

WARREN
MAGAZINE



FAMOUS
MONSTERS
#135

\$1.25 58380-8

FAMOUS MONSTERS OF FILMLAND

PDC
JULY 1977



GODZILLA vs BIONIC MONSTER!

SEE PAGE 16

you'll shrink in terror as **CALIGULA MEETS DRACULA**

by eric l. hoffman

TWILIGHT ZONE JR! That's what Saturday morning TV might be called. A special time & place. Often dealing with youngsters or characters trapped in some sort of fantastic situation or lost world, Saturday morning now has a new type of ... HERO?!

The bad guys are having their innings thanks to Dr. Shrinker, a mad scientist doing his evil deeds for THE KROFFT SUPER-SHOW with undisguised glee.

Dr. Shrinker is a totally evil character who has set up bad housekeeping on an uncharted island. Self-styled "The World's Greatest Scientist," Shrinker has invented the Shrinking Ray, which reduces people to 6" ... or less. The good (?) Doctor has already tried it out on 3 teenagers, whose plane has crashed on the isle. Welcoming the youngsters with open arms (and a smile borrowed from the JAWS shark), Dr. Shrinker gives his "guests" the world's most obvious (and fastest) weight-loss treatment.

Shrinker intends to use his "Shrinkies" as living proof of his genius ... as well as part of a package deal to sell his ray to the highest bidder ... or for one million dollars, whichever comes first.

The "Shrinkies" escape, however, and when not coping with the outside (to them) perils of the island, try to keep out of the clutches of Shrinker and his assistant, Hu-

go, hoping to find a way to get back to normal size.

In the role of the fiendish Dr. Shrinker, actor Jay Robinson has done something of the impossible: he has made a villain a national favorite—not only with youngsters.

But then, Jay is something of a veteran at making villains fascinating characters.

killed by karloff

"My first Broadway stage appearance was as a heavy in a play called THE SHOP AT SLY CORNER with—how lucky can you get?—BORIS KARLOFF! That was in 1949 and I was only 18. Boris was a seemingly kindly antique dealer who moonlighted as a 'fence,' a dealer in stolen goods. I found out about his 'dark side' and began to blackmail him. I'd be getting more & more money and get nastier & nastier to Karloff, who would be quivering with the urge to kill, but didn't do a thing. I finally went too far when I tried to force him to let me marry his daughter, the one thing he loved most of all. That was too much and the kindly old man went bananas and throttled me ... that is, strangled me with his bare hands. Boris was very specific about the term for this form of mayhem.

"Karloff was a wonderful person to work with. He was really dedicated to his craft



Mad Dr. Shrinker (Jay Robinson) imperils the world every Saturday morning. Tune in your TV for the fiendish glee!

& very encouraging to this beginner. His kindness was extraordinary. In fact, he & the rest of the cast, which included Una O'Connor, who did such marvelous work in *THE INVISIBLE MAN* and *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN*, took me under their wing, so to speak.

"You know, it was Boris who made the first observation about my style. He told me that the kind of character I was portraying, a villain, was my forte. And if anybody should have known, it would be Boris Karloff.

"I have a portrait of him on my wall that he autographed for me... *Dear Jay—I can truthfully say that in all my long career in crime, you are the best victim I have ever throttled.* It's one of my most treasured memories, working with Karloff."

"the bone" & the boney (rathbone and thesiger)

"Basil Rathbone was actually the first star to encourage me in my acting. I'm sorry I never had the chance to work with him but I used to go backstage and watch him make up for the role of Dr. Slooper in *The Heiress*, around 1947. We'd

talk and I'd watch until a few minutes before the play would begin and then I'd sit in the audience and watch Basil give a tremendous performance. He was another wonderful person.

"I've been very fortunate in working with some fantastic people on the stage. Cyril Ritchard (he was Capt. Hook in *Peter Pan*, the one with Mary Martin, and played the alien, Kreton, in *Visit to A Small Planet*)—he directed me in a comedy, *Buy Me Blue Ribbons*. I had the chance to work with Ernest Thesiger in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. Thesiger was a fascinating performer. Those long thin hands! That face, that voice! His Dr. Pretorious in *BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN* was a delight to me so it was a real treat to work with him."

A trip to Hollywood took Jay Robinson into motion pictures... beginning a career in film villainy that proved Karloff to be something of a prophet.

caligula, the coagulator; or, the bloody monarch

The film that started it all was *THE ROBE*. As Caligula, the mad Emperor of Rome, Jay gave



He didn't "planet" that way but one day he found himself turned into a Bewitching Ape named Bandor.

a performance that electrified audiences and has been called "One of the great cult performances of the 50s."

Caligula was a special role for Robinson. "THE ROBE was my first picture. I was the 40th actor to try out for the role. We did the test and the head of Fox saw it at about 3 in the morning (!). I'm told that he said 2 words after seeing the test: 'Take Robinson!' And that's how Caligula & I got together."

Jay's Caligula was worthy of honors in a Villains' Hall of Fame... or Infamy... if there was one.

So popular was Caligula, Jay was called upon to repeat it in THE ROBE's sequel, DEMETRIUS & THE GLADIATORS. "They made sure that Caligula didn't live at the end of that one," Jay recalls. "I was killed by my own bodyguard, the Praetorian Guard. Of course, that's history and not even Darryl Zanuck could change that!"

"At times I've felt a bit like Boris & Bela Lugosi. Their most famous roles became permanently associated with them in audiences' minds. Caligula has become part of my identification. I've played him on the stage, even did a cross-country tour for DEMETRIUS, talking about the film and doing some of his speeches. In fact, some of the villains I've played, including Dr. Shrinker, have a touch of the old boy in them. It's something of an achievement to create such a characterization that it doesn't seem to want to die."

But evil emperors & other human villains are only part of Jay Robinson's gallery of characters.

stalk trek to the planet of the apes

"Parts that have a fantastic element to them are a great deal of fun to do. I was Ambassador Petri from the planet Troyius in the *Star Trek* episode 'Elaan of Troyius,' and Bandor, an orangutan scientist, in the *Planet of the Apes* TV series. They used green makeup on me for *Star Trek*. It took me a week to get it out of my skin. As Bandor, I was buried under some incredible makeup."

On the *Night Stalker* series, Jay gave Darren McGavin some tips on the proper use of the Guillotine and even had the chance to do a mad scientist right out of a Karloff movie in "The Night of the Sedgewick Curse" episode of *Wild, Wild West*. "I was Dr. Maitland, trying to find the secret of eternal youth. My men would kidnap people with a rare disease; their blood had that extra added ingredient."

from 'bewitched' to 'barney'

"*Bewitched* was a delightful experience for me... twice. In an episode entitled 'Samantha's Caesar Salad,' Alice Ghostley tried to make a

Caesar salad with witchcraft and got me instead. When I found a city almanac describing me as a dictator I went off to fight City Hall in full toga, sandals & laurel wreath! Another episode had me pop up as Professor Poindexter Phipps, a warlock who served as a tutor for Samantha's little girl Tabatha.

"I did a character on the *Barney Miller* show that still brings me a lot of comment. I was Morton Hackler, 'The Man From Saturn,' who was supposed to be a con-man, fleecing people out of their money. But they left open the possibility that I was really an alien and that I might return from time to time."

count jaycula!

One role that Jay had always wanted to do was that of Count Dracula. In 1974 he got the chance... but not in the way he expected. The picture was *TRAIN RIDE TO HOLLYWOOD*, a rock comedy released in 1976.

"I'd always wanted to take a crack at the Count but I never expected it would be in a musical. My Count was a bit different. He was fearsome on the outside... the Lugosi-ish accent & his jokes, you know... but inside he was a pussycat, very sympathetic."

The Count not only became one of the most popular characters in the film but he also became the first *dancing* Dracula. That's right, a dancing Dracula! During a scene in which two of the film's characters are being buried (they've been done in by a weird fiend), the ceremony is performed in the style of a Dixieland jazz funeral. Everybody is properly somber... except the Count. For him, it's a pick-me-up. The music gets to him and he starts dancing.

Wearing dark glasses and holding an umbrella to shield himself from the sun, Jay's Count really lived it up, right down to some very fancy high kicks. Unwittingly he invented *The Dracula Drag!*

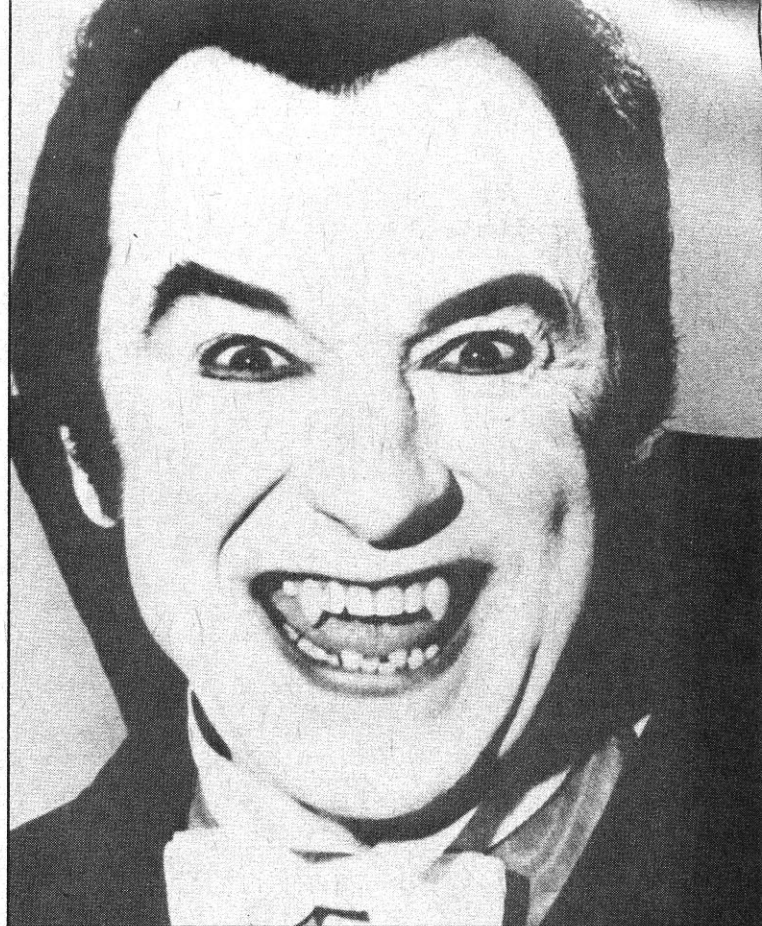
But the Count was only an appetizer. For waiting in the wings was the diabolical Dr. Shrinker.

from blood-drinker to people-shrinker

"When I tested for the part, I remember one line had Shrinker complaining how ridiculous it was for the World's Greatest Scientist to be chasing shrunken teenagers. Just for fun, I did the line with the Count's Transylvania accent... and everybody broke up.

The same day my agent called. His first words were, 'Hello, Dr. Shrinker.'

The show has proven to be something of a phenomenon. A team effort is one answer. "I may be a dyed-in-the-wool fiend as Shrinker," says Jay, "but Billy Barty as Hugo is such a delightful character in his own right. Always scheming to turn the tables on Shrinker, who always bosses him around. One show had Hugo catching a contagious disease, Splotchalaria,



Jaycula! Jay Robinson was the reason a *TRAIN RIDE TO HOLLYWOOD* became a drain-on-the-bloodbank ride for the passengers!



Jaycula meets the Ackermonger at Horror Film Preview. (Foto: Patrick M. Jordan.)



Dr. Phibes meets Dr. Shriner at Hollyweird premiere of THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES. The third PHIBES film is now in the works and FM'S Editor may play Vincent Price's look-alike.

and keeping me hopping, waiting on him hand & foot. If I got mad, he'd reach out his hand and say, 'Uh-uh, touchy-touchy!' and I'd move... real fast. Another story had him reducing me to 6 inches high so we could catch the Shrinkies; then he put me in a cage and tried to take over!"

And then, of course, there are the Shrinkies themselves; Ted Eccles as Brad, Susan Lawrence as his girlfriend B.J. and Jeff McKay as Gordie. "I really make life miserable for them in the show. Of course, the writers do their share to keep them jumping, what with every animal on the island bigger than they are. Susan's character usually brings out the worse in Shriner... she keeps needling him whenever she's captured. I was particularly nasty in one episode: I put a snake into the cage where she was held prisoner. That's really no way to treat a lady... even a Shrinkie."

robinson grue-so strikes again

How has *Dr. Shriner* affected Jay's personal life? "For one thing, every day around our house

is almost like Halloween. Youngsters who find out where I live knock on the door and ask my wife if Dr. Shriner lives here... or if I'm not home, they ask if she's Mrs. Shriner. They ask about Hugo or if the Shrinking Ray is in the house. Even when we're just out driving they spot me and call out Shriner's name. It's almost like Caligula all over again. When they ask me questions, I'm not quite sure how to answer them. To them, I'm the evil Dr. Shriner and somehow I don't want to disillusion them. The wonder of children is a marvelous thing. To them, life is still something magical... otherwise they wouldn't be able to enjoy things like Disney films, PETER PAN, FRANKENSTEIN or DRACULA... and *Dr. Shriner*.

"I'd love to do some more fantasy-oriented parts (I'm a fan of people like Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee & Vincent Price... in fact, I'm a film buff) as well as some plays. I've always had a yen to do a Captain Hook.

"But right now I'm grateful that *Dr. Shriner* is such a hit. I'd like to thank the readers of FAMOUS MONSTERS who watch the show and I promise that I'll continue to do my *worst* and make Dr. Shriner as evil as possible!"