

# TREASURES FROM THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

AN ONGOING SERIES OF CLASSIC AND CONTEMPORARY FILMS PRESENTED IN 35MM BY THE YALE FILM ARCHIVE

FRIDAY, MARCH 10  
7 P.M. • HUMANITIES  
QUADRANGLE  
LECTURE HALL

## GODS AND MONSTERS

PRESENTED WITH SUPPORT FROM  
PAUL L. JOSKOW '70 M.PHIL., '72 P.H.D.



"To a new world of gods and monsters." —Dr. Pretorius, BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN

Adapted from the 1995 Christopher Bram novel *Father of Frankenstein*, GODS AND MONSTERS is a speculative look at the last days of Hollywood director James Whale (played by Ian McKellen). Centered around his relationship with the purely fictional gardener Clayton Boone (Brendan Fraser), the film finds the shadows in the bright sunshine of Pacific Palisades, showing us the memories—both dark and beautiful—that haunted Whale until the end. Writer/director Bill Condon described the film as “about the waning of an artist’s powers, about somebody who is at that point in his life when death is staring him in the face and he’s taking stock.” For critic Lisa Schwarzbaum, GODS AND MONSTERS is “an extraordinarily graceful film about desire, aging, and the creative harnessing of personal pain into art (low and high), which is, of course, what a good chunk of moviemaking is always about.”

No. 21  
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Best remembered for horror classics such as FRANKENSTEIN (1931), THE OLD DARK HOUSE (1932) THE INVISIBLE MAN (1933), and BRIDE OF FRANKENSTEIN (1935), Whale began his working life as a cobbler, selling the nails from old shoes as scrap to pay for his evening art classes. A second lieutenant in World War I, he was captured in Flanders and taken to a POW camp where he remained for more than a year until the war’s end. While there, he spent his time creating watercolor illustrations of camp life and writing, directing, and acting in the camp’s stage shows, which he found “a source of great pleasure and amusement.” His ability to mine beauty and humor from horrifying situations was a hallmark of his filmmaking, and it was emulated by the GODS AND MONSTERS team.

Condon had only directed two features before GODS AND MONSTERS, including the supernatural slasher CANDYMAN: FAREWELL TO THE FLESH (1995), adapted from a short story by Clive Barker. Barker became the executive producer of GODS AND MONSTERS, and said of the film “This is a small, intimate picture about a gay man who was, in my opinion, one of the great creators of Hollywood. I wanted that story to be told because of who James Whale has been in my life.” Condon also praised Whale for having “an amazing, poetic identification with the outsider” and “a very, very idiosyncratic wit.”

In the lead role, Ian McKellen plays Whale as “a white-haired, soigné aesthete, a faded grandee with too many voices in his head” (according to the *Guardian* review). McKellen pointed out that he and Whale were born just 50 miles apart, and that Whale had also spent years as a stage actor. (Barker describes himself, McKellen, and Whale as “three gay Northern England lads, albeit several generations apart, who all found their way to Hollywood.”) McKellen was joined by Brendan Fraser, who at that point was largely known for comedies like ENCINO MAN (1992), AIRHEADS (1994), and GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE (1997). Fraser remarked that when he signed on, “I knew that this film had no money, very little time, and its working title was THE UNTITLED PIECE WITH IAN MCKELLEN, and that’s all I needed to know.”

The film was shot in Pasadena in 24 days in the summer of 1997, and it premiered at the Sundance Film Festival on January 21, 1998. It went on to win Condon an Academy Award for Best Adapted Screenplay, with two additional Oscar nominations for acting: the first nomination for McKellen and the second and final for Lynn Redgrave as Whale’s housekeeper Hanna, a riff on the comedic women seen so often in Whale’s films. (McKellen later claimed, “I had in my tuxedo pocket a piece of paper with my speech written on it, which said, ‘I’m proud to be the only openly gay actor ever to receive an Oscar. But I didn’t win. So I didn’t get to do the speech.’”) Barker said of the film’s appeal, “When you’re going after very different constituencies—a gay constituency, a horror constituency, an old Hollywood constituency—people would say, ‘I don’t know who it is for.’ The truth is it plays for all three and a whole heap more.

DIRECTED BY **BILL CONDON**

SCREENPLAY BY **BILL CONDON** FROM A NOVEL BY

**CHRISTOPHER BRAM**

CINEMATOGRAPHY BY **STEPHEN M. KATZ**

DISTRIBUTED BY **LIONS GATE FILMS** (1998), 105 MINS.

STARRING **IAN MCKELLEN, BRENDAN FRASER, LYNN REDGRAVE, AND LOLITA DAVIDOVICH**

**DID YOU KNOW:** FOR ANOTHER TAKE ON A FADING HOLLYWOOD LUMINARY, A SUSPICIOUS YOUNGER VISITOR, AN OVERLY-DEVOTED SERVANT, BAROQUE FLASHBACKS, AND A PORTENTOUS POOL, JOIN US FOR BILLY WILDER’S 1950 CLASSIC **SUNSET BLVD.**, SCREENING AT 7 P.M., FRIDAY, APRIL 14

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