

Short Review: “Young Frankenstein” (1974) by Dr. John L. Flynn



Young Frankenstein (1974). Venture Films and Crossbow Productions, b/w, 108 min.

Director: Mel Brooks. Producer: Michael Gruskoff. Screenwriters: Brooks and Gene Wilder. Cast: Gene Wilder, Peter Boyle, Marty Feldman, Madeline Kahn, Cloris Leachman, and Gene Hackman.

Directed by Mel Brooks, with the same inspired zaniness of his “Blazing Saddles” (1974), this brilliant pastiche spoofed many of the familiar clichés of the horror/sci-fi genre while, at the same time, paying homage to the traditional forms which over the many decades had become classic. Baron Beauford von Frankenstein has finally passed away, willing his estate to his great grandson (Wilder). When Dr. Frederick Frankenstein (pronounced FRONK-kon-steen) arrives in the fantasy land of Transylvania, he resumes the work of his ancestor. Aided by hunchbacked Igor, pronounced EYE-gore (Feldman), and sexy assistant Inga (Garr), Frankenstein creates yet another monster (Boyle). When the creature goes on its predictable rampage, it leaves Frankenstein's castle to terrorize the local populace. But the rampage is played more for comedy than terror, as the

monster is charmed by a little girl and played fool by a blind man (Hackman). Eventually, the Creature dons a top hat and tails to perform “Puttin' on the Ritz” (like Fred Astaire) for the townspeople, and hooks up with the mad doctor’s girlfriend Elizabeth (Kahn). A dozen or so orgasms later, Elizabeth has exchanged her brainy boyfriend for the Creature, Frankenstein settles for Inga, and the two couples live happily ever after. The movie succeeds as both a clever parody and a loving tribute of the genre. Gene Wilder, who also co-wrote the script with Brooks, plays his mad doctor as a tribute to not only Colin Clive but also Basil Rathbone, Boris Karloff and Peter Cushing. Marty Feldman sends up Dwight Frye with his Igor, Kenneth Mars spoofs Lionel Atwill as Inspector Kempt, and Peter Boyle provides an inspired performance as the monster. Brooks would later spoof Hitchcock (in “High Anxiety,” 1977), George Lucas (in “Spaceballs,” 1987) and Robin Hood (in “Men in Tights,” 1993), but he would never eclipse the success and sheer comic genius of his horror spoof, “Young Frankenstein.” Fans of the genre will recognize Kenneth Strickfadden's original equipment from Universal's “Frankenstein” series.

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