

Fango Flashback: "THE SORCERERS" (1967)

Written by David Ian McKendry
Monday, 15 October 2012 09:39



The book was called A PICTORIAL HISTORY OF HORROR MOVIES by Denis Gilford. On page 88, in glorious color, was a full page still from THE SORCERERS. I won't describe the picture because it will blow the ending, but needless to say it piqued my curiosity about this atypical Boris Karloff film. I subconsciously added it to my list of eventual viewing. Unfortunately copies of THE SORCERER were extremely hard to come by, and I wouldn't get an opportunity to see it until the Warner Archives made it available.

THE SORCERERS is the tale of elderly scientist Professor Monserrat (Boris Karloff) who, along with the help of his wife Estelle (Catherine Lacey), creates a machine capable of not only controlling a subject's mind, but also transmitting his feelings and sensations to them. Their victim, Mike Roscoe (Ian Ogilvy), is a bored youth looking for thrills, stuck with a drab girlfriend and a thankless job as a clerk at The Glory Hole Antique Shop. I'll give you a minute to stop snickering. Experiencing the boring thoughts and day-to-day activities of a younger man by their second-hand magic machine isn't enough for Estelle, so the sadistic old bird controls Mike down a path of theft, brutality, and murder. The Professor discovers his will is no match against his wife's (go figure) as he finds himself incapable of stopping her from using Mike as a tool for evil (go figure yet again).

This era was a fantastic time for British horror. Of course you had the work of Hammer, but there are so many other classics that carry with them the distinctive Mod signature of late '60s/early '70s England. Films like PEEPING TOM, PSYCHOMANIA, and BLOW-UP are all part of the same fun-loving scene, where you could just as easily see a musical number break out along with a murder. Although not as well remembered as those three, THE SORCERERS fits so easily into that category. At around 23 years-old, director Michael Reeves had no problem capturing the spirit of youth culture. Unfortunately, this would have been the only opportunity he would have to do so, as he died of an accidental overdose in 1969 while working on the script for the Vincent Price / Christopher Lee film, THE OBLONG BOX.

Boris Karloff gives one of his best performances, proving he can play sensitive hero just as well as monstrous killer. Veteran stage actress Catherine Lacey, who began her career in Alfred Hitchcock's THE LADY VANISHES, holds her own against such a powerful leading man and in some instances, surpasses him. The pair is backed by an outstanding supporting cast led by

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Ian Ogilvy, who would go up against another horror legend the following year in Reeves' last film, the Vincent Price vehicle *WITCHFINDER GENERAL*. The story is wonderful, the cinematography at times trippy, and the music is quite groovy.

The transfer is brilliant with the only fault being a lack of special features. I would have loved to see a brief documentary or maybe a couple of interviews with someone involved in the making of this film. In the end, however, it is simply enough that Warner is making this brilliant classic available, and allowing me to scratch another title off of my wish list.

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