Despite a modicum of traditional graveyard philandering, "The Mad Doctor" is ill-served by its lurid thick-ear title. Indeed the British title of "A Date With Destiny" seems far more dignified and appropriate. The change was presumably made to accommodate the film's booking as a top feature on the big Odeon circuit, which would not normally play anything that sounded like a cheap horror film. Well mounted, handsomely photographed and written with wit and style the film is much in the genre of Rathbone's previous "Love from a Stranger", and his later (though less interesting) "Fingers at the Window". Though quite leisurely in its general approach, its moments of physical menace, there is no padding in the film, and it holds up rather well - mainly due to the performance of Rathbone. In one of his biggest and best roles at that time (he had been rather wasted since his superb cameo villainy in "Captain Blood" and "David Copperfield" in the mid-30's), he gives a superb polished performance, making the most of every line, effortlessly mixing urbanity, menace and even a hint of pathos. It's a real pleasure to sit back and watch him wrap up the whole show, like Joseph Cotten in "In a Lonely Place". However, it is the women, who in this case are not all of the inappropriately interfering males and wildly empty-headed females who flutter around him, that his wife-murdering career seems perfectly justified, and one is somehow rooting for him to get away with it! The print is in excellent condition, although one key but very brief (about 4 seconds) shot is missing at the end. To describe it now would be to give away the plot, but let me add that since it was done, not too convincingly, with back projection - and since the surrounding shots remain - there is never any doubt about what happens, and its loss is not catastrophic. The locations are a bit sketchy, but more than make up for it as a thriller, although a trigger-happy cop who blazes away at a suspect's back without even a warning shot does carry a certain amount of contemporary realism. A long sequence in the public library is reasonably well done too. On the whole, a good and enjoyable example of a vanished genre.

*DOCTOR CYCLOPS* (Paramount 1939, rel: 1940) Directed by Ernest B. Schoedsack Produced by Dale Van Every; Screenplay: Tom Kilpatrick; Camera: Henry Sharp, Winton Hoch; Musical: Ernst Toch; Editor: Gerard Carbonara, Albert Malotte; 7 reels

With Albert Dekker, Janice Logan, Thomas Coley, Charles Halton, Victor Kilian, Frank Yacrishi, Frank Reicher, Paul Fix.

In a year overrun with the cloying ministrations of Dr. Kildare and Dr. Christian, the medical malpractices of Dr. Cyclops somewhat restored the balance. An interesting stunt shocker, part of the big new horror cycle that began with "Son of Frankenstein", it also marked Ernest B. Schoedsack's return to the field after some empty and wasted years in which he had descended to items like Jack Holt's "Outlaws of the Orient". Also, made in Technicolor, "Dr. Cyclops" is now available only in black and white - but the result is not too serious. The preponderence of greens in the original made the jungle settings pleasing, and the ruddy ray scenes effective, but for the most part the color also made everything so cheerful that it robbed the plot of menace or suspense, and it was helped in this by a jolly, frolicking musical score which was almost Disney-like in its concentration on the novelty of the situation, rather than its horror. (Talking about Disney - the store sequence, which should have been a genuine nightmare since, if it is the doll-people's first experience with the outside world in their new size, is much inferior to Disney's store and forest sequences in "Snow White".) Schoedsack, who prepared everything so carefully and mathematically in "Kong", is here bland and casual to a fault: everything starts too early, continues on an even keel, and finishes with only the slightest buildup to a climax. There is not even the - one would think essential and unavoidable - subjective view of the giant Cyclops from the doll people's point of view. The trick work is largely a matter of a few mattes and a lot of back projection (which is well done, even less apparent in color), but lacking real imagination, and especially lacking the presence of Willis O'Brien. Albert Dekker, then a relative newcomer, has a few of the standard mad doctor lines, but lacks the verve of an Atwill or a Zucco. Thomas Coley is beneath contempt (no wonder one heard no more of him!) and Janice Logan is pretty and ladylike, but a rank amateur in the bosom-heaving screams that constantly call for the expertise of a Fay Wray. Charles Halton plays professionally enough, and his death scene is a genuinely chilling moment. While disappointing and a wasted opportunity, the film - rarely seen outside TV - is still diverting hokum.