

The Black Cat

Philip J. Riley, Gregory Wm. Mank
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Philip J. Riley, Gregory Wm. Mank : The Black Cat before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Black Cat:

17 of 18 people found the following review helpful. It looks like a volume of Phillip Riley's "Film Scripts Series" but.....By fanI have followed the literary career of Mr. Mank since the publication of "it's Alive! The Classic Cinema Saga Of Frankenstein" and have always considered his research in the field of classic horror cinema seminal. "The Black Cat" is no exception. His insightful and informative analysis of Universal's most troubled and bizarre celluloid offering should serve as a welcomed edition to any monster kid's library but unfortunately he is undone by the editorial decisions of Phillip Riley. Having collected all of Mr. Riley's "Universal Filmscripts Series Classic Horror Films", published by both Magic Image and Bear Manor, I was dumbfounded to discover that the shooting script was NOT included in this edition. For those casual connoisseurs of classic horror who might not be aware, Edgar Ulmer's "The Black Cat" was heavily edited when the film's elements of rape, necrophilia, incest and torture proved too distasteful

for studio head, Carl Laemmle, Sr. The mind reels pondering what sadistic bits of terror committed by Karloff and Lugosi that was included in the shooting script but ultimately condemned to the cutting room floor. In lieu of the shooting script the book is "padded out" with stills, lobby cards, and the press book. If printed on a higher grade of paper this might have sufficed, but unfortunately the quality of some of the images are not up to snuff and tend to be space wasters. I have included a picture of a page from the press book as an example. The book concludes with a seven page essay by Randall Larson which serves as an overview of the musical choices made by composer Heiz Roemheld, who cobbled together bits from classical symphonies by Bach, Liszt, Brahms and the like for the film's score. In conclusion, what could have been the gem of the Magic Image series proved to be somewhat disappointing, but the enlighten research and prose of Mr. Mank does save this volume. I would begrudgingly recommend "The Black Cat" to any horror film buff with the pre-cater that any Mank article is well worth reading.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. atrocious kindleization
By Charles Power
This rating is strictly for the ebook. My best guess is that the original is in two columns, and that the dummy who made the scan neglected to take this into account. So the reader constantly has one paragraph appearing in the middle of another paragraph. Not quite unreadable, but nearly so. As best I can tell, though, the actual text is fascinating. Leastways that's my guess.

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful. Still waiting for "The Black Cat"
By Nathalie Yafet
Please see the previous posted review as there are excellent points made. I was also expecting more from this MagicImage book. The shooting script should have been included, no question about that. Classic horror buffs have been wondering for years about footage that was (supposedly) scissored from the movie or never filmed at all. Unfortunately, we have to go on wondering. There is definitely information here but information that has been, for the most part, previously seen in other interviews and books by Gregory Mank. Where is all this stuff? This was the point of the book, or so we all thought. If you know nothing about "The Black Cat", you will definitely learn more than a few things but for those of us who know more than a bit, we hope there will be a follow-up book that finally answers all those persistent questions.

I'm also a Greg Mank fan but must take extreme issue with statements made on page 30 of this book. Greg Mank, much as I like his writing and also him personally, has very strong preferences in actors and actresses which sometimes avoid the truth. In his mini-background on Black Cat romantic lead, David Manners, Mr. Mank states that, "He adored many of his leading ladies - Barbara Stanwyck, Katharine Hepburn, and especially Dracula's Helen Chandler - but had suffered with divas Loretta Young and Kay Francis." The only Kay Francis/David Manners pairing was in Warners, "Man Wanted" (1932) Scott O'Brien's excellent Kay Francis biography, "I Can't Wait To Be Forgotten" contains a David Manners quote which directly contradicts the Kay Francis slur in this book, "Producer Darryl Zanuck . . . had written "A Dangerous Brunette" with Kay in mind . . . translated to the screen as "Man Wanted" and it still has a contemporary feel to it. A breezy, truthful comment on marriage and relationships, Kay finds herself with a philandering husband, a male secretary who adores her, and her emotions grappling with the human thing to do. In spite of the film's mature attitude, and Kay being "tremendously serious" about her work, David Manners and Andy Devine acted like juveniles on the set. "Andy Devine and I behaved very badly," Manners commented years later. "We were whooping it up one day and Kay Francis walked off the set. She sent back word that she'd return to work when those two 'apes' quieted down." In fact, Kay Francis was well known for her decidedly un-diva like behavior as a major studio star. She drove her own car, tried to help young hopefuls get ahead in numerous instances (instead of being threatened by them as Ms. Hepburn was) Susan Hayward and Jane Wyman were two young actresses Kay boosted. Ms. Wyman stated, "We were trained by pros. Kay Francis helped me the most when I got started." She also stood up for production people and extras: buying a car for a wardrobe assistant who had been saving to buy one for two years, financing an adoption for "a childless couple who worked at the studio" and helping an electrician with a large family to be re-hired on "Another Dawn." Sybil Jason (Kay's daughter in "I Found Stella Parish" and "Comet Over Broadway") said, "To me she was more than an actress. She was a warm and compassionate woman who always fought for the underdog." Ms. Jason (as mentioned in Mr. O'Brien's book) also recounted how Ms. Francis courageously stood up the forty female extras in the Florence Nightingale biopic, "The White Angel." "The nurses are shown debarking during a torrential downpour. After a morning of takes and retakes . . . one of the wardrobe mistresses brought Kay a huge towel and portable heater so she wouldn't catch a chill. Kay immediately asked if the the extras who were in the scene with her were going to be offered the same things. When she was answered, "No," Kay handed back the towel and stepped away from the heater, Jason emphasized, "That was just the kind of lady she was." Kay refused to separate herself from the others and receive special treatment. Reporter Harry Evans was also there and remembered production people fussing over Kay who said, "And while I'm doing this, what's going to happen to these people?" Evans continued, "She pointed over to the side of the set. Standing in a group, huddled and wet to the bone, were about forty women . . . they were all extras . . . many of them well past middle age. Kay stated, "You can't leave them standing around in these dripping clothes until you are ready to use them again this afternoon . . . stop making such a fuss over me . . . you'll see that they get dry clothes and something hot to drink . . ." Days later, the grateful women sent a gigantic bouquet to Kay's mother, "knowing Kay, we felt sure she would like it better if we gave them to her mother." Oddly enough, in Greg Mank's book, "The Hollywood Hissables" he quotes John Carradine on working with the "adored" Katharine Hepburn on, "Mary of Scotland" . . . But day after day, Kate kept saying she really wanted to play both Mary and Queen Elizabeth.

We all got tired of hearing it. So one day I told Kate, "If you played both parts, how would you know which queen to upstage?" She walked off the set, and didn't speak to me for 20 years."Will the real diva please stand up.

In 1934, Universal Pictures released *The Black Cat* - the first teaming of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi, and the darkest, most sinister horror classic in the studio's legendary canon. MagicImage Filmbooks takes you on a time travel trip back into the shadowy soundstage of this macabre milestone - the facts, the figures, the studio politics, the sinister inspirations, the demonic virtuosity of director Edgar G. Ulmer, the censorship troubles, the personal memories of the leading ladies, a sexual harassment saga almost as perverse as the film itself... and the complex, moving, ultimately tragic relationship of the film's two horror superstars. Included are the pressbook, and many rare and striking photos. Plus: "The BLACK CAT: Universal's Symphony of Horrors, The Film's Music" by Randall D. Larson