was fairly unrecognizable in his Mummy incarnations. In fact, despite his objection to using appliances, Pierce undoubtedly created full facial masks for several of Chaney Jr.'s Mummy appearances. Pierce also worked with Chaney Jr. on both *Ghost of Frankenstein* (1942) as the Monster and *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man* (1943). However, it is no secret that Chaney Jr. and Pierce had their disagreements. The actor, whose father Pierce had idolized and called both friend and mentor, was intolerant of the long hours and crude methodology that Pierce undertook in realizing the monster characters. If the makeup for *The Wolf Man* was uncomfortable—supposedly hot, itchy and malodorous—Chaney Jr. was no more pleased with his Mummy makeup and costume. Pierce, in all his attention



to detail, insisted on applying the necessary “muck,” as Chaney called it, on a daily basis while the actor waited, as patiently as he could. He once signed a photo to Pierce as follows: “To the greatest goddamned sadist in the world.” - L.C.

The forties came with more than just Jack Pierce and Lon Chaney Jr. Tom Tyler wore a subtly horrific Pierce makeup in *The Mummy's Hand*, and in 1941, and in the same year, Pierce also created a full-blown wolf character for Lon Chaney Jr. in *The Wolf Man*. Though *The Wolf Man* was intended as a B picture, the film created Universal's fifth legendary horror character after *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *the Mummy* and *the Invisible Man*. All four aforementioned

films spun-off 1940s sequels, but *The Wolf Man* resonated above nearly all of them as its attention to detail and quality surpassed everything the studio had created since the early 1930s. *The Wolf Man* was directed by George Waggner, edited by Ted J. Kent, and to create the now-familiar howling and barking of the *Wolf Man*, Bernard B. Brown was on board as sound director, with Joe Lapis listed as sound technician. In several pioneering scenes, the *Wolf Man* prowls the moors, attacking victims before succumbing to a silver-tipped cane by the hand of his father. Due in equal parts to Lon Chaney Jr.'s spellbinding performance as Lawrence Talbot/the *Wolf Man*, Jack Pierce's brilliant makeup, George Waggner's direction,



and the effortless blending of the production design, cinematography, score, editing, and sound, these scenes help to rank *The Wolf Man* among Universal's all-time best films.

With *The Wolf Man*, Kent, along with major contributions by studio mainstays Pierce and Fulton, created the film's showpiece “transformation” sequences which became standard fare in the many spin-offs that followed. Witness the lap dissolves that Kent and Fulton implemented for transformations from man to wolf, and especially, in the film's tragic climax, from wolf back to man. Kent also cleverly orchestrated the noted end of the film where Claude Rains unknowingly beats his own son with a silver-tipped cane, later realizing that it was his own flesh and blood that he killed. In their tussle, an especially marked cut to a close shot of Chaney Jr. as the *Wolf Man* struggling with Rains makes for one of the film's most fascinating moments.

During pre-production of *The Wolf Man*, Jack Pierce, disappointed with his reduced makeup for Henry Hull in *Werewolf of London*, worked diligently to create the makeup for the title character. Pierce pulled out all the stops, making his version of the *Wolf Man* a model for the numerous werewolves that have since come to the screen. “I don't use masks or any appliances whatsoever,” proclaimed Jack Pierce about the development of his famous monster characters. The one exception to Pierce's rule occurred with his striking initial realization of *The Wolf Man* in 1941. “The only appliances I used was the nose that looks like a wolf's nose. There you either put on a rubber nose or model the nose every day, which would have taken too long. It took 2 1/2 hours to apply this makeup,” Pierce said, indicating the head, chest piece and hands. “I put all of the hair on a little row at a time. After the hair is on, you curl it, then singe it, burn it, to look like an animal that's been out in the woods. It had

to be done every morning.” Pierce’s other key characters in *The Wolf Man* included 1940s “scream queen” Evelyn Ankers as Gwen Conliffe, Claude Rains as Sir John Talbot, Béla Lugosi as Béla the gypsy, and Maria Ouspenskaya as Maleva, the gypsy woman. As a result of Pierce’s methods, audiences were treated to the perfectionism in *The Wolf Man* and that film’s success ushered in a slew of additional Universal genre films – albeit many sequels – in the early-to-mid 1940s.

**“MY FAVORITE MONSTER FROM THE UNIVERSAL CLASSIC MONSTERS IS THE WOLF MAN. MY FOLKS TOOK ME TO SEE IT ON ITS SECOND RELEASE. I MUST HAVE BEEN AROUND TWELVE AT THE TIME. I WAS EXCITED AND FRIGHTENED AND I REMEMBER WATCHING IT WITH MY FINGERS OVER MY EYES BUT I REALLY LOVED IT.”**

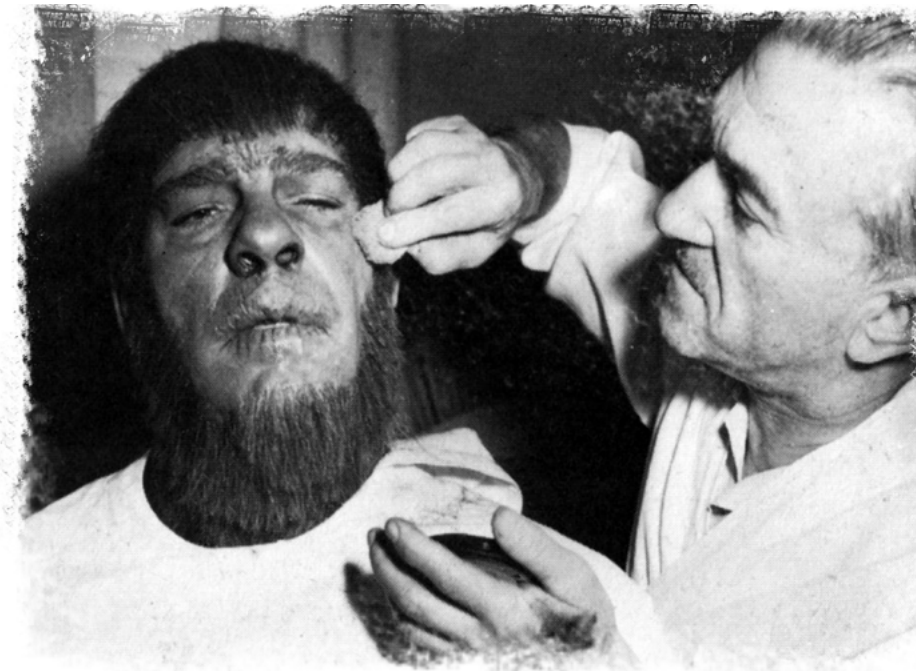
**--- BOB BURNS, LEGENDARY FILM COLLECTOR, HISTORIAN, AUTHOR, PRODUCER, AND FAN**

To mix it up a little in 1941, Bud Abbott and Lou Costello brought their successful stage partnership to the screen with Universal’s *Buck Privates*, beginning a decade-long run as Universal’s top stars. Soon afterwards, they began planning a “horror comedy,” pairing themselves with Pierce’s celebrated monster characters. A year later in 1942, *Ghost of Frankenstein* featured Lon Chaney Jr. as the Monster, marking the first time that Pierce had made an actor other than Boris Karloff into the *Frankenstein* Monster. A sequel to *The Wolf Man* and *Ghost of Frankenstein*, came 1943’s *Frankenstein Meets the Wolf*

*Man* that featured Béla Lugosi as the Monster (Lugosi was said to have turned down the role of the Monster back in 1931 before it was offered to Boris Karloff) and Lon Chaney Jr. as the now resurrected Lawrence Talbot who searches for a release from his curse using Dr. Frankenstein’s secrets of life and death.

Then, in 1943, for the lone color film of the classic monster era, Universal produced its second version of Gaston Leroux’s *The Phantom of the Opera*, following

their 1925 landmark film with Lon Chaney. For this new film, shot on the same interior opera set which housed the 1925 film and still standing to this day on Stage 28 at Universal, Pierce created a brutally scarred makeup for Claude Rains. The makeup was reportedly toned down at the request of Pierce’s friend and director Arthur Lubin. One can only speculate how Pierce’s original conception looked, but shooting in color certainly played a role as Pierce’s scarring work was multiple colors and horrifying enough in its toned-down version. Rains played the Phantom quite capably, his intense English accent moving



through the production. If there is a criticism, it has long been held that this film was more opera and less Phantom, though its chandelier sequence and climax were definitely genre standouts. While Chaney Sr.’s 1925 performance relied on silence and menace, Rains’ take on the Phantom was more overt and challenging. Considering Rains’ bravura acting with several set piece scenes, this Phantom must be selected among the other top films in Universal’s cycle.

In 1943, Chaney Jr. played *Son of Dracula*, for which Pierce created a subtle age makeup. Amazingly,

this gave Chaney Jr. a crack at every film franchise at the studio except *The Invisible Man*. Again in 1943, Pierce created a rare female horror character when he designed and applied the makeup for *Captive Wild Woman* and its two sequels in the succeeding years. And also in 1943, echoing Chaney’s makeup in *Man Made Monster*, Pierce made David Bruce into *The Mad Ghoul*.

With Chaney Jr. and his stuntman/double/stand-in Eddie Parker Universal created *The Mummy’s Ghost* and the final Mummy sequel, *The Mummy’s Curse* in 1944. Also that year, with Chaney Jr. and Lugosi’s incarnations as the Monster less than ideal, producer Paul Malvern cast Western movie heavy Glenn Strange as the Monster for *House of Frankenstein* when Pierce

showed him a test makeup. Strange is the fourth and final actor to wear the Pierce makeup as the Monster. An all-out monster rally, *House of Frankenstein* not only featured Strange as the Monster in a the aforementioned newly designed Pierce makeup, but presented John Carradine as Count Dracula, and Lon Chaney doing his third turn as *The Wolf Man*. In 1945, Jack Pierce created Abbott and Costello’s makeup in *The Naughty Nineties*, featuring the classic ‘Who’s on First?’ routine; it is his first screen credit for makeup on an Abbott and Costello picture



though he had worked with them through the 1940s. In fact, the three men had hoped to bring together Pierce's monsters with Abbott and Costello's unmistakable humor. But the project never came to fruition at the time. Also in 1945, Carmen Dirigo, daughter of the first hairstyling department head at any film studio, Lily Dirigo, when she worked at Universal in the late 1920s and early 1930s, was hired as the new hairstyling department head at Universal. She was able to work on the final horror films at Universal during that time, including both *House* films.

In point, in 1945, for *House of Dracula*, the last significant horror film of the classic Universal era, Pierce created his familiar Wolf Man and Frankenstein's Monster characters, in addition to creating dynamic character makeups for John Carradine and Onslow Stevens. But the handwriting was on the wall. By 1946, Universal had

merged with International Pictures, and plans were made to completely overhaul the studio. In April, 1947, after working as department head of makeup for 19 years, and having never signed a contract with the studio, Jack Pierce, along with Vera West and longtime special effects supervisor John P. Fulton, were let go from Universal Pictures. Bud Westmore would become Universal's new makeup department head, utilizing the new foam rubber technology to which Pierce had not adapted. The classic monster movie era, in effect, was over.

Yet, just as they had returned countless times in their sequels, the monsters lived again. By 1946, Universal began preparing *The Brain of Frankenstein*, a horror-comedy project featuring Abbott and Costello under the direction of Charles T. Barton, featuring many of Universal's top horror characters. The project was renamed *Abbott and*



*Costello Meet Frankenstein* and released in 1948. For the film, Bud Westmore used foam rubber appliances sculpted by Chris Mueller for Glenn Strange (in his third and last stint as the Frankenstein Monster, made up by Jack Kevan) and Lon Chaney Jr. (in his last Universal appearance as the Wolf Man, made up by Emile LaVigne). *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein* was a box office smash and spawned several sequels pairing the comedy team with classic monsters, the last being *Abbott and Costello Meet the Mummy*. With the dawn of the atomic age in the 1950s, it seemed that the classic monsters were a

thing of the past, but not before two final bows, both cut by the ubiquitous Ted Kent. Sensing a moviegoing trend to compete with the unwelcome advent of national television in 1954, Universal released Jack Arnold's *Creature From the Black Lagoon* in 3-D. Arnold's handling of the underwater footage of the striking Gill Man was an unprecedented look at a movie monster, and the creature took its place as one of Universal's famous faces. The monster's face was designed by Millicent Patrick, the suit conceived by Jack Kevan, and was sculpted by Chris Mueller. The best scene in the film is the swimming sequence when Julia Adams, replete in a white bathing suit, swims topside while the underwater Gill Man (Ricou Browning) parallels her crawl stroke just out of view under her.

Yes, there was Ricou Browning for the underwater scenes and suit performers on land who followed in *Revenge of the Creature* and *Creature Walks Among Us*,

**"IT'S AMAZING HOW MANY PEOPLE HAVE COME TO ME OVER THE YEARS EXPRESSING AN AFFECTION FOR THAT MOVIE. GROWING UP, MY FATHER ALWAYS TOLD US HE WROTE IT BECAUSE WE NEEDED A NEW STATION WAGON. NOW THAT I KNOW THE MOVIE WELL, I SEE HOW ICONIC AND TIMELESS IT IS IN THE HORROR GENRE. OBVIOUSLY MY DAD HAD MORE ON HIS MIND THAN A NEW CAR."**

**--- GARY ROSS, DIRECTOR OF PLEASANTVILLE, SEABISCUIT, THE HUNGER GAMES, AND MANY OTHERS**



notably Tom Hennesy and Don Megowan, but for millions of “creature feature” fans, Benjamin F. Chapman Jr. was the “reel” Gill Man from the original 1954 classic, *Creature from the Black Lagoon*. On February 21, 2008 he sadly passed away in Hawaii at the age of 79.

Certainly, the Bay Area native had the advantage of being a player on the Universal lot in the early 1950s and his 6’5” size and relative youth – in his late 20s –



made him ideal for the part of the creature who stalks North American invaders of his native Amazonian lagoon in the beloved film, originally filmed in 3D. But Chapman brought a grace and several nuances to the performance of the first Gill Man, which made him one of the great icons in the Universal Studios canon of classic monsters. In preparations for the creation of the titular character, Universal’s makeup department, headed by Bud Westmore, cast Chapman’s and Browning’s various body parts to fabricate the Gill Man costume, which was realized in foam rubber. Different sections such as torso, arms and legs, were taken off of impressions of Chapman’s body, then the team, including stalwarts such as Tom Case and Jack Kevan, created individual sections. Chapman was suited up on a daily basis by Bob Dawn for his exterior scenes, filmed on Universal’s backlot. Footage

of Browning in a duplicate suit was achieved on location in Florida. Though Chapman never played the Gill Man in the sequels, he did reprise the creature for the Colgate Comedy Hour’s TV episode with Abbott and Costello, a program in which they comedy duo first encounters Glenn Strange as the Frankenstein Monster, then reveals the Gill Man to the public for the first time anywhere. Though only three films all in, the *Creature from the Black Lagoon* series rates with any of Universal’s monsters from the 1930s and 1940s for sheer fan adulation.

Chapman had long been retired from acting but made regular personal appearances at conventions and autograph signings over the years. He maintained a Web site, [the-reelgillman.com](http://the-reelgillman.com), and was the focus of fans’ love since magazines such as *Famous Monsters of Filmland* made the character

popular again for new generations of fans in the 1960s and 1970s. Always good natured and happy to talk about his 1953-1954 Gill Man performances, Chapman will be fondly remembered by fans of the original film and all who had met him since. Magazines such as *Famous Monsters of Filmland* helped keep the Universal monsters alive for new generations in the 1960s and 1970s through publishing detailed accounts of the film and presenting rarely seen

photographs. The films also lived on syndicated television stations nationwide in a time before home video, which has now obviously brought the films and characters to a new level for contemporary fans.

In the 1970s-1980s, Universal Studios was acknowledged as a pioneer of horror cinema by industry publications and fans alike. In its 100th anniversary in 2012, Universal’s key horror films deserve new appreciation and respect by both horror and non-genre fans alike. Great names who worked behind-the-scenes

deserve the accolades of their on-screen counterparts in these triumphant works. Thus, one must highly regard directors such as Tod Browning, James Whale, Karl Freund, Rowland V. Lee, George Waggoner, Jack Arnold and others named herein, plus the many craftspeople who worked on the films,

along with the famous faces of Béla Lugosi, Boris Karloff, Claude Rains, Henry Hull, Lon Chaney Jr. and many more. Though Universal has continually produced additional horror films, the originals from their classic 1930s to the 1950s will always have a special place in cinema history.

**“GILL-MAN WAS MY FAVE. HE SWAM UNDERNEATH THE UNAWARE HEROINE, MATCHING HER STROKES IN THE WATER. IT WAS THE SEXIEST THING ON FILM, EXCEPT FOR TARZAN AND JANE DOING IT EARLIER, IN THE FIRST MGM TARZAN FILM IN THE 30S. ALSO, THE MONSTER SUIT WAS JUST GREAT FOR SOMETHING OUT OF THE 50S.”**

**--- TOM HOLLAND, DIRECTOR OF FRIGHT NIGHT, CHILD’S PLAY, THINNER, AND MANY MORE**



**"HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR THE CHILDHOOD DISCOVERY OF DRACULA, THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER, AND ALL OF THE OTHER CLASSIC UNIVERSAL MONSTERS, I MIGHT NEVER HAVE DISCOVERED THE KINDRED SPIRITS THAT KINDLED MY PASSIONS AND FASCINATIONS THAT HAVE LED TO A CAREER IN THE DARK ART OF HORROR CINEMA. AN ENTIRE CINEMATIC VOCABULARY WAS CREATED IN THE FASHIONING OF THOSE FILMS, AND THE JOY OF BRINGING THOSE DARK DREAMS TO LIFE DURING MY WAKING HOURS WAS A JOYOUS REVELATION."**

**--- MICK GARRIS, DIRECTOR OF TELEVISION HORROR FILMS THE SHINING, THE STAND, AND MANY OTHERS, PLUS FEATURES INCLUDING SLEEPWALKERS AND MANY OTHER HORROR FILMS**