

“SHALL WE PUT THE HEART IN NOW?”

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN CREATURE FEATURES AND THEIR SINGLE REEL
ABRIDGEMENTS

by

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A thesis

presented to Ryerson University

in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in the Program of

Film and Photography Preservation and Collections Management

Toronto, Ontario, Canada, 2015

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**“Shall We Put the Heart in Now?”: A Comparative Analysis Between Creature Features
and Their Single Reel Abridgments**

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Ryerson University, 2015

Abstract

Single reel abridgements of commercial feature films are entering moving image archives because home movie collections that contain them are slowly increasing in archival representation. The abridged commercial films occupy a liminal space in between sustained preservation efforts that focus on studio films and the current interest paid to preserving home movies. As a result, the abridged films are being neglected. The films' liminal status stems from a dearth of information regarding their relationship to the original films and a clear definition of what they are narratively and aesthetically. After analyzing fourteen abridged horror and science fiction films found in the Ryerson Moving Image collection and comparing them to their original counterparts this project finds that the abridged films are heavily altered in terms of narrative, characters, and causality, and should be treated as individual objects instead of derivative works, thus absolving their liminal status.

Acknowledgements

First and foremost I would like to thank my parents for supporting me throughout the completion of my graduate degree. It is safe to say that from both an emotional and biological standpoint I would not be where I am today without them.

I would like to thank my first reader, Bruce Elder, for guiding me through the process of writing this project. His wisdom, fairness, and his belief in my work and my ability as a writer has been a driving force in my success. I would also like to thank my second reader, Marta Braun, for helping me narrow my focus and teaching me how to complete a project at this level.

I would be remiss to exclude the professors whose course material I have studied over the last two years, and whose lessons prepared me for writing this thesis project. Special thanks go to Gerda Cammaer and Izabella Pruska-Oldenhof for your wonderful lectures and eternal support.

Finally, thank you to my classmates Stacey Turner, Alexandra Jokinen, Chelsea Keen. I could not have made it this far without you.

I dedicate this project to my friends,
the greatest people I have ever known.

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Chapter One - Introduction

Moving image archives, still chiefly concerned with studio productions, documentaries, and avant-garde cinema, are slowly beginning to increase the representation of home movies in their collections. Single reel 16mm and 8mm versions of feature length films, versions that were constructed by abridging feature films so they can be distributed on a single 400ft film reel, are entering moving image archives as part of home movie collections because of this increased, albeit comparatively minor, interest. The abridged commercial film occupies a liminal space in between sustained preservation efforts that focus on studio films and the current interest in preserving home movies. Their liminal status consequently affords them a much lower preservation priority even though their presence in home movie collections illustrates the viewing habits of families, provides historical information similar to that of the home films themselves, and, more broadly, illustrates non-theatrical distribution practices employed by Hollywood before the advent of VHS. The aesthetic value, or "the value that an object...possesses in virtue of its capacity to elicit pleasure (positive value) or displeasure (negative value)," also contributes to the liminality of abridged films.¹ They are perceived as ugly, deformed versions of the originals that are not deserving of attention in moving image archives.

Abridged commercial films have yet to be studied in depth and there is no literature that closely examines these objects in comparison to the original films. The lack of academic inquiry has left the abridged films undefined. This project will seek to define abridged films so that their place and priority in archival collections can be accurately assessed by archivists and absolved of their liminality. Fourteen such films, created by Castle Films between 1957 and 1971 and found in the Ryerson Film Preservation collection, will be compared to their original films to assist defining

¹ Levno Plato and Aaron Meskin, *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well Being Research*, 1st ed., s.v. "Aesthetic Value," New York: Springer Reference, 2014. 77.

the abridged films more broadly. I contend that the abridged versions of feature length films must undergo a radical transformation to be distributed on a single 400ft film reel, and because of that transformation they can not be considered derivative works, but individual works created from previously produced images and sound. The abridged versions stand apart as separate entities with separate identities, and their fate in moving image archives should be determined on the individual merits of the object as opposed to their relation to feature length studio films.

The project is separated into eight chapters, and each chapter is dedicated to increasing the understanding of the abridged films, their method of creation, and how they should be defined. Chapter 3 begins the analysis by detailing the individual objects, including information regarding how the films are housed, the material nature of the objects, and their current condition. Chapter 4 places the film objects in a historical context as they relate to commercial films being purchased for use in the domestic space. The chapter is separated into two sections. The first examines how commercial films penetrated the home market at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. The second section provides an overview of Castle Films that includes the founding of the company, its eventual purchase by Universal International, and their movement towards serving the niche market of commercial films for non-theatrical distribution.

The comparison of the feature length films and the shortened versions required the use of digitization technologies and the use of digital editing software. Chapter 5 outlines the method for the comparison so researchers can compare other abridged films with the original material have a basis for doing so at a high technical level. The method is also designed so the comparison can be repeated by a researcher with little technical skill. Chapter 6 outlines the findings of the comparison in detail. The findings are separated into five sections that explore one specific area of comparative difference with the assistance of examples from the fourteen object films. The five sections are length, frame size, opening and closing credits, narrative, and cause and effect

relationships. Chapter 6 ends with an overview of my conclusions based on the observations made while also offering insight into the guiding principle that was followed by editors and producers during condensation process. The film objects are referred to as excerpts on their film canisters, but based on the findings of the comparative analysis that is not an appropriately descriptive term. Chapter 7 reviews different terms that might be used to describe the film objects, such as digest, excerpt, and remix, and determines which is most appropriate for defining the film objects. Chapter 8 concludes the project by summarizing the findings of the comparative analysis as well as offering avenues of possible study for future researchers in the areas of Castle Films' business practices, other types of abridgements including those made for silent projectors, and the sound design of abridged films.

Chapter 2 - Literature Survey

My research, outside of the comparative analysis, has focused on three central areas, namely the history of Castle Films, how feature length films entered the domestic space before the creation of VHS, and defining the film objects as individual entities. The goal of researching Castle Films and how feature films penetrated into the home was to compile available sources, synthesize the material, and present capsule histories that can be used by future researchers. Surveying possible ways to define the film objects led to a contemporary movement of shortening works of literature, a movement that was spearheaded by *Reader's Digest*. The literature referenced for defining the abridged film centres largely on *Reader's Digest*, its business practices, and their cultural impact.

The literature available on Castle Films is limited. Even though the company released thousands of films to the home market a major academic study of the company has not been published. Information about the company and its history can be drawn from two main sources: *Castle Films: A Hobbyist's Guide* by Scott MacGillivray and a PhD dissertation authored by Eric Hoyt, entitled "Hollywood Vault: The Business of Film Libraries, 1915-1960." MacGillivray's guide catalogues every film that Castle Films released throughout its history, and each entry contains basic information such as year of release, production number, and pieces of additional information specific to each individual title. The text also contains a short history of the company that begins in 1914 and includes sections dedicated to Universal International's takeover of the company, distribution, promotion, and the company's rebranding as Universal 8 in 1977. The text is essential to my project because of the complete catalogue of released films. However, the company history does not provide source information or citations, meaning that none of what MacGillivray wrote can be independently verified or traced back to its source for scrutiny. Furthermore, at the

beginning of the catalogue MacGillivray states that his book “is intended not as an academic textbook, but as a handy resource for the curious film enthusiast or collector.”² Based on this statement and the lack of source information and citations it is best to rely on this text as a basic point of reference for information on the specific films that are being investigated. In terms of providing a historical narrative of Castle Films it will be treated as subordinate to texts whose sources of information are catalogued and cited.

Eric Hoyt’s 2012 Ph.D dissertation, which was written for his Doctor of Philosophy in Cinema-Television: Critical Studies at the University of Southern California, starkly contrasts MacGillivray’s style of historical writing. Hoyt’s dissertation is an examination of “how old movies became valuable and how the marketplace for film libraries emerged and evolved....”³ Hoyt explores the creation of the Universal International owned subsidiary United World Films, and the purchase of Castle Films in 1948 by United World.⁴ Hoyt uses the Castle Films example to discuss the broader practice of creating and screening 16mm abridged versions of popular films and how that practice benefited film studios in the pre-VHS era. Overall this is the most substantive academic study completed on Castle Films and it will figure largely in my project as a way of contextualizing the addition of abridged versions of Universal science fiction and horror films to the Castle Films catalogue.

Beyond the work of Hoyt and MacGillivray, Castle Films has been left on the periphery of academic writing. The company is cited in discussions of home movies and collections, but is not described beyond the fact that they were distributors. For example, two articles written by Dwight Swanson and Eric Schaefer, published in *The Moving Image* and *Cinema Journal* respectively,

² Scott MacGillivray, *Castle Films: A Hobbyist's Guide*, New York: IUniverse, 2004. 23.

³ Eric Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault: Film Libraries Before Home Video*, Ann Arbor, MI: Proquest LLC, 2012, xxi.

⁴ Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault*, 2012. 245.

examine the collection of 16mm pornographic film in the 1950s.⁵ Castle Films is named as a distributor of professionally made films to the amateur market in each article, but the company is not discussed beyond its market association of being advertized in the same home movie magazines as the pornographic films. I will also focus on the historical conditions that allowed for Castle Films to penetrate into home markets in the pre VHS era and find its niche as distributors of abridged commercial films to supplement the lack of academic writing on Castle Films as a subject.

The first publication of note in the area of pre VHS distribution is Anthony Slide's *Before Video: A History of the Non-Theatrical Film*. Slide's text chronologically organizes the history of industrial, educational, and travel film, as well as commercial films made for the home. He begins at the genesis of the film medium and ends with the release of VHS and Beta-max systems in the mid to late 1970s. Slide refers to Castle Films over two pages and broadly speaks of the company's creation and the kinds of films they distributed during the 1940s.⁶ However, Slide offers no details beyond what MacGillivray covered in his more substantial history of the company. At most the history that Slide provides can be used to verify elements contained in MacGillivray's history of the company, which is important given the previously stated issues with MacGillivray's text.

Alan Kattelle's *Home Movies: A History of the American Industry, 1897-1979*, published in 2000 by Transition Publishing, chronologically charts the history of home movies by examining the medium's origins, the technological advances that brought motion pictures into the home, companies, such as Kodak and Bell & Howell, who aided in the development of the medium, and

⁵ Dwight Swanson, "Home Viewing: Pornography and Amateur Film Collections, A Case Study" in *The Moving Image* 5, no. 2 (2005): 136-40. & Eric Schaefer, "Gauging A Revolution: 16mm Film And The Rise Of The Pornographic Feature" in *Cinema Journal* 41, no. 3 (2002): 3-26.

⁶ Anthony Slide, *Before Video: A History of the Non-Theatrical Film*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992. 99.

further technological advances such as colour and the invention and dissemination of video technologies in the 1970s. Kattelle's text will be chiefly used to address the broader history of home films and their penetration into the domestic space. Kattelle, a retired engineer who has previously been published in the *Journal of Film and Video* and *Film History*, focuses specifically on the American market while looking to Europe at appropriate moments, such as discussing the technological origins of projecting films in the home, to create a thorough history of films in the domestic space. As with Swanson and Schaefer, Castle Films is referred to only in passing. Kattelle describes the company as a "well-known distributor of professional films for the amateur market..." and doesn't elaborate any further.⁷ The text focuses on amateur home movies from a technological, sociological, and business perspective. Castle Films, as a company who sold professional films to the amateur market, falls outside of the text's purview.

Clare Watson's article "Babies, Kids, Cartoons and Comedies: Children and Pathéscope's 9.5mm Home Cinema in Britain," found in *Movies on Home Ground: Explorations in Amateur Cinema*, discusses the technological history of the 9.5mm film format by the Pathé Frères company for the home market. Watson's approach is similar to Kattelle, but instead focuses on professional films which were released for the fledgling format. Castle Films is not discussed in the article because the company did not release films for the 9.5mm market. However, focusing on professional films is uncommon in academic writing dedicated to the home film market, and due to that scarcity I have included Watson's article even though Castle Films is not addressed.

Swanson's aforementioned text on pornography in home film collections points out that many professional films came into archives as part of larger amateur home movie collections, stating that the "commercial films that accompanied home-movie collections were either not accessioned or were largely ignored by regional film archives, condemned to the fringes of

⁷ Alan Kattelle, *Home Movies: A History of the American Industry, 1897-1979*. Nashua: Transition Publishing, 2000. 229.

collections."⁸ Additionally, Slide wrote a brief section in his text that examines condensed commercial films. Slide does not offer a concrete definition of what a condensed film is or how it functions in relation to the original film that it was adapted from, but he does acknowledge that condensed films were apart of Castle Films' distribution strategy.⁹ Slide's exclusion of a detailed examination and definition of condensed films parallels the general trend of discussing aspects of non-theatrical home film distribution while ignoring how condensed films were constructed. What is missing from the current academic canon is a dissection of abridged films, both in terms of how they were made and how they differed from their original.

Finally, in attempting to define the abridged films, I discovered that *Reader's Digest*, at approximately the same time as Castle Films creation, began condensing articles from popular magazines and publishing them in a single monthly edition. I researched their methods of condensation in order to determine if "digest" more accurately describes the film objects as opposed to "excerpts," the term that Castle Films used to describe them. The relevant published work on *Reader's Digest* is confined to historical overviews, a PhD dissertation, and the critical social observations of Ariel Dorfman. *Of Lasting Interest - The Story of the Reader's Digest* by James Playsted Wood, originally published in 1958 and then again in 1967 in a new edition, is the first published historical overview of the company.¹⁰ The text employs language akin to a promotional piece for *Reader's Digest* as opposed to an objective overview of the company, but it does contain within it three chapters of interest: "The First Condensed Book," "Cutting and Condensing," and "The Reader's Digest Condensed Book Club." Each chapter examines the editorial process required to condense both articles and books and thus provides insight into how the finished product was made. I was initially hesitant to include Wood's insights due to the biased

⁸ Swanson, "Home Viewing" in *The Moving Image*, 136.

⁹ Slide, *Before Video*, 101.

¹⁰ James Playsted Wood, *Of Lasting Interest: The Story of the Reader's Digest*, 2nd ed, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967.

style of prose he uses and the amount of time that elapsed from the text's initial publication to the present. However, the questions that Wood's text raises in regards to respecting the work of the original author provides an excellent avenue for discussing the cultural place of abridged films, and was therefore included to aid in defining the film objects.

Shawny Anderson, in her PhD dissertation entitled "Condensed Hegemony: A Cultural/Ideological Analysis of *Reader's Digest*, 1980-1992," "analyzes the ideology of *Reader's Digest* during the Reagan/Bush era."¹¹ Her focus on ideology as it relates to the political landscape of the United States during the rise of neoconservatism does not directly relate to my own work, but she includes an in depth history of the company that balances the biased writing of Wood with a critical viewpoint. Ariel Dorfman's book *The Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes Do to Our Minds*, first published in 1985 and then revised and reprinted in 2010, also takes a critical stance against *Reader's Digest*. While at times arrogant, Dorfman outlines his concerns with cultural domination through the infantilization of "mass market adult literature," specifically taking direct aim at *Reader's Digest* in the chapter "The Infantilization of the Adult Reader." Dorfman argues that *Reader's Digest* plants articles in other publications for their own use to appear worldly and well researched, structures their abridgements in such a way so that there is always a problem to be solved by an "average man," and reduces what is faraway and famous "to its most comprehensible, immediate, noto say vulgar, form."¹² The actions of *Reader's Digest*, according to Dorfman, reinforce capitalistic notions of self-improvement and upward social mobility because "North American society requires that each person believe that the world offers unlimited opportunities, and that everyone is equal to the task

¹¹ Shawny Anderson, *Condensed Hegemony: A Cultural/ideological Critique of "Reader's Digest," 1980-1992*, Ed. Edward Schiappa, Purdue University, 1994. vii.

¹² Ariel Dorfman, *The Empire's Old Clothes: What the Lone Ranger, Babar, and Other Innocent Heroes Do to Our Minds*, 2nd ed, Duke University Press, 2010. 126.

of conquering that magical horizon."¹³ I intend to use Dorfman's assessment of *Reader's Digest Magazine* to critique works of literature that were selected for condensation and the process of condensation that Wood claimed did not essentially alter the original work. The results of my critique will be applied to the fourteen abridged films to better understand their relationship to condensed works of literature, but also their role in infantilizing adult viewers.

¹³ Dorfman, *The Empire's Old Clothes*, 2010. 131.

Chapter 3 - Description of Materials

The fourteen film objects I will be examining were produced by Castle Films and purchased by the Ryerson Library in approximately 1975. The fourteen films came from Castle Films' "Science Fiction and Horror" series, and the titles include *It Came From Outer Space* (1957), *The Creature from the Lagoon* (1957), *Bride of Frankenstein* (1960), *The Mummy* (1962), *Dracula* (1963), *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman* (1963), *Son of Frankenstein* (1965), *Revenge of the Creature* (1965), *House of Frankenstein* (1967), *The Mummy's Ghost* (1968), *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1969), *Man-Made Monster* (1969), *The Wolf Man* (1971), and *Frankenstein* (1971).¹⁴ Please note that the included dates refer to the release of the Castle Films versions and not the release of the corresponding Universal Studios feature films.

The objects are English language 16mm triacetate Eastman Kodak safety film release prints with synced optical sound. Each film is presented in the Academy Standard aspect ratio of 1.37:1. The edge code on each of the films is a plus sign and a circle, indicating that the film stock was manufactured in 1974. Each film is contained in a grey plastic film canister with exterior labels that contain the name of the film, its running time, the year the film was produced, and indicators that the films are sound with black and white images. The library call number associated with each object is still present on the front of each canister. On the inside of each canister is a square sticker that contains four separate series of numbers and a barcode. Ryerson University librarians were not able to identify the purpose of these numbers. Ophelia Cheung, the Audio Visual and Reserve Services Librarian for the Ryerson Library, commented that the numbers were likely applied before Ryerson became a university. At that time items would be sent to Biblocentre, a

¹⁴ It was common practice for Castle Films to give its abridged versions new names. In the case of the fourteen objects examined for this project only one, *The Creature from the Lagoon*, had its name altered. For the sake of clarity when I refer to the feature length version of the film I will use the full title, *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, and when referring to the shortened version I will refer to it by its Castle Films moniker.

consortium of colleges that centralized the cataloguing of library objects. Biblocentre ceased operations in 2009, and no trace of records for the objects has been located. The grey canisters are not vented, therefore they do not meet current archival standards.

The films are wound on plastic projection reels, and nine of the fourteen films have a sticker attached to the reel indicating when they were last cleaned and inspected. The dates range from October 17th, 1991 to March 8th, 1999. Eleven of the fourteen films have identifying inscriptions either at the head, tail, or at both positions just after the leader. The inscriptions vary in detail, but most contain the title of the film, the name of the distributor, and a production number. The distributor names vary, but all appear to be linked with Universal Studios. For a detailed list of the film titles, their corresponding inscriptions and other specific information pertaining to each film object please see Table 1.1.

Table 1.1

Name	Release Number	Release Year	Length (s)	Colour	Frame	Production Note (on film)	Production # (on film)
<i>It Came from Outer Space</i>	1007	1957	500	BW	1.37:1	Picture It Came From Outerspace	C6976
<i>The Creature from the Lagoon</i>	1008	1957	493	BW	1.37:1	N/A	N/A
<i>Bride of Frankenstein</i>	1013	1960	492	BW	1.37:1	UWF D1431 Bride of Frankenstein Long Version	D1431
<i>The Mummy</i>	1021	1962	482	BW	1.37:1	UNIV EDUC - The Mummy - With Prologue Subtitles Sound Version	D4924
<i>Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman</i>	1022	1963	493	BW	1.37:1	United World Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman	GFL 90294
<i>Dracula</i>	1023	1963	494	BW	1.37:1	Dracula Sound Ver Picture	N/A
<i>Son of Frankenstein</i>	1033	1965	501	BW	1.37:1	UNIV EDUC - Son of Frankenstein - Sound Vers - Recut New Vers 6-17-71	D7460

<i>Revenge of the Creature</i>	1037	1965	490	BW	1.37:1	UW Revenge of the Creature Sound Vers	N/A
<i>House of Frankenstein</i>	1043	1967	488	BW	1.37:1	N/A	N/A
<i>The Mummy's Ghost</i>	1049	1968	492	BW	1.37:1	UWF Mummy's Ghost Sound Version	N/A
<i>The Incredible Shrinking Man</i>	1053	1969	490	BW	1.37:1	N/A	N/A
<i>Man Made Monster</i>	1054	1969	494	BW	1.37:1	Universal Education + Visual Arts	D9647
<i>The Wolf Man</i>	1060	1971	482	BW	1.37:1	UNIV EDUC - The Wolfman - Sound Vers	E2967
<i>Frankenstein</i>	1061	1971	508	BW	1.37:1	Universal ED. E(C?) 3987 Frankenstein	E3987

Evidence of inspection and repair can be found on each of the objects. There is new green and red leader at the head and tail of the films, respectively. A majority of the films had sprocket holes repaired, with *Bride of Frankenstein* requiring nearly the entire first half of the film to be repaired in this manner. There are also multiple instances throughout the films of clear splicing tape being placed on the image. However, these instances did not always correspond with the repair of broken splices or torn film and, in a few cases, hair was visible underneath the tape splices.

The films were inspected and are in relatively good condition considering they had previously been used as lending copies at the Ryerson Library. Each film shows light to medium base and emulsion scratching throughout, a fading of the luminosity of the image, and mild warping of the film strip. The audio fluctuates during projection due to the warping, but individual aspects of the audio, such as dialogue, music, and sound effects, are discernible. The instances of severe damage are minimal, and are limited to two of the prints. *Son of Frankenstein* has sprocket holes punctured through the image in the middle of each frame throughout the opening credits,

and the sprocket side of *Frankenstein* has a prominent wave which could make it difficult to project. There is no evidence of vinegar syndrome in any of the films.

Chapter 4 - Historical Context

Development of the Home Film Market

To understand how abridged feature length films became a part of home film collections it is necessary to outline how film first penetrated the domestic space. According to Alan Kattelle, “almost as soon as motion pictures became commercially successful in the closing years of the nineteenth century, entrepreneurs began looking for ways to bring this new amusement into the home.”¹⁵ Although safety film was not made available by Eastman Kodak and Pathe until 1911, there were initial efforts in Europe to bring moving pictures into the home as early as 1897. Middle to upper class families began to install made-for-the-home magic lanterns in domesticated spaces at the end of the nineteenth century, and the first moving image projectors made for the home relied on the magic lantern’s light source for projection. It is worth noting that these machines were being installed in the home even though they were designed to project highly flammable nitrate film.¹⁶

In the United States the movement towards the exhibition of moving images in the home was also swift, but the immediate need to install professional equipment in the home was not as advanced as in Europe. The first moving image machines to be marketed for home use, the Parlor Kinetoscope and the Vitak 11mm film projector, released in 1897 and 1902 respectively, were marketed as toys.¹⁷ The Parlor Kinetoscope was a smaller version of the Edison Kinetoscope, the only difference between the two, besides the diminutive dimensions of the Parlor version, being the Parlor Kinetoscope used paper film rolls instead of celluloid.¹⁸ Rector, the developer of the

¹⁵ Kattelle, *Home Movies: 1897-1979*, 2000. 52.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid, 54.

¹⁸ Ibid.

Vitak 11mm projector, continued to develop projectors for the home market. In 1904 they released the Ikonograph 17.5mm projector along with a series of short subjects that could be purchased separately.¹⁹ A section of the the Sears, Roebuck & Co catalogue from 1905 featured an advertisement for what they called their "Premier Moving Picture Outfit." The advertisement enticed customers with statements like "You can make lots of money by giving evening entertainments right in your own neighborhood."²⁰ The Premier Projector, like the Ikonograph, projected 17.5mm film that was sold separately at the price of approximately ninety cents per ten feet of film.²¹ The Premier Projector, while still using a film format that did not allow for professional projection of 35mm film, marked a difference in marketing techniques in North America; it was being marketed as an investment as opposed to a toy, indicating that public perception was beginning to shift in regards to the role of moving images in the home.

The perceptual shift was partially influenced by the vagrant nature of early film projection. Haidee Wasson, in the journal article "Electric Homes! Automatic Movies! Efficient Entertainment!: 16mm and Cinema's Domestication in the 1920s," argues that films were able to make their way into the home due to the initially unstable nature of cinema exhibition during the early years of film.²² Specifically, she states that it was not understood in the first two decades of cinema that film needed to be watched in a movie palace or a theatre because, at that time, they did not exist.²³ Films could be exhibited in any space such as schools, churches, basements, and store fronts. There was no tradition of cinema being viewed in a theatre. When 16mm film was released as an amateur format in the 1920s, and along with it the 16mm projectors needed to view amateur works, it was not odd to view these works in the home, the place where they were

¹⁹ Ibid, 55.

²⁰ Ibid, 56.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Haidee Wasson, "Electric Homes! Automatic Movies! Efficient Entertainment!: 16mm and Cinema's Domestication in the 1920s," *Cinema Journal* 48, no. 4 (2009): 1-21.

²³ Haidee Wasson, "Electric Homes!," 2009. 6.

most often made.²⁴ Portable film projectors, along with phonographs and radios, were marketed in a way that placed them as an essential piece of the family circle, a circle that existed squarely in the domestic space of the home.²⁵

For the home market to be secured as a viable space for motion picture exhibition, a safety film that was not nitrate based was required. In 1912 French film company Pathé Frères “announced the first complete system of safety film, camera, and projector for the amateur.”²⁶ The 28mm film stock gauge utilized a cellulose-acetate base that tended to melt if overheated as opposed to ignite like nitrate based films were prone to do. The projector, the Pathé Kok, also came equipped with a light source that could be powered by an onboard generator. The generator drew power from the same cranking motion that ran the film through the gate of the projector. The films released for the Pathé Kok Projector were “abbreviated versions of Pathé’s commercial films, reduction printed to the smaller gauge,” indicating that even in the infant stages of home film distribution there was a market for commercially made films.²⁷

The movement of film into the home grew steadily, but, as Kattelle noted when writing about the first home projectors in Europe, home projection and home filmmaking were expensive hobbies that only high class families could afford.²⁸ The Pathé Kok system was not able to lower the cost of production and projection to a significantly low enough threshold. In 1919 George Eastman began research into an amateur film gauge but “prudently demanded that only safety film be provided for in-home use....”²⁹ Advocating for safety film meant that 17.5mm film, a gauge which would have produced an image exactly half the size of 35mm, was not pursued due to fears that other companies might have tried to produce a type of 35mm film that could be cut in half for

²⁴ Ibid, 6.

²⁵ Ibid, 4.

²⁶ Kattelle, *Home Movies: 1897-1979*, 2000. 61.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid, 52.

²⁹ Dwight Swanson, “Inventing Amateur Film: Marion Norris Gleason, Eastman Kodak and the Rochester Scene, 1921-1932.” *Film History* 15, no. 2, 2003. 127.

amateurs and thus bring nitrate based film stock back into the home.³⁰ Scientists at Eastman Kodak were also aware of the reversal development process that had been created by Rodolfo Namias, an Italian photochemist, in 1900. The reversal process cut the cost of developing film in half because it removed the need to have a camera negative developed and a positive print produced from that negative. With the reversal process, the film that ran through the camera, once developed, would produce a positive image that could be projected. Combining the smaller gauge with the reversal process would make filmmaking more affordable for the amateur."³¹ The 16mm film gauge was presented to the public in 1923 along with Kodak's Cine-Kodak camera, the first 16mm film camera.³² Following the release of the Cine-Kodak and the 16mm film gauge, Kodak's own camera and projector systems, along with the 16mm camera and projector systems of Bell & Howell, slowly became the American standard for amateur film gauges. Other amateur gauges, like the above mentioned 28mm gauge, began to disappear due to the popularity of 16mm film.³³

16mm filmmaking was still "expensive and therefore accessible primarily to the upper classes and the more enthusiastic hobbyists," however the lower price allowed the format to proliferate beyond what previous gauges had accomplished.³⁴ As the 16mm market continued to grow, an increasing number of slapstick comedies, animation, travel, sports and nature films were made available for people to view on their personal 16mm projectors.³⁵ Castle Films was founded at the beginning of the 16mm period of growth, and it was one of many companies distributing 16mm films for home viewing.³⁶ The pace of growth of the 16mm market in the late 1920s was so great that in 1927 Variety declared that "all Hollywood studios would either reduce their theatrical

³⁰Swanson, "Inventing Amateur Film," 2003. 127.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid, 128.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Wasson, "Electric Homes!," 2009. 9.

³⁶ Mark Clark, "For Monster Fans."

35mm prints to the 16mm standard or would make titles exclusively for what was variably termed “the home” or “amateur” market.³⁷

Variety's prediction did not come to pass. The distribution of 16mm Hollywood films was strictly controlled by firms like Films Inc., a company that acted as a gatekeeper against distribution to home viewers.³⁸ In fact, Films Inc. was trusted with the 16mm films of the major Hollywood studios because it would refuse any rental request from a home viewer. However, the initial penetration of 16mm into the homes of amateur filmmakers in the 1920s allowed some companies, such as Castle Films, to survive well into the 40s, 50s, and beyond.

The place of home films in the domestic space has been taken up by two other scholars, Dwight Swanson and Eric Schaefer, each of whom seek to contextualize the rise of pornography as a collectable item that existed in home film collections. Swanson specifically argues that the curator of the home film collection was “Dad,” the evidence being examples of advertisements that were included in amateur filmmaking magazines such as *Home Movies*.³⁹ Swanson points to an example from an issue of *Home Movies* published in the 1950s that includes an advertisement for Castle Films near the front while advertisements for pornographic films such as *Goldilocks Goes Glamorous* and *Sweethearts of Burlesque* were found in the back.⁴⁰ The popularity of pornographic films relative to abridged commercial films in home collections is difficult to gauge. Swanson notes that the collection he is using as a case study is “split right down the middle,” with sixteen reels of home films, fifteen reels of pronographic films, and one commerical film.⁴¹ However, this anecdotal example should not be seen as representative of all home film collections due to the small sample size.

³⁷ Wasson, “Electric Homes!,” 2009. 10.

³⁸ Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault*, 2012. 245.

³⁹ Swanson, “Home Viewing” in *The Moving Image*, 136.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid, 138.

Neither article focuses on the work of Castle Films, but a general enthusiasm for collecting abridged commercial films can be discerned from the time period that the articles focus on, namely the 1950s. The fact that both point to Castle Films as an example of a company that penetrated the home reinforces the notion that the abridged films that Castle Films were releasing, as some of the 16mm films that “Dad” would collect, were part of a much larger and more significant culture of home film distribution than previously thought.

Castle Films

Eugene Castle, the founder of Castle Films, began his career in the San Franciscan film industry in 1914.⁴² He was employed as a “freelance cameraman photographing local events” who was “trying to break into the film industry via newsreels.”⁴³ He was later employed by Pathé News and then Fox News where he held an “editorial position ... at the newsreels’ west coast bureau.”⁴⁴ According to Scott MacGillivray, Eugene Castle believed that “movies had potential outside of conventional theatrical distribution,” and by following this belief Castle began distributing educational and industrial films in 1918.⁴⁵

In 1924 Castle founded Castle Films with an investment of 10 000 dollars, or approximately 146 000 dollars adjusted for inflation to 2015. The company’s initial focus was creating films that could be used by business professionals for presentations. Castle himself thought of films as “business tools.”⁴⁶ Castle Films was distributing both 35mm film and 16mm films, and the first large scale expansion of the company came in 1933 when Kodak released

⁴² Slide, *Before Video*, 99.

⁴³ MacGillivray, *Castle Films*, 1.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 2.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

16mm film with sound, a format that Castle Films adopted immediately as a distribution format. Castle, having spent years in the newsreel industry and with his experience in "commercial and advertising fields," pushed the company towards distributing films made specifically for the growing home film market.⁴⁷ Castle realized that more projectors were being sold to home users and that, in turn, would create a higher demand from consumers to own films.⁴⁸ Castle Films eventually became a non-theatrical producer and distributor of short excerpt films that would be sold to churches, schools, libraries, and home viewers.⁴⁹ Their niche, as described by Eric Hoyt, was in "outright sales to home viewers and collectors, a method of distribution (sales, rather than rentals) to a market of non-theatrical end-users (home viewers)."⁵⁰

In 1937 Castle's entry into the home market began with three newsreel shorts: *Hindenburg Explodes!*, *England's Coronation*, and *The Life of Edward-Britain's Ex-King*.⁵¹ According to MacGillivray, Castle "edited the films himself, giving his wares a personal, professional touch."⁵² The films Castle produced for the home market, which quickly ballooned to twelve by the end of 1937, were offered in 16mm and 8mm film formats in both sound and silent versions so that the films could be projected by smaller toy projectors as well their 16mm counterparts.⁵³ In 1937 the company settled on the policy of releasing single reel films only. Local movie theatres, at the time, would show "newsreels, sports films, travelogues, and cartoons" that were "generally no more than 10 minutes in length each."⁵⁴ MacGillivray states that the one reel format "became an industry standard," a standard that Castle Films deviated from only once when they experimented with "slightly longer films in the 1950s."⁵⁵

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Slide, *Before Video*, 1992. 99.

⁴⁹ Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault*, 2012. 245.

⁵⁰ Ibid, 245.

⁵¹ MacGillivray, *Castle Films*, 2004. 3.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid, 4.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

In the 1940s Castle Films expanded once again to include “scenics, actuality shorts, and Terrytoon cartoons,” these films comprising “the bulk of Castle’s offerings.”⁵⁶ The Second World War, on the strength of Castle Films’ series of short subjects that focused on specific battles, also proved to be a successful period for the company.⁵⁷ Exuberant titles and promises of releasing battle footage as soon as it could be compiled and edited kept the public informed about events overseas.⁵⁸ Advertisements for the war shorts even encouraged people to collect all of the films so that customers could own a “complete record of the war.”⁵⁹ The company released thirty seven films in their war series by the time the Second World War had come to an end.⁶⁰

In 1947 United World Films, a wholly owned subsidiary of Universal International, purchased a 75 percent stake in Castle Films for 2.25 million dollars, or 28.2 million dollars adjusted for inflations to 2015.⁶¹ United World Films had been created by Universal International in 1946 in order to meet the growing demand of the 16mm market.⁶² WWII, Hoyt contests, caused an upswing in production of 16mm films resulting in “mainstream educators and the public [growing] more familiar and accepting of non-theatrical films...”⁶³ The total revenue that Universal International was accumulating through 16mm made up approximately 1.5% of their gross revenue, but the market for 16mm films had grown steadily leading up to 1946.⁶⁴ United World Films was created for Universal International to further monetize their film holdings and expand their film library while becoming a leader in the distribution of 16mm film.⁶⁵

⁵⁶ Slide, *Before Video*, 1992. 100.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ MacGillivray, *Castle Films*, 2004. 5.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Hoyt, *Hollywood Vault*, 2012. 245.

⁶² Ibid, 244.

⁶³ Ibid, 243.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 244.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

United World Films first acquisition was the Bell & Howell Film-o-Sound library that featured a large collection of 16mm shorts. At the same time, United World purchased Bell & Howell's 16mm distribution network, which gave them a strong foothold in the 16mm market.⁶⁶ Castle Films was purchased soon after. The deal made United World/Universal the leaders in non-theatrical film distribution, but it also put Universal two million dollars into debt.⁶⁷ For Castle Films to be monetized effectively United World adapted the practice of condensing feature length films from Universal's back catalogue for the home market.⁶⁸ The sales of 16mm film through United World did not perform as expected, and the market of growth that Universal originally foresaw had become stale. United World's financial issues were exacerbated because the post-war market for 16mm films centred around educational and industrial films, and these were two areas that United World's library did not cover.⁶⁹ In an attempt to change the fortunes of the company, president Matty Fox started examining contracts of films that were already in Universal's library to determine if they could be sold to television stations.⁷⁰

Castle Films continued to produce abridged films for the niche market it served, and ten years after its initial purchase by Universal it began to release a selection of the science fiction and horror films found in the Universal library. In 1957 Castle Films released two of the most popular science fiction films of the 50s as abridgements: *It Came From Outer Space* (1953) and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954).⁷¹ Both films featured Richard Carlson in the starring role and were directed by Jack Arnold. The success of these two films spurred Castle Films to release 28 more films as part of the science fiction and horror series that would see films from the 30s,

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 245.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 246.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 248.

⁷⁰ Ibid, 251.

⁷¹ MacGillivray, *Castle Films*, 2004. 186.

40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s condensed for release.⁷² Later films added to the series of excerpts included the Jack Arnold directed *Tarantula!* (1955) and horror classics like *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931). The series was so successful that after the introduction of the first two films no film from the series was taken off sale until Castle Films was rebranded as Universal 8 in 1977.

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⁷² Mark Clark, "For Monster Fans of the 1960s and '70s, Castle Films Abridgements Were The Best Things on Earth!" *Monsters from the Vault*, Accessed December 1, 2014.
<http://www.monstersfromthevault.com/LittleGiants.html>.

⁷³ MacGillivray, *Castle Films*, 2004. 186.

Chapter 5 - Method of Analysis

This section, which will detail how I compared the original films to the Castle Films versions, is designed as a guide for other researchers to use with other abridged films. To start, I needed to obtain digital copies of both versions of each film. I obtained the long form versions with ease because some of the more popular films - *Bride of Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, for example - were recently released for home viewing on DVD and Blu-Ray. The more obscure films, such as *Man Made Monster*, I eventually found on compilation DVDs included with other horror films from the Universal Studio catalogue. I ripped the DVD image and audio files to a hard drive at the DVDs original resolution of 720x480 pixels using a program called Handbrake. I needed to encode the ripped files at an image size and bit rate that would maintain a high fidelity image while keeping the file size as low as possible.⁷⁴ For that reason, I encoded the video with the x264 derivative of the H.264 codec at the same frame size of the original DVDs. I encoded the audio using the standard AAC audio encoder. Regardless of the technical efficiencies of x264 and AAC's compression algorithms, the original low resolution images of the DVDs are less detailed than the 16mm films.

After the digital versions of the feature films were properly stored and backed up on a secondary hard drive, I had to check each film to ensure that each file was identical to the film's original release. Each of the DVD versions had been digitized and restored in order to be presented digitally, and it was possible that the films may have been altered during that process by a digitizer, technician, colourist, or producer. I cross checked technical aspects that included running time, which would indicate scenes being added or taken away from the film, and frame size. I verified the frame sizes because in the 1950s film studios began releasing films in a variety

⁷⁴ A lower file size allows Avid Media Composer, the program that I used to compare the films, to interact with the media at more efficient speeds.

of widescreen formats (Cinemascope, Panavision, and Superscope, for example). It is possible that the original films that were released in the 1950s could have been altered in order to accommodate the now standard 16:9 aspect ratio used for home viewing on widescreen televisions. *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, for example, was originally released in the 1.37:1 Academy Standard aspect ratio as a 3D film. The studio filmed *Creature* "widescreen safe", meaning that no important action took place in the upper and lower portions of the screen. The studio shot the film this way to ensure it could later be matted and presented in the 1.85:1 widescreen aspect ratio. The technicians who restored the version of *The Creature from the Black Lagoon* that I used for my comparison cropped out the upper and lower portions of the frame in order to present the film in 1.85:1 aspect ratio, a deviation from its original release. Castle Films released each of the abridged films that I am studying in 1.37:1 aspect ratio, and knowing that the original film was released in the same aspect ratio meant that I would not make a false observation in the analysis.

Dracula's running time is difficult to determine because multiple versions of it were made in 1931. *The Film Daily* review of *Dracula* lists a running time of 85 minutes, whereas other reviews state the film is 75 or 65 minutes in length.⁷⁵ Two other versions of *Dracula* were released in 1931, a Spanish language version that was filmed at night using the same sets as the English language film and a silent version of the English language film. It is possible that the variety of running times reported in print and online are attributable to the existence of three distinct versions of the film. In any case, when I compared *Dracula* to its Castle Films counterpart all of the shots used in the Castle Films version were matched back to their original source. No elements from other possible versions remained in the shorted version, so I am confident including the *Dracula* comparison in

⁷⁵ *The Film Daily*, "Dracula Review," Feb 15, 1931. www.mediahistoryproject.org (accessed May 7, 2015). 11.

this project. In all other cases I confirmed that the feature length films accurately represented their original presentations.

I digitized the Castle Films versions using the 16mm release prints because no other reliable digital versions could be found. I digitized the films at a resolution of 1920 x 1080i pixels at 60 frames per second using the Sniper 16 HD film digitizer found at the Ryerson University film lab. The Sniper 16 HD software processed the footage to playback at 24 frames per second. The Sniper also records the visual information as one continuous video file. For the purposes of film preservation the Sniper 16 is not ideal, but for this project it was adequate. Handbrake further processed the files, encoding them in the same x264 codec and MKV container as the feature length versions. I also decreased the frame size from 1920 x 1080i to 1280 x 720p. The smaller resolution decreases the size of the files, therefore freeing system resources and allowing the computer to run more efficiently when interacting with the files. At the same time, I kept the Castle Films versions at an HD resolution to provide enough visual detail to mitigate any difficulty in comparing the restored feature film versions to their faded and warped 16mm film counterparts.

After I had completed digitizing all of the films I imported the feature and Castle Films versions into Avid Media Composer and converted the files to Avid's MXF 1:1 format. This method created new files that Avid can read and operate with easily and ensures that any changes I make to the files in Avid as necessitated by my comparison will not affect the digital objects. Once imported, I paired the films together in bins (a file inside which film clips, audio, effects, etc can be stored and organized) that corresponded with each specific film. For example, I moved the feature and Castle Film version of *Bride of Frankenstein* to the same bin. I then placed both versions on a single timeline, the feature version on video track 1 (V1) and the Castle Films version on video track 2 (V2). I moved the Castle Films version along V2 until its first frame corresponded with a frame on V1. After finding it, I played both clips simultaneously until the images no longer

matched. I cut the Castle Films version at the frame where the difference occurred, and the shot was labeled numerically. Numbering the segments maintained the structural chronology of the original Castle Films version. The process was repeated until all of the segments in the Castle Films version were paired with their feature counterparts. If a shot from the Castle Films version came from a chronologically different section of the original film it was placed on video track 3 (V3) to visually separate it. This was done to help identify how cause and effect relationships, temporal construction, and the visual context for each shot were altered in the creation of the abridged version.

Following the completion of the comparison, I created visual representations of the Avid timelines in Adobe Illustrator. The visual representations, which make up the entirety of Appendix A, demonstrate where the images used in the abridged versions came from in the original films and the degree to which the images were rearranged in order to best complete the narrative. This final step was not necessary for the purposes of the comparison, and the visualizations were included merely as a visual aide for how each abridged film was constructed.

Chapter 6 - Observations

Once I successfully cut the Castle Films versions into their component pieces and matched their corresponding shots, I compared both visual sources based on the content of the footage that was not used in the Castle Films version, how the absence of footage affected the causality of the original film, the extent that shots were reordered in the Castle Films versions, the effect that reordering shots had on the cause and effect relationships established in the original film, and if any new images were created for the abridged version. I observed five differences between the two versions after the comparison was complete: length, frame size, opening and closing credits, narrative, and the chronology of the component shots.

There are analytical considerations that go beyond these boundaries. When analyzing moving images the construction of motion in frame and how that motion persists from shot to shot, the temporal arrangement of shots in relation to each other, and the facets of constructing visual imagery, such as tone, line, and shape, each offer different possible approaches for interpretation. However, I have elected to limit the detailed aspect of my analysis to a narrative focus in order to demonstrate the high degree to which the original films were transformed during the condensation process. My aim in this thesis, as stated in the introduction, is to define the abridged films as separate and distinct entities, and I believe demonstrating that the abridged films are narratively separate from the originals will accomplish that goal.

At the conclusion of this section I will briefly discuss the guiding principles that informed how images were chosen to be included in the abridged films, and in this particular case I do not believe narrative is the best means for doing so. Discussing the existence of guiding principles at Castle Films requires examining the abridgements in relation to each other as opposed to their original films. A narrative comparison between the fourteen abridged films revealed the existence

of a basic three act structure, but no indication for why certain images were used and others were not. Therefore, I believe that in this case it is more appropriate to examine visual elements of the abridged films in order to determine what guiding principles were followed in their creation.

Length

The difference in length between the original film and the abridged version best illustrates the degree to which the original films were altered. The fourteen original films vary in length, the shortest being *Man Made Monster* (59 minutes) and the longest being *Son of Frankenstein* (99 minutes). The Castle Films versions range in length from 8 minutes and 2 seconds to 8 minutes and 20 seconds. The range indicates that the editors at Castle Films were required to cut the films down to a near uniform size. In the case of *Man Made Monster*, 51 minutes (86%) had to be excised from the original. In the case of *Son of Frankenstein*, 91 minutes (92%) were taken out. The amount that each film needed to be shortened directly affected the credits, narrative, and cause and effect relationships in the Castle Films versions. This point is necessary for understanding why the abridged versions differ to the extent that they do.

Frame Size

I noted in Chapter 5 that each of the Castle Films releases was released in the Academy Standard 1.37:1 aspect ratio. Each of the original films, save one, was originally released in the same aspect ratio. The exception, *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, was originally released in 1957 during the transition period to widescreen viewing formats in North American theatres. Its original aspect ratio was 1.85:1, and it was altered to bring it in line with the rest of the abridged releases.

The reason for altering the frame size of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, however, is curious. In the VHS era of home distribution it was common practice for films to be “pan and scanned,” a process that altered films that were originally released in widescreen formats. The process involved cropping or moving the image so that all of the important narrative information could be displayed on a television with a 4:3 aspect ratio. There was little need for such an alteration in the pre-VHS era of home film viewership. Home projection could, with the appropriate lens on the projector, produce an image several feet high and wide, making the need to crop the image for the sake of saving space on the viewable surface irrelevant.

The process that Castle Films used to alter the frame in order to give the image an aspect ratio of 1.37:1 is equally puzzling. In the VHS era the image was altered by deciding which part of the frame was the narrative focus and cropping out what remained. For example, in an over the shoulder shot-reverse-shot sequence where a character occupies the right side of the frame in medium close up while the other character’s head and shoulder are shown out of focus on the left hand side of the frame, the right side of the frame would become the main focus of the image on the VHS version and the left side would be cropped out; the reverse shot, which would show the other character’s face, would focus on the left hand side of the frame. However, *The Incredible Shrinking Man* is cropped using a crude method: instead of panning or adjusting each individual shot to best suit the narrative, approximately one fifth of the image on the right hand side of the frame is simply removed. The removal of the right hand side of the frame is uniform throughout, and it leads to awkward instances where a character is cut in half by the frame or cut out of the frame entirely, even if that character speaks in the scene.

The dearth of published material on the business and technical practices of Castle Films and on the ways it produced its abridged films make it difficult to understand why such a crude cropping method would be used. *The Incredible Shrinking Man* is the only film out of the fourteen

film objects I have assessed that is formatted this way, therefore there is no basis for comparison or for determining if this was a common practice. However, the use of such a thoughtless method of cropping suggests that Castle Films did not respect the original film in the first place and points to a general mode of thought that was pervasive throughout the company. The third film that was released in the Science Fiction/Horror series, a shortened version of *This Island Earth* (1955), that was renamed *War of the Planets* for release in 1958, was originally screened in the 2.00:1 aspect ratio.⁷⁶ Comparing the visual treatment of *War of the Planets*, along with other films that were originally released in widescreen aspect ratios, to the Castle Films version of *The Incredible Shrinking Man* would provide insight into the technical practices of Castle Films and how those practices may have evolved over time.

Opening and Closing Credits

The target running time of the Castle Films versions made it necessary to truncate, speed up, or alter the opening and closing credits for each film. The opening credit sequences, measuring as long as 90 seconds in *Son of Frankenstein*, would have accounted for approximately 18% of the total running time of the abridged version if left untouched. Beginning with *It Came From Outer Space* and ending with *Revenge of the Creature*, various styles of altering the credits were employed. There is no discernable visual evidence that points to why a particular method was used. The original *It Came from Outer Space* begins with the Universal International logo and is followed by a shot of a fireball streaking from right to left across the frame. The following shot shows the fireball racing towards the audience and eventually exploding when it “hits” the screen. The fireball hitting the screen is synchronous with the bold faced title of

⁷⁶ MacGillivray, 186.

the film appearing, and there are no other credits used. The Castle Films version is largely the same, except that a title card, which states "Castle Films Presents," is superimposed over the image of the fireball traveling from right to left across the screen. *Bride of Frankenstein*, released three years later in 1960, uses different credits than the feature film. The original *Bride of Frankenstein* opens with a credit sequence that fades in and out over a shot of smoke billowing in the background. The Castle Films version places credits that are approximately eighty seconds shorter over an exterior shot of Frankenstein's Castle. This technique is used again in *Son of Frankenstein*, which was released by Castle Films in 1965. *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman's* credits faded in and out over top of a single shot of steam emanating from a laboratory glass. The sequence was shortened by first removing the fade transitions, and then using crossfades to transition from one credit to the next. Using this method reduced the length of the credits by 69 seconds. For *Creature from the Lagoon*, released in 1957, completely new title cards were created and shown at a rapid pace. *The Mummy* and *Dracula*, released in 1962 and 1963 respectively, used the same technique. *House of Frankenstein*, released in 1967, and the films released thereafter indicate that at some point between 1965 and 1967 Castle Films normalized the opening credit sequences and made them uniform. Overlaying the credits on shot sequences that contained no credits, first observed in *Bride of Frankenstein*, became the standard. Moreover, aspects such as the typographical layout and the font used for the credits also became ubiquitous. The average length of the opening credits is approximately 16 seconds, or 3% percent of the total run time of the average Castle Films release.

Castle Films would also change how much information and what kind of information would be present in the opening credits. The credits for *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*, for example, were left intact and no information was altered or omitted. However, credit sequences that were made from scratch for the abridged versions would rearrange the placement of actors or omit

them entirely. Technical and artistic staff, such as the art director, cinematographer, and film editor were also commonly omitted from the credits. In the original *Dracula*, for example, the opening credit sequence uses four title cards whereas the Castle Films version uses three. The first card in each version displays the name of the film. The original film also displays a credit for Bram Stoker, the two writers who wrote the play that the film adapted (Hamilton Deane and John L. Balderston), and a credit for Tod Browning and Carl Laemmle Jr, the director and producer respectively. The Castle Films version, on the other hand, only displays the title of the film, the text "Excerpts from the Photoplay 'Dracula'," and the original Universal Pictures copyright. The second card in the original shows the names of the technical and artistic staff who worked on the film. This card is omitted from the Castle Films version and the names are not reproduced elsewhere in the opening credit sequence. The third card from the original film contains only Tod Browning's director credit. The Castle Films version displays this credit on the third (and last) card, but "directed by" is changed to "A Tod Browning Production." The final card of the original film's opening contains the actors' credits -- nine in total. The actor card in the Castle Films version contains only four: Bela Lugosi as Count Dracula, Helen Chandler as Nina, David Manners as John, and Edward Van Sloan as Van Helsing. There are also differences in the names of the characters between each version. In the original film Helen Chandler plays "Mina," not "Nina," and David Manners plays "John Harker" instead of simply "John." The changes are minor, and the reason for changing the names of the characters is unknown. I found similar rearrangements and omissions in all of the Castle Films versions examined with the exception of *The Mummy's Ghost*.

The presentation of the ending credits also vary from film to film. *It Came From Outer Space*, which only featured the name of the film in the opening credits, shows the entire cast and crew in the closing credits. The Castle Films version, however, highlights Richard Carlson as the main actor and omits the rest of the cast. In addition, the abridged version shows four cards of

credits over the same shot of the fireball streaking across the sky, only this time the fireball is moving in reverse. The original film shows a clip of each actor with his or her name present at the bottom followed by a series of technical and artistic credits, all of which are shown over a sparkling star-lit sky. The Castle Films version of *The Mummy* ends with three cards, one dedicated to the screenwriters, one dedicated to the director, and a “The End” card that features the Castle Films logo. In *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*, the end credits begin with the “produced by” and “directed by” sections from the revised opening credits, then fade to a different style of the Castle Films “The End” card.

Dracula, *Frankenstein Meets the Wolfman*, *Son of Frankenstein*, *House of Frankenstein*, *The Mummy’s Ghost*, *The Wolf Man*, and *Frankenstein* each end with a solitary “The End” card adorned with the Castle Films logo. *The Incredible Shrinking Man* and *Man Made Monster* also end with the appearance of the lone “The End,” however it is not displayed on a card; the words are superimposed over an image that comes from the end of the film. The Castle Films logo is not seen. Using the single “The End” credit was the preferred method of ending the abridged films, but unlike the standardization of the opening credits there was no movement towards uniformity.

Narrative

The changes that were made to the narrative are the most striking example of the differences created by the condensation process. Each film, regardless of how long the original film was, had to be edited to remove entire scenes, characters, and plot points to meet the time constraints of a single reel release. The result is that the Castle Films versions have different narratives altogether. The new narratives use different numbers of characters, change the

development and motivations of the characters who remain, and alter the ending to better suit the new narrative.

House of Frankenstein is the best example of a narrative changing completely. The original *House of Frankenstein* opens with Professor Lampini's Chamber of Horrors traveling by horse and buggy through a dark forest. The traveling side show passes a prison from which two of the main characters, Dr. Gustav Niemann and Daniel, a hunchback, have just escaped. Niemann and Daniel encounter Professor Lampini's carriage and, after talking with Lampini, murder him. Niemann impersonates Lampini and the two travel to the town of Reigelberg. Upon arriving they join a larger circus-like festival that features other traveling sideshows. During a demonstration Niemann shows the bones of Dracula to an onlooking crowd and then pulls out the stake that had killed the vampire. Dracula is resurrected as soon as the stake is removed. Dracula then attempts to seduce and finally kidnap a woman at the fair, culminating in a final chase scene. The chase ends with Dracula realizing that the sun is about to rise and his attempt to crawl back into his coffin. He turns back into a skeleton and is left on the mountain side. The next scene depicts Lampini's Chamber of Horrors entering the town of Frankenstein.

The opening section of the feature film, approximately 28 minutes in length, is entirely omitted from the Castle Films version. Instead, the abridged film begins with Lampini's Chamber of Horrors entering the outskirts of the town of Frankenstein with no indication of what happened in the opening act of the original version. All of the characters who made up the town of Reigelberg, Neimann's and Daniel's prison escape, and the murders they recently committed are omitted. In fact, there is no indication that Neimann is *not* Professor Lampini. Suppression of Neimann and Daniel's story alters the motivations for actions that the pair take later in the film.

House of Frankenstein also illustrates another commonality between the abridged versions: the omission of romantic subplots. As Neimann and Daniel enter the town of

Frankenstein they see a woman named Iloka performing a traditional dance. Daniel falls in love with her, and his love acts as the principal motivating factor for assisting Neimann to revive both the Frankenstein monster and the Wolfman.⁷⁷ Once the Wolfman is revived and he returns to the human form of Lawrence Talbot, Daniel and Talbot feud over the love of Iloka. Their conflict, along with Talbot's courtship of Iloka are not shown in the abridged film. Consequently, Daniel's motivation for helping Neimann shifts from his love of Iloka to his desire to be healed by the science that created the Frankenstein monster. Moreover, after Iloka's appearance at the beginning of the Castle Films version she is not seen again. Romantic subplots are removed from Castle Films abridgements as a matter of routine.

The removal of the romantic subplot in *Bride of Frankenstein* directly affects the ending of the film, and consequently requires the ending of the Castle Films version to be altered. In the original version, the monster becomes enraged after the Bride rejects him. The monster reaches for a lever that, if pulled, would cause the destruction of the entire lab and everyone in it. Dr. Frankenstein's partner, Elizabeth Lavenza, arrives at the door of the lab and begs Frankenstein to come with her. The monster, feeling sympathy towards the couple, allows Frankenstein and Elizabeth to escape before finally destroying the lab and, in the process, killing himself, his Bride, and the evil Dr. Pretorius. In the Castle Films version Elizabeth is not shown coming to the door of the lab, and the monster grants no final act of mercy. Frankenstein is not shown leaving the lab, and he is killed along with Dr. Pretorius, the monster, and the Bride.

The shots of Elizabeth's arrival and her escape with Frankenstein would have added no more than 10 seconds to the running time of the Castle Films version, which in its current state is 8 minutes and 12 seconds long. The abridged version of *Frankenstein* is 8 minutes and 20 seconds long, so it would have been possible to include the additional footage of Frankenstein and

⁷⁷ Neimann promises Daniel that if he helps him to unlock the secrets of Dr. Frankenstein's early experiments Neimann will be able to turn Daniel into an "Adonis."

Elizabeth escaping. These shots were removed because within the new narrative Elizabeth's arrival and Frankenstein's escape had no narrative basis. Elizabeth is not seen in the Castle Films version, so she would appear as a character without discernible motivations. Frankenstein, in the original film, is forced to help Dr. Pretorius create the Bride after Pretorius convinces the monster to kidnap Elizabeth. Frankenstein is often shown protesting against his involvement, but he ultimately helps create the Bride because he does not want Elizabeth to be harmed. However, in the Castle Films version, the kidnapping of Elizabeth is never shown and Frankenstein's motivations for helping Pretorius are implied to be scientific, much in the same way Frankenstein was driven to originally create the monster in *Frankenstein*. This lack of motivational clarity on Frankenstein's part is ultimately what leads to his destruction in the Castle Films version; he has done nothing to deserve the sympathy of the monster and is shown to be a collaborator instead of a forced participant. For this reason he shares the same fate as Dr. Pretorius.

Shot Reordering and Causality

The original films each have their own specific chronology that dictates the specific cause and effect relationships between events and characters that drive the narrative forward. The chronology is built around the premise that a specific shot will always come after another specific shot, and so on throughout the film. However, when creating the abridged versions the original chronology of the feature films was disrupted by the excision of large parts of the narrative. The Castle Films versions, however, are not clumsily edited together highlight reels. In each of the films, there is a visible effort to create a new chronology that, consequently, creates new cause and effect relationships. In order to create a new chronology the Castle Films editors would move shots from other sections of the feature films and insert them into narratively strategic places. The

editors of the abridged films used shot reordering for three distinct purposes: to hide the presence of a character in a scene, creating a narrative bridge between two scenes that are separated in the original film, and to change the character motivations for a specific action.

The monster is shown prominently in the original *Bride of Frankenstein*, but he is primarily absent from the Castle Films version. The first appearance of monster is withheld until after the Bride comes to life at the end of the film. It could be argued that the monster's late appearance is merely coincidental due to the large amount of footage that needed to be cut away, but one scene in particular that was included in the abridged film indicates a conscious decision to withhold the monster until the end. While fleeing capture in the original film the monster hides in a crypt. As he hides, Dr. Pretorius and two hired helpers enter the crypt to search for a body to be used for the Bride. The monster watches them as they select a coffin to open. The following shot sequence begins with the two helpers prying at the edges of a coffin, cuts to a medium shot of the monster looking on, and then cuts back to a shot of the helpers opening the coffin. The first and third shots of this sequence are used in the Castle Films version, but the second shot of the monster is cut out. Instead of cutting directly from the first shot to the third shot the editor inserted a close up of a dead woman's face, however it is not the face of the Bride. This decision points to a conscious choice on the part of the producer of the Castle Films version to remove the monster from the scene while maintaining the basic sequential structure of the original sequence. It also indicates that the producers wanted to withhold the first appearance of the monster until the end for maximum impact.

A more substantial example of shot reordering is the creation of a narrative bridge, connecting two scenes that were separated temporally in the original film. Narrative bridges collapse the plot of the film and allow the abridged versions to ignore large amounts of narrative without affecting the new plot. *Man Made Monster* creates a narrative bridge to move the

narrative as quickly as possible to the end chase scene, thus removing narrative elements that were not required. The original *Man Made Monster* centres on Dan McCormick, an ordinary man who was the sole survivor of a bus crashing into an electrical station. All of the passengers were electrocuted, signaling that McCormick has a high tolerance for electrical shock. McCormick is later visited in the hospital by Dr. John Lawrence who requests that McCormick come to his research centre after leaving the hospital. Upon arriving at the research centre, McCormick is tricked into being used as the subject of illegal experiments by Dr. Paul Rigas, one of Dr. Lawrence's colleagues. The experiments turn McCormick into a battery able to release electrical energy into anyone he touches, killing them. McCormick becomes addicted to electricity as a side effect of the experiments, and his addiction allows Dr. Rigas to enslave him.

McCormick is shown at escalating stages of Dr. Rigas' experiments in the feature film. The Castle Films version can not show the different stages of experimentation, and instead connects the first successful experiment and the last experiment using a narrative bridge. After the first experiment is complete McCormick is ordered by Rigas to kill the interfering Dr. Lawrence. With Lawrence dead, Rigas hands an object to McCormick that will bleed away his energy, essentially turning him off. Rigas then convinces McCormick to take responsibility for Lawrence's murder, and as a result McCormick is arrested, found guilty, and taken to the electric chair for execution. The electric chair reenergizes McCormick who then returns to Rigas' laboratory to confront him. When McCormick arrives he discovers that Rigas was about to murder June Lawrence, Dr. Lawrence's daughter and McCormick's love interest. McCormick kills Rigas and takes June out of the laboratory, instigating the final chase scene of the film.

In the Castle Films version the narrative elements that centre on McCormick's arrest, trial, and execution are removed. Instead, the abridged film moves directly from the scene where Rigas hands McCormick the object that bleeds away his energy, cuts to a shot of Dr. Lawrence's dog

waiting outside of the laboratory, and then cuts to the moment when McCormick kills Rigas and kidnaps June. The two separate shots of McCormick and Rigas use identical shot scales, figure placement of the actors, and location within the lab. The inclusion of the shot of Dr. Lawrence's dog eases the transition between these two shots. A cut from one to the other would have been jarring due to the minor visual differences between the shots; the clothes worn by both characters, for example, are different in each scene. The three shot sequence makes up the whole of the narrative bridge.

The final approach to reordering shots that producers at Castle Films would employ involved swapping the placement of two scenes in order to create new motivation for an action. Moving scenes became necessary during the abridgement process in order to maintain a coherent cause and effect relationship inside the Castle Films version. *The Creature from the Lagoon* uses this strategy to change the motivation for escape from the Black Lagoon. The original film depicts a scientific expedition committed to finding evidence of a Devonian era creature. The expedition travels down the Amazon River and into the Black Lagoon where they instead find the creature itself. A number of conflicts between the crew and the creature leave members of the expedition dead or severely injured. Dr David Reed, the leader of the expedition, implores the crew to leave the Black Lagoon and return to safety. The crew agrees, but as their ship travels towards the exit of the lagoon they run into a series of toppled trees that block their exit. Dr. Reed and Mark Williams, one of the other main characters, dive into the water to clear away the debris. While working on the debris they are attacked by the creature, and Williams is killed.

The Castle Films version uses a narrative bridge to collapse the narrative content between Dr. Reed and Williams' first dive into the lagoon and the dive where Williams is killed. The scene begins with a shot from much earlier in the film that depicts the first time Reed and Williams dive into the lagoon. The Castle Films version then cuts to the attack by the creature that

leads to the death of Williams. Moving from one scene to the other was seamless because Reed and Williams were underwater in both scenes and dressed identically. The narrative bridge eliminates all of the content in between the two separate dives and allows the narrative to move forward. However, the ship must still escape the Black Lagoon. The chronology of the ship crashing into the downed trees and Williams' death is reserved, meaning that Williams' death becomes the motivating factor for escape from the lagoon as opposed to the impassioned pleas of Reed shown in the original version. A logical cause and effect relationship is maintained, but how the events relate to each other in the cause and effect chain is altered to suit the newly established narrative. In short, the characters in the abridged film are taking the same actions but for different narrative reasons.

Conclusions of Analysis

The conclusion that I draw from this analysis is that the shortened versions are new films with different lengths, credits, casts of characters, narratives, and cause and effect relationships. They are drawn from the same genetic makeup as the originals, but their relationship should be thought of as two siblings born at different times and raised under different circumstances, with only their original genes as proof of their relation. Based on these findings I believe it is necessary for moving image archivists who currently have abridged commercial films in their collections to reconsider the preservation priority of the objects. The objects represent a section of film history that, to a large extent, has yet to be mined by researchers and, as such, require a higher degree of care than they currently receive. At the very least, the objects need to be thought of not as compromised or inferior films, but instead as wholly new works.

The analysis also provided insight into the process that an editor might have followed when condensing a feature length film. Based on what I have observed the abridged versions are not created to fit a mould, and they do not conform to easily identifiable patterns. The illustrations found in Appendix A show where the images from each abridged version came from, and the finale is the only consistent section that the editors draw images from. It may seem natural for all of the abridged films to contain images from the finales of the original versions, but we can not forget that entire sections were left out of the abridged films. In the case of a film like *House of Frankenstein*, it is conceivable that the editor at Castle Films could have taken the first section of the film, which depicts Dracula's resurrection and eventual demise in just 28 minutes, and created an abridged version from that section alone. The film would have had to be renamed (there are several examples from Castle Films' catalogue of films being renamed after they have been abridged) and then it could have been distributed as part of the science fiction and horror series. The process would have taken less time, and a more coherent narrative that more closely resembled the original narrative could have been told. Instead, the editor or producer chose to focus on the final 43 minutes of the film. Without documentation from the offices of Universal International or Castle Films it is impossible to be sure if editors and producers had specific rules for condensing the feature films with which they had to abide.

However, it is possible to determine why an editor would choose to keep certain shots while omitting others by focusing on the one element that is always present in the abridged versions: dynamic motion both in and between images. It is clear that the editors of the abridged versions could potentially cut the feature films into any form they pleased. To use a modern example, an amateur editor released a trailer for Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* online that arranged the footage to give the impression the film was a romantic comedy.⁷⁸ The abridged films

⁷⁸ "The Shining Recut, HD," *YouTube*, Web, 18 June 2015, <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6s40Q6ODSI8>>.

made by Castle Films could have similarly focused on different aspects of the narrative. The romantic subplots that were completely removed could have easily been the narrative focus. There was, however, a concerted effort to define the narrative of the abridged versions by the creature/monster/alien, their creation, the terror they wrought, and their eventual defeat in the finale. Each abridgement's compliance to that three part structure demonstrates that there were guiding principles in place.

It could be said that the abridged films are similar to found footage films that repurpose images from a film in order to create a new work. Typically images in found footage films are repeated rhythmically, juxtaposed with other images, rephotographed using colourization techniques, etc., for an artistic purpose. However, the abridged films were not constructed by editors who were allowed to express themselves artistically through their work. I discussed previously how film elements from other sections of the feature films could be used to create smooth transitions between sections using a narrative bridge. However, the use of subtle and unobtrusive editing techniques was not a primary concern. As demonstrated by the thoughtless cropping of *The Incredible Shrinking Man*, there was little care taken to preserve the visual fidelity created by the unobtrusive, Classical Hollywood style of editing found in the original films. Each of the abridged versions contain awkward cuts within scenes where, for example, at one moment a character has his back to the camera, and then in the next shot he is facing the camera and speaking to another character off screen. Visual impact, as opposed to visual fidelity and artistic motivations, is the concern of the editors.

Due to the constraints of reducing a feature film to an eight minute short film the editors were at the mercy of the narrative, but they typically gravitated towards images that contained a high degree of dynamic motion regardless if they matched graphically with the surrounding shots or if they created awkward editing rhythms. If a Castle Films editor used a jump cut it was not

because the editor was attempting to undermine classical Hollywood conventions of editing, but because using a jump cut was the most effective way to join two narratively relevant images whose combination created a visually impactful juxtaposition. The reliance on highly dynamic images underlines the guiding principle used to determine whether a shot would be selected for use in the condensation process: the image and audio had to efficiently portray the new narrative while using the most impactful images to do so. By following this principle the abridged films not only condensed the narrative, but concentrated the excitement a viewer would experience over the course of a feature length film. The effect is numbing as we are only presented with moments of decision and action, with the subtleties and nuances of the original film removed in favour of highlighting the most visually dynamic images.⁷⁹ It is for this reason that the abridged versions draw a majority of their shots from the final third of the original film, the section of the film that would contain the final chase, the destruction of the lab, the death of the monster and quite often his creator. These images are indicative of the kind of spectacle a viewer would expect from the “grand finale” of any horror or science fiction film from the Classical Hollywood period, except in the case of the abridged film they do not need to wait through the majority of the film to be stimulated. The idea of concentrated entertainment, or fast entertainment, directly relates to Ariel Dorfman’s notion of the infantilized adult reader, or in this case viewer. His cultural critique will be expanded on in the following chapter in relation to the *Reader’s Digest Condensed Book Club*.

⁷⁹ The feeling is similar to what a viewer experiences while watching a Hollywood film that has committed to the oppressive editing style popularized by the films of Michael Bay and which is now commonplace amongst high-budget Hollywood cinema

Chapter 7 - Defining the Film Objects

Referring to a Castle Films version as a different film or a film with a new narrative lacks the specificity necessary to accurately describe it. There are several possible defining terms that could be used to describe the film objects including excerpt, digest, and remix. This section will focus on defining each term and applying that definition to the film objects and their method of construction to determine which term best describes the film objects.

Excerpts is the term that Castle Films used to describe its own products. In the opening credits of each film there is a title card that features the name of the film and a variation of the following statement: "Excerpts from the photoplay [film title]." The librarians who created the labeling for each film also included the term "excerpts" in brackets beside the title on the film canister, indicating that the statement shown above was viewed during initial inspection or on literature that accompanied the film objects. When describing the film objects to my peers they have used terms that are synonymous with excerpts, such as "highlights" and "compilations", to describe the objects.

These three terms, in the context of print media, can be defined as "a passage taken out of a printed book or manuscript; an extract, quotation, selection."⁸⁰ But this definition does not account for the fact that these film objects are more than sections pulled from a longer film and laid out in chronological order. More often than not the majority of footage used in the abridged versions came from the final act of the original film, but the way that the entire abridged version is constructed creates a new context for the final climactic ending. In other words, how the characters reach the climax of the respective version is different, and the shortened version requires the construction of a new narrative in order to reach that climax. Defining the abridged

⁸⁰ "Excerpt." Oxford English Dictionary. Web. 6 May 2015.
<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/65746?rskey=8GUs3T&result=1#eid>

versions as excerpts, highlights or compilations neglects the narrative transformation that each film object was subjected to during editing, and are thus not ideal terms to use when defining them.

In order to assess the validity of using the term digest to describe the abridged films, I will compare and contrast how Castle Films created its abridgements to how *Reader's Digest*, a publishing contemporary of Castle Films, created digest versions of magazine articles and novels. There are parallels between the creation of an abridged Castle Films short and the creation of digest versions of novels and articles made for public consumption. Beginning in 1934 *Reader's Digest* began publishing digest versions of non-fiction books, the first of which was "How to Live on Twenty-Four Hours" by Arnold Bennett.⁸¹ In 1949 the *The Reader's Digest Condensed Book Club* began circulation in the United States.⁸² The book club compendium was published four times a year, and each would contain two longer fictional stories and shorter non-fictional works typically totalling 575 pages per volume.⁸³ The condensing of longer works into digest form matches the business practices of Castle Films: take a long form subject, remove content to truncate the overall narrative, and rerelease the shorter version to the public. There are, however, differences between the how literary works were condensed and how feature length films were abridged that calls into question the use of a term like digest to describe the film objects. This section will examine the similarities and the differences in creating condensed literature and abridged films, after which I will discuss the appropriateness of using digest as a term to define abridged films.

James Playsted Wood, who wrote a corporate history of *Reader's Digest* in 1958, described the process that was used to condense a book:

"Once the decision is made to accept a complete book, the Digest buys the rights to condense it, and the book is assigned to an editor for the first cut. Three more editors go over this first condensation, making further cuts, perhaps restoring some

⁸¹ Wood, *Of Lasting Interest*, 1967. 175.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid, 176.

already made, making sure that the contents, the spirit, and the style of the author are retained in the shortened version. Nothing essential is changed. Where deletions necessitate the insertion of transitions, these are made in the manner of the author. The condensed book, still in Digest "manuscript," then goes to the copy desk, where a final reading is made, and the copy is prepared for the printer."⁸⁴

Wood's claim that "nothing essential is changed" is preposterous. When a work of literature is condensed in any way it is immediately stripped of the author's intentions and style, two facets of its creation that are undeniably essential. For example, the eighth chapter of *Smith and Jones* by Nicholas Monsarrat begins with the following sentence: "They settled down very quickly; it was made easy for them by a continuing popular welcome, and a benign official smile."⁸⁵ The same sentence taken from the condensed version reads "Smith and Jones settled down very quickly."⁸⁶ The narrative action of the two main characters settling down remains the same, but the nuance of that action and the context in which it is performed is removed. The condensed novels and articles are systematically stripped of the words, phrases, and paragraphs that define the original tone of the work so the reader only has to engage with the content on a purely narrative level. In addition to *Smith and Jones* I have also compared Anya Seton's *The Winthrop Woman*, Alexander Klein's *The Counterfeit Traitor*, and E.R. Braithwaite's *To Sir, With Love* with their respective condensed versions. The editors of *Reader's Digest*, beyond removing sections of a sentence, would also combine sentences in order to accelerate conversations between characters. For example, in *The Counterfeit Traitor*, Ambassador Steinhardt asks Eric Erickson, the main character, if he will become a spy. Erickson is astonished and Steinhardt replies "Yes, Eric. When the time comes, will you be willing to help us?"⁸⁷ Erickson agrees, questions Steinhardt what his role will be, and wonders out loud if he will be sent to the infantry. Steinhardt

⁸⁴ Ibid, 178.

⁸⁵ Nicholas Monsarrat, *Smith and Jones*, London: Cassell & Company LTD, 1963, 90.

⁸⁶ Nicholas Monsarrat, "Smith and Jones," *Reader's Digest Condensed Books*, Vol. 2, Pleasantville, N.Y.: Reader's Digest Association, 1963. 361.

⁸⁷ Alexander Klein, *The Counterfeit Traitor*, London: Frederick Muller, 1958. 20.

replies “No. As you’ve probably guessed, it’s oil. Intelligence about the German oil industry.”⁸⁸ In the *Reader’s Digest* version Steinhardt’s answers are combined into one reply: “Yes, Eric. When the time comes, we will badly need intelligence about the German oil industry. Would you be willing to help us?”⁸⁹ In terms of narrative nothing essential has changed. Erickson has still agreed to help, and Steinhardt has still told Erickson that they will need intelligence regarding the German oil industry. The original pacing and style, however, has been altered significantly.

The condensed products created by *Reader’s Digest* and Castle Films are systematic of what Ariel Dorfman describes as the need to satisfy rampant consumption in North American society.⁹⁰ In a capitalistic society it is necessary to gain knowledge as quickly as possible because it is knowledge that separates the successful from the failures in a supposedly equal community. The condensed novels and abridged films are products of the need to consume knowledge as quickly as possible and, to use Dorfman’s term, are best described as “fast ideas,” ideas equal to that of fast food in that they stimulate the consumer but ultimately do not nourish them.⁹¹ They are products made so consumers believe they are learning and gaining new experiences, but in actuality they are consuming the same narrative repeatedly. This is true for both the abridged films and the condensed literature.

While the abridged films and the condensed novels were born in the same cultural context to satisfy rampant consumerism, the differences between how they were created questions the appropriateness of using digest to define the abridged films. Dorfman points out that *Reader’s Digest* would often plant articles in other magazines so they could be reproduced, in condensed form, in the *Reader’s Digest* magazine.⁹² Seeding articles in other publications for condensation

⁸⁸ Klein, *The Counterfeit Traitor*, pg 20.

⁸⁹ Alexander Klein, "The Counterfeit Traitor," *Reader’s Digest Condensed Books*, Spring ed, Vol. 2, Pleasantville, N.Y.: Reader’s Digest Association, 1958, 281.

⁹⁰ Dorfman, 131.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Ibid, 120.

allowed *Reader's Digest* to control the style and content of articles it was publishing for its readership, a practice that Dorfman mocks: "Each "selected" [article] cannot help but repeat the same language, procedure, technique, and ideology of all other [articles]."⁹³ There was, in other words, a discernible hegemony of style that was pervasive throughout all of the articles that *Reader's Digest* published and that dictated which articles would be seeded. Castle Films, on the other hand, did not have the opportunity to seed films in theatres and then select them for abridgment. As a wholly owned subsidiary of Universal International it could only choose from the feature length films produced by Universal. Castle Films could not request that a feature film be made in a particular way so that it could be abridged and conformed to a hegemonic style. Despite this, the abridgements released by Castle Films still contain the repeated language, procedure, and technique that Dorfman saw in *Reader's Digest* condensations. However, I argue that those repeated elements owe more to the ubiquitous Classical Hollywood style of film construction than the more dubious associations to cultural domination that Dorfman makes in regards to *Reader's Digest*.

The other main difference between the creation of abridged films and condensed literature is the degree to which each adheres to the structure of the original's plot. As discussed above, it was routine for the editors at Castle Films to move a scene in order to create new cause and effect relationships and character motivations, to remove characters from the plot, and to change the ending of the original to better suit the narrative of the abridged film. While the condensations of *Reader's Digest* would remove words, sentences, paragraphs, and even whole chapters while trying to streamline the narrative, it would only do so if the narrative cause and effect relationship and plot remained in tact. Additionally, *Reader's Digest* did not create new endings for their condensed works that better suited the shortened narrative. The progression of the plot, in its

⁹³ Ibid, 121.

basic form, would not be altered. The movement of scenes that led to the alteration of the cause and effect relationships and the creation of new endings are some of the main distinguishing factors of the abridged films. Despite that fact that both the abridged films and the condensed novels were stripped of their original nuance and style, the differences between both styles of condensation are rooted in the reorganized nature of the abridged films, an aspect that is tied directly to their identity as objects separate from the original films. For that reason, and for the reason that the works were selected for condensation based on different circumstances, digest is not an acceptable term to define the abridged films.

The last term I would like to explore is remix. The term is generally reserved for audio recordings of songs in which a new version of a recording is made where "the separate instrument or vocal tracks are rebalanced or recombined," or, in a more modern context, a song is radically changed by "altering the rhythm and instrumentation."⁹⁴ In extended use the term remix can also be used to define "a reworked version."⁹⁵ Both definitions can be applied to the abridged films, but the definitions are too broad to specifically define them.

The radical alteration of a sound recording is the most relevant aspect of remixing that can be applied to the Castle Films versions. The findings of my comparison show the abridged films have been radically altered. Similarly, the broader and non-medium specific definition that a remix is any reworked version also applies. The issue with these definitions is that they do not specifically address the shortening and elongating of a work as an aspect of the remixing process. The exclusion of language that specifically speaks about length and the removal of content means that "remix," as defined here, is not specific enough to properly define the shortened Castle Films. However, I would argue that the radical alteration a song experiences while being remixed covers

⁹⁴ "Remix," Oxford English Dictionary, Web, 6 May 2015.

<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/246356?rskey=Qi8SG6&result=1&isAdvanced=false#eid>

⁹⁵ "Remix," Oxford English Dictionary.

the differences in length, content, and narrative. The definition itself is biased towards sound recordings, so a film definition of remix could easily include language that applied to length, content, and narrative. Remix is not a perfect way of defining the films, but it is the most appropriate option given the lack of alternative choices.

Chapter 8 - Conclusion

The comparative analysis that I have undertaken in this project outlines both technical and narrative differences between feature length films and their shortened counterparts. The shortened versions of feature films are now beginning to enter archives as part of home film collections, and it is necessary to understand how these film objects were constructed to assess their value to archival collections as objects of study. The role that abridged commercial films played in the history of home film distribution has only begun to be explored, and now that these film objects are entering moving image archive collections the opportunity to explore the history of this often overlooked section of film history is growing. However, it is important that film archivists who accession these types of shortened films understand that the films are not merely excerpts of, or highlights from, Hollywood films, but new narratives created using the same genetic material as the original. Framing the shortened films as merely excerpts undermines their status as self-contained narratives that do not require knowledge of the original source material in order to understand or enjoy. Treating the film objects in any other way increases the possibility of neglect, both scholarly and archivally. Additionally, defining the objects as remixes allows archivists to assess the importance of the objects by removing the negativity of terms, such as excerpts, that connotatively imply the objects are mere highlight reels as opposed to new works. Declaring the objects as remixes acknowledges both the source of the material used to create the abridged films and the defining difference between the abridged films and their feature length siblings.

Possible Avenues for Future Research

The sample size of this project is admittedly small. Castle Films released thousands of abridged films for the home market, and there were other companies who engaged with the same niche market. However, given that this project is, to my knowledge, the first of its kind to closely examine how abridged versions of feature length films differ from the original films, it opens several areas of future research. Castle Films' process for creating the abridged versions is the most obvious hole in current literature about the company. Based on my observations I have suggested the guiding principles that an editor might have followed, but discovering internal documentation that dictated company policy for abridging a feature film would allow for new ways to approach the construction of the film objects. Internal documentation might also reveal the names of the people who worked on the abridgements, which in turn could lead to possible interviews and new sources of information regarding the creation of abridgements.

Another avenue for approaching the construction of the film objects is an examination of the silent versions of each film that Castle Films released. For each 16mm sound print that Castle Films distributed, at least in the science fiction and horror series, there was a corresponding 16mm and 8mm silent copy made for consumers who had silent projectors or toy projectors. These silent versions typically ran for twelve minutes and used title cards or subtitles, much like the silent films of old, for the purpose of screen direction and dialogue.⁹⁶ Did Castle Films insert direction and speech cards into the abridged versions they created for 16mm, or did they create new versions whose image selection would be informed by the inherent limitations of silent projection? A comparison between an 8mm silent version and one of the 16mm sound versions could reveal more information about the technical practices of Castle Films.

⁹⁶ Elena Gorfinkel, "'Shown in 16mm on a Giant Screen': Adventures in Alternative Exhibition with The Secret Cinema - An Interview with Jay Schwartz," *Framework: The Journal of Cinema and Media* 49, no. 2, 2008. 116.

This project focuses solely on visual comparisons and did not delve into comparing how the audio was mixed and altered in order to suit the abridged films. I omitted the consideration of audio both for the sake of brevity and because it was difficult to analyze the less than ideal state of the scanned audio that the Sniper 16HD film scanner produced. All of the films are warped, some worse than others, and this caused the audio transfer to be unusable. A comparison of the source audio to the audio used in the Castle Films versions would further expand the knowledge of Castle Films' technical practices. For example, in order to perform the narrative bridge in *Man Made Monster* effectively the music in one of the scenes would need to be extended over all three of the shots that form the bridge. If this section were dissected using the appropriate tools it would reveal whether a sound editor had access to the appropriate material to remix the music, or if release deadlines permitted that level of sound editing.

Examining the objects in the context of a university library lending collection could lead to a discussion of the use of abridged versions of commercial films in educational institutions. Inscriptions found near the head and tail on clear film leader indicate that the films were marked for sale to educational facilities. The company names present in the inscriptions include "UNIV EDUC," "Universal Education," and "Universal ED." Research into the role of science fiction films in educational settings has been done in the past, most notably the collection of articles entitled *Hal in the Classroom: Science Fiction Films* released in 1974 and edited by Ralph Amelio. The collection of articles argues for specific feature length films, such as *2001: A Space Odyssey* and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, to be taught to high school students in ways that compliment broader discussions, such as on politics and the creation of cultural icons.⁹⁷ The book points to a contemporary attitude that science fiction and horror films can be used as educational tools. However, there is no mention of abridged films and their possible use in any of the articles.

⁹⁷ Ralph J Amelio, *Hal in the Classroom: Science Fiction Films*, Dayton, OH: Pflaum Publishing, 1974.

The inscriptions on the film objects indicate that there was a belief that these abridged films could be used as educational tools. Identifying the perceived role and advantage of using abridged films in the classroom would expand both the context for the objects creation and the history of educational films, particularly the role of commercial films in the classroom. That discussion could also include Dorfman's previously cited stance on the infantilization of the viewer to question why abridged films were purchased for the classroom in the first place.

Finally, it would be interesting to learn what the original filmmakers of *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, *The Mummy*, *House of Frankenstein*, and others thought about the abridged versions of their films. Determining the involvement that the filmmakers had in the condensation process would provide additional insight into how the abridged versions were created. Did the filmmakers have any input in the process, and if so to what extent? Jack Arnold, who was the director of *It Came From Outer Space* and *The Creature from the Black Lagoon*, was still under contract with Universal International at the time those two films were released by Castle Films, so it is conceivable that he could have participated in the process. For films such as *Frankenstein*, that was released by Castle Films forty years after its initial release, it is difficult to imagine the original filmmakers participating in the abridgement process.

Further research into this area may also reveal the attitudes that filmmakers took towards their artistic work being abridged and reassembled. Discovering those attitudes would more than likely be accidental and come from musings recorded in interviews done with the filmmakers. Of particular interest would be the opinion of Alfred Hitchcock. The last two films to be abridged and released in the science fiction and horror series were two Hitchcock films, *Psycho* and *Frenzy*.⁹⁸ Hitchcock was notoriously careful when constructing his films during the shooting phase of production, and the way that Castle Films created new narratives that would have disrupted his

⁹⁸ MacGillivray, *Castle Films*, 2004. 192.

carefully conceived editing patterns may not have pleased him. Despite the possible bemusement of an auteur these abridged films, as new films created from previously existing images and sound, deserve to be treated with respect in moving image archives so that preservation and academic study remain a possibility for scholars and the interested public.

Appendix 1.1

What follows are visual representations of the comparisons that were made in Chapter 6. The illustrations show two key elements: the location in the full length version of a film from which the corresponding shots in the abridged version are taken and the order of those corresponding shots in the abridged version. The original version is represented by the two grey bars located in the middle of the page, and each bar corresponds to one half of the film. The visualization was split into two halves to allow for greater detail. When a corresponding shot is used in the same chronological order as the original film, it is denoted in red; shots that are not ordered chronologically are denoted in blue. In the lower section, entitled Castle Films Version Shot Order, the shot order of the abridged film is shown. The illustrations are ordered by the year of release of the Castle Films version, not by the release date of the original films.

It Came From Outer Space (1957)

Original Version

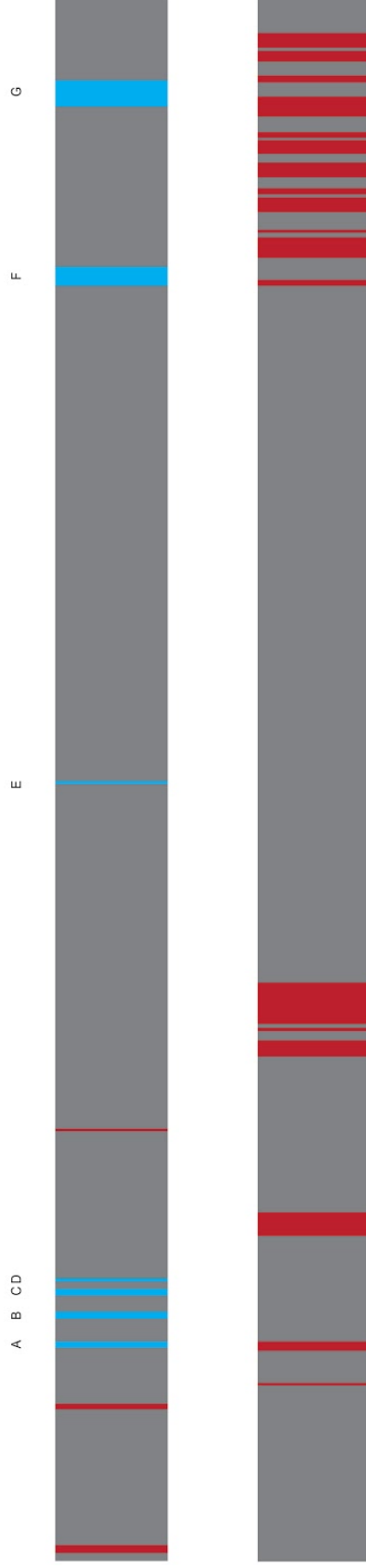
Length: 80 minutes, 05 seconds

● Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 20 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



The Creature from the Lagoon (1957)

Original Version

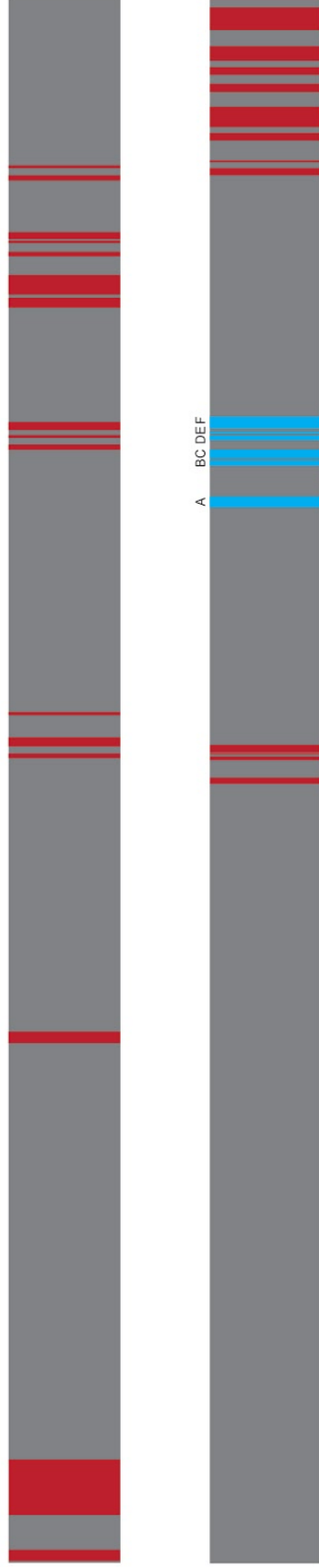
Length: 79 minutes, 08 seconds

● Original Chronology

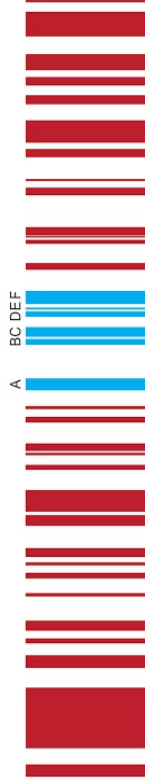
Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 13 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



Bride of Frankenstein (1960)

Original Version

Length: 74 minutes, 44 seconds

● Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 12 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



The Mummy (1962)

Original Version

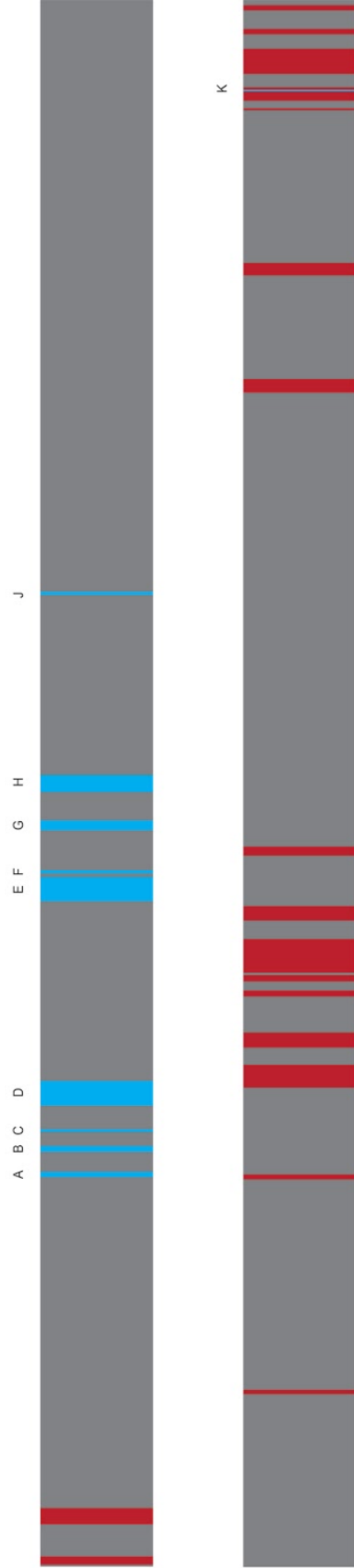
Length: 73 minutes, 07 seconds

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 02 seconds

● Original Chronology

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



Frankenstein Meets The Wolfman (1963)

Original Version

Length: 73 minutes, 16 seconds

● Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 13 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



Dracula (1963)

Original Version

Length: 74 minutes, 26 seconds

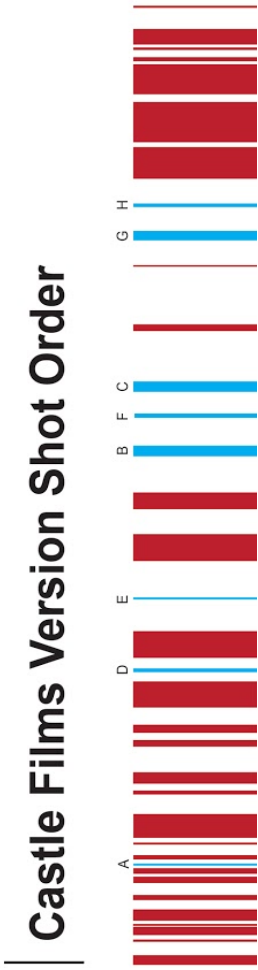
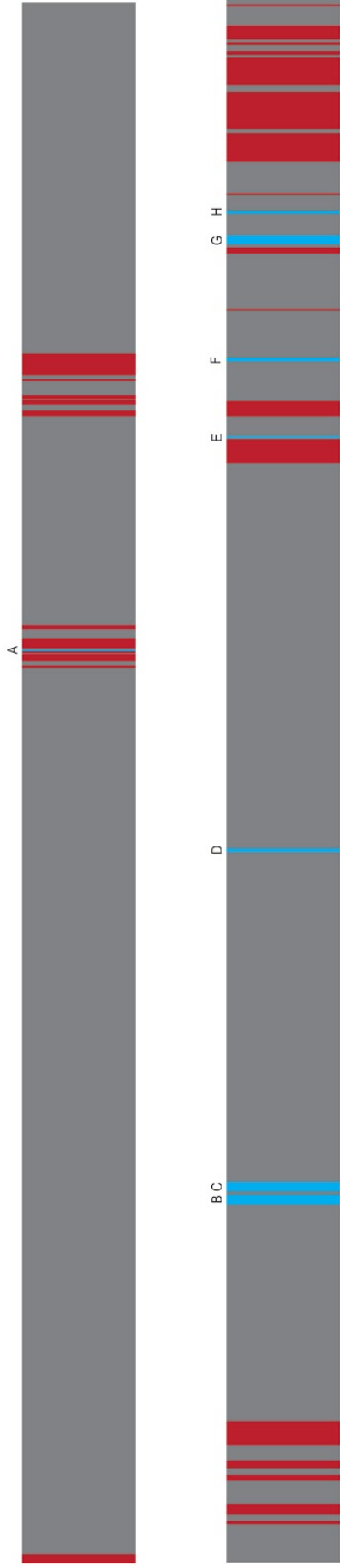
Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 14 seconds

Corresponding Shots

Origin of Reordered Shots



Son of Frankenstein (1965)

Original Version

Length: 99 minutes, 12 seconds

Castle Films Version

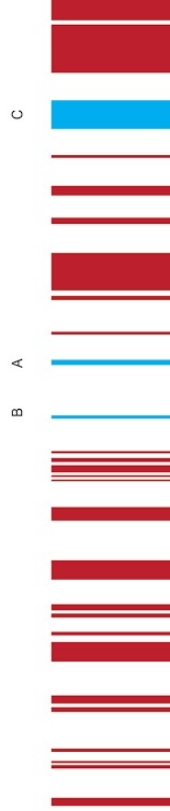
Length: 8 minutes, 21 seconds

● Original Chronology

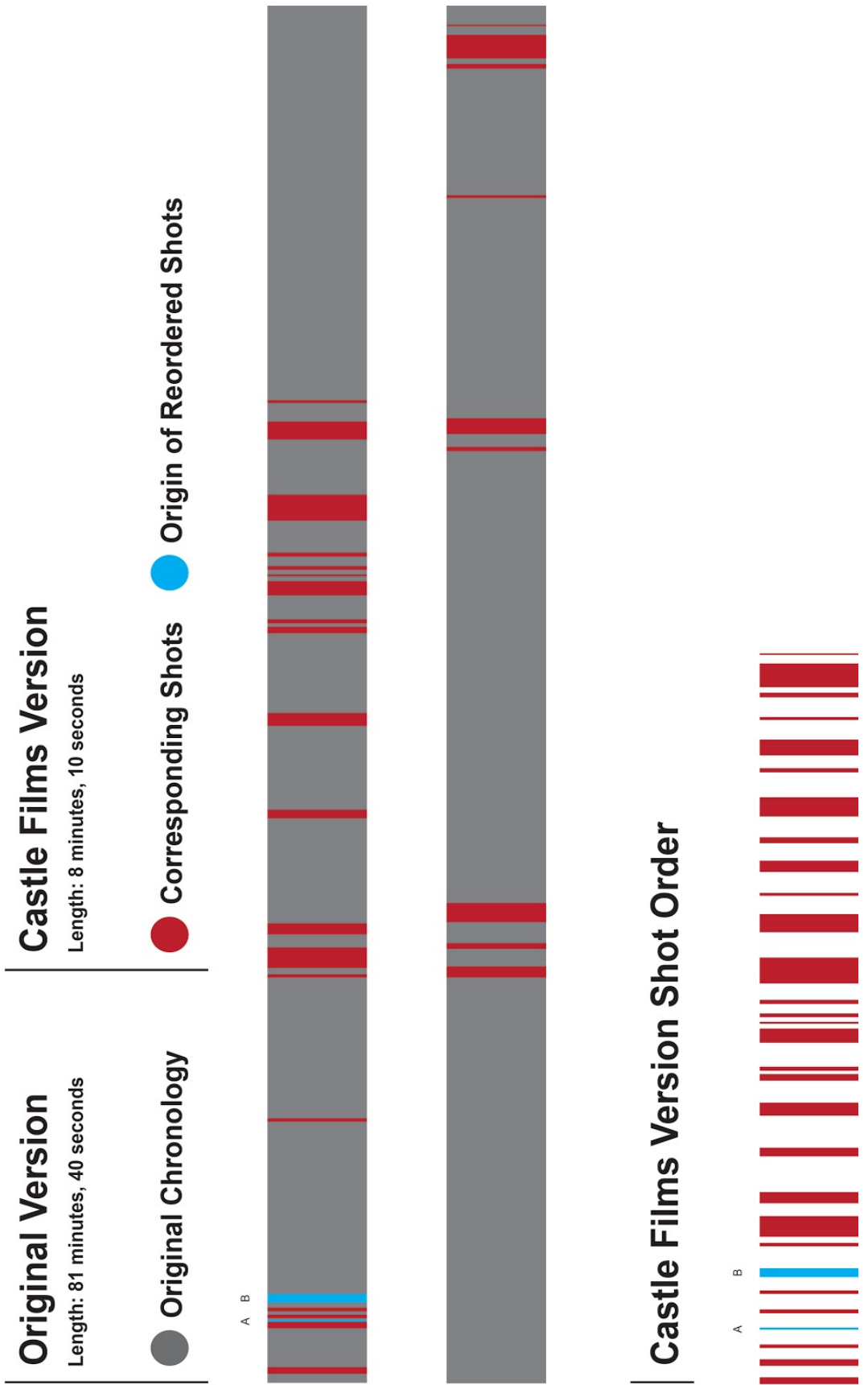
● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



Revenge of the Creature (1965)



House of Frankenstein (1967)

Original Version

Length: 70 minutes, 24 seconds

● Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 08 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



The Mummy's Ghost (1968)

Original Version

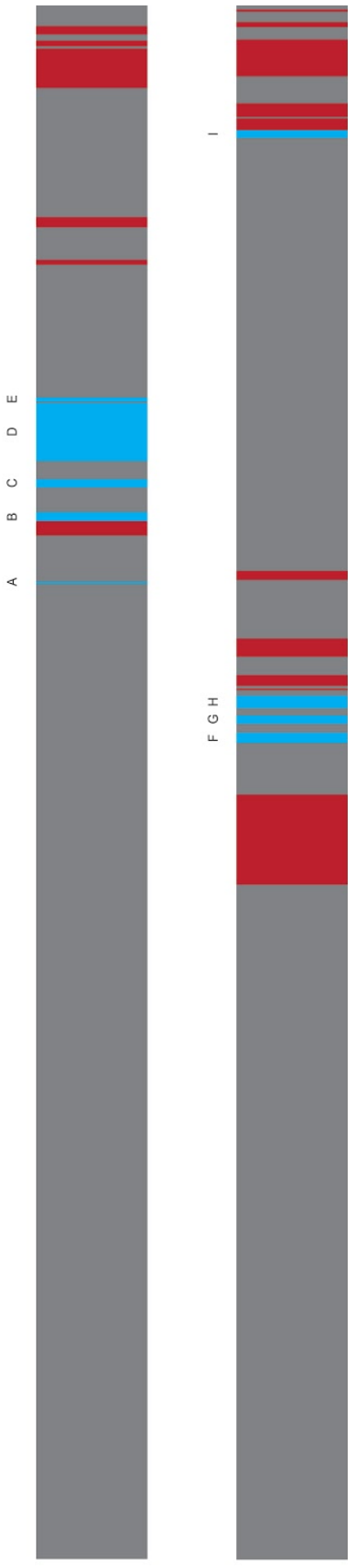
Length: 60 minutes, 10 seconds

Original Chronology

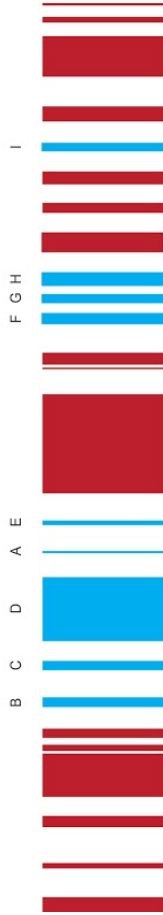
Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 12 seconds

Corresponding ShotsOrigin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



The Incredible Shrinking Man (1969)

Original Version

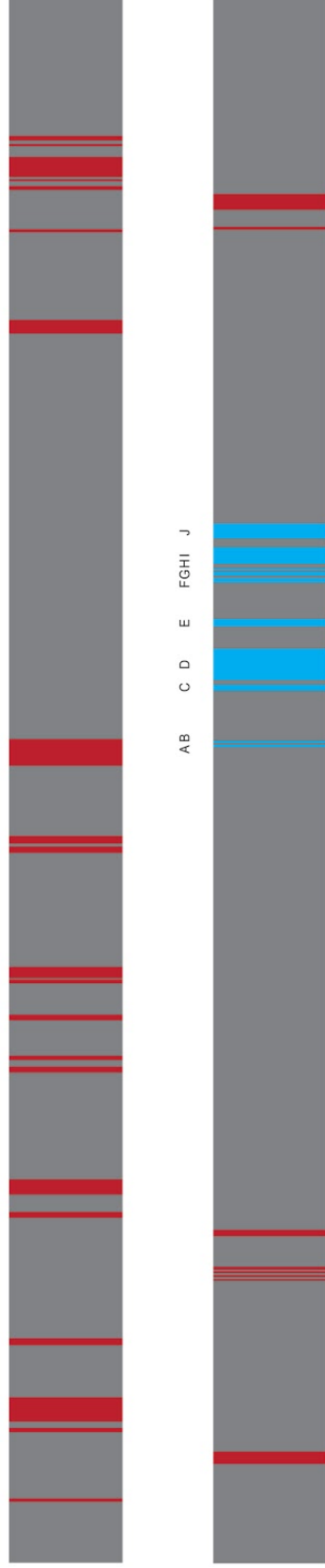
Length: 80 minutes, 48 seconds

● Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 10 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



Man Made Monster (1969)

Original Version

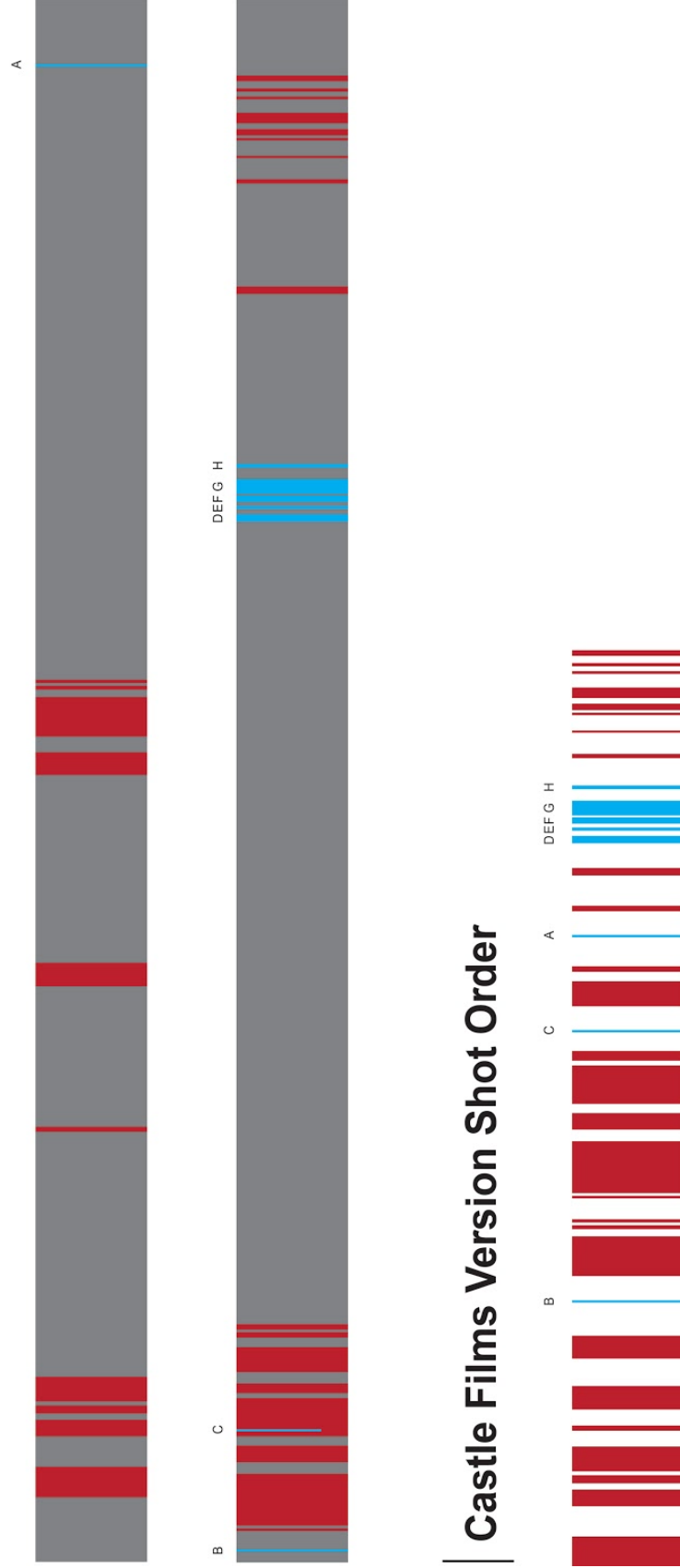
Length: 59 minutes, 49 seconds

● Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 14 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



The Wolf Man (1971)

Original Version

Length: 69 minutes, 53 seconds

● Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 02 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



Frankenstein (1971)

Original Version

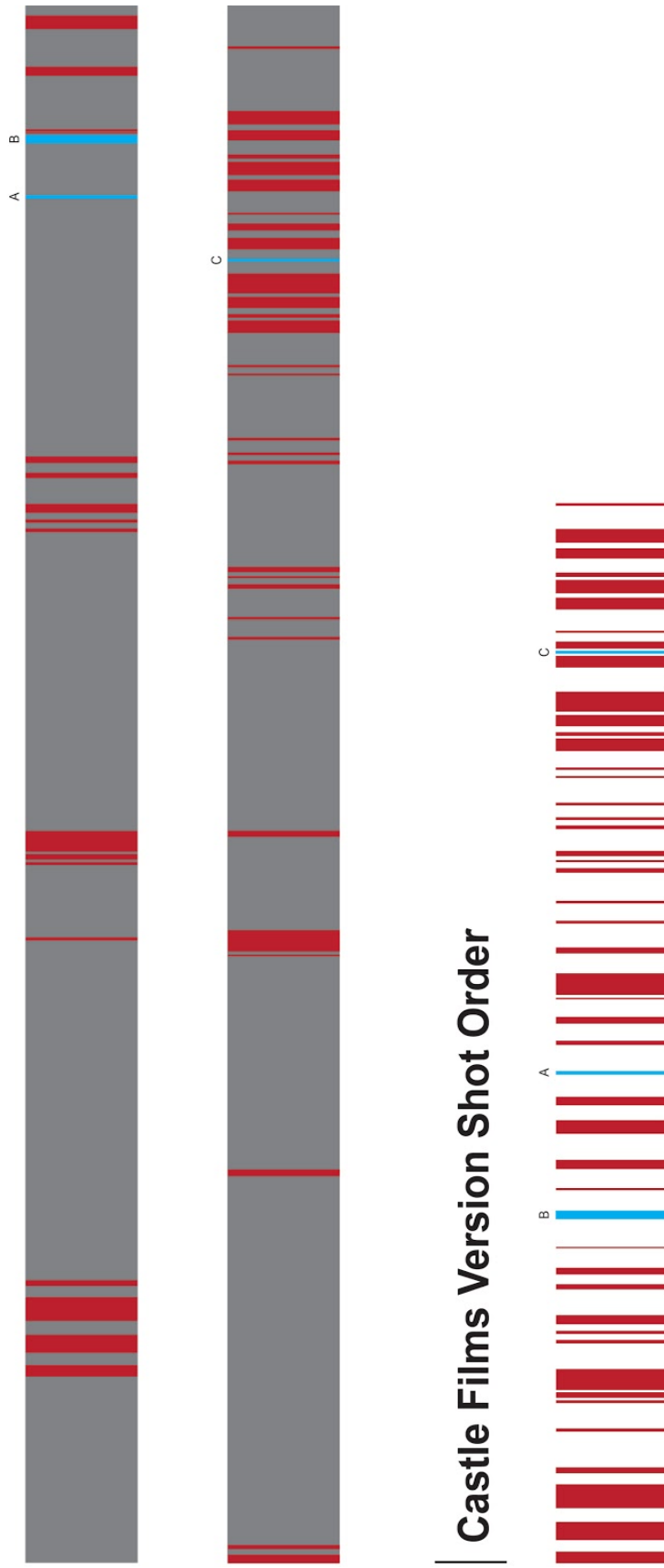
Length: 70 minutes, 12 seconds

● Original Chronology

Castle Films Version

Length: 8 minutes, 28 seconds

● Corresponding Shots ● Origin of Reordered Shots



Castle Films Version Shot Order



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