Although presented as part of our ongoing triple-bill examinations of the "B" movie, tonight's program is rather more accurately a celebration of three genres - the Western, The Mystery and the Horror Film. None of them are strictly speaking "B" movies except in length.

**The Cisco Kid** (Fox, 1931) Directed by Irving Cummings; Scenario by Alfred A. Cohn suggested by an original story by O.Henry; Camera, Barney McGill; 60 mins.


So successful was Fox's first Cisco Kid adventure, "In Old Arizona" (1929) that Baxter was immediately put into a follow-up. Almost at the last minute Fox discovered to their chagrin that they didn't have the rights to the character for more than the one film. Ingeniously, and perhaps outrageously, they merely called the second film "The Arizona Kid", though it was to all intents and purposes exactly the same character. By 1931, they had reassigned the rights to the character, and retained them through the early 40's. "The Cisco Kid" is by far the best of the early ones, partly because it is the shortest. There is no padding, no excess of dialogue, no nevously prolonging of the usual Spanish accent. True, there is not very much actual action - but the story itself keeps on the move, and when there is some traditional action, it is punctuated both by music and first-class photography. A night chase near the beginning is beautifully done, and a short street shoot-out near the end is given added excitement by intelligent camera mobility. In fact the camera is mobile throughout, unusual both for the period and for the normally rather dull director, Irving Cummings. It's an extremely rare film, and a very pleasant one, with the Baxter/Lowe team working extremely well together. Casar Romero, Gilbert Roland (best of all) and Duncan Renaldo were later Cisco Kids, but Baxter was the biggest star to play the role. (And also the busiest - he starred in six films in 1931!) It's an elaborate production, and a particularly good print which, while a copy, shows off the richness of the old print at its best.

--- 5 minute intermission ---

**The Frog** (Wilcox-General Film Distributors, 1939) Produced by Herbert Wilcox; Directed by Jack Raymond; Screenplay by Ian Hay and Gerald Elliott from the novel "The Fellowship of the Frog" by Edgar Wallace and the play by Ian Hay; Camera, Fredric A. Terris; released in the U.S. in 1939 by 20th Century Fox; 60 mins.


Edgar Wallace is right up there with Dumas, Victor Hugo and Gane Grey as one of the most oft-adapted authors, and the British were especially prolific in adapting his thrillers to the screen. Most of them however were slick but talkative, and not very exciting. "The Frog" is very much of an exception; not only is it unusually faithful to the original Wallace novel, but it moves like lightning - though in all fairness it must be admitted that this latter virtue is partially an artificial one, since the film was cut for U.S. release and that cut version is all that is now available. However, the cutting has been done intelligently, mainly in the earlier portions of the film, and dialogue makes it very clear that it has been cut and what has transpired. This has the effect of tightening up the action and bringing all the melodramatic highlights closer together. It has a marvellous Fritz Lang/Dr Mabuse kind of plot, with all the tricks and devices one expects of a master criminal. Also, it is rather obvious from the outset just who the hidden villain is - but the climax does have one real dramatic surprise up its sleeve as a compensation. (The story was also used as the basis for one of the best of the silent American Pathé serials, and that same surprise was used as the solution to the climax of the last chapter but one. It's a very streamlined production for a British film of that era, the leads are full of old favorites, and if some of Gordon McLeod as an American audience, it's of small matter. They were only there in the first place because Barker had a reputation as a comedian as well as a character actor, and his fellows would have been disappointed without the odd joke. By the way, a sequel, "The Return of the Frog", wasn't nearly as good.

--- 5 minute intermission ---

**Man Made Monster** (Universal, 1941) Directed by George Waggner; screenplay by Joseph West from an original story by Sid Schwartz, E. Respess and Lenore Coffee; Camera, Russell Bresdall; 80 mins.


I wish there was more space to devote to this little gem, but anyone interested in further reading on the subject can refer to my longer essay on the film in Citadel Press' "Classics of the Horror Films". It certainly isn't a classic, but it is a model of how to make this kind of thing cheaply, succinctly, and above all without any old-fashioned horror elements. With Leo Driscoll's "White Man", it disappointed at the time because it was one of the first of Universal's smaller horror films, and seemed lacking in spectacle or atmosphere. It certainly is too clean, modern and streamlined to be frightening - but what seemed to be merely clichés in 1941 is now, 40 years later, transformed into tradition and folklore. What a pleasure it is to hear Lionel Atwill utter all those deathless lines and speeches with such relish, and it is perhaps just as well that shortage of space precludes my quoting some of them and spoiling the fun for you.

Initially Universal used the film as the top half of a double bill with "Horror Island"; in England it was retitled "The Electric Man", and on a later US release it picked up another title, "The Atomic Monster".

--- William K. Everson ---

Program finishes 10.50  (Hopefully, a short discussion period will precede the screening, this dependent on my plane getting in on time from New Mexico).