A program of (Fun) Halloween Horror (Program ends approx. 10:12; no discussion)

THE MAN ON THE TRAIN (a Star Playhouse series, 1952) Directed by Robert Florey; Produced by David Miven; Screenplay by John and Gwen Bagri; Camera, George Dickson; Assistant Director, John Pommer; 25 mins.
With: David Miven (William Langford); Alan Napier (John Dwerrhouse); Lowell Gilmore (Jeff Pender); Rhys Williams (Raikes); Jean Willers (Allison); Gordon Richards (Grimes); Walter Kingsford (Sir Charles); Reginald Sheffield (Inspector Blaney); Alex Fraser (Conductor).

Obviously there isn't too much time in a half-hour tv show (especially one devoted to being a star showcase) to build up atmosphere or tension; but luckily this pleasant old chestnut (the screenplay is credited, but not the original source material) doesn't really need them. It's fairly obvious what the surprise denouement will be, and it's the plot details that make it fascinating ... plus the obvious care with lighting and camera angles that shows that Florey, as always, is trying to deliver more than the budget would normally call for. It's a neat little thriller, with an enjoyable cast of old favorites.

THE MAD GHOUL (Universal, 1943) Directed by James Hogan; Assoc. Producer, Ben Pivar; Screenplay by Brenda Weissberg and Paul Gangelin from an original story by Hans Kraly; Camera, Milton Krasner; Musical Director, Hans J. Salter; 65 mins.
With: David Bruce (Ted Allison); George Zucco (Dr. Morris); Evelyn Ankers (Isabel Lewis); Turhan Bey (Eric Iversen); Robert Armstrong (McClure); Rose Hobart (Della Elliot); Milburn Stone (Giff. Macklin); Charles McGraw (Detective Garrity); Andrew Tombes (Mr. Egan); Addison Richards (Gavigan); Gus Glassmire (nurse); Gene O'Donnell (radio announcer); William Ruhl, Lew Kelly (stage hands); Cyril Ring, Bess Flowers (members of audience).

Although their great days of horror were certainly behind them by now, 1943 was nevertheless the last year for Universal's Grand Guignol merchants; even though by now their horror films were both more economical and more standardised, they still had a certain amount of style and originality. 1943 after all was also the year of Robert Siodmak's beautifully done 'Son of Dracula' though a steady decline, and by 1946 the studio was down to rock bottom with 'The Spider Woman Strikes Back', 'The Wolf Man of Washington', interest in the genre that it sold two late ones away to other studios - 'The Bruise Man to PRC, and 'The Creeper' to Fox. 'The Mad Ghoul' is certainly one of the lesser Universal horrors (it was designed only as a double-bill support to go with 'Son of Dracula') but it does have a kind of perverse charm, and is clearly made to order for a Halloween night showing such as this one. For its period, it is a remarkably grisly story - one hates to think of the blood that would be shed in putting this same story on the screen today - yet at the same time, it is remarkably tasteful too in having the camera focus on something else when the bodies, like a carved up George Zucco, on top form with a singularly painless and medically useless expression lets his eyes blase. It's the only time he thinks of something particularly revolting, and has some classic throw-away lines which we won't spoil by quoting. A British reviewer summed it all up rather succinctly when he remarked that "to be a ghoul is disconcerting enough, but to be a mad ghoul must be the height of personal embarrassment". Actually the title is a bit of a misnomer, since both Zucco and David Bruce are ghouls, and technically neither of them are mad. Zucco is merely over-enthusiastic, and David Bruce, as his victim, is understandably a bit on the morose side. The cast is unusually strong, though the (unnecessary) dubbing for Evelyn Ankers is too obvious, and her simple repertoire to make her the big star the script claims she is. Silly, certainly not atmospheric enough to be terrifying, quite harmless by today's standards, 'The Mad Ghoul' is certainly highly enjoyable in its own wild and woolly way. Incidentally, it was director James Hogan's last film, and he died while it was in production.

--- TEN MINUTE INTERMISSION ---

THE RAVEN (Universal, 1935) Directed by Louis Friedlander (Low Landers); Assoc. Producer, David Diamond; Screenplay by David Bohm suggested by themes from Edgar Allan Poe; Camera, Charles Stumar; Musical score, Clifton Vaughan, Heinz Reisenfeld and X. Franke Harling; "Raven" dance staged by Theodore Kosloff; 61 mins.
With: Boris Karloff (Pateman); Bela Lugosi (Dr. Voldin); Irene Ware (Jean Thatcher); Samuel S. Hinds (Judge Thatcher); Lester Matthews (Jerry Halden); Spencer Charters (Colonel Grant); Inez Courtney (Mary Burns); Ian Wolfe ("Pinky"); Maidel Turner (Harriet Grant); Arthur Hoyt (Chapman); Jonathan Hale (Dr. Cook); Walter Miller (Dr. Hemingway); Raine Bennett (Poe); Bud Osborne (police man); Al Ferguson (cook); Cyril Thornton (servant).

What can one say about a "Raven" that hasn't already been said by Arthur Lennig in his Lugosi biography, in my own book "Classics of the Horror Film", by Bruns and Weaver in "Universal Horrors", by Carlos Clarens and others writers on the horror films? We've never played it here before, and since it is now released to the videotape market, further big-screen outings are unlikely, and it's just too enjoyable a film - albeit often more like a serial than a horror film - not to be revived occasionally. The second of Universal's three major Karloff/Lugosi teamings, it was the only one to give Lugosi the bigger role and he more than makes the most of it, going over the top with a role and script that offers more classic dialogue per foot than any of the other Universal horrors; an absolute joy to listen to. (Despite the size of his role, Lugosi with a $5000 salary was getting exactly half what Karloff got). Handsomely mounted if carelessly written - though there are the germ's of some serious horror themes semi-buried here - it moves too fast for its absurdities to be too obvious. (And it also stresses how dramatically Universal's levels fell between this and "The Mad Ghoul") ...W.K.Everson