

PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE (1956)

Cast: Bela Lugosi (The Ghoul Man); Vampira (The Ghoul Woman); Tor Johnson (Police Inspector Clay); Criswell The Narrator (Himself); Gregory Walcott (Jeff Trent); Mona McKinnon (Paula Trent); Dudley Manlove (Eros); Joanna Lee (Tanna)

Written, produced and directed by: Edward D. Wood Jr.

The worst film of all time? That is the title "Plan 9 From Outer Space" won, by an overwhelming margin, in a poll conducted in 1980 by Harry and Michawł Medved for their book 'The Golden Turkey Awards'.

"Plan 9" was written, produced and directed by Edward "Eddie" D. Wood, Jr., a legend in his own right and winner of the 'Golden Turkey Lifetime Achievement Award For Worst Director Of All Time'. Wood was a transvestite (one of his other films "Glen or Glenda" deals with a transvestite theme) who characteristically wore womens trouser suits, high heels and angora sweaters on the set, and according to the Medveds, when he was a Marine in World War 2 landed on an enemy beach wearing a bra and panties under his uniform.

The only thing that distinguishes the film is that it contains Bela Lugosi's last screen appearance. Lugosi, by this time a recovered drug addict shunned by Holloywood, was a good friend of Woods and they were working together on another film called "Tomb Of The Vampire" when Lugosi died. Wood then took the two minutes of Lugosi footage, and used it in "Plan 9" hiring his wife's chiropractor to be Lugosi's double. The only trouble was that since he looked nothing like Lugosi, he was required to hold a cape over his face whenever he appeared on the screen. As for Lugosi he appears at his wifes funeral in a scene at the beginning of the film and in a later scene where he emerges from a wood, walks to a tombstone, spreads his cape for the camera and goes back into the woods. This scene is repeated at least five times to make his part seem more substantial.

How bad is the rest of the film? Well, some of the points that won it the 'Golden Turkey Award' and made it into a legend, are the cemetery with cardboard tombstones - one of which falls over: the aeroplane cockpit that doesn't have a control panel or steering equipment - just two chairs and a blanket across a doorway: the Trent's house where the same furniture is found in the bedroom and on the patio; the police cars that always zoom across the screen from right to left; how in one shot it is day and the next it is night and the flying saucers that look like paper plates flung into the air! There is also the uncomparable dialogue i.e. when Inspector Clay is found murdered, quick thinking detectives deduce: "Inspector Clay dead, murdered and somebody's responsible."

It's unlikely you will argue that any film is worse, and to quote Clive James, when he showed clips on a television programme, "To make movies like this takes more than just lack of money and lack of time, it takes the lack of that special something extra!"

Stephen Lock

P.T.O.