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Monster & The Ape (1946/Cheezy Flicks DVD Set) + **Red Barry** (1938/VCI DVD Set/Universal Serials)

Picture: C-/C Sound: C
Extras: C- Episodes: C/C+



Universal's serials were as numerous as those of Republic and Columbia, so much so that they are *still* making their DVD debuts at this late a date. One reason is how hard it can be to find all the prints for all the chapters, rights in some cases could be another and then you have to have companies willing to issue them and not all want to. Cheezy Flicks and VCI Entertainment have been adamant in issuing serials from all the companies and they each have a new release that happens to be Universal-produced.

The Monster & The Ape (1946) offers us Metalogen Man battling a killer gorilla named Thor in one of the oddest, wackiest, dumbest and silliest serial of them all. Not great by any standards, an electronics lab has created its man/machine, while a deadly trainer has made Thor a crime-fighting ape. Robert Lowery, George Macready, Ralph Morgan, Carole Mathews and Ray "Crash" Corrigan (as the robot) star.

Red Barry (1938) is a 13-chapter actioner with Larry "Buster" Crabbe as the title police detective, trying to track down millions of dollars in savings bonds. This pits him against two groups of enemy agents (one Chinese, the other Russian!) plus other unexpected dangers. Based on a then-famous comic strip, Universal wanted to see if they could get Crabbe into a hit outside of Flash Gordon or Buck Rogers, but it was not as commercially successful, yet it has energy, some action, a bunch of unintended laughs and shows us that Crabbe could have been a regular action hero outside of space operas. Edna Sedgewick, Frances Robinson, Stanley Price and Cyril Delavanti co-star.

The 1.33 X 1 black and white image in both cases come from decent prints, considering the age of the productions, but **Ape** has weak Video Black in a way that hampers the appearance of the picture, while **Barry** is older and has some more flaws for it, yet looks better overall. The Dolby Digital 2.0 Mono in both cases I more on par with weak sound showing the condition of the prints, and budget limits of the sound for the time of the productions. As far as extras go, both have trailers, then **Ape** adds Intermission Shorts and **Barry** a stills section.

- Nicholas Sheffo

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