


KARLOFF ★ FRIGHT NIGHT ★ THE BRIDE

**WIN**  
A FREE TRIP TO  
HOLLYWOOD  
Details Inside

FORREST JACKERMAN'S

# MONSTER

LAND 

4842  
October 1985  
\$2.95  
\$3.50 Canada  
UK £2.95 DGS

## MONSTERS ARE BACK

Roddy McDowall  
Sting and  
Jennifer Beals

BRING FRANKENSTEIN  
AND DRACULA  
BACK TO THE SCREEN



JAPAN'S  
**FRANKENSTEIN**  
vs **GAMORA**  
SAVINI MEETS BUB!  
**DAY OF THE DEAD**  
TITAN OF TERROR  
**KARLOFF**

EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW WITH  
**CHRISTOPHER LEE**

ON THE SET OF  
HP LOVECRAFT'S  
**RE-ANIMATOR**



71896 48426

THERE ARE VAMPIRES LURKING IN THE SHADOWS,

WAITING FOR  
RODDY McDOWALL  
IN

# FRIGHT NIGHT

BY PAUL DAVIDS

Roddy McDowall was so impressed with the first several issues of **MONSTERLAND** that he quickly consented to my request for an exclusive interview. At his suggestion, we met for breakfast at the Polo Lounge of the Beverly Hills Hotel.

I of course knew many of his films, including **The Planet of the Apes**, **Legend of Hell House**—and now, **Fright Night**. But I quickly discovered that I was familiar with only a small fraction of the pictures in which he had appeared.

"How many films have you been in now, Roddy?" I asked.

"Hm," he replied, musing and calculating. "About 110."

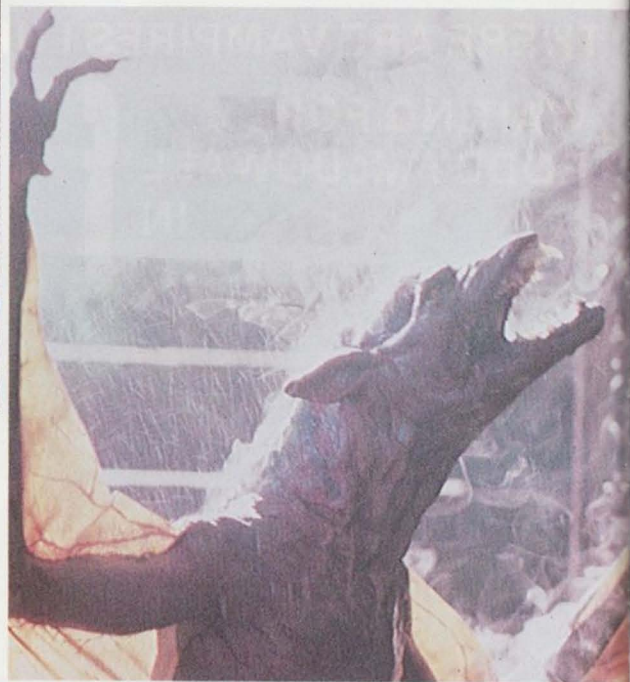
"110!" I was astonished.

"Well, my first 24 films you wouldn't know anything about," he said. "Until **How Green Was My Valley**, anyway."

I quickly discovered that, though he is an incurable fan of most films our readers might consider horror movies, Roddy McDowall resists those labels—and that includes for **Fright Night**.



*How can Roddy McDowall, mild-mannered TV host and B-movie actor, hope to cope when all of his fans grow fangs in the new vampire fearfest Fright Night?*



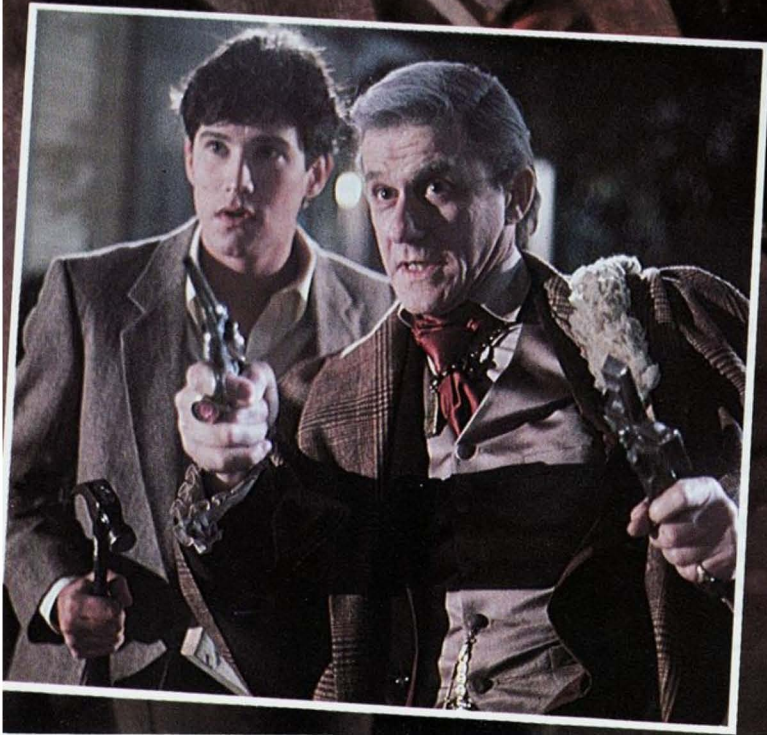
## REDUCED TO MONSTERS

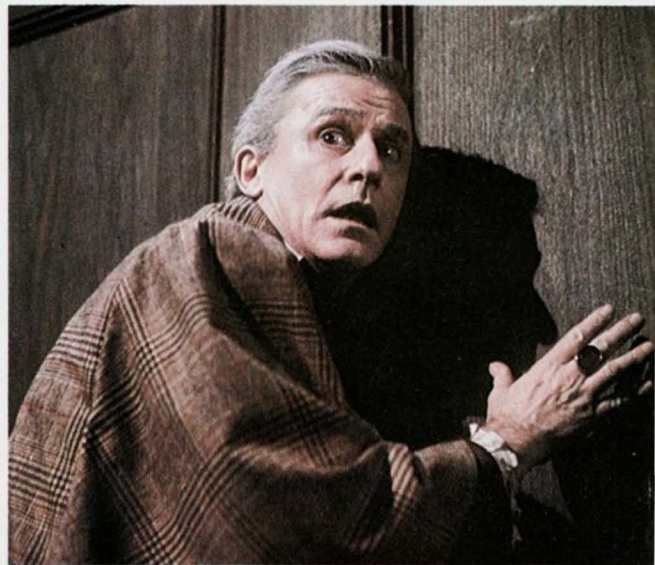
"The danger is that material can be falsely classified in order to achieve what the studio may think is a ready audience," he explained. "It also leads to gratuitous product, in a great many cases. You see, you take a piece of material like **The Hunchback of Notre Dame** and you go to its source...Victor Hugo wasn't writing a story of a monster, he was writing a story about someone who was deformed, a story about love and the inhumanity of that society. When it's reduced to being a

monster movie—that isn't the thrust, nor is it the content of any of the three versions I've seen. The same goes for **The Phantom of the Opera**, which is a magnificent piece. The only way that those themes are successfully played, in my opinion, is with an enormous amount of humanity, trying to illuminate something that isn't merely horror. Fairy tales contain a great deal of horror, but we do not think of them as primarily horror stories.

"Who was more monstrous, in a sense, than Scarface?" he continued. "In the original film, Scarface is absolutely

horrific. It was dangerous in its time. In that role, Paul Muni had such an ambivalence to humanity, he infused the role with it. As opposed to the second **Scarface**, which is just a bloodbath—no humanity in it at all. If someone tries to perform the hunchback as merely an ugly misbegotten "monster", it would miss the point, which is that the hunchback was longing to be accepted and to be loved. That was also the basis of the monster in **Frankenstein**. The fact that he was trapped in a horrible body was his particular problem, but he wanted, above





all, to be loved and accepted as a human being."

#### BITE KNIGHT

"Would you say that the vampire in *Fright Night* is given any particular humanity?" I queried.

"Just imagine," replied Roddy, "if you were sentenced, like the Wandering Jew, to walk the earth for eternity. You can't rest, and you have to keep refueling. That's what you're condemned to—a helluva situation."

"Wouldn't that be true of any vampire?" I probed. "What is it about the vampire in this film that makes it special?"

"It's told in modern terms, but the condition is still the same, I suppose. Once a vampire, always a vampire," he said, laughing. "The condition is a constant until you're put to rest."

"We had a very good writer in Tom Holland," he went on. "I've known him for a long time. I'm a great admirer of his and I think he's a very good director. This is a very complex film. The

audience will never know how complex it was to make—nor should they. But, knowing the special interests of your readers of **MONSTERLAND**, they should be aware that the makeups and transformations were **extremely** complex. In order to make a film like this directorially and photographically, it has to be very carefully designed, because a great deal of it depends on mounting tension through the cuts involved, building tension and horror with variations of the same theme—it's very hard to sustain. And I think all the other actors in the film were wonderful."

"How did you feel about the character you were playing?" I asked him.

#### HALFBAKED HAM

"My part is that of an old ham actor, I mean a **dreadful** actor. He realizes it but doesn't admit it. He had a moderate success in an isolated film here and there, but all very bad product. Basically, he played one character for 8

or 10 films, for which he probably got paid next to nothing. He was a vampire killer in all those very bad films. Unlike stars of horror films who are very good actors, such as Peter Lorre and Vincent Price or Boris Karloff—and who played lots of different roles—this poor sonofabitch just played the same character all the time, which was awful. And then he disappeared from sight, 15 years beforehand. He's been peddling these movies to late night tv, various syndicated markets...he'd go six months in Iowa, six months in Podunk. He'd introduce the movies. He's like the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, really. Full of rubbish.

"Then these kids come to him saying they need him to kill a real live vampire. Of course, he tells the kids he can't get involved because he doesn't know anything about vampires. He has no belief in his own abilities at all. But in the view of the kids, he's a hero. Their expectations are completely unrealistic."

"*Fright Night* is more sexy than most



other vampire films, wouldn't you agree?" I inquired. "There's a real undercurrent of sexuality...."

#### SEX AND THE SINGLE VAMP

"Ah, but if you'd been around in 1930 when **Dracula** with Bela Lugosi came out, that was considered highly sexually disturbing," he replied. "The same way as Mae West. I mean, we've all seen Mae West—but in her day, she was banned. Charlie Chaplin was banned, considered vulgar. It was one of the reasons for his huge success. Mothers thought he was a dreadful influence on their children, and that was part of his great appeal. You see, we forget all those things and so when we see those films, they seem very tame to us. Of course, our shock level has gone up so much...."

"That's an important point," I interjected. "Do you think we've been so inundated with visual shock that it's hard to shock us with **anything** any more?"

"Sure, to some extent," he agreed.

*Can you believe that the sweet little lady in the picture at right turns into the gruesome girly pictured above on Fright Night? It's all the work of the new vampire in the neighborhood, Chris Sarandon (opposite page, upper right), work that reluctant vampire-hunter Roddy McDowall must put a stop to.*

"The same is true of sound. If we went back fifty years to hear opera voices, they would probably sound very tiny to us. Because our decibel levels have been shattered. You see, we're spoiled, in a sense. I don't mean that as a negative. But if we see **2001: A Space Odyssey** now, it's still wonderful, but it doesn't have the same effect any more as it did when it came out. For instance, **Metropolis** is absolutely remarkable—it's a sophisticated and brilliant film. But it's impossible for us to imagine its true impact in its own

day. It was utterly unique when it came out—they invented the futuristic concepts of the film. But today, we just accept all that sort of thing. It's like, well, 40 years from now, can you imagine trying to explain to your grandchildren what Barbara Streisand meant, or what the Beatles meant? 30 years from now, how can Judy Garland have the same effect on the needs and neuroses of that future society as she did on her own society?"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 38

# FRIGHT NIGHT



Left: Roddy's ready to stake out his claim to vampire-killing fame  
Above: But is Bloodsucker Next Door Chris Sarandon going to give him enough time to get the job done?

## THE FRIGHT OF THE NIGHT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

"It seems to me," I said, "that there's something in all of us that draws us to seek out the bizarre, the uncanny, or even the monstrous. There is almost a universal curiosity and attraction. Would you agree with that?"

"There always has been that kind of fascination in mankind," replied Roddy. "Again, look at fairy tales. They reveal the dark side of our nature. We live in a Judeo-Christian Society, which for centuries has been dedicated to the idea of appeasing God. Or going back to ancient times, when they used to build bridges, they would sacrifice babies and put their bodies into the foundation. They would take the most

innocent to sacrifice, because they felt that otherwise it would anger the gods to bridge a natural impediment. So there's always been a relationship with, an inquiry into the dark side, the superstitious, how to appease the elements ...the end of the world was thought to have sea monsters near the edge, where you could fall off. It's all deeply ingrained in our psychology, our heritage.

"There's usually a hidden feeling of attraction to things that repulse," he continued. "When you ride a roller coaster and say, 'Oh, no, I'd never get on this again', there's nevertheless a desire to do it again, anyway. There's a fascination with being terrified, with putting our lives in jeopardy."

## STALKING THE FRIGHT, AT NIGHT

"Going back to **Fright Night** for a moment," I said, "—you've pointed out that you were attracted to Tom Holland's script. How did it come about that you got the role?"

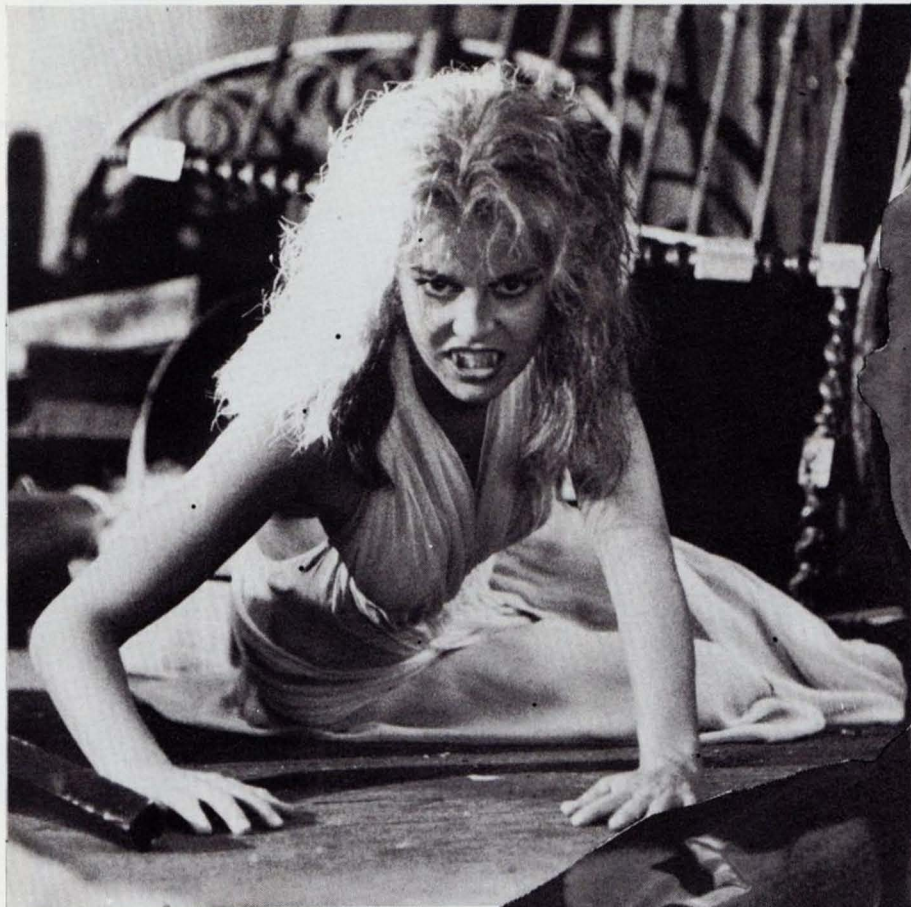
"It was an unusual idea on Tom Holland's part, because I had never played anything like that, or that age bracket. In the film, I perform as being in my late 20s or early 30s in the film clips of my old movies—all the way up to my 60s, when I'm the washed-up has-been. I'd never played anything that old."

"Did you resist the idea?"

"Oh no. I'm very glad I got the part. It was a pretty good part. And I hope it proves successful. I've played a lot of parts I liked, and then nobody saw the films."

"Do you think there's a tendency for the lead roles today to be more and more anti-heroes?" I asked. "Heroes used to be swashbucklers who had their swords and muskets and never failed," I emphasized. "But so many new heroes seem to have 'feet of clay'.

*Some scenes from Roddy's Roudy Night that's sure to leave audiences quivering with Fright*





Either they trip over their own feet, like the Ghostbusters, or they're handicapped by their own cowardice or lack of abilities like your character in **Fright Night**."

"I wouldn't call that a new trend, especially, if that's what you mean," replied Roddy. "It seems to me that every decade, something happens where there's suddenly a new expression, or new form, of old themes. It's why Montgomery Clift suddenly became a star, for instance, in **Red River**. Suddenly the hero was totally opposite to John Wayne, because it

was the end of the war, and the public was tired of heroes that were all macho. Ten years before that, right before World War II, there was another sort of hero—John Garfield—a sort of romantic fellow from the streets. I don't think the basic themes have changed, just the mores, and the manner in which the themes are told.

"In remakes," he went on, "it seems to me we're trying to take a message or theme that worked in another era and put it in a new context. **Heaven Can Wait** was a remake of **Here Comes Mr. Jordan**. One couldn't remake **Here Comes Mr. Jordan** exactly the way it was...it was too much a specific product of the society of its time. **Heaven Can Wait** was a wonderful 'reassessment' of that theme and story. Now, the opposite can occur, too, of course. Take **Invasion of the Body Snatchers**, **The Cat People** or **King Kong**—the remakes were nowhere as good as the originals."

#### PSYCHO ACTORS

"While you're actually performing, do you get into the role so deeply that you lose the consciousness of the set and

the machinery of the film production?" I asked.

"Well, that's very dangerous to talk about," he said. "I mean, there are people who say 'I live the part', but then you're getting into a scenario like a double life. Which is certainly valid, but there's something highly neurotic about people going around living their role, because if they're living their role they're no longer living their life. They've abdicated for some neurotic or psychotic reason. So one has to be very careful—no, you just do your work.

"In a theatre you can see the people in the audience perfectly—especially if it's theatre in the round. They're right next to you. They're as close as I am to you. They know you're acting and that you're that face there, buried under makeup. That proximity is one of the occupational hazards. One of the mistakes people make when they come from the theatre and go into film is that they don't realize, in the movies, the 'room' ends where the lens is. And just the opposite is true with theatre. In a play, the 'room' ends at the back of the house.

"The childlike belief that one has to maintain is all part of not over-reaching



Is this that new Demonic Duo—Bats, Man & Roddy?



the lens, and not acting for the camera," he went on. "The actor's job is to understand the author's intent, to fulfill moment to moment what the author expects, given the 'truth' he is conveying. The 'truth' of Shaw is very different from the 'truth' of Tennessee Williams. Or the 'truth' of Shakespeare is very different from the 'truth' of Noel Coward. So the actor has to know how to illuminate the author's 'truth'—not 'believe' it, but illuminate it. The actors who 'behave' their roles are hams like the character I play in **Fright Night**, who goes around saying 'ha, ha', 'ho, ho' and posing. He's a

behaviorist, not really an actor. There are some wonderful behaviorists who are quite effective, but they're not good actors. And they're at a loss ultimately, because unless they have something to behave, an attitude to play (such as 'I am a hero'), they don't know what to do."

"You've certainly explained your point of view in a fascinating way," I concluded, "—especially your character in **Fright Night**."

"Thank you," he replied. "Frankly, I'm **very** hopeful for the success of the film, for a number of reasons. Number one, I love the people I worked with. I

think Tom Holland is very talented. And Guy McElwaine, the President of Columbia Pictures, was certainly brave and wonderful to allow a new director to do it."

And on that note, having completed a most satisfying breakfast, and having been delightfully illuminated by one of the screen's most prolific and competent actors, I left the Polo Lounge to get on with my day. Roddy was heading to a studio meeting about yet another, new, upcoming project.

