Although labelled as test footage from "Creation/Genesis", an ambitious and unrealised O'Brien project, its content would seem to suggest that it was actually from a somewhat different planned film. Nothing is known about it, but a fairly reliable estimated date would seem to be about 1928. The stop motion model work is actually cruder than in the earlier "The Lost World", but it is understandable that test shots wouldn't be given the same care as the finished product. One matte/glass shot - with a typically graceful O'Brien bird flying past - is especially polished however, and as good as much later work as "Nights on the Path". Joe Yeager, a veteran animator at Universal, is the only human involved, and is the main clue in our assessment of a 1928 date. We hope you'll bear with us in running this reel without music; it so ideally belongs in this particular programme, but it wasn't worth bringing down all our musical equipment just for a reel of footage. In any case, we're sure that you can mentally supply a Max Steiner score for the various monster shots.

"MONSTERS WE HAVE KNOWN AND LOVED" (Wolper Productions-United Artists TW, 1954) Produced by Deeper Lewis; Script by Deeper Lewis, Al Raarup, Jack Haley jr. Narrated by Joseph Cotton. 3 reels.

This entry in tv's "Hollywood and the Stars" is actually one of the weakest and least of the group. Already seriously hindered by being denied access to the most important group of horror films - the Universals of the 30's - it compounds its crimes by falsifying its narration and its "history" to the footage at hand, resulting in omissions, generalisations and distortions, to say nothing of several downright and quite inexcusable errors. Furthermore, Joseph Cotton's narration sounds even more bored and disinterested then ever, its sparse information is pulled out as quickly as possible. But forget all the others, its failure to even recognise that many genuine classics have emerged from the genre, and its condescending, semi-humorous approach. The footage itself is still good to look at, ranging from the silent German fantasies through the 30's and 40's, the science-fiction and special effects cycles, and spiralling rapidly downhill via the American International epics. There are one or two fairly rare shots - some off-screen Chaney material, and a delightful little exchange between Boris and Bela - and a good coverage of such names as Karloff, Lugosi, Atwill, Zucco, Carradine, Chaney, Lorre et al, if not in their most representative roles.

"THE MAD DOCTOR" (Walt Disney-United Artists, 1932) 1 reel

Made at the height of the early 30's Hollywood horror cycle, this Disney spoof of films like "Doctor X" shows the old master at his most uninhibited satiric best. Actually its grim nightmare images of skeletons and fanged bats, and a scienuent who blithely cuts Pluto in half, all undiluted by color, must really have given the horrors to infants back in 32, especially since they were then not inured to horror by constant casual exposure to it on television. When presented to the British censors, the film was promptly classified as "Adults Only", with no children admitted under any circumstances - almost certainly the only time that has happened in Britain with a cartoon, though one or two of the grimmer 2-reel comedies (such as Columbia's "Sweet Spirits of Night") rated similar classification. Disney, shocked and embarrassed, withdrew the film from British release, modified the American prints, and soon withdrew it in the US too. It never turned up again, and its existence was thereafter denied - or brushed aside - by the Disney people. Even allowing for the fact that Disney's most creative work has often been the satiric and/or horrific highlights of films like "Snow White" and "Pinocchio", he never again went in for such a concentrated emphasis on sheer horror to the almost total exclusion of comedy content.

- intermission -

"THE GOBLI" (Gemant-British, 1933) Directed by T. Hayes Hunter Screenplay by Rupert Downing from the play and novel by Dr. Frank King and Leonard Hines; Camera: Gunther Krampf; edited by Ian Dalrymple; 7 reels With Boris Karloff, Sir Cedric Hardwicke, Ernest Thesiger, Ralph Richardson, Dorothy Hyson, Anthony Bushell, Kathleen Harrison, Harold Ruth, D.A. Clarke-Smith, Jack Raina.

For years, "The Gobli", while perhaps not the most in-demand, has been the most elusive and the most mysterious of all the "lost" horror films. Elusive because it has never shown up once for reissue since its original release, and even in England disappeared from distribution within about five years. No prints are known to have survived in this hemisphere, and even the tattered and unpredictable print held in England by Bank (as of ten years ago) is probably, by now, no
more. Every few years, as with the complete "Greed", someone would announce that a print had been found - and invariably of course it turned out to be the much later "The Mad Ghoul". Mysterious - because little was ever known about the film, only one or two stills seemed to have survived, and most of the original reviews seemed to cancel one another out, as though not one had been written by anybody who had seen the film. One acclaimed it as a triumph for British studios, matching Hollywood in horror, while another dismissed it as silly and amateurish. One referred to Karloff playing "a kindly old gentleman" in his first sympathetic role; yet another said that for the first time Karloff wore no makeup - both statements being spectacularly at odds with the facts. Karloff himself tended to minimize the film, but not too much; he appears (albeit to tremendous effect) only in the opening two and closing two reels - and his dialogue is limited to death-bed mutterings and oaths in the opening reel. For the rest, he is little more than a bohey-man - and coming right on top of some of his best and most literate thrillers for Universal, it must have seemed rather a let-down for him.

Happily however, the film is a very pleasant surprise. It was made right after "The Old Dark House" and "The Mummy", and is a rather interesting combination of themes and moods from both films. As the first major British effort to cash in on the big horror cycle, it is quite remarkably effective, and in terms of production values, sets and mood, generally up to the average, if not the best, Hollywood standards of the day. It may be no "The Old Dark House" - but a comparison with "Murders in the Rue Morgue" would not be inapt. The sets are handsome, the Gothic mood well sustained by the atmospheric camerawork of Gunther Krampf, and there is even an effective musical score.

In terms of plot, the film is admittedly dangerously close to farce at times. Were it not for the Karloff presence, it might well taxer more in the direction of "Thark" than "The Old Dark House". In fact, in the early 60's it was remade as a knockabout comedy, impure and simple, by some of the "Carry On" gang. Titled "What a Carve Up!" in England, it was known over here as "No Place Like Homicide". Its distribution was sparse, and mainly served to make it even more difficult to get at the original! Even the original has its comedy elements, and some of the performances are so overdrawn as to suggest that the actors were having a little fun on their own, but for the most part Karloff manages to keep any levity in check. His makeup is still genuinely horrific, and there are several grim closeups; it's never quite explained why a scholarly if eccentric English gentleman should look and walk like the Frankenstein monster, but that is perhaps the only loose end. Despite all the red herrings and the casual intermingle of the occult, the supernatural and the plain melodramatic, the plot (within the boundaries of its genre) is quite a good one, with satisfying if not entirely convincing explanations made in the last reel.

Its cast, of course, is a beauty, with Karloff and Thesiger, fresh from "The Old Dark House", stealing all the honors. Despite the limitations of his role, Karloff still manages to extract a large extent of audience sympathy from it. With many of you having seen "The Old Dark House" for the first time this past week, there may be a tendency to expect a lot from "The Ghoul". Be warned that it is certainly no classic re-discovered - but as a piece of sheer horror horror, it survives surprisingly well, especially since T. Hayes Hunter - a prolific but rather undistinguished director of the 20's and 30's in both Britain and Hollywood, and incidentally Griffith's successor at Biograph - is definitely not in James Whale's class! So expect little - and you may be quite spectacularly surprised.

We were about to apologize for the print and say that it isn't the best print in the world - but actually, since it's probably the only one, it really is the best! Some lines of dialogue are clipped by splices - though not drastically and one brief scene seems to be missing, but it's much through censorship as the we and tear on the old age. We were forced to minimize that missing scene by making the real change at that point. The sound is low, a serious defeat in the opening reel since Karloff speaks only in whispers, but we've tried to remedy this by hooking up to an additional amplifier. This gives us all the volume we need, but unfortunately also magnifies every sound and pop of surface noise on the track. But it can't be helped, and after a few minutes of experimentation, we should find the right compromise in level and tone.

--- William K. Everson ---