



A History of Horror

By Wheeler Winston Dixon

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A History of Horror By Wheeler Winston Dixon

Ever since horror leapt from popular fiction to the silver screen in the late 1890s, viewers have experienced fear and pleasure in exquisite combination. Wheeler Winston Dixon's *A History of Horror* is the only book to offer a comprehensive survey of this ever-popular film genre.

Arranged by decades, with outliers and franchise films overlapping some years, this one-stop sourcebook unearths the historical origins of characters such as Dracula, Frankenstein, and the Wolfman and their various incarnations in film from the silent era to comedic sequels. *A History of Horror* explores how the horror film fits into the Hollywood studio system and how its enormous success in American and European culture expanded globally over time.

Dixon examines key periods in the horror film-in which the basic precepts of the genre were established, then banished into conveniently reliable and malleable forms, and then, after collapsing into parody, rose again and again to create new levels of intensity and menace. *A History of Horror*, supported by rare stills from classic films, brings over fifty timeless horror films into frightfully clear focus, zooms in on today's top horror Web sites, and champions the stars, directors, and subgenres that make the horror film so exciting and popular with contemporary audiences.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Dixon is recognized as an eminent film scholar and the current title is an impressive addition to his oeuvre. This book certainly has solid scholarship, but it is also a book that once picked up is hard to put down. Essential."

(*Choice* 2011-05-01)

"Dixon is a deft and knowledgeable guide, leading us from silent ghouls to Universal's monsters. Interspersed throughout this catalogue are nuggets of surprising information."

(*Times Literary Supplement* 2011-09-02)

"This is an excellent survey of horror movies. The author, a veteran film historian, takes the reader back to the beginning, when, in the first three decades of the twentieth century, such directors as Georges Melies, F. W. Murnau, and Paul Wegener were defining not only the look of a genre but also cinema itself. The period between 1930 and the late 1940s saw the rise of the classic Universal Studios characters—Frankenstein's monster, Dracula, the Wolf Man, the Mummy—and the actors who played them: Karloff, Lugosi, Chaney Jr. By the end of the 1940s, horror was dying, 'killed by a plethora of poorly made sequels.' But never fear: the period between the late 1940s and 1970 saw a massive resurgence, due in part to gimmicks (such as 3-D); low-budget quickies from the likes of Roger Corman, the wizard of the B movie; and the stylish resurrection of the classic Universal monsters by Britain's Hammer Film Productions. This survey, which takes the reader right up to the present, is full of fascinating information and is delivered in an accessible manner. Required reading for horror fans."

(David Pitt *Booklist* 2010-08-01)

"Dixon surveys the development of the horror genre from the earliest Frankenstein and Dracula films through the decades of classics by Hammer studios, William Castle, Roger Corman, and Val Lewton. Dixon covers movies seldom found in other histories and more modern, international titles such as *Wolf Creek*, *Black Water*, and *Grudge*. The endurance of horror, trends like remakes and sequels, and such popular franchises as *Child's Play* and *Halloween* are also discussed. In the final chapter, Dixon analyzes the decline of modern horror owing to desensitized audiences, graphic gore, violence, and lack of solid plot lines or character development. Lists of the best horror websites as well as the 50 movies covered round out this volume. This concise overview is an informative and entertaining read. Recommended."

(*Library Journal* 2010-09-17)

"In less than 250 pages, Wheeler Winston Dixon manages to cover the trends and sub-genres of film horror from 1896 to 2009. Bonuses include a list of top horror sites, a list of fifty classic films, and a pretty wonderful bibliography. Well written and well researched and offering an enjoyable overview of more than one hundred years of cinema, *A History of Horror* is a quick, delightful read."

(*Seattle Post-Intelligencer* 2010-11-05)

"No mere catalog of titles, Dixon's account explores all aspects of the genre: literary underpinnings, themes, and transformations, including much on actors and directors. Dixon's mind-priming volume will enhance spine-tingling late-night viewings."

(*ForeWord Reviews* 2009-01-01)

"A breathtaking panorama, written with wit and candor, showing how the horror film has shaped cinema from the origins of the genre until now."

(Tom Conley *Harvard University* 2010-05-18)

"Rich with excellent illustrations and clever anecdotes, this book will appeal to fans of horror as well as film students and scholars interested in a readable overview of the history of the genre."

(Rebecca Bell-Metereau *author of Hollywood Androgyny* 2010-01-25)

About the Author

Wheeler Winston Dixon is the James Ryan Professor of Film Studies, Coordinator of the Film Studies Program, Professor of English at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, and, with Gwendolyn Audrey Foster, editor of the new book series *Quick Takes: Movies and Popular Culture* for Rutgers University Press.

His recent books include *Black & White Cinema: A Short History* (2015); *Streaming: Movies, Media and Instant Access* (2013); *Death of the Moguls: The End of Classical Hollywood* (2012); *21st Century Hollywood: Movies in the Era of Transformation* (2011, co-authored with Gwendolyn Audrey Foster); *A History of Horror* (2010); and *Film Noir and the Cinema of Paranoia* (2009).

Dixon's book *A Short History of Film* (2008, co-authored with Gwendolyn Audrey Foster) was reprinted six times through 2012. A second, revised edition was published in 2013; the book is a required text in universities throughout the world.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Mary Gillon:

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