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The Dartmouth Film Society

THE INVISIBLE MAN (1933)

Jack Griffin	CLAUDE RAINS
Flora Cranley	GLORIA STUART
Doctor Kemp	WILLIAM HARRIGAN
Doctor Cranley	HENRY TRAVERS
Mrs. Hall	UNA O'CONNOR
Mr. Hall	FORRESTER HARVEY
Chief of Police	HOLMES HERBERT
Jaffers	E.E. CLIVE
Chief of Detectives	DUDLEY DIGGES
Inspector Bird	HARRY STUBBS
Inspector Lane	DONALD STUART
Milly	MERLE TOTTENHAM
Reporter	DWIGHT FRYE

Screenplay: R. C. SHERRIFF, from the novel by H. G. WELLS. Photography: ARTHUR EDE-SON. Art Direction: CHARLES D. HALL. Special Effects: JOHN P. FULTON. Editor: TED KENT. Producer: CHARLES LAEMMLE, JR. Presented by CARL LAEMMLE. Released November, 1933 by UNIVERSAL PICTURES.

Directed by JAMES WHALE

In 1933, Director James Whale was the pride of Universal Studios, the home of the horror film. Universal was turning out appealingly well-made films which made moviegoers tingle with expectations of being frightened out of their wits.

Whale had just brought out the best known and granddaddy of the horror picture, FRANKENSTEIN, and was riding on a crest of popularity at the home-office. FRANKENSTEIN was grossing fantastically and now more subjects were sought as suitable horror film properties.

Naturally, science-fiction writer H. G. Wells' short stories and novels were rampant with filmic opportunities, or so it seemed. Universal bought the rights to The Invisible Man for \$10,000 and then had countless attempts made at putting it into script form. Scriptwriters ranged from John Huston and Preston Sturges to R. C. Sheriff and Philip Wylie, who eventually collaborated on the final script, with Sheriff getting all the credit.

Scripting problems were minor compared to casting difficulties. Naturally, after his success as the Monster in FRANKENSTEIN it was hoped that Boris Karloff would undertake the role of the voice whose owner is never seen until the last scene; however, he was not so modest as to accept such a lead. As a result, Claude Rains (who, incidentally, lived near Hanover until his death last year) assumed the role and did an amazing job for an actor who had to rely entirely on his voice and pantomime for achieving any kind of effect at all.

THE INVISIBLE MAN does not appear as much a horror film today as it does a black comedy. This is due mainly to director Whale's off-beat sense of fun. The best example of this is found in the scenes between Griffin and Kemp before the latter dies. There is an underlying sense of possible terror throughout but just as it nearly breaks the surface, Whale injects his over-riding feeling of the ridiculous to relieve the situation. The result is highly effective, making THE INVISIVLE MAN a totally enjoyable film with great escapist potential.

The film's real star, like the Invisible Man, is never seen; special effects were executed with great dexterity by John P. Fulton. In his book, An Illustrated History of the Horror Film, Carlos Clarens writes:

...the special trick effects of John P. Fulton would have dazzled pioneer trickster Melies. The scene where Griffin first flaunts his invisibility is the kind of cinema magic that paralyzes disbelief and sets the most skeptical audience wondering. It was primarily achieved by the combination of double exposure and masked negative, but there were other elaborate effects in the picture which required more complex techniques.

THE OLD FASHIONED WAY (1934)

The Great McGonigle	W. C. FIELDS
Wally Livingston	JOE MORRISON
Albert Pepperday	BABY LeROY
Betty McGonigle	JUDITH ALLEN
Cleopatra Pepperday	JAN DUGGAN
Gump	TAMMANY YOUNG
Mrs. Wendelschaffer	NORA CECIL
Dick Bronson	JACK MULHALL
Bartley Newville	SAMUEL ETHRIDGE
Agatha Sprague	RUTH MARION
Sheriff from Barnesville	RICHARD CARLE

Cast of "The Drunkard":

Drover Stevens	LARRY GRENIER
Mary Wilson	RUTH MARION
Landlord (of saloon)	WILLIAM BLATCHFORD
William Dowton	JOE MORRISON
Mr. Arden Rencelaw	JEFFREY WILLIAMS
Squire Cribbs	W. C. FIELDS
Edward Middleton (Drunkard)	SAMUEL ETHRIDGE
Agnes Dowton	JUDITH ALLEN
The Minister	DONALD BROWN
The Villager	TOM MILLER

Screenplay: GARNETT WESTON, JACK CUNNINGHAM, from a story by CHARLES BOGLE (W. C. FIELDS). Photography: BENJAMIN REYNOLDS. Lyrics and Music: MACK GORDON and HARRY REVEL. Producer: WILLIAM LeBARON. Released by PARAMOUNT PICTURES.

Directed by WILLIAM BEAUDINE

THE OLD FASHIONED WAY is a piece of cinematic nonsense that is 100% enjoyment due to the fantastic talents of W. C. Fields, who, the credits tell us, wrote the book (under his pseudonym Charles Bogle). There is very little plot to contend with, so all that one can and should do is sit back and take all of the fun it has to offer with open arms.

One of the real treats of this film, aside from the boot Fields gives Baby LeRoy, is the exhibition of his juggling act and the casual yet masterful dexterity of its execution. From the time that the performance begins at the Opera House, one is seeing an old turn of the century play being performed the way it was then. It is amazing to see how little musical theatre has progressed since that time and also astonishing to see how far drama has improved.

All of the performances of the film are beautiful and the characters, down to the minor ones, are all sketched in fully and provide a rich backdrop for all of Fields tricks. There are

the usual Fields gimmicks, such as the feud with a child (which is wisely short) and the buttering up of the local, rich widow. It is the latter relationship that produces the stronger moments of the film. Jan Duggan's song of picking up sea-shells, the loss of youth and Willy are strongly reminiscent of Beatrice Lillie's humor and Miss Duggan pulls it off with almost as much flair as the fantastic Miss Lillie.

The only real flaw of the film is in the weakness of the ending. Somehow, it is not completely satisfactory to see Betty going off to happiness and Fields going on as a con man. A stronger finale would have been in order.

THE OLD FASHIONED WAY is a rarely seen film that is considered to be among the top films ever made by Fields. A review from the New York Times of 1934 agrees and shows the vast popularity that was felt for "he of the bulbous nose" at that time:

The vital statistics of this film could be imprisoned comfortably in a newspaper column. But historians, soiling their beards in moldy newspaper archives a century from now, would filch precious little on the history of the abdominal guffaw from that. What would it tell of the emotion that filled those of us who saw Mr. Fields boot Baby LeRoy in the rear with a pure classic motion that liberated the life-time frustrations of all males everywhere.

Mr. Fields' talents are continually being rediscovered. When he marches soberly in front of a camera, arranges his remarkably bulbous nose in the proper focus and gets down to the business of the day, he immediately becomes so devastating in his innocent onslaught on the funnybone that his helpless auditors are forced to conclude that so droll and resourceful a comic never faced an audience before.

--Jeffrey McFarland

Howard Hawks' RIO BRAVO, a classic American western, will be shown Saturday, December 9th at 10:30 p.m. and Sunday, December 10th at 4 p.m.