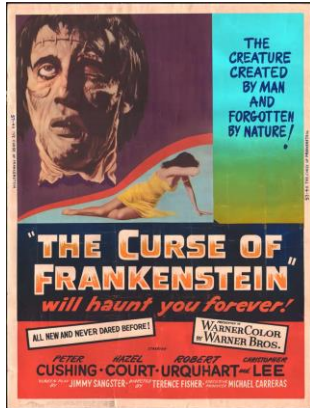


Short Review: “The Curse of Frankenstein” (1957) by Dr. John L. Flynn



The Curse of Frankenstein (aka *Frankenstein*, *Birth of Frankenstein*) (1957). Hammer Films/Great Britain, 82 min. Director: Terence Fisher. Producer: Anthony Hinds. Screenwriter: Jimmy Sangster. Based on the novel by Mary Shelley. Cast: Peter Cushing, Christopher Lee, Hazel Court, Noel Hood, Michael Mulcaster, Patrick Troughton, Marjorie Hume, and Valerie Gaunt.

The first and most successful of Hammer's Frankenstein movies was not a pallid remake of Universal's “Frankenstein” (1931) but a bold experiment in color, graphic violence, and sexual perversity. Told in flashback, the imprisoned Baron Victor Frankenstein (Cushing) attempts to convince authorities that the Creature (Lee) committed the murders for which he has been accused. They all think he is mad, but he continues to tell the familiar tale of how he, with partner Hood, obtained various organs and body parts from the local graveyard to fabricate the perfect man and how he brought his creation to life. He relates how the Creature escaped, terrorized the village, and how he alone managed to lure the Creature back to his laboratory and a vat of acid. But since there is no proof that the Creature ever existed, the authorities dismiss his unbelievable story as the ravings of a madman. The film concludes with an air of finality as the mad doctor is escorted to the guillotine and certain death. Because Hammer was restricted

from using Jack Pierce's trademark monster designs, Phil Leakey's make-up has Lee looking like a green-faced, badly mutilated zombie. Ironically, Lee's appearance as the Creature is far closer to what Mary Shelley had originally in mind. Cushing, in his most remembered role, restores dignity to the character that had fallen to parody in the later Universal films. Few actors, today, can displace his image as the quintessential Frankenstein. The film was followed one year later by its sequel, "The Revenge of Frankenstein" (1958).

Copyright 2015 by John L. Flynn, Ph.D.