



Thursday October 27th 2022

Nosferatu the Vampyre

West Germany, France 1979 107mins Cert PG

Director Werner Herzog has triumphantly remade the famous F W Murnau 1922 horror silent with all due respect to the original and exactly the right actors. With its unforgettable vampire brilliantly realised as one of the accursed undead, this 1979 gothic classic is recognised as a second masterful reworking of the original movie nightmare.

Herzog sticks surprisingly closely to the original, changing very little apart from using Bram Stoker's Dracula character names that Murnau couldn't for copyright reasons. He keeps Murnau's ending, which hinges on a woman 'pure of heart' destroying the undead vampire by tempting him to stay beyond cock-crow and ignore the fatal daylight.

Obviously Herzog has colour and sound at his disposal, and he deploys them in a most peculiar, unsettling but nevertheless imaginative way. Nothing about this movie (or indeed any other Herzog film) is ordinary. If this remake is at heart a tribute to the original *Nosferatu*, Herzog also makes it a salute to silent movies in general, with long wordless passages and extravagant acting especially from Isabelle Adjani as the lady in peril. At the same time, it's very much a Herzog film, the work of an individual, idiosyncratic auteur, with links to his other work, eg *Aguirre, Wrath of God* (1972).

Taking his acting cue and look entirely from Max Schreck, Klaus Kinski is perfect, looking (with the help of four hours a day in the makeup chair) nightmarishly ravaged and scarily crazed as the desperately undead Count Dracula. As the leading character, he gets more to do than his predecessor, while his detailed playing of the role is extraordinary and involving, providing the film with its backbone.

Herzog said he wanted to stay close to Bram Stoker's novel but he's much nearer to the original Murnau film, unsurprisingly, since he partly used Henrik Galeen's original 1922 screenplay to write his own. (It's noticeable, however, that Galeen isn't credited here.)

The plot is identical to the 1922 version but has the advantage over it of Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein's ravishingly weird, grainy-looking Eastmancolor cinematography and an oddly unsettling soundtrack as Herzog accompanies his images with Wagner, Popul Vuh and Florian Fricke. (You may notice, incidentally, that the Mina and Lucy character names are reversed from Stoker's original.)

Klaus Kinski won the Best Actor award at the 1980 German Film Awards and Henning von Gierke's outstanding production design won the Silver Bear at the Berlin Biennale in 1979.

Acknowledgments: Derek Winnert. derekwinnert.com

"I feel the vampire genre is one of the richest and most fertile [that] cinema has to offer.
There is fantasy, hallucination, dreams and nightmares,
visions, fear and, of course, mythology"
Werner Herzog

Leading Players

Klaus Kinski
Bruno Ganz
Isabelle Adjani
Roland Topor
Walter Ladengast

Count Dracula
Jonathan Harker
Lucy Harker
Renfield
Dr van Helsing

Production Credits

Director Werner Herzog
Producers Werner Herzog, Walter Saxer + 2 others
Screenplay Werner Herzog, Bram Stoker (novel)
Cinematography Jorg Schmidt-Reitwein
Original Music Florian Fricke, Popol Vuh, Richard Wagner

Coming soon

November 24th

WOMAN AT WAR (Iceland/France/Ukraine, 2018, 101mins, Cert 12) A wonderfully light-touch character study of an Icelandic eco-warrior's campaign against her country's Aluminium industry. "[The film] speaks to the modern scourge of fake news and [...] harmful political propaganda"
Nikki Baughan, *Sight&Sound*

December 29th

LOVE & FRIENDSHIP (UK/Ireland/France, 2016, 90mins, Cert PG) Based on Jane Austen's novella *Lady Susan*, Whit Stillman's delightfully acerbic and witty adaptation takes great pleasure in its self-centred heroine's duplicity. "[...] highly entertaining, with Austen's text fitting Stillman's style like a Regency era glove"
Thirza Wakefield, *Sight & Sound*

