



Robert Florey's Frankenstein Starring Bela Lugosi

Philip J. Riley

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With the success of Dracula, starring Bela Lugosi, Universal Pictures was quick to capitalize on creating a new Lon Chaney in Bela Lugosi. Chaney had been the original choice to portray a dual role as both Dracula and Professor van Helsing, Dracula's adversary. Before production could begin Chaney died suddenly leaving Carl Laemmle Jr. without a star. Laemmle Jr. had seen Dracula on the stage in New York City, although he could not recall if he had seen Lugosi or Raymond Huntley in the role of Count Dracula. However Lugosi was performing in the touring company which happened to be in Los Angeles at that time. Was he the new Lon Chaney? Lugosi was not Carl Jr's first choice for the role. However he eventually won the part and now they needed more ideas for him. "Murders in the Rue Morgue", "Cagliostro", "The Invisible Man" and "Frankenstein" were top on the list. One day in March 1931 Robert Florey, recently returned to Hollywood from Europe, was having lunch at the Musso and Frank Restaurant on Hollywood Boulevard. He was approached by an old acquaintance, Richard Schayer, head of Universal's story department. Schayer told him that his studio was looking for ideas for a new horror film to star Bela Lugosi and he knew Florey was involved with The Théâtre du Grand-Guignol de Paris, (a small theater, in an obscure alley in Paris which specialized in sadistic, shocking, explicit, violent melodramas and became known as the "Theater of Horrors". It opened in 1897 and closed in 1962.) They both agreed on "Frankenstein" being the best choice. Schayer suggested that Florey would stand a better chance at being assigned writer and director if he were to present the idea to Carl Laemmle Jr. We present now the script for "Frankenstein" as it would have been had Bela Lugosi starred; and Rober Florey directed.

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