

## '50s PHLASHBACKS!

### ARROW VIDEO

(\$39.95 2-disc Blu-ray + DVD) 4/17

#### CALTIKI, THE IMMORTAL MONSTER (1959)B&W

D: Riccardo Freda (as John Hamton), Mario Bava (uncredited). John Merivale, Didi Sullivan, Gerard Herter, Giacomo Rossi Stuart, Vittorio Andre, Daniel Vargas. 76 mins.

Take a heaping helping of **The Quatermass Xperiment** (aka **The Creeping Unknown**), mix with a generous scoop of **The Blob**, add a dash of Lovecraft, heat over a roiling volcano, serve Italian-style, and you have the vintage beast feast **Caltiki, the Immortal Monster**. Truth be told, your Phantom has been waiting to see this flick since he missed it lo these many millennia ago when it played one week only with a creature co-feature at Hollis, Queens' long-vanished Island Theater. Back in those days, pics like **Caltiki** could be gone in an eye-blink—sometimes never to appear again, occasionally to resurface some six decades later, in this instance courtesy of the genre-conscious folks at Arrow Video. Arrow's black-and-white 2K Blu-ray transfer is kind to soon-to-be revered auteur Mario Bava's (credited as "John Foam") oft-atmospheric cinematography but quite cruel to his (as "Marie Foam") special effects, unmercifully exposed as the chintzy miniatures they were. The titular menace is initially discovered during an archeological dig amid Mayan ruins in Mexico, a substance fallen from the skies that apparently hastened that civilization's disappearance. The situation grows dangerous when the at-first modestly scaled monster, which resembles nothing so much as a wet cloth manipulated by an unseen hand, expands exponentially until it attains almost unthinkable strength and size and decides to throw its weight around. A second serious threat emerges in the form of deranged, vengeful expedition member Max Gunther (Herter), contaminated by **Caltiki**, who rampages about much in the manner of toxic astronaut Victor Caroon (Richard Wordsworth) in the above-cited **Xperiment**. The plot proceeds in a fairly predictable arc as expedition leader Prof. John Fielding (Canadian Merivale) and wife Ellen (Brit Sullivan) seek to end the two-pronged attack. Was **Caltiki** worth the wait? Not overwhelmingly, but the film supplies enough nostalgic entertainment value to earn a look by monster-mad boomers and Bava buffs alike. Arrow adds many tasty sides to their Italo dish, including separate commentaries by Bava scholars Tim Lucas and Troy Howarth, a discussion with critic Kim Newman, archival interviews with Italo auteur Luigi Cozzi and critic Stefano Della Casa.

—The Phantom

### SCREAM FACTORY

(\$27.99 Blu-ray each) 4/17

#### THE FOUR SKULLS OF JONATHAN DRAKE (1959)B&W

D: Edward L. Cahn. Henry Daniell, Valerie French, Edward Franz, Grant Richards, Paul Cavanagh. 70 mins.

**The Four Skulls of Jonathan Drake** is a little gem waiting to be rediscovered. The shadowy lighting is superb and the obviously stagebound (though not cheap-looking) "outdoor" sets create an otherworldly atmosphere of dread and fear. The Drake family, it seems, has been under a curse for centuries. All male family members die at age 60. They are then decapitated in their coffins, their heads shrunken and their skulls returned to the family mausoleum. Jonathan Drake (Franz) is the last of the male line. His brother has just met the family fate, and it becomes eerily obvious that his time is coming. As the cause of the curse is revealed, it grows apparent that uber-creepy family friend Dr. Zurich (Daniell) is not who—or what—he appears to be. His true identity, which I won't spoil, is one of the few truly surprise endings I've seen in a horror film. In sum, this is a fun B movie!

—David-Elijah Nahmod

#### I BURY THE LIVING (1958)B&W

D: Albert Band. Richard Boone, Theodore Bikel, Peggy Maurer, Herbert Anderson. 76 mins.

Albert (Father of Charles) Band helms an offbeat shocker with surreal touches supplied by veteran Czech montage master Slavko Vorkapich. Reluctant cemetery overseer Robert Kraft (Boone) finds that by sticking black pins (for deceased) into a burial-grounds map, he can cause the demise of the plot's unwary owner/future resident, an entirely unwanted power. Late folksinger/actor Bikel (in Captain Kangaroo-style makeup) plays Andy McKee, an elderly caretaker with a wandering Scottish accent. Marred by a disappointing ending, **I Bury the Living** is still well worth a look for its fresh storyline, Boone's uncharacteristically subdued performance, and Vorkapich's eerie contributions. Paul Landres' excellent tragi-chiller **The Vampire** (1957), starring John Beal as a doctor transformed into an unwitting bloodsucker by experimental pills, and AIP's 1958 **The Screaming Skull** ("a motion picture magnificent in its horror," per the trailer) complete Scream's fresh '50s fear foursome.

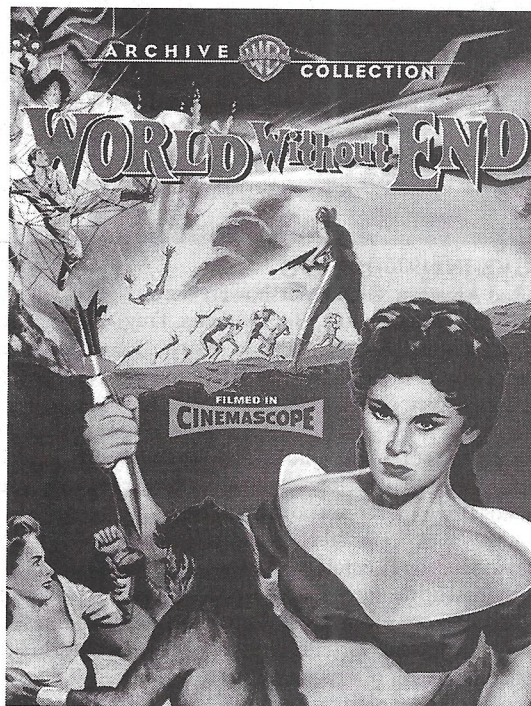
### WARNER ARCHIVE

(\$21.99 Blu-ray) 3/17

#### WORLD WITHOUT END (1956)

D: Edward Bernds. Hugh Marlowe, Nancy Gates, Nelson Leigh, Rod Taylor, Shawn Smith, Lisa Montell, Christopher Dark. 80 mins.

Four intrepid astronauts board a Meliesian spaceship, adjust control panels that appear to be as-



sembled from stuff found in a '50s garage, settle into their Barca Loungers and zoom off to explore Mars. Unforeseen circumstances force a crash-landing on an unknown planet that looks suspiciously like Earth and, with its colorful plush-toy spiders, possibly even Sesame Street. Our heroes—resourceful leader John Borden (Marlowe), dignified Dr. Gailbraithe (Leigh), hunky Herb (Taylor), and taciturn Hank (Dark)—soon discern from the surrounding terrain that it's more likely Colorado or New Mexico, in the 26th century, where, instead of buffalo, spear-tossing Cyclopean "Mutates" roam. Our guys also discover a high-tech underground enclave harboring the last civilized humans, mostly thin older gents in bathing caps and double-hubba starlets in scanties and skimpiers. Borden and crew strike up romances with the local lovelies, attempt to instill the passive subterraneans with the "guts" needed to reclaim the surface, and contend with resident bad guy Mories (Booth Colman), who's out to subvert the Earthlings' efforts. This relatively lavish (for Allied Artists, formerly Monogram Pictures) effort, written and directed by veteran B hand Bernds, is more than a bit reminiscent of Monogram's earlier color space pic **Flight to Mars** (1951). But the recycled **World** still supplies fairly rousing fun for '50s genre hounds with its parade of leggy ladies, imaginatively cheesy set designs, mutant battles, and choice lines. (To wit: "How do we fight several hundred savages with guns that burst?") The Mutate leader is played by big Mickey Simpson, a bit of a step down from his supporting role as belligerent diner owner Sarge in the same year's George Stevens blockbuster **Giant**. Withal, **World Without End** is no **Forbidden Planet** but rates as must viewing for monster kids, even if even Warner Archive's sharp new Blu-ray further exposes the pic's cost-efficient look.

—The Phantom