



## The Ed Wood Pages

### Edward D. Wood, Jr. Filmmaker Without Peer

Edward D. Wood, Jr. loved the movies. And armed with little more than naiveté and a closet full of angora sweaters, the young Ed Wood set out to be a filmmaker. He knew far less about film than he thought he did, and his movies, if they received theatrical exhibition at all, disappeared almost immediately. By the 1960's his films had virtually vanished, rarely seen even on late night television. And none of them ever made any money.

A little less naïve and a little more disillusioned, Ed Wood still couldn't turn his back on the magical world of movies. He took screenwriting work where he could and wrote under so many pseudonyms that his true credits on this score may never be known (although his favorite pseudonym seems to have been "Akdiv Telmig" -- hint: the words are spelled backwards). In an (unsuccessful) attempt to pay the bills, he wrote pornographic novels and worked on cheap softcore porn films. And he turned to the bottle. In 1978, Ed Wood died at the young age of 58 without ever realizing his dream of becoming a successful filmmaker.

Less than two years after his death, *Plan 9 from Outer Space* received a public screening for the express purpose of laughing at it; at the screening, he was posthumously presented with the Golden Turkey Award as the Worst Filmmaker of All Time. Taken literally, the title is of course grossly unfair. There were and continue to be far less competent directors. But if you take "bad" movie to mean "so bad, it's good", then Ed Wood's unique vision and inane dialogue are definitely the best of the worst. The event also marked the emergence of Ed Wood as a film personality, and sparked an interest in his work far beyond anything Ed ever lived to see.

I laugh heartily at Ed Wood's movies -- but I would never laugh at Ed Wood himself. I have the highest



respect for the man. He was a filmmaker for the best of motives -- he simply loved to make movies. Edward D. Wood, Jr. wanted to entertain us -- although he might not have done that in exactly the way he had hoped. Nonetheless, I believe the true measure of a movie's worth is if people enjoy watching it. And more than fifty years after Ed Wood made his first film, his works are on constant display at fan conventions and available on the newest technologies in home entertainment. Millions of film lovers all over the world just adore his movies. And there's not a whole lot of directors who can say that. So here's to Ed Wood, *successful filmmaker*.

presented in chronological order, in three sections

## 1: Ed Wood, Director:

### **GLEN OR GLENDA**

(1953) writ & dir: Edward D. Wood, Jr.; w/ Bela Lugosi, Ed Wood (as Daniel Davis), Lyle Talbot, Timothy Farrell, Dolores Fuller.

Here is Ed Wood's, um, "breakout" film -- in which he becomes, more than anything else, a human hallucinogen. Bela starts the film by spouting some incomprehensible nonsense and then plays with his test tubes -- somehow, this serves as an introduction for a pedantic plea for the social acceptance of transsexuals and transvestites. And then we get a stern lecture on the superiority of women's clothing.

After that, the film devolves into a mind-altering collage of stock footage, more ridiculous pronouncements from Bela, a little bondage & cheesecake, and a stream-of-consciousness dream sequence which seems to indulge Ed Wood's own fantasies of persecution and the triumph of dressing in drag. Whoa, Nelly. Top it all off with wretched acting and some of the most lame-brained & bloated dialogue ever committed to film. The flick's subject matter might be considered odd, but that's nothing compared to the filmmaking techniques on display here. A truly stupefying film experience.

"Beware the big green dragon that sits on your doorstep!"



## JAIL BAIT

(1954 - aka *Hidden Face*) prod & dir: Edward D. Wood, Jr.; w/ Lyle Talbot, Dolores Fuller, Clancy Malone, Steve Reeves.

The bored son of a famous plastic surgeon turns to a life of crime -- when things go bad, his father is forced to perform surgery on the gang leader to conceal his identity. It's a chunky little attempt at an old-fashioned crime potboiler that actually doesn't land too far off the mark. We get a shot of gratuitous pectorals thanks to young Steve Reeves, and a soundtrack made of the worst stock music Ed Wood could possibly have found. But the only things that make the flick even passably amusing are Ed Wood's trademarkable dialogue and Dolores Fuller's gruesome attempts at acting. By the way, after the title was changed to something more salacious, a single line was added in post-production to inform us that "jail bait" means the act of carrying a concealed firearm without a permit. Well, golly.



## BRIDE OF THE MONSTER

(1956 - aka *Bride of the Atom*) writ, prod & dir: Edward D. Wood, Jr.; w/ Bela Lugosi, Tor Johnson, Tony McCoy.

Mysterious disappearances in the swamp draw the attention of a nosy lady reporter -- who promptly winds up the captive of a mad scientist out to create atom-powered super-men. See the inept cops, see the atom-powered octopus, see Bela Lugosi whip Tor Johnson! This is my personal favorite Ed Wood film -- it's just ten pounds of cheese in a five pound bag. It's a veritable circus sideshow filled with cackling loonies, grunting brutes, cardboard sets, wooden acting, and one sad little rubber octopus. It is so corny and so proud of it -- just irresistible fun.





## PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE

(1958) prod, writ, & dir: Edward D. Wood, Jr.; w/ Tor Johnson, Vampira, Tom Keene, Bela Lugosi.

“Future events such as these will affect your life in the future.” Stuck-up space aliens reanimate the dead in the hopes of scaring the bajeezus out of the living! Well, great heaping volumes have been written about this one elsewhere -- suffice it to say that if you haven't seen it yet, just grab yourself a copy. You will rarely find a flick that is easier to make fun of than this one. With Ed Wood's endearing combination of naiveté, incompetence and exuberance, you're guaranteed a good time.

“Because all you of Earth are *idiots!*”



## NIGHT OF THE GHOULS

(1959 - aka *Revenge of the Dead*) writ, prod & dir: Edward D. Wood, Jr. w/ Kenne Duncan, Duke Moore, Valda Hansen, Tor Johnson, Criswell. No skin; no gore.

The cop from *Plan 9* stars in a semi-sequel to *Bride of the Monster*; he heads up an investigation into ghostly sightings at the home previously used by the mad doctor. It turns out to be a phony medium bilking rich old ladies, but are there perhaps some *real* ghosts lurking around? This one is more self-conscious than Ed's earlier films and features more deliberate humor, including a little self-lampoonery. It is, however, the



unintentional humor that still works best. Ed's unmistakable touch with dialogue & narration is as strong as ever, the cast is uniformly wretched (except for Tor, who knows his part inside & out), Criswell can clearly be seen reading his cue card, and the sets are dressed with a bare minimum of detail. Not as well known as Ed Wood's other flicks, this one is every bit as enjoyable.

## the SINISTER URGE

(1961 - aka *The Young & the Immoral*) writ & dir: Edward D. Wood, Jr.; w/ Kenne Duncan, James "Duke" Moore, Jean Fontaine, Carl Anthony. One teensy peek o' skin; no gore.

The evil "smut picture racket" is the root cause of all crime in the city; two tough detectives are putting a stop to it -- mostly by sitting around a desk discussing how the evil "smut picture racket" is the root cause of all crime in the city. See teen girls in pretty dresses beat up the ice cream man! See a cop in drag try to catch the porn-crazed sex killer! See the bitchy queen of the smut racket talk tough and wear dresses three sizes too small! See Ed give himself a wordless cameo as a smut peddler who gets in a street brawl -- and *slaps* the other guy silly! In short, it's utterly delightful. Thank God for Ed Wood.

The detective's concluding line: "Pornography: a nasty word for a dirty business."



## NECROMANIA

(1971) writ & dir: Edward D. Wood, Jr.; w/ Rene Bond, Rick Lutze. Oodles of soft porn; no gore.

The poor young lad can't get it up, so his girlfriend drags him off to a very strange sex clinic. She very quickly learns the wonders of lesbian groping, but the boy has to be pushed into a coffin with the undead necromancer babe before his engine gets revved. The only known surviving print of this thing runs just over 40 minutes, and at that it's a little long for its material. The wisp of a plot peeks in for all of 90 seconds, the rest is just a big mess of softcore porno (with hardcore pictures -- the camera gets right into the crotch, they lick all around it, but never actually make contact with the critical bits -- it's weird). Although not actually a horror flick, the quality of the acting is genuinely horrifying. Fortunately, little is required of the cast in that area, and when they do speak, we are treated to some priceless dialogue from the inimitable mind of Ed Wood. It's a somewhat tedious stag reel, rather than an actual movie; but Ed's contribution makes it an interesting museum piece.





2: Ed Wood, Screenwriter:

### the VIOLENT YEARS

(1956 - aka *Female*; *Girl Gang Terrorists*; *Teenage Girl Gang*) dir: William M. Morgan; w/ Jean Moorhead, Barbara Weeks, Arthur Millan.

A gang of girl hoodlums terrorizes the city's gas stations and rapes young men at gunpoint; then they're recruited by nefarious foreign commies to vandalize a school. And all the while the cops are giving pompous monologues. (Why yes, the script is by Ed Wood. How'd you guess?). Finally, the flick's long drawn-out, bombastic ending delivers a moral that's about as subtle as weeding your lawn with a cruise missile. It's unsophisticated, mercifully short, and the plot proceeds at a



good pace. But it's the stupefyingly overblown & cheesy dialogue that makes this thing a gem.

## the BRIDE AND THE BEAST

(1958) dir: Adrian Weiss; w/ Charlotte Austin, Lance Fuller, Johnny Roth. No skin; no gore.

A young bride accompanies her husband on a safari to Africa -- where they get spliced into a ton of stock footage from all over the planet. Eventually (once they run out of stock footage), the lady comes to grips with being a reincarnated gorilla, abandons her husband, and disappears into the jungle for some monkey lovin'. And since the script is by Ed Wood, we are treated to a gratuitous reference to the luxuries of angora sweaters. The opening scenes (where the bride is wooed by the groom's pet gorilla) and the climax are quite delightful, but the middle chunk of the flick seems like an endless deluge of stock footage. And just when you think they've exhausted that, we learn that a shipwreck has dumped two tigers into Africa, and that allows them to splice in way too much footage ripped from some Indian flick. It's a fun little piece of sleaze, if you can make it through the master class on film splicing.



## MARRIED TOO YOUNG

(1962) dir: George Moskov; w/ Harold Lloyd, Jr., Jana Lund, Anthony Dexter.

It's the usual sort of cautionary tale of two high school lovers who dash across the state line to get married, but then have to deal with all those nasty real-world consequences. Except... they really seem to be doing all right at it. They're actually a couple of likable, straight-arrow kids who don't do such a bad job of treating each other right. It's not until the money situation gets bad and the guy makes one fateful mistake -- which leads to the police chase and the fatal car crash. But wait! Ed Wood was brought in to finish the script and the crash wasn't fatal after all. And so the movie ends with the judge giving the kids' parents a good scolding. Huh? The flick is surprisingly well crafted and the cast is good; but the story is a veritable geyser of sappy clichés and painfully contrived melodrama that never really adds up. Perversely, the flick is too nonsensical to be enjoyed at face value, and yet too well made to be a lot of fun.



## ORGY OF THE DEAD

(1965 - aka *Orgy of the Vampires*) dir: A. C. Stephen; w/ Criswell, Fawn Silver, Pat Barringer, William Bates. Lotsa boobies; no gore.

After a car wreck, a couple stumbles in to a graveyard -- only to see the dead arise! Well, actually, they are forced to watch Criswell emcee over a series of cheap stripper routines straight off of a two-bit burlesque stage. Oh, the ladies are cute enough, no doubt -- but the costumes are dirt cheap, the acts have no spark or style, the girls are only topless and not one of them can dance worth a damn. As a sample of burlesque, it's simply dreadful -- I've seen better exotic dancing at a fleabag trucker bar. Thank goodness that Ed Wood wrote the script; not that there's any plot, but at least the dialogue has Ed's unmistakable style. Some of the lines Criswell struggles to read off his cue cards are a riot. If you can sit through the all the girls wiggling their shoulders behind an over-active fog machine, the scenes with Criswell, Lord of the Dead, and his Queen are worth the wait.



## ONE MILLION AC/DC

(1969) dir: Ed de Priest; w/ Susan Berkley, Billy Wolf. Gobs o' skin; no gore.

In this romp through the prehistoric era we learn the truth about our caveman ancestors -- how the women were all hot-to-trot babes (even gorillas can't resist them), how the men wore tightie whities under their furs, how they battled the plastic T. Rex, and how they kept on sacrificing that virgin until she darned well learned to enjoy it. This nudie cutie was scripted by Ed Wood under the pseudonym Akdon Telmig (they misspelled Akdov), although the word "script" is hardly deserved. It's really just a string of quite long softcore sim-sex scenes broken up by some cheap gags, bad puns, and caveman-movie spoofs. They do ham it up and the Tyrannosaurus (played in part by the same toy used in *Mighty Gorga*) is considerate enough to strip the clothes off the cavegirl before chowing on her. The photography is good, but gets a bit too artistic for a stag reel and the overlong sex scenes aren't near as erotic as they might be. On the other hand, the performers are distinctly better looking than in the average skin flick of this caliber. It has a certain brain-damaged charm and the ladies are easy to watch.



## FUGITIVE GIRLS

(1974 - aka *Five Loose Women*; *Hot on the Trail*; *Women's Penitentiary 8*) prod & dir: A. C. Stephen; w/ Jabie Abercrombe, Renee Bond, Talie Cochrane, Dona Desmond, Margie Lanier, (Ed Wood cameo). Plenty of skin; no gore.

1) Good girl gets boinked; 2) boyfriend robs liquor store; 3) good girl goes to jail; 4) and gets her first master class in dyke-boinking. Now let's all escape and raise hell. In between the softcore porn, these tough dames rape men, rape women, and kick the snot out of hippies. It's cheap, tawdry, and sleazy enough to call for a disinfectant on your TV screen. Ed Wood's contributions to the script are obvious, as he manages to pull in most of his favorites, including gang fights, trite moralizing, and girl rapists. And in the most shocking twist of all, the cast is actually pretty darn good (except for the yahoo in the wheelchair -- what a ham). Although it's marred by bad photography and some yawning slow spots, this slimy little flick is a hell of a lot more entertaining than it has any right to be. I should probably be ashamed to admit it, but I got a big kick out of it.

Frightened Hippie quote: "Oh good Christ, a *lesbian!*"



### 3: Ed Wood, Movie Star:

#### LOVE FEAST

(1969 - aka *The Photographer*; *Pretty Models All in a Row*) dir: Joseph F. Robertson; w/ Edward D. Wood, Jr. Lots of skin; no gore.

Ed Wood turns movie star -- he plays a lecherous photographer who seduces young models, but today the girls are coming too thick & fast. Just as he gets one warmed up, another rings the doorbell. He has to stack them up in the bedroom where they end up satisfying themselves. As more & more girls pile up, a cabbie and a pair of plumbers pinch-hit for Ed and finally a quartet of dominatrixes (dominatricies?)

arrive to put Ed in a dog collar and lingerie. And that's the entire script; it's just unwashed, skid-row, softcore porn with bad photography and haphazard editing. It wouldn't have the least bit of entertainment value if it weren't for Ed Wood's thoroughly delightful performance. The bulk of the running time is just footage of the overloaded orgy bed -- and although some of the girls are awfully cute, the sight of so many unretouched, blemished bottoms is not for the faint of heart. But if you stick with it to the end, you're rewarded by the sight of Ed Wood in a pink nightie licking some lady's boots. Now that's just precious.



#### MRS. STONE'S THING

(1970 - aka *The Sensuous Wife*) writ, prod & dir: Joseph F. Robertson; w/ Victor Rich, Karen Johnson, (Ed Wood cameo). Oodles of skin.

A skirt-chasing executive finally agrees to bring his demur wife to one of "those" parties. And the rest of the flick is just one big plotless orgy. The action is softcore, the acting is, um, best left unmentioned, the scripting is clear evidence of mental disease, and the editing seems to have been accomplished with a meat grinder. But what they lack in technical skill and story content, they make up for in variety.

Hardly thirty seconds goes by before another naked body is spliced in, and in addition to the usual lesbian spice and light bondage, they include an old couple, a gay couple, and stealing the entire show is a pair of 400-pound porkers on a pool table trying to figure out how to get their parts close enough together to make it.



Ed Wood gets a brief cameo as a cross-dressing guest who's caught trying on some of the discarded clothing. It's all dreadfully cheap soft porn, but it manages enough wit & silliness to earn its keep.



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Icon Glossary:



**Good Stinker** -- These are the films where a good deal of the entertainment comes from filmmaking incompetence; fun to watch in spite of themselves.



**Goopy Gore** -- These films exhibit distinctly above-normal quantities of unpleasantly abused body parts.



**Naughty Nudie** -- Films with this flag feature frequent and/or explicit nudity (almost always female) beyond that normally found in your average T&A flick.



**Butt Stompin'** -- These films feature at least one superior violent fight or shootout scene that will get the testosterone pumping.



**Gold Star** -- These are the flicks that I felt reached above their expectations or at least pleasantly surprised me; they may not always be actually good flicks, but I did find something in them worthwhile.



**Blue Max Medal of Really Goodness** -- These are flicks that I not only enjoyed, but I think are actually quite good films (not always the same thing).



**Lethal Cinema** -- These wretched viewing experiences go beyond being merely bad to become genuine sources of pain and regret; they should be avoided by all but the most masochistic trash cinema veterans. Don't say I didn't warn you.