

FILMS FANTASTIC 7



NIGHT OF THE DEMON

Films Fantastic number 7 is published by Eric Jamborsky for the N3F Film Bureau.
mrsolo1@comcast.net

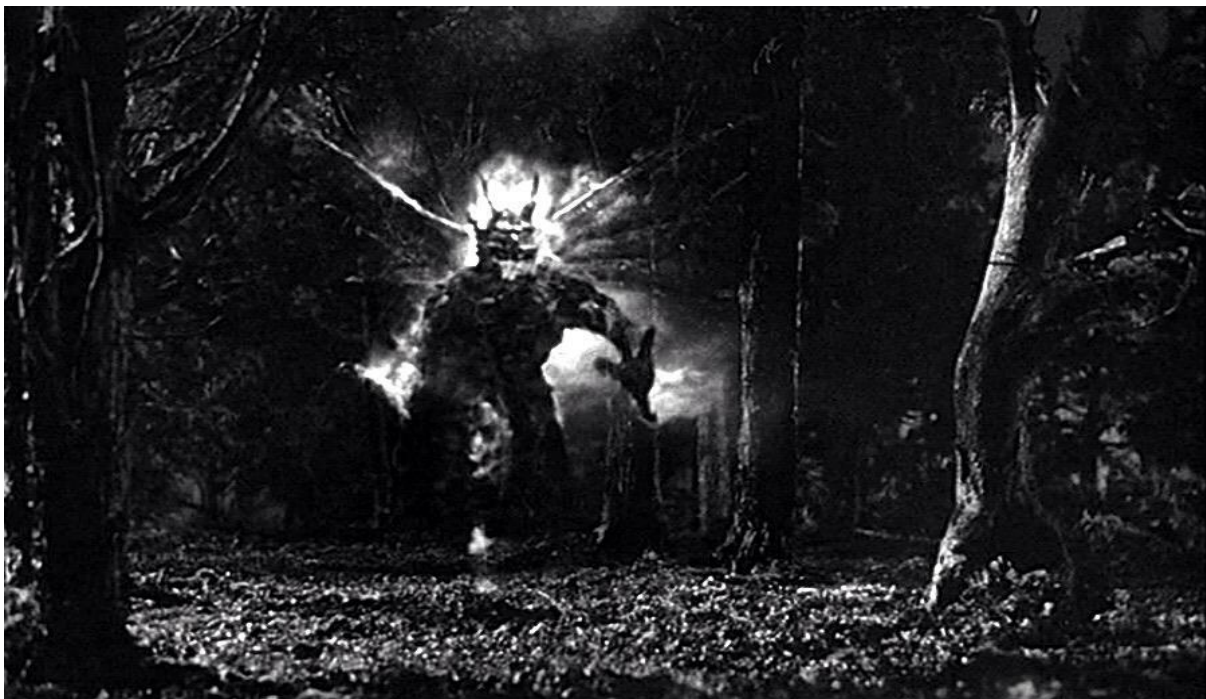
Halloween! That most wonderful time of the year, Ghoulies, Ghosties, Long-Leggedy Beasties, and other such critters roam the airwaves, or digital transmissions. The time when various kinds of candy appear on the shelves and diets fall to the wayside until January 1. Fun, fun, glorious fun. So, in keeping with the season we shall look at a few favorite offerings from the studios.

NIGHT OF THE DEMON (released in the US as CURSE OF THE DEMON) was a British production based on the M. R. James story 'Casting the Runes'. An American scientist John Holden (Dana Andrews) travels to Britain to take part in a conference debunking the supernatural, and particularly a Devil cult run by Dr. Julian Karswell (Niall MacGinnis). The story evolves into a cat and mouse game between Holden and Karswell. Is Karswell, who entertains children with magic more than a fraud, or is there something deeper and more dangerous? Niall MacGinnis is excellent as Karswell, bringing a real sense of menace to the character.

NIGHT OF THE DEMON was filmed in black and white which works well for the story. The music was composed by Clifton Parker, a noted English composer. The supporting cast is very good, especially Athne Seyler as Karswell's mother, a woman devoted to attending seances. Peggy Cummins is Peggy Harrington, the niece of a scientist who died under mysterious circumstances, possibly linked to Karswell.

When the film was released in the US it was cut by about twelve minutes and a few

bits reordered, but the version now usually shown on TV is the original British cut. The DVD has both versions. In addition an 8mm digest print was released in the sixties which was my introduction to the film. This is definitely a movie worth seeing for a serious look at the subject, and, perhaps a warning to not delve too deeply into certain subjects. And beware the glowing clouds at night.





The nineteen fifties was a decade full of mysteries that captured the attention of the public. After Flying Saucers the Abominable Snowman, or Yeti, gained much attention. Reports of sightings of the mysterious creature, accompanied by photographs of giant footprints in the snow filled newspapers and news magazines. So it was only natural that Hollywood, or Oakley Green, Berkshire, England in this case, jumped on the subject with great enthusiasm.

This 1957 feature was my first encounter with Hammer Films. The movie was based on a BBC drama, long since lost. Nigel Kneale adapted his script for the television production and Peter Cushing repeated his role of Dr. John Rollason, and actors Arnold Marle as the Lhama and Wolfe Morris as Kusang repeated their roles. To gain release in the U. S. Forrest Tucker was cast as explorer/showman Tom Friend.

What was billed as a scientific expedition turns out to be a hunting party lead by showman Tom Friend. Rollason's protests are ignored by Friend who intends to capture an elusive Yeti and place it on display. McNee, another member of the expedition had encountered a Yeti several years before and is drawn back to the mountains by a

mysterious compulsion. Things begin to go wrong almost immediately and the story heads toward an unexpected ending.



Peter Cushing examines what is supposed to be the tooth of a Yeti. (Above)



THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN OF THE HIMALAYAS was the first Hammer film I saw, but within a few months THE MUMMY and HORROR OF DRACULA were released, introducing color (especially blood red) to Horror films. Still, I find this

black and white thriller remains my favorite movie from the storied studio. It shows what a good script can do, especially when backed up by good actors and director. This is definitely a must-see.

