



The Palgrave Encyclopedia of American Horror Film Shorts

1915–1976

Gary D. Rhodes · David J. Hogan
with Mark Martucci and Henry Nicoletta

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Cover illustration: *The Spook Raisers* (1915) (From the collection of Gary D. Rhodes)

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*For Forrest J Ackerman, our dear friend who so greatly inspired us,
and
For Hal Roach and all the brilliant people who worked at his Laugh Factory.*

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Introduction

No area of Hollywood film history is in greater need of additional research and cataloging than the short subject. At the time of this writing, there are no complete encyclopedias of comedy short subjects, musical short subjects, or newsreels.¹ While many short subjects are listed in online databases, the number of errors in such entries render them spurious and of relatively little value. Here, then, is the rationale for this encyclopedia.

At the outset, it is important to note that the American film industry and its audience had evolving understandings of what constituted a “short subject,” particularly once that terminology came into usage. The first films were “short,” but had no need of that word until they had a comparator, the “long” film, or what became known as the “feature.” In 1915, the *New York Dramatic Mirror* wrote, “[M]uch has said on the relative merits of the short picture and the multiple reeler.”² By that point, a “feature craze” was underway.³ Many films, among them D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915), led to a growing understanding of what a “feature” film was and – by contrast – what was not.

As *Moving Picture World* noted in 1913, “Less than three years ago, the single reel held absolute sway.”⁴ The publication warned that “the coming of features ... will undoubtedly have a tendency to decrease the demand for the single reel.”⁵ That comment became true of all short subjects, whether they were one, two, or three reels in length. After becoming subservient to the feature, the short subject faced later threats from double feature programs that proliferated in the 1930s and thereafter.

Nevertheless, the theatrical short subject trudged onward. At times, as with some cartoon characters (like Mickey Mouse) and live action actors (like Laurel and Hardy), particular short subjects commanded much attention. The same was true of newsreels during World War II. However, as *National Board of Review Magazine* wrote sympathetically in 1947, all of these films were usually

seen as less important than features and grouped together under such vague publicity as “And Selected Short Subjects.”⁶

In 1959, *Motion Picture Exhibitor* suggested, “Although too long relegated to a filler classification on the program by most exhibitors, and hardly ever receiving their deserved advertising mention, the program rounder short subject has proven sturdy enough in an entertainment and artistic sense to more than hold its own.”⁷ Then, in 1963, the same publication predicted, “That short subjects will become more important in the next few years appears fairly certain.”⁸

The reality was much different, much less positive. Exhibitors rented fewer and fewer short subjects during the 1960s, causing them to die a slow death, such that by the late 1970s, the standard movie theater program consisted of coming attractions and a feature film, nothing more. Despite its inauspicious ending, though, the American theatrical short subject had an important history that spanned over sixty years, from circa 1915 to the mid-1970s.⁹

This history included a large number of short subjects that were part of – or in a dialogue with – horror. The genre terminology “horror film” (and, by extension, “horror movie”) did not come into common usage until 1931 and 1932, but horror-themed topics appeared in American cinema as early as 1895.¹⁰ Before 1915, devils, witches, ghosts, mummies, werewolves, and other characters associated with the later genre populated American cinema, as did adaptations of the works of Poe, Hawthorne, and Irving.¹¹ Of course, what precisely constitutes the horror genre remains the subject of continued debate.

For this encyclopedia, we have attempted to be as comprehensive as possible, listing all horror-related subjects that are three reels or shorter in length and that were released in America from 1915 to 1976. We include not only subjects regularly understood to be “horror,” but also horror-adjacent subjects, such as apes, cannibalism, dinosaurs, graveyards, hypnotism, magicians, mysteries, nightmares, psychics, robots, somnambulism, superstitions, and science fiction. Also chronicled are those non-horror shorts in which brief allusions are made to horror or horror film characters, as in the case of *Hollywood Steps Out* (1941), a Warner Bros. cartoon depicting movie stars at Ciro’s nightclub. Frankenstein’s Monster appears briefly, which merits its inclusion in this book. Our effort to be comprehensive will hopefully benefit readers and scholars who are seeking, for example, to determine the sheer number of times that given subjects – ranging from, say, skeletons to hypnotists – appeared onscreen, as well as in what narrative and thematic contexts.

By contrast, we intentionally do not catalog all appearances made by actors associated with the horror film genre, meaning, for example, every single time that someone like Boris Karloff or Bela Lugosi appeared in a short subject. The only such entries we include – in keeping with the remit of this encyclopedia – are those in which the narrative content is horror or horror adjacent.

It is also important to note that we catalog only short subjects that were theatrically released in America to mainstream theaters. These shorts range from live action to animated, from fiction to nonfiction.

That said, we do not include serials, which were released as short episodes but whose total running times exceed most feature films. We have also excluded coming attraction trailers, due to their sheer numbers which continue to the present day. Given the fact that some trailers contain unique footage not seen in the features they promote, they certainly deserve to be cataloged in another volume.

Non-theatrical horror short subjects also need to be cataloged elsewhere, ranging from government and industrial films to amateur and home movies. The same is true of sexploitation and pornographic cinema, whether shorts sold for the home market or those projected at non-mainstream venues. To be sure, non-theatrical horror short subjects have value. Consider the fascinating instructional film produced for theater managers about how to promote *Psycho* (1960), a short that at times has been wrongly identified as a theatrically released newsreel.

Collectively, the short subjects cataloged herein meaningfully augment our knowledge and understanding of American horror film history, specifically in terms of the decades prior to the 1930s, during which time many characters and storylines associated with the later, codified horror film genre appeared onscreen, as well as the period from the 1930s through the 1970s, given that horror film historians have largely focused on feature films rather than short subjects.

The sheer number of these shorts attests to their importance, as do the topics they covered. For example, contrary to popular belief, for example, *White Zombie* (1932) was *not* the first zombie film. Zombies had already appeared onscreen in 1931 short subject called *Curiosities*.

There are also particular eras of note, such as mid-1936 through 1938, when Hollywood generally avoided making horror or horror-themed feature films. The short subjects cataloged in this encyclopedia show that horror-themed topics still appeared onscreen during those years.

And then there are overarching conclusions to draw. Particularly important is the fact that a predominant number of the cataloged shorts were comedies that treated horror humorously, whether in live action films or in animated cartoons.

This encyclopedia is arranged chronologically by year, with films listed alphabetically within each year. Such a structure allows the reader who wishes to gain an overall understanding of these short subjects – including their numbers and specific subject matter over the years – the ability to do so.

For those who are using this encyclopedia to find particular types or sub-genres of horror, the index will be of assistance, as it includes not only film titles and cast and crew names, but also subjects, allowing one to find, for example, all of the short subjects that feature mummies or vampires or witches.

Individual entries offer basic information such as the films' titles, release dates, actors, directors, studios, and running times. The titles and release dates are for the American theatrical releases, even in those cases when the same

short had a different title and/or release date in its country of origin. Running times should be treated as approximate.

Notes on the films are written by David J. Hogan and Gary D. Rhodes. Depending on the entry, these include plot synopses and production information. The authors have rigorously researched the entries based upon examining thousands of historical documents and viewing hundreds of short subjects. In many cases, modern notations are not possible to provide, given that the specific films are either lost or – for reasons ranging from being unrestored at public archives to being held in private collections – are inaccessible for viewing.

When possible, quotations from period critical reviews are provided. They provide insight into how one or more critics at the time of release responded to these shorts, as well as offering narrative, thematic, and/or production information about them. This is particularly important in those cases where the short subjects are lost or inaccessible.

In terms of our reprints of such reviews, it is worth noting that reviews and articles on short subjects tended to be more common and more in-depth during the silent period than the sound era. That was even more true in terms of the period from 1915 through 1917, presumably because the industry tended to view shorts more importantly during those few years than in subsequent eras.

Critical reviews were not published for many short subjects, particularly from the 1920s onward, which explains their absence from those entries. It is also worth noting that on occasion critical reviews were published long after a given short's release, usually the result of its re-release. Publication titles are abbreviated in the entries. Their full titles are listed below:

<i>Bill</i>	<i>Billboard</i>
<i>Box</i>	<i>Boxoffice</i>
<i>DV</i>	<i>Daily Variety</i>
<i>FD</i>	<i>Film Daily</i>
<i>EDR</i>	<i>Exhibitors Daily Review</i>
<i>EH</i>	<i>Exhibitors Herald</i>
<i>Exhib</i>	<i>The Exhibitor</i>
<i>ETR</i>	<i>Exhibitors Trade Review</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Hollywood Reporter</i>
<i>IFJ</i>	<i>Independent Film Journal</i>
<i>IFSS</i>	<i>Inside Facts of Stage and Screen</i>
<i>MA</i>	<i>Movie Age</i>
<i>Motog</i>	<i>Motography</i>
<i>MP</i>	<i>Motion Picture</i>
<i>MPA</i>	<i>Moving Picture Age</i>
<i>MPD</i>	<i>Motion Picture Daily</i>
<i>MPE</i>	<i>Motion Picture Exhibitor</i>
<i>MPH</i>	<i>Motion Picture Herald</i>
<i>MPN</i>	<i>Motion Picture News</i>
<i>MPR</i>	<i>Motion Picture Reviews</i>

MPW	<i>Moving Picture World</i>
NBRM	<i>National Board of Review Magazine</i>
PE	<i>Philadelphia Exhibitor</i>
PP	<i>Photoplay</i>
PPW	<i>Photo-Play World</i>
PS	<i>Pathé Sun</i>
RL	<i>Reel Life</i>
STR	<i>Showmen's Trade Review</i>
TW	<i>Tullar's Weekly</i>
UW	<i>Universal Weekly</i>
Var	<i>Variety</i>
WFR	<i>Weekly Film Review</i>

For the sake of internal consistency, the same abbreviations are used throughout this volume, even when a publication title changed during its run. For example, prior to 1922, *Film Daily* was known as *Wid's Daily* (1918–21), *Wid's Independent Review of Feature Films* (1916–18), and *Wid's Film and Film Folk* (1915–16). Nevertheless, *FD* is the abbreviation used throughout.

When entries include both quotations from period critical reviews and modern plot synopses, this is an intentional effort to provide readers and researchers with as much relevant information as possible. For example, the critical review might not have mentioned certain aspects of a film's plot or characters that our modern text can include.

Catalogs and encyclopedias are invariably, perhaps inevitably, incomplete. The sheer volume of short subjects produced and/or released theatrically in America is enormous. For the single season of 1931–32, meaning a twelve-month period, fifteen American companies produced approximately 1500 short subjects.¹² About 1500 just for a single year. As a result, we anticipate and welcome the need for a second edition as more horror shorts become known.¹³

In the interim, we sincerely hope this volume adds meaningfully to the body of film history knowledge.

NOTES

1. We do acknowledge the importance and value of two encyclopedias, Graham Webb's *Encyclopedia of American Short Films, 1926–1959* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2020) and Roy Liebman's *Vitaphone Films: A Catalogue of the Features and Shorts* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2010).
2. "How Long Should Films Be?," *New York Dramatic Mirror*, February 24, 1915.
3. *Ibid.*
4. W. Stephen Bush, "The Future of the Single Reel," *Moving Picture World*, April 19, 1913, 256.
5. Bush, 256.
6. "—And Selected Short Subjects," *National Board of Review Magazine*, December 1947, 14.

7. "The Shorts Parade: A Company by Company Look at 1960 Short Subject Plans," *Motion Picture Exhibitor*, Nov. 25, 1959, 22.
8. F.J.A. McCarthy, "The Long and Short of It for 1963," *Motion Picture Exhibitor*, December 5, 1962, 12.
9. The reference to "circa 1915" is to the "short subject" with that name, as judged against the proliferation of feature films.
10. For more information, see Gary D. Rhodes, "'Horror Film': How the Term Came to Be," *Monstrum*, No. 1, April 2018, 90–115.
11. For more information, see Gary D. Rhodes, *The Birth of the American Horror Film* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).
12. "1,500 Shorts for '31–32 Release," *Film Daily*, September 6, 1931, 1.
13. We also hope that narrative information will become available on short subjects with titles that suggest horror-related content, such as two films produced by the Monitor Film Company, *The House of a Thousand Spooks* (1916) and *The Ghost of Mooredown Manor* (1917), as well as *Spooks and Spasms* (Vitagraph, 1917), *The Mummy's Nightmare* (Pacific, 1922), and *Buster's Dark Mystery* (Century, 1927). The same is also true of a trio of Ebony Film Corporation releases: *Devil for a Day* (1917), *Spooks* (1918), and *When You Are Scared, Run* (1918). Without reliable plot synopses, it is not possible to include these shorts, as titles implying horror content are sometimes deceptive.



Entries 1915–76

1915

Arrow Maiden, The (1915)

Dove Eye, a tribal medicine woman, is persuaded by Eagle Eye to cast an evil charm over his rival. Brave Heart dies the next day, and Arrow Maiden follows her lover's body to the grave. Eagle Eye, gloating in his victory, contrives to be chosen medicine man, but Dove Eye frustrates his plan. She avenges herself and resurrects Brave Heart who later hurls Eagle Eye over the cliff. The lovers are reunited. (*Motog*, July 17, 1915)

Starring: Billie West
Studio: Reliance
Running time: 1 reel

Bombay Buddha, The (1915)

The idol is seen being taken from the Powers family safe, by some unknown. Detectives are employed to recover it and a number of Hindoos are brought into play. Though the plot ingredients in this are very familiar there is still a pleasing novelty in the development of this story. The detective's ruse for locating the idol was a good one. The photography is good and the story as a whole retains the interest well. (*MPW*, Apr. 17, 1915)

Barnard Power and his wife are made prisoners by Hindoos because of their possession of a golden statue of Buddha, which Power has insured for \$100,000. The Powers hide the statue in a pool and plan to collect the insurance on it and still retain the statue. The insurance investigator discovers this. Meanwhile a band of Hindoos make the Powers confess the hiding place of the Buddha. When they

look for the statue it is gone, and the insurance investigator makes his appearance with the information that the statue is in his possession and that the Powers are his prisoners as are also the Hindoos because the latter had stolen the statue originally, and were wanted by the Bombay police for this crime. (*Motog*, Apr. 17, 1915)

Producer: Stuart Baton
 Writer: John B. Clymer
 Studio: Imp
 Running time: 3 reels

Boob and the Magician, The (1915)

Burlesque with settings intended to represent a theater in which a magician performs wonderful tricks until the boob comes to his assistance. Then everything goes wrong. While the action is hardly sufficient for a full reel, it is enlivened every once in a while by touches of broad comedy that please an audience. (*MPW*, Mar. 20, 1915)

Starring: Madge Kirby
 Studio: Biograph
 Running time: 1 reel

Buried City, A (1915)

Starting on a trip with the professor to see how archaeological explorations are made. Homer Croy sees the remains of the 'kings' feet,' done in stone many thousands of years ago. The professor shows Mr. Croy where the digging goes. They walk through the streets of Cairo showing where mummies have been found. Then they come to a former tomb. Later, a miniature railway is shown which is used in making the excavations, and the workmen discover a mummy 4,000 years old. The dust has to be carefully blown aside in order not to disturb the crumbling bones which are shown in a close-up of the picture. The professor shows a bust of a former king of Egypt. The relic is 3,000 years old. A scene follows showing the finds sent to America and our flag floating a few feet from the Great Pyramid over the professor's house. (*MPW*, May 22, 1915)

Notes: Nonfiction travelogue, also known as *A Buried City as Seen by Homer Croy*
 Studio: Big 'U'
 Running time: 1 reel

Cannibal King, The (1915)

Willie, who is penniless, sees an advertisement asking for extra people in a motion picture production entitled *The Cannibal's Bride*. He secures the position and is all fixed up scandalously when he hears familiar voices and comes face to face with

his hated rival and his adored one. All he wants is to get away and in so doing he upsets the cameraman and vaults the fence. Meanwhile Grace has been all upset by the experiences in the studio and when Willie dashes into the library of her home he interrupts a love scene and implores Grace to find a hiding place. He makes himself known to the girl and she hides him under several rugs. After the police have gone he proposes and is accepted. (*Motog*, July 10, 1915)

Studio: Lubin

Running time: Split-reel

Cheval Mystery, The (1915)

This offering, produced by Harry C. Myers, begins with a murder mystery. In the very first scene is shown the body of a man lying in the woods. A hunter is seen in the distance, nonchalantly looking for game. Then the observer sees a girl running through the woods, minus a hat. She pauses long enough to cast aside a revolver; the hunter then observes her kneeling beside a stream. The girl is in a hysterical state, and after drinking faints upon the rocks.

The opening scenes arouse the interest and are commendable for the effective manner in which they present the mystery. There is no padding and any number of possibilities for the crime are suggested.

Later the girl appears at the house where the body has been carried, inside the streets of the town. She is searching for her aunt, a Mrs. Streeter, and the lady of the house takes her in. A letter explains that her mother has died, leaving no one to care for her but Gaston Cheval, her father's stepbrother. The letter from the dying mother expresses distrust of Cheval, and later developments prove that this feeling on her part was by no means groundless.

The girl having found a home with her aunt soon has Cheval on her trail. He is a hypnotist of the Svengali type. His power over her was originally achieved while traveling with a side show and is exerted in such a manner that at his command the girl becomes a raging fiend. The hunter, who saw the girl in the woods, appears in due time and charges her with the murder. In the interim Cheval has been exercising his hypnotic influence to suit his own purposes. The scenes in the house during the girl's paroxysms are of a sensational, uncanny sort.

Following the accusation, the girl recovers herself and relates her story, telling the hero and his mother of her own mother's death and the way in which Cheval has victimized her. The latter is finally brought to confess that he himself committed the murder in the woods in order to rid himself of the girl's admirer. This frees Nana and at the close she and the hero find happiness together. This story, hinging as it does upon hypnotic influence, is not very new in plot; neither does it possess any great depth. (*MPW*, June 26, 1915)

Starring: Harry Myers, Rosemary Theby

Studio: Victor

Running time: 3 reels

Club Pest, The (1915)

His club mates bet him fifty dollars that he wouldn't spend the night in a haunted house, and proceeded to make ghostly things happen. Discovering the trick, Mr. Bore pretended to commit suicide, turned the tables on his friends, and won the bet. (*MPW*, Feb. 6, 1915)

Studio: Biograph

Running time: Split-reel

Colonel Heeza Liar, Ghost Breaker (1915)

Colonel Heeza Liar has returned to our midst again, and we are sure a right royal welcome will be extended to him. The Colonel, who is undoubtedly the greatest rival of his contemporary, Baron Munchausen, enters into a new field of investiga-

6 MOTION PICTURE NEWS Vol. II, No. 5

GOOD NEWS FOR ALL FILM LOVERS
A New Animated Cartoon Comedy by J. R. Bray



COL. HEEZA LIAR—GHOST BREAKER

When an exhibitor runs a Bray cartoon you can hear the roars of laughter for blocks. First in the field they are easily the best. They are not only excruciatingly funny but exceedingly life like.

In this latest exploit of the inimitable little colonel, he goes upon a ghost hunt—but the hunter becomes the hunted. See it and you'll have sore sides for a week. Joined with **THE GREAT EARED BAT** (Madagascar) to form 1000 feet of solid enjoyment.

THE PATHE EXCHANGE, Inc.
25 West 45th Street, New York

Fig. 1 Pathé trade ad, in *Motion Picture News*, for *Col. Heeza Liar—Ghost Breaker* (1915)

tion — that of psychic research. He is the guest of honor of the Royal Society of Ghost-Chasers, who regale him with tales of hair-raising and harrowing experiences. They look for evidences of fear in his countenance, but only scorn radiates therefrom. Who ever heard of the doughty Colonel fearing a mortal, much less an immortal? To prove his utter disrespect for apparitions, he agrees to sleep at the ancient Castle Clare, owned by his friend, Lord Helpus. He enters his assigned chamber and prepares for a snooze. The magic hour of midnight at last rolls 'round, and in a moment the air is filled with weird and ghostly sounds. The banshees are at work. The Colonel, from his bed, gives vent to these thoughts: 'If I could see who makes that din I'd bust his bloomin' coco in.' The next moment he does see, and his blood suddenly turns to water and freezes at the dread apparition. Seeking to evade the midnight prowler, the now quaking Colonel rises from his bed and flees for his life; but nothing seems proof against the advances of his awful foe. Should the Colonel lock a door, the Ghost comes through the key-hole ... there also follows the shadow demon. Just as the Colonel is about to expire from fright, his life is saved by the ghost's mortal enemy, 'One o'clock.' With a final wail, the banshee [goes] to a neighboring graveyard. The Colonel breathes again. (*MPW*, Feb. 6, 1915)

The Colonel's experiences in the haunted room, all for the sake of winning a wager, are memorable events. (*MPW*, Feb. 13, 1915)

Notes: Animated cartoon

Artist: J. B. Raby

Studio: Pathé

Running time: Split-reel

Colonel Heeza Liar, Ghost Breaker (Second Part) (1915)

After his wild and harrowing experience with the ghosts of Castle Clare, the doughty Colonel vows that it was 'some time,' but he is game for another set-to with spooks. Approaching the ancient castle through a graveyard, he quakes with fear on beholding a skeleton rise from a grave. Heeza beats it for the castle, and locks himself in the bedchamber. He slips into bed, and prepares for developments. His unmusical snores reverberate through the castle when, awakening suddenly, he beholds friend skeleton rising from the floor. Heeza hides under the bed, but old 'bones' soon has him on the run. Picking up a chair, Heeza prepares to lambast the spook, but the spook is proof against all assaults, so the quaking Colonel decides to retreat. He goes to sleep in another room, but is awakened by the antics of the furniture, which seems to be possessed with life. 'This is no place for me,' sighs the Colonel and once more makes a retreat, but 'Bones' is on the job and follows him. Heeza scatters the skeleton with a well-directed blow of his club, but it avails him nothing, as the bones refuse to stay scattered. Realizing that he is up against too tough a proposition, Heeza decides that as a ghost breaker he is an 'onion' and gives up the fight. (*MPW*, Feb. 27, 1915)

Notes: Animated cartoon, released on a different, subsequent reel from the first *Colonel Heeza Liar, Ghost Breaker*

Artist: J. B. Raby

Studio: Pathé

Running time: Split-reel

Curing the Cook (1915)

Cooking in a student's boarding house is what Sherman thought of war, so thought poor Bridget, and to forget her trouble, she would sit all day with a black bottle beside her. 'We want lunch—we want lunch,' quoth the starved-out students. 'A cook, a cook, our learning for a sober cook,' said they all. However, the cook had a gentle hang-over and would not move. The landlady finally extricated Bridget from the aforesaid bottle, and set her to mixing some week-old hash.

What will the students do? Ah, one has a plan. They will cure the cook by means of a skeleton that they have. They hang it in the coal-bin. Bridget sees it, invokes the aid of seventy saints and runs. 'Everywhere, here and there, but the skeleton her pursues.' She falls off the roof and breaks all the new pavement, for which the landlady assessed the students one 'bone' apiece. She mixes up the crowded traffic of Bingville by getting run over by an automobile, and then, refusing to collect a crowd, boatmen, policemen, everyone, are skeletons, but she learns her mistake, beats up and ducks the stew-reforming students and then swears off. (*MPW*, Jan. 9, 1915)

Director: Charles Ranson

Studio: Edison

Running time: Split-reel

Devilish Dream, A (1915)

Fritz and his wife have one of their daily arguments and Fritz retires to his room. His wife's parting words are to the effect that unless he ceases his dissipations, the old Nick himself will get him. Fritz laughs at the prophecy, but is no sooner in bed than wonders begin. He is transported to the lower regions, where he meets not only the Prince of Darkness, but has the honor to be introduced to all the little Princes, with the result that his visit is marked by several unpleasant adventures. Overcome at last by the persistency of their attentions, he makes an attempt to escape. Old Nick and his pet imp follow him through the air and back to the city. Finally, however, Fritz manages to evade them. Awakening in his room, he is again tempted to imbibe, but the vision that appears in the bottle works a complete reformation. (*MPW*, Mar. 27, 1915)

Producer: Bruce Mitchell

Writer: G. C. Peterson

Studio: Thistle

Running time: 1 reel

Devil's Darling, The (1915)

The plot is a variation of the 'Faust' theme; in this case a woman sells her soul to the devil in order to retain her beauty. This part of Irma is a repulsive one, yet well handled; she entices the girl from her work and tries to procure her ruin. Phillip, a young Minister, arrives just in time to save the girl from a wretched fate. This combines a half-mystic theme with some familiar white slave situations. It is well-constructed and a fairly strong offering of its type. (*MPW*, Nov. 6, 1915)

Notes: This film included images of Hell.

Starring: Francine Larrimore, Flavia Arcaro, John Reinhard, H. W. Pemberton

Studio: Rialto

Running time: 3 reels

Distilled Spirits (1915)

This one-reel MinA film is said to be one of the most advanced examples of trick photography on record. It tells the story of an inebriate and visualizes his delirium, the grotesque horrors of which bring about his complete reformation. Milton Fahrney, against whose name many great successes have been recorded, was the director of *Distilled Spirits*, scoring thereby the greatest achievement of his long career.

Distilled Spirits is a comedy which depends largely upon its situations for humor. An interest larger than the laugh is created by its incredibly skillful mechanics, and in the tenseness of its rapidly developed story. In addition to this, *Distilled Spirits* points a high moral lesson, and with its many elements of appeal should prove one of the most exceptional releases of the day. (*MPW*, Jan. 9, 1915)

This is one of the finest exhibitions of trick photography that has been shown upon the screen for many moons. The story starts out with a booze fiend husband taking his wife's wash-money to buy the wherewith to quench his thirst, then he crawls into a barrel and falls asleep and the things that happen to him in his delirium are wild and wonderful. This picture is an out of the ordinary one, and will please any audience in any house. (*MPW*, Jan. 30, 1915)

Director: Milton Fahrney

Studio: MinA

Running time: 1 reel

Dragon's Claw, The (1915)

Its theme circles around an Indian curio representing a dragon's claw which is the good luck omen of a certain Indian tribe. Possessed by a little girl's father at the time of his murder by a bandit gang, this claw was stolen by their leader. Years later the girl, now a woman, finds out that her husband possesses a dragon's claw and, believing it to be the only one in existence, believes that she has married the murderer of her father. Not able to bring herself to kill this man in cold blood,

she leaves him alone on the desert to die. He sees that she is being molested by some highwaymen and saves her at the cost of his own life. She again deserts him and comes upon an Indian trader who has a score or so of these dragon's claws. It develops that they are very common in the neighborhood. Realizing her awful mistake, she goes back to the dead body of her husband to mourn over it.

Getting away from both the cut-and-dried western picture on the one hand and the conventional society drama on the other, this feature promises to be a big drawing card. (*MPW*, Oct. 2, 1915)

Writer: Stanner E. V. Taylor
 Starring: Walter Hampden, Marion Leonard
 Studio: Knickerbocker Star Feature
 Running time: 3 reels

Droppington's Devilish Deed (1915)

This is a roaring piece of slapstick comedy, which is well done, and will keep any audience in constant laughter. Droppington ... is seen as a scene shifter in a theatre. His antics and those of his companion are remarkable, to say the least. A scene supposed to show the devil arising from his home is mistaken by Droppington for a real fire, and he uses the fire hose with telling effect. (*MPN*, Apr. 24, 1915)

Starring: Chester Conklin
 Studio: Keystone
 Running time: 1 reel

Duel in the Dark, The (1915)

[T]he wife of a prosecuting attorney falls a victim to a hypnotist. Her husband is at the time engaged in routing out the fakers in this and kindred lines. The hypnotist compels her to install a dictograph in her husband's room and betray him in other ways. The duel in the dark is where she and her daughter fight to free the mother's mind from the hypnotist's power. This plot is somewhat similar to previous offerings of the kind and makes an offering of about average strength throughout. (*MPW*, Mar. 27, 1915)

Writer: Philip Lonergan
 Studio: Thanhouser
 Running time: 2 reels

Eastland Horror (1915)

This picture contains between 300 and 350 feet of film showing the removal of the bodies of the victims of the steamboat disaster at Chicago. (*MPW*, Aug. 14, 1915)

The photography of this film is most clear, which, considering the fact that the pictures were taken during a drizzling rain, is quite remarkable. The film selected

to make up this one thousand-foot reel shows the rescue work in taking the victims from the wrecked hull; the dragging of the Chicago river for bodies; the enormous crowds gathered on the bridges and in the streets; the loading of the bodies on ambulances improvised from delivery trucks; pictures of some of the survivors; the lines of relatives and friends stretching for many blocks from the second regiment armory, used as a morgue. (*MPN*, Aug. 14, 1915)

Notes: The apparent discrepancy in running times between the *MPW* and *MPN* reviews might not be a discrepancy. It is possible that in 1000 feet of film, only 300–350 feet showed corpses. Other footage of the Eastland disaster appeared in the newsreels *Hearst-Selig News Pictorial*, No. 61 (1915), *Pathé News*, No. 60 (1915), and *Universal Animated Weekly*, No. 177 (1915).

Studio: Mutual

Running time: 1 reel

Eleventh Dimension, The (1915)

Professor Singleton believes that there is existence after death. He disapproves of his daughter's love for Lloyd Chambers and favors Dr. Lovejoy's attentions. He spends most of his days and nights in the laboratory experimenting. On one occasion, after a flash, he becomes frenzied. Dr. Lovejoy appears and is chloroformed and strapped to a chair by the professor. When he regains consciousness and pleads for mercy, the professor suggests that they play a game of chess, the loser to give up his life. The doctor cheats and wins. The professor shoots himself, and is surprised to find that he still lives. The police arrive, break open the door to the laboratory, and when the professor, whose life has been saved by the deflection of the bullet on his watch, sees his daughter being embraced by young Lloyd, his reason is restored. He realizes that there is but one real dimension, and that is love. (*Motog*, July 17, 1915)

An attempt at a drama that is hardly worthy of a place on the Universal program. The story shows a demented professor's attempts to secure a subject to operate on to prove his theory in an after-existence. The photography is poor, there are too many closeups, while the story as a whole is too improbable to entertain. The last scenes, it must be admitted, create a good bit of suspense, but as far as elevating the entire picture, they cannot do the impossible. (*MPN*, July 17, 1915)

Stories of mental infirmity always have an unpleasant tinge. At the same time this plot, which centers around an insane chemist, who tries to kill a man and then restore life, has numerous qualities which are commendable. The girl first suspects her father's loss of reason and brings aid just as he is in the act of trying to kill a friend named Lovejoy. The game of chess and later the bullet imbedded in the watch were good features. There is considerable suspense in the later scenes. (*MPW*, July 17, 1915)

Starring: William E. Welsh, Howard Crampton, Allen Holubar, Frances Nelson

Studio: Imp

Running time: 2 reels

Experiment, The (1915)

Max Weldon, college chum of George Foster, is somewhat of a hypnotist and during his stay at the Foster home over the holidays is asked to experiment on Grace, George's sister. In full view of the family he subjugates the mind of Grace and while she is in the hypnotic state directs that at midnight she shall rise from bed, walk downstairs and get a knife from the table in the living room and carry it back to George's room. She asks to be told what Max had directed, upon being awakened, but they withhold it from her.

In order that he may see his daughter actually following the directions of the hypnotist, Mr. Foster remains up. He dozes, however, and fearing that he will miss the experiment, places his hand on the knife so as to be aroused when Grace takes it. The boys await the result of the experiment upstairs with much avidity. In the interim a burglar enters the living room and in a struggle with the intruder Mr. Foster is hurt, only superficially, however, the shock rendering him unconscious.

At midnight Grace wakes up and guided by her subconscious mind, puts on her kimono and slippers and proceeds downstairs. She takes the knife which has blood upon it as the result of the fracas, and returns upstairs. She gives the blood-spattered knife to Max, who immediately wakens her and shows her what she has done. Grace, of course, is puzzled. The three hasten to the room where Mr. Foster is lying unconscious in a chair beside the table. The police had been notified of the trouble at the Foster home when a central office operator became alarmed at hearing what seemed like a tussle, over the phone, which had been knocked from the table. Upon the arrival of the police it is seen that a window is open and one of the officers goes to investigate. The burglar had fallen behind a sofa, weakened from a wound received in the struggle, and he was hauled to his feet by the officers. Mr. Foster regains consciousness and identifies him as his assailant. Thus the experiment worked, but not as disastrously as at first thought. (*MPW*, Feb. 20, 1915)

Starring: Bessie Learn, Richard Tucker, Saul Harrison, Richard Brower

Studio: Edison

Running time: 1 reel

Fakir, The (1915)

He first appears as a travelling hypnotist and she as his unwilling subject. She flees and again comes in contact with him at a social function when he is posing as a Hindu fakir. He forces her to rob the house, but is shot by a policeman and the girl is released from his spell. In spite of jerky construction and lack of suspense in several places where it might have been obtained, this is above the average production of this kind. The story is quite absorbing in its way and well staged throughout. The close is dramatic. (*MPW*, Apr. 3, 1915)

Starring: Walter Edwards, Rhea Mitchell

Studio: Domino

Running time: 2 reels

Foiled (1915)

Bud Duncan has a strenuous time in this comedy, trying to wed the girl. Pitted against him are cutthroats, yeggs, gunmen, and scoundrels of every description. Bud succeeds in putting them all to rout, until Reckless Reginald, the arch-fiend, employs an East Indian yogi, who by hypnotism and black art, still further complicates the hero's plans. (*MPN*, Oct. 2, 1915)

Starring: Bud Duncan, Ethel Teare

Studio: Kalem

Running time: 1 reel

Fortune Tellers, The (1915)

The idea on which the picture is based is a good one, and allows for plenty of good business. The two loafers who have long ago agreed that the world owes them a living have decided to go into the fortune telling business. They get mixed up with a female Raffles, as usual both fall in love with the same lady, especially with her fortune, and through these circumstances some comical incidents arise. (*MPW*, May 8, 1915)

Starring: Heine and Louie

Studio: Starlight

Running time: 1 reel

Freaks (1915)

Herculo, the strong man of the sideshow, showers his attentions on Yum Yum, the beautiful Circassian maid. Hamus, a broken-down actor, is very hungry and tries to steal a handout from the mess tent. The manager notices how thin Hamus is and engages him as a living skeleton. Yum Yum transfers her affections to the newcomer. Herculo starts a riot and gets the worst of it. Yum Yum finds a photo of a woman among Hamus' effects and, sure that he is false, returns to Herculo. The innocent Hamus pines away, gets thinner, and has his salary doubled. The original of the photo arrives with her ten children and recognizes Herculo as her long-lost husband. Yum Yum collapses in the arms of Hamus. (*Motog*, July 17, 1915)

This is way below Allen Curtis' standard offering. A great number of the scenes are too dimly photographed to comprehend without eye strain, while the leads, made up as freaks, are anything but pleasant to look at. Milburn J. Moranti especially, as the human skeleton, is quite repelling. (*MPN*, July 17, 1915)

Starring: Max Asher, Gale Henry, William Franey, Lillian Peacock, Milburn Moranti (aka Milburn Morante)

Producer: Allen Curtis

Writer: Clarence Badger

Studio: Joker

Running time: 1 reel