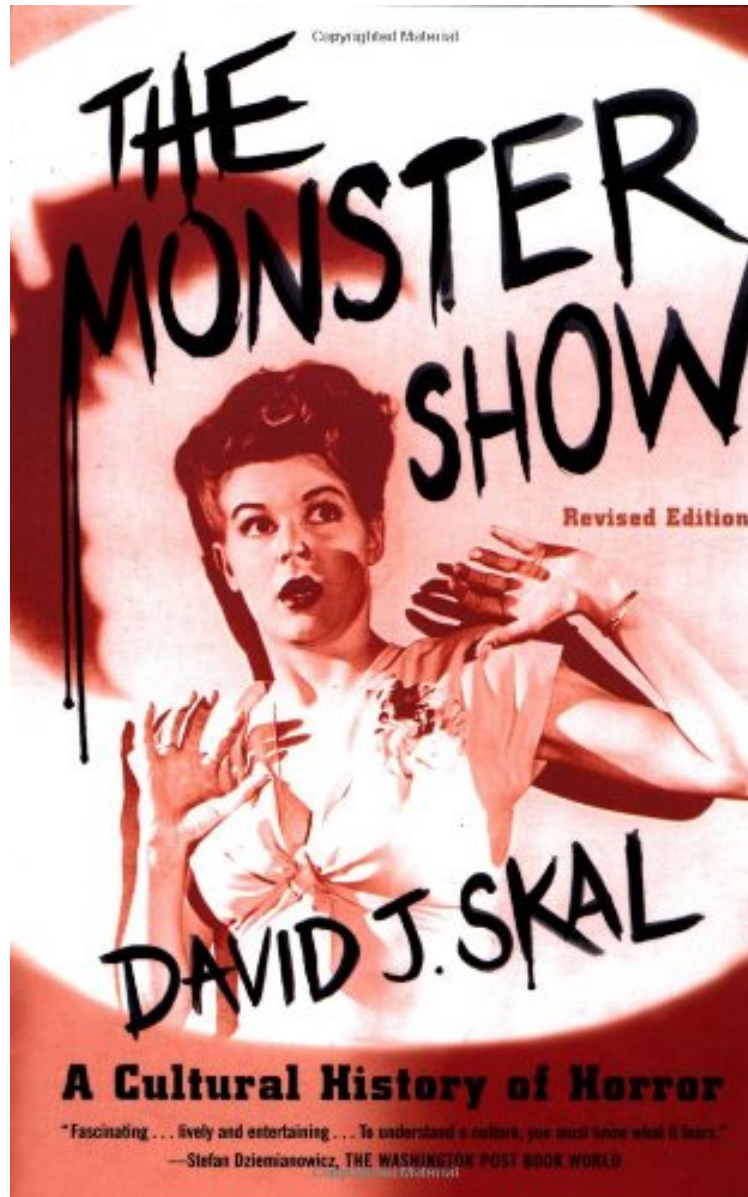


The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror; Revised Edition with a New Afterword

David J. Skal

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David J. Skal : The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror; Revised Edition with a New Afterword before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror; Revised Edition with a New Afterword:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Horror among the High Brows. By Stephen Schicker A very good introduction to Horror films and their evolution in American Cinema with a special nod to German Expressionism. He does a good job of registering Tod Browning's importance as Horror auteur. He explains quite well, within the context of Depression Era America, the attraction to the Horror Film and Bela Lugosi's success (I hadn't realized that Dracula, the novel, was one of the most read paperbacks among GIs during WWII, and that Bela Lugosi was an immediate success on the War Bond circuit during the War). I wish he would have gone into more detail about the Wolf-Man series, but the background history or myth about Wolves was fascinating. For those interested in Camp, he has a wonderful section on Vampira and her relationship with James Dean (catch the photo of Dean in his Frankenstein makeup). His writing is witty, smart, entertaining, and non-academic (no conflating or foregrounding in his prose). This is a welcome addition to anyone's cinematic history collection. Stephen Schicker

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful book, well and lovingly written by David J ... By Customer Wonderful book, well and lovingly written by David J Skal, although I could have done without the California/feminist/Freudian critiques that take up far too much of the last quarter of the book. The photographs are many and great. An excellent book all the way around. If you have a "Monster movie" fan on your Christmas list this would be a perfect gift.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Interesting research, terrible print job By HMcN "The Monster Show" is a well-researched and very readable history of horror in (mostly American) mass media. The first part of the book, a detailed look at Dracula and the Frankenstein monster, is to me more compelling and relevant than the semi-psychological analysis of later 20th century horror. But the printing! (That's why I gave the book only 3 stars.) The paperback copy I received had extremely poor printing; the photographs are muddy in the extreme, and some of the type blurry -- it looks like a cheapo job done on the quick. I don't know whether a hardcover copy of the book would look better; I hope so.

Illuminating the dark side of the American century, *The Monster Show* uncovers the surprising links between horror entertainment and the great social crises of our time, as well as horror's function as a pop analogue to surrealism and other artistic movements. With penetrating analyses and revealing anecdotes, David J. Skal chronicles one of our most popular and pervasive modes of cultural expression. He explores the disguised form in which Hollywood's classic horror movies played out the traumas of two world wars and the Depression; the nightmare visions of invasion and mind control catalyzed by the Cold War; the preoccupation with demon children that took hold as thalidomide, birth control, and abortion changed the reproductive landscape; the vogue in visceral, transformative special effects that paralleled the development of the plastic surgery industry; the link between the AIDS epidemic and the current fascination with vampires; and much more. Now with a new Afterword by the author that looks at horror's popular renaissance in the last decade, *The Monster Show* is a compulsively readable, thought-provoking inquiry into America's obsession with the macabre.

.com This study of the visual horror genre from Dr. Caligari to Dr. Hannibal Lecter starts with a discussion of Diane Arbus's photographs of freaks. David Skal then suggests that he will seek to "explain why the images resonated in the culture ... [and] why so much of our imaginative life in the 20th century has been devoted to peeling back the masks and scabs of civilization, to finding, cultivating, and projecting nightmare images of the secret self." Whether or not you agree with his thesis that horror is a symptom of society's ills (war, disease, poverty), you will find much of value in this thorough, highly readable history--especially the detailed accounts of the work of filmmaker Tod Browning, and of how Frankenstein and Dracula made their way from books to plays to films. The book is handsomely designed (hardcover has dust jacket by Edward Gorey), with illustrations, footnotes, and index. From Publishers Weekly This entertaining survey mixes behind-the-scenes Hollywood anecdotes with intriguing social analysis. Skal (*Hollywood Gothic*) considers the archetypes depicted in Dracula , Frankenstein , Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and Tod Browning's Freaks as responses to the Great Depression that contained metaphors of class warfare. Scientific sadism in films of the 1940s drew on partial knowledge of the Third Reich, he argues, while movie monsters of the '50s personified Bomb-bred mutants or Cold War brainwashers. Skal links 1960s films' anxiety about sex and reproduction to the introduction of the Pill and Thalidomide, and suggests that horror flicks of the '70s and '80s show signs of the post-traumatic stress syndrome suffered by many Vietnam veterans. Though he analyzes Stephen King's novels, Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video and Famous Monsters magazine, his book might have been richer had he delved into more non-Hollywood aspects of pop culture, such as heavy metal music. Illustrations not seen by PW. Copyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal Skal, author of a terrific history of the Dracula subgenre, *Hollywood Gothic: The Tangled Web of "Dracula" from Novel to Stage to Screen* (LJ 9/15/90), offers an incisive analysis of the (mostly) American horror film. He demonstrates how historical, social, and political factors influenced (and were influenced by) Hollywood's production of this changing but almost always popular genre. Skal ventures from Tod Browning's "mutilation allegories" of the post-World War I 1920s, to the early archetypes of the 1930s (Dracula, Frankenstein, and the one-of-a-kind movie Freaks), to the mid-1950s, and on to the AIDS metaphors in today's sex-and-splatter films. Skal also includes fresh production information and trivia. *The Monster Show* is much better than

Walter Kendrick's recent *The Thrill of Fear* (Grove Pr., 1991), which deals more with literature than film. This sharply written, thoroughly researched, and unflaggingly compelling book is the best "serious" nonsurvey of the genre to date. For all cinema collections.- David Bartholomew, NYPLCopyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc.