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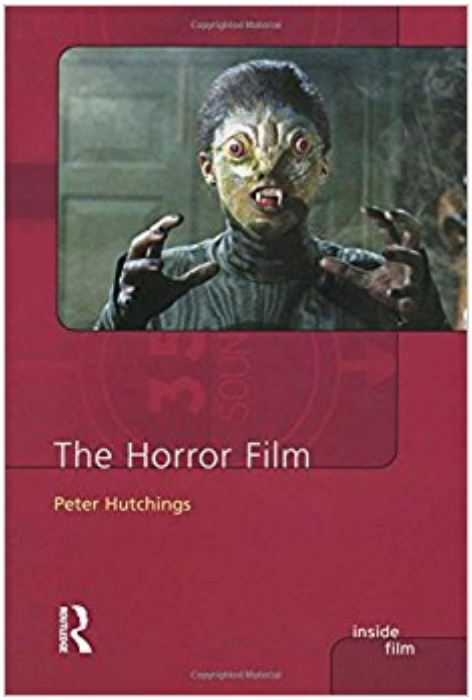
The Horror Film



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Synopsis

The Horror Film is an in-depth exploration of one of the most consistently popular, but also most disreputable, of all the mainstream film genres. Since the early 1930s there has never been a time when horror films were not being produced in substantial numbers somewhere in the world and never a time when they were not being criticised, censored or banned. The Horror Film engages with the key issues raised by this most contentious of genres. It considers the reasons for horror's disreputability and seeks to explain why despite this horror has been so successful. Where precisely does the appeal of horror lie? An extended introductory chapter identifies what it is about horror that makes the genre so difficult to define. The chapter then maps out the historical development of the horror genre, paying particular attention to the international breadth and variety of horror production, with reference to films made in the United States, Britain, Italy, Spain and elsewhere. Subsequent chapters explore: The role of monsters, focusing on the vampire and the serial killer. The usefulness (and limitations) of psychological approaches to horror. The horror audience: what kind of people like horror (and what do other people think of them)? Gender, race and class in horror: how do horror films such as Bride of Frankenstein, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre and Blade relate to the social and political realities within which they are produced? Sound and horror: in what ways has sound contributed to the development of horror? Performance in horror: how have performers conveyed fear and terror throughout horror's history? 1970s horror: was this the golden age of horror production? Slashers and post-slashers: from Halloween to Scream and beyond. The Horror Film throws new light on some well-known horror films but also introduces the reader to examples of noteworthy but more obscure horror work. A final section provides a guide to further reading and an extensive bibliography. Accessibly written, The Horror Film is a lively and informative account of the genre that will appeal to students of cinema, film teachers and researchers, and horror lovers everywhere.

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Customer Reviews

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I've read a handful of books on horror cinema now, and this is the best I've encountered so far. It's a bit of a slog for the first 20 or so pages, but then it picks up. Hutchings's main aim is to explore and even revel in the diversity and richness of horror cinema throughout its history and at any given point in time. As such, we find him frequently pushing back on over-simplified or overly tidy accounts of particular horror sub-genres or historical movements. It's a great place to start for anyone who wants a grounding in the history of the horror film and in the key themes in horror film studies.

This film study book follows a different path due to the film fan approach taken by the author. The book begins with the perfunctory introduction to what comprises a horror film. The author handled this difficult task can be handled with an open-ended definition and mapped out the historical development of the horror genre. What I liked about this book was the breadth of the horror films mentioned and dissected. One can tell that the author, a horror film fan included many films that were favorites of his. He also spends time on the different kinds of monsters, villains, henchmen and settings of the various films. Mr. Hutchins also delves into the audience appeal and cultural significance of the horror films. One can sense and tell that the author revels in the horror films of the late-1960s through the 1980s. The variety of films mentioned and the awe of the author make this a fun and entertaining read for a true film of the horror film.

It's been said (I think by Mark Twain) that a joke is like a frog. You can dissect it to see how it works, but it will lose its life in the process. Is the horror film also like a frog? For Peter Hutchings, the answer is almost. His analysis of horror film - appropriately titled The Horror Film - offers a lot of insight into the genre but doesn't kill enjoyment of it in the process.Hutchings starts off showing that it is difficult to even define what a horror film is. The term really only came into use in the 1930s with the original Universal monster movies, including Dracula, Frankenstein and The Mummy. Of course, in hindsight, it is easy to see possible horror movies from the silent era, including The Phantom of the Opera, The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari and The Golem. Is the existence of the supernatural a requirement? If so, what about movies like Psycho or Jaws? As Hutchings illustrates, even a rather clear-cut genre like the western is not easy to define; horror is even harder.Subsequent chapters in The Horror Film look at various elements in the horror film, such as the nature of monsters, the psychology of horror, the use of sound in horror and the differences between "classic" horror and "modern horror" (the latter roughly categorized as beginning with Rosemary's Baby and Night of the Living Dead, when "good" was less likely to triumph). Hutchings introduces us to the theories of

other writers as well. Some consider the horror film as statements on race or class or gender differences, and while Hutchings gives such views their due, he also is clear that at times, overanalysis is done.Hutchings is both critical of the horror genre and affectionate towards it. This is not the easiest of reads and is seemingly designed for students of film more than the lay reader (such as myself). That is not to say that others won't get anything out of this, but this is not a quick page-turner. If you are a fan of horror movies and have the patience for this book, you are likely to get something out of it. The Horror Film will allow you to appreciate these movies in a new light.

This was for my Horror and Sci-Fi Film Analysis class, and I found it to be an appropriate overview of critically analyzing major films in the Horror Classics as well as the Modern. The author did a good job explaining in detail elements of what characterizes the horror genre, how culture plays a role in influencing the symbolism that pervades classic horror films, and the increased use of violent and sexual images in modern "slasher" films.

I enjoyed reading this informative book. I read this along with "The Monster Show," and I have to say that this book contained much more information about how to analyze the horror genre. Although the pace is slower and the writing somewhat scholarly, the author's passion for film shines through. I feel like I got to know him by the end of the book. If you are looking for an introduction to analyzing horror films, I would read this. If you are looking for an introduction to the history of horror films, I would read, "The Monster Show." Together, they complete a well rounded study of the horror film.

Great

Great read, and an awesome class!

Good Quality and fast delivery.The book itself...The class I took has been using this book for almost 9 years so that says something. I personally thought it was a difficult read. It should be an easy enjoyable read considering the topic. There were parts that were informative and then there were parts that were "no, duh." The font is small and there are no spaces. It felt repetitive and just all around meh. I was throwing a fit by the end of each chapter and found it extremely difficult to get into. I will say that there are hardly any other books out there that analyze horror films and I was happy that my textbook was fairly inexpensive.

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