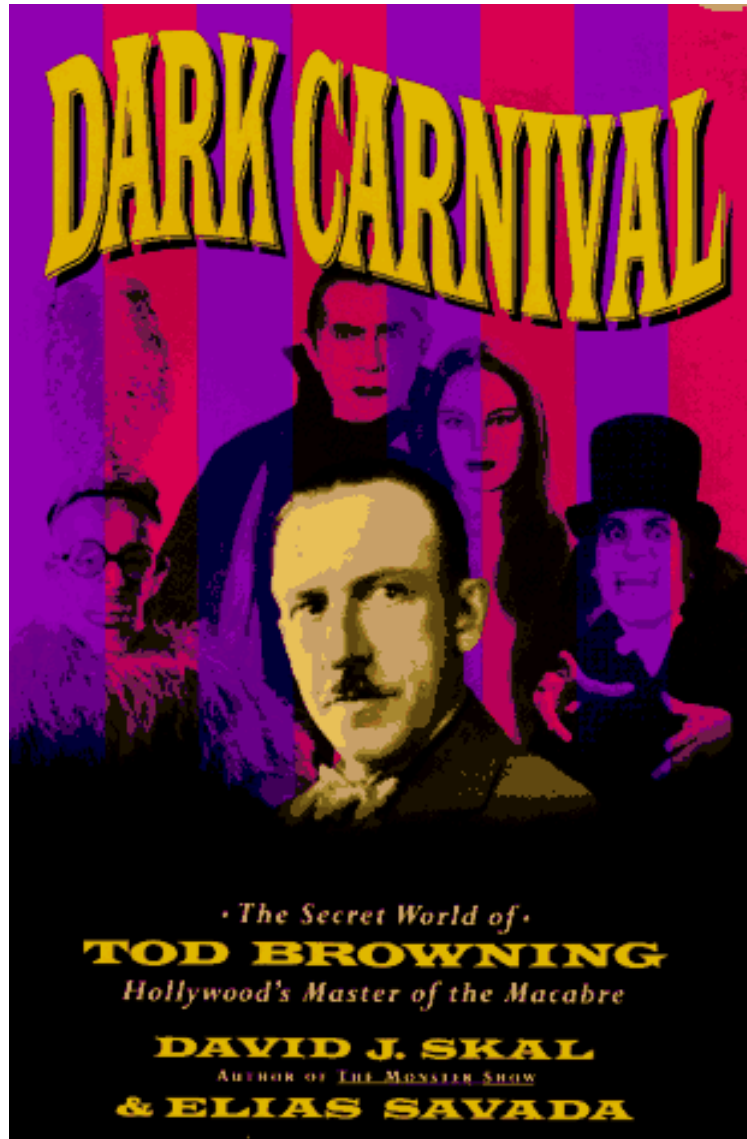


[Pdf free] Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning

## Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning

*David J. Skal, Elias Savada*

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**David J. Skal, Elias Savada : Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. BiographyBy Mrs. Michele M. OrsborneHave been wanting to find out about Mr Tod Browning ever since I saw his film "Freaks". A complex and secretive man. Interesting book.3 of 5 people found the following review helpful. A fair and in depth biography on a great and revolutionary directorBy Salem BlandinoJust finished this book and absolutely loved it. Being a Lon Chaney fan for years, I was always

fascinated with Mr. Browning and wanted to know more about his upbringing, struggles, victories, and battles he had in Hollywood. This book does an amazing job at detailing Browning's work and especially his struggles in both his personal and professional life. Many times I was reminded of another director who may not have had as much talent or budgets for his film but certainly had the passion, Mr. Ed Wood. In fact some of problems Browning faced with studios regarding pre-production and production of his films, Wood would go on to face as well. Lugosi worked with Browning multiple times and then eventually Wood. I salute Skal and Savada for their research and work on this book. It is so well organized and makes the read so enjoyable. And what an amazing job on Browning's filmography as an actor and director. Thank you for this book. Tod Browning would have been proud! 43 of 43 people found the following review helpful. A top-notch biography of a difficult subject By Adam P. Lounsbury Director Tod Browning, best known for his films "Dracula" (1931) and "Freaks," was a surrealist for the masses. In his films he used characters with mental and physical abnormalities to illustrate the plight of humanity diminished by modernism. He was one of the first horror auteurs in America, and filtered elements of the fantastic from European film makers like Robert Weine and F.W. Murnau. As an artist, he was uneven, and as the subject of a biography, he is all but unknowable, but David J. Skal does the best he can. Some sections of the book (especially the ones covering Bela Lugosi and the making of "Dracula") reread earlier work by Skal. Browning is also not the best subject for a biographical treatment, since he left almost no letters or personal effects. Instead of resorting to guesswork or pop psychology, however, Skal (with his collaborator Elias Savada, a film historian) wisely focuses on the content of Browning's films. The best sections of the book deal with Browning's frequent silent movies collaborations with Lon Chaney, Sr., and the making of, and subsequent furor over, the film "Freaks." This is a top notch book that should appeal greatly to film buffs, lovers of silent cinema, Hollywood historians, cultural critics, and horror fans of all stripes. (And completists and trainpotterers will be happy to know that the filmography is both detailed and exhaustive.)

One of the most original and unsettling filmmakers of all time -- the creator of the horror classics *Dracula* and *Freaks*, among others -- Tod Browning is also one of the most enigmatic directors who ever worked in Hollywood. A complicated, troubled, and fiercely private man, he confounded would-be biographers hoping to penetrate his secret, obsessive world -- both during his lifetime and afterward. Now, film historians David J. Skal and Elias Savada, using newly discovered family documents and revealing published interviews with friends and colleagues, join forces for the first full-length biography of the man who earned a reputation as "the Edgar Allan Poe of the cinema." The author chronicles Browning's turn-of-the-century flight from an eccentric Louisville family into the world of carnival sideshows (where he began his career literally buried alive) and vaudeville, his disastrous first marriage, his rapid climb to riches in the burgeoning silent film industry, and the alcoholism that would plague him throughout his life. Browning's legendary collaborations with Lon Chaney, Sr., and Bela "Dracula" Lugosi are explored in depth, along with the studio politics that ended his career after the bizarre circus drama *Freaks* -- a cult classic today -- proved to be one of the biggest box-office disasters of the early thirties. Illustrated throughout with rare photographs, *Dark Carnival* is both an artful, often shocking portrait of a singular film pioneer and an illuminating study of the evolution of horror, essential to an understanding of our continuing fascination with the macabre.

.com Although Tod Browning directed the 1931 classic *Dracula* and some of Lon Chaney's best movies, he is better known today for *Freaks*, which effectively sank his film career. Judging from the evidence in *Dark Carnival: The Secret World of Tod Browning: Hollywood's Master of the Macabre*, this probably wouldn't have mattered to him. Authors David J. Skal (*Screams of Reason and The Monster Show*) and Elias Savada faced a difficult task in recounting the life of a man who "reveled in disturbing and provoking the public ... from a position of obsessive privacy," apparently caring nothing for posterity or even his reputation during his lifetime. Because Browning chose to reveal so little of his private self, any biography of him must by default focus on his career -- which is itself strange and unsettling. As a filmmaker, Browning established a reputation as a teller of pessimistic, even perverse tales, often featuring physically deformed characters (Chaney's specialty), which doubtless reflected his youthful experiences performing in carnival sideshows. Following the enormous success of *Dracula*, he assembled a cast of real sideshow performers to make *Freaks*, which appalled nearly everyone and was quickly removed from circulation. He soon found himself being quietly pushed out of filmmaking, and spent his final years leading a reclusive, slightly paranoid existence. Readers of *Dark Carnival* should not expect to come away with a very clear picture of the intentionally shadowy Browning. Skal and Savada do an admirable job of showing us both the demanding "sadist" and the "great humanist" described by his colleagues, but for the most part, Browning's own thoughts and feelings must remain mysterious -- which is just what he wanted. *Dark Carnival* includes photo sections, a genealogy, and filmographies that incorporate contemporary reviews. --Mary V. Burke From Booklist His career virtually began with that of motion pictures (he was an actor for D. W. Griffith), but filmmaker Tod Browning is remembered today for two early sound masterworks of horror: *Dracula* (1931), starring Bela Lugosi, and *Freaks* (1932), the bizarre, disquieting story of a traveling sideshow, cast with real-life human oddities. The outraged public reaction to the latter, which was quickly pulled from circulation, effectively derailed Browning's career. After a few final films, he withdrew to an eccentric

retirement in Malibu until his death in 1962. Although his work was rediscovered by movie aficionados--*Freaks* became an arthouse staple in the antiestablishment 1960s--the director himself has remained largely anonymous. Skal and Savada rectify that situation with a detailed, painstakingly researched biography that draws on unpublished interviews with Browning's coworkers and friends as well as the new contributions of surviving family members. They call Browning's reclusive career and its dissolution "one of Hollywood's most mysterious vanishing acts." Their illuminating work should help win him his just place in the annals of cinema. Gordon Flagg

From the Publisher One of the most original and unsettling filmmakers of all time -- Tod Browning is also one of the most enigmatic directors who ever worked in Hollywood. A complicated, troubled, and fiercely private man, he confounded would-be biographers hoping to penetrate his secret, obsessive world -- both during his lifetime and afterward. Now, film historians David J. Skal and Elias Savada, using newly discovered family documents and revealing published interviews with friends and colleagues, join forces for the first full-length biography of the man who earned a reputation as "the Edgar Allan Poe of the cinema." The authors chronicle Browning's turn-of-the-century flight from an eccentric Louisville family into the world of carnival sideshows (where he began his career literally buried alive) and vaudeville, his disastrous first marriage, his rapid climb to riches in the burgeoning silent film industry, and the alcoholism that would plague him throughout his life. Browning's legendary collaborations with Lon Chaney, Sr., and Bela "Dracula" Lugosi are explored in depth, along with the studio politics that ended his career after the bizarre circus drama *Freaks* -- a cult classic today -- proved to be one of the biggest box-office disasters of the early thirties. Illustrated throughout with rare photographs, *Dark Carnival* is both an artful, often shocking portrait of a singular film pioneer and an illuminating study of the evolution of horror, essential to an understanding of our continuing fascination with the macabre. Copyright 1995 by David J. Skal and Elias Savada