"THE LOST WORLD" (A First National-Watterson B. Rothacker Production, 1925) Directed by Harry Hoyt; Research & Technical Direction, Willis O'Brien; Camera, Arthur Edeson; Chief Technician, Fred Jackson; script by Marion Fairfax from the novel by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle; 5 reels


Music arranged and played by STUART ODERN

Although the plot and structure of "The Lost World" was repeated verbatim in "King Kong", and has now been absorbed into the standard repertoire of the horror film, it was not initially exploited as such. When it opened at the Astor on a two-a-day basis in 1925, despite reviews raving about its technical accomplishments, it was advertised primarily as a spectacular romantic adventure. "They sought a virgin world, and even there found LOVE!" was one typical catchline.

Although there have been rumors that all or part of the missing footage has been found, no complete print of the film is positively known to exist, and all we have today is this specially edited version. However, although a good deal is missing -- including two lesser leading ladies (Alma Bennett and Virginia Brown Faire) -- the bulk of the special effects/monster footage has been retained, so this version is quite representative of the original. (By the entrance doors I am attaching a detailed breakdown of the missing material for those interested enough to wade through it). "The Lost World" was O'Brien's first venture into the feature field, after having experimented with special effects and stop-motion monsters in a number of shorts.

While his work here is relatively simple in that there is a minimum of involvement between monsters and humans in the same scene (there was rather more in "King Kong", and a great deal more in the most polished of all of his films, "Mighty Joe Young"), the monsters themselves need no apologies. They move smoothly, look convincing in themselves (although the "sets" are palpably miniature) and above all have the personality traits and implicit sense of humor that marked all of O'Brien's monsters, and distinguished them so readily from the skinflint, realistic, yet never quite so human monsters of O'Brien's disciple and successor, Ray Harryhausen. Most of the print is a fine multi-toned original, with a few missing scenes duped and inserted in black-and-white; the qualitative difference in those few moments shows quite clearly why all silent films should be seen in original sharp toned prints, and not -- as is too open the case -- via dupes.

--- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION ---

"MADAM SATAN" ( MGM, 1930) Produced and directed by Cecil B. deMille Scenario by Jeanie MacPherson, Elsie Janis and Gladys Unger from a story by Jeanie MacPherson; Camera, Harold Rosson; 12 reels

With Roland Young, Kay Johnson, Reginald Denny, Lillian Roth, Elsa Petersen, Boyd Irwin, Wallace MacDonald, Allen Lane, Wilfrid Lucas, Martha Sleeper, Julianne Johnston, Mary Carlisle, Mary McAllister, Katherine deMille, Theodore Kosloff, Abe Lyman and his Band.

First, an important warning! The first third of the film, though it is amusing and may well come to life before an audience, is quite incredibly arch. DeMille, trying to step into Lubitsch's shoes, finds them much too big. Instead of ballet shoes he is wearing clogs, and one element that this part of the film has to have to work -- namely grace -- it just doesn't have. But don't feel you have been lured or betrayed; once aboard the Zeppelin, the whole pace speeds up; and it becomes the kind of wild, vulgar, spectacular, no-holds-barred frolic that all deMille films are supposed to be and almost are. Whether it is legitimately a "thriller" is something else again; its plot is a wild melange that incorporates elements from "Die Fledermaus" and "The Gua rdsman", and it could equally logically be termed sex farce, operetta, musical or fantasy. James Whale wouldn't be ashamed of it -- nor would Georges Melies.

Certainly the climactic sequence of the runaway, collapsing dirigible is authentic "thriller" -- but by that time you'll all have had too much fun, and too much exposure to modern-art culture of 1930, to want to quibble. The costumes, the girls, the dialogue, all are quite dazzling. The one element of the film that comes off with genuine dignity and that hasn't dated one whit is the serene and lovely performance by Kay Johnson, who also has one of the screen's greatest curtain-exit lines: "I'll make him so sick of vice he'll scream for decency!" Incidentally, DeMille's voice can be heard as the radio announcer in the closing reel. Culturally, this may be one of the worst films we've played -- but it's certainly also one of the most entertaining and most unique. --- Wk. K. Eversen --