

# "Sight"

## The Glassy Eye

By Dave Meile

Friday, 11 p.m. and 3 a.m. USA ch. 17

"Scared to Death," (1947) Bela Lugosi, Angelo Rossitto

This film is so bizarre that it's tough deciding where to start. First, it's in color, which is weird because it's a really cheap film and it's made by a minor studio (Golden Gate Productions). "Scared to Death" also is narrated by a corpse. Every 20 minutes or so the camera zooms in on a woman's corpse. A voiceover says something like "it was the most horrifying moment of my life." Then the camera zooms back, music resembling someone playing a saw intrudes, and we're subjected to another flashback of what happened on that fateful day.

Bela Lugosi (who looks like he's been into the cognac or the morphine) arrives with dwarf actor Angelo Rossitto in tow and introduces him as "my leetle fiend Indigo." Bela is there to see his brother, George Zucco (the great bad guy Moriarty in the Sherlock Holmes films). Joyce Compson is a woman (and a corpse) who keeps getting scared when she sees a green Kresge's Halloween mask hovering in the window. Famous dumb guy/comedian Nat Pendleton (who played the dumb ambulance driver in the Dr. Kildare movies) displays versatility as a dumb guy/gumshoe. I've seen this film 10 times and something happens at the end that wraps up the whole Halloween mask mystery... I just haven't been able to figure out what it is. A morgue attendant in the film says a woman was "literally scared to death," but I'm not even sure that happened. "Scared to Death" is perplexing, incoherent, confusing, ludicrous and definitely for fans of Lugosi, Angelo Rossitto (who was in "Freaks" (1932) and last year's "Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome") and shoe-string-budget films.

Saturday, 1 p.m. USA ch. 17 "I Walked with a Zombie" (1943) Frances Dee, Darby Jones

Harlan Ellison, while scathingly decrying the pervasiveness of "knife-kill" and "splatter movies," once wrote of the films of Val Lewton, "As a more reliable barometer of the centigrades to which artful horror can chill a filmgoer, I find no equal to what Lewton produced in merely eight films between 1942 and 1946, with budgets so ludicrous, achievements so startling and studio intentions so base that they stand as some sort of landmark for everyone venturing into the genre, whether a John Carpenter or a Brian DePalma."



"I Walked with a Zombie," like producer Val Lewton's other RKO projects like the original "Cat People" and "The Leopard Man," are intelligent, visually stunning and provocative. Many of his films deal with themes like the power of reason, reality, religion, philosophy, obsessions with death and a general feeling of despair.

The film, based loosely on "Jane Eyre," takes place in the West Indies on the island of San Sebastian where Betsy (Frances Dee), a nurse, is sent to care for an invalid woman thought to be suffering from a rare form of mental paralysis. There Betsy and everyone on the island become involved in bizarre voodoo rituals. It may sound trite, but it's not. Thanks to great direction by acclaimed gothic-film director Jacques Tourneur, there are some unforgettable scenes such as the long tracking shots that accompany two women as they trek through the cane fields to a voodoo ceremony. They encounter the incredible Darby Jones as a huge zombie who guards the gates of Houmfort where the ceremonies take place. "I Walked with a Zombie," despite its title, is a classic that should not be missed.

There are some good books about Val Lewton's inimitable filmmaking vision at Love Library; for example, "Val Lewton: The Reality of Terror" by Joel E. Siegal and "Dreams of Darkness" by J.P. Telotte. See Monday's entry for another great Val Lewton film.

Saturday, 2 p.m. KPTM, ch. 9 "Dr. Blood's Coffin" (1961-British) Kieron Moore

Writer Jerry Juran decides to save himself some time (and imagination) by simply naming the mad-doctor character Dr. Blood. However, this guy is more than just mad, he's also not very bright. He thinks that you can kill people, remove their hearts, place them in a dead body and whammo, the dead body will come to life again. Unfortunately, as writer Bill Warren points out, putting a functioning heart in a dead body full of decaying veins and arteries would just spray blood around and make a big mess.

See GLASSY EYE on 8

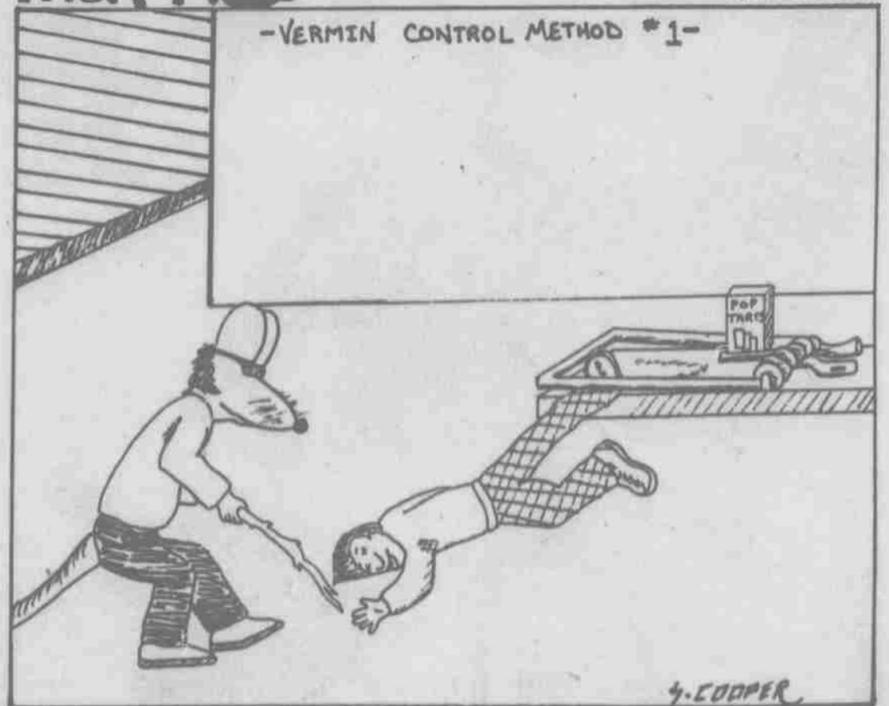
# The Funny Page

MY WORLD presents "HORSE OPERA" Tom Lauder/Diversions



## PACK RATS

Stonie Cooper/Diversions



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