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Hammer Films remaking Swedish vampire story

Hammer Films and Spitfire Pictures has picked up the remake rights to the Tomas Alfredson-directed Swedish film "Lat den ratte komma in" - which won the feature prize at the Tribeca Film Festival.

Variety reports the remake deal is worth seven-figures if the film gets made. Spitfire is lined up to produce the remake. A writer will start work on an English-language version of the film under the title "Let the Right One In."

The film is set to be produced by Simon Oakes, Guy East and Nigel Sinclair. Alex Brunner and Tobin Armbrust are lined up to executive produce the film with John Ptak, Philip Elway and Fredrik Malmberg. Swedish producers John Nordling and Carl Molder of EFTI will also be involved in the remake.

Ptak and Elway are responsible for deal for Arsenal – which started working on the remake rights at the Berlin Festival. The film was part of a bidding war with Warner Bros., Paramount and Overture. The Swedish film is set to be released by Magnolia.

Hammer Films (the iconic British production company which had a string of successful horror films in the 1950s and '60s) was revived in May, 2007, and is funded by the Dutch-based fund Cyrte Investments. Along with original horror films, Hammer has plans to remake films from its library.

"Let the Right One In" is described as a contemporary vampire story about a 12-year-old boy who becomes friends with a young female neighbor who moves to town.

M&C Movie News, 5 May.

Book lifts lid on star of eerie first Dracula film

The first screen portrayal of Dracula was so eerie, some critics asked whether the actor himself could be a vampire. But since his death, little has been done to resurrect Max Schreck's reputation -- until now.

Schreck is best remembered for playing the cadaverous vampire Count Orlok in F.W. Murnau's 1922 silent classic "Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror," the first, unauthorized cinematic adaptation of Bram Stoker's novel "Dracula."

The rest of his career has been largely forgotten -- unjustly, in the view of German author Stefan Eickhoff, who has written what he says is the first biography of Schreck.

"Whoever hopes to discover a vampire will be disappointed, but they will find an actor of real skill and versatility," said Eickhoff. "Yet he himself remains somewhat shrouded in mystery."

"Nosferatu" failed to make its lead a star, but achieved such cult status that some film scholars speculated his name -- Schreck means "fear" or "fright" in German -- was a pseudonym.

In 1953, Greek-born critic Adonis Kyrou mischievously asked in his book "Le Surrealisme au Cinema" whether the actor was a vampire. The idea caught hold and later inspired a film.

Despite years of research, Eickhoff found there were virtually no anecdotes featuring Schreck, nor any references to him in the memoirs of the many people he had worked with.

Instead, Eickhoff's biography provides a detailed chronicle of the career of Schreck, a civil servant's son who appeared in around 800 stage and screen roles. Glimpses into the man behind the actor's mask remain few and far between.

Only in death does Schreck's character begin to come alive. The most revealing descriptions of the Berliner come from tributes paid to Schreck after he died suddenly in 1936.

Eickhoff's biography, "Max Schreck -- Gespenstertheater" (Ghost theatre) is due to be published later this year.

Loner

Contemporaries remembered Schreck, who was married but had no children, as a loyal, conscientious loner with an offbeat sense of humor and a talent for playing the grotesque.

One recalled how he lived in "a remote and strange world" and would spend hours walking through dense, dark forests.

"Nosferatu" helped propel Murnau to a brief but successful Hollywood career, but Schreck faded from the limelight.

The haunting film, which critics later saw as a metaphor for the collective trauma Germany suffered after defeat in World War One, changed the names of Bram Stoker's characters because the filmmakers failed to get permission to adapt his novel.

After the release, Stoker's widow sued the production company for breach of copyright, and won a court order to have all prints of the film destroyed. Since it had already been distributed worldwide, this ultimately proved impossible.

Over time, "Nosferatu" became seen internationally as a landmark of early German film and the horror genre -- while Schreck's other work has languished in relative obscurity. Schreck died of heart failure aged 56, and was buried in an unmarked grave near Berlin, where he was born in 1879.

In the years that followed, his name has lived on in filmlore, thanks to the undying appeal of his most famous role.

In the 1992 sequel "Batman Returns," Christopher Walken plays a villain called Max Shreck, while in 2000, E. Elias Merhige's movie "Shadow of the Vampire" cast Willem Dafoe as Schreck the real-life bloodsucker hired to star in "Nosferatu."

Unlike Bela Lugosi and Christopher Lee, stars of later Dracula adaptations, Schreck never reprised the role and spent most of his subsequent film career in small, non-horror parts.

But as an actor, he was the equal of both, said Eickhoff.

"Their Draculas were refined creatures, whereas Schreck's was a more ancient, nightmarish vision," he said. "In a way, he resembled Lee a bit in that he tested himself in the most varied of roles. And funnily enough, both of them sang too."

Dave Graham
Reutera, 10 May.

Touring play adding new bite to Dracula

An acclaimed touring theatre company, Point Blank, is to come to Whitby with a fun, fast paced, family show promising to shed new light on the Dracula legend.

"Many people come to Whitby imagining they might find Dracula's final resting place so we made this our starting point," artistic director Steve Jackson told the Whitby Gazette.

Here Lies Dracula follows a stuffy archaeologist digging around Whitby for the truth behind the real historical figure of Dracula.

She is on a Da Vinci Code-style mission to connect Dracula to the Vikings who settled in Whitby.

Mayhem starts when the archaeologist falls foul of a celebrity psychic. He puts her under a trance and starts to tell the story of Dracula using her, the audience and an odd assortment of props.

Performer Stewart Lodge said: "One of the highlights is when we get the audience to pump blood back into one of Dracula's victims.

"It's got something for everyone; new perspectives on Whitby history and legend; cheeky humour and eerie moments of mystery."

The company has long been inspired by Whitby and is grateful for the local support which has been offered to get the show up and running.

They thank everyone from the port manager to staff at the Coliseum, the Pavilion and the Mission to Seafarers Centre in Hagersgate for their support.

As well as being drawn to Whitby for its outstanding beauty, the team say the more they visit the town, the more they feel a sense of mystery and intrigue.

An array of local legends have crept into the show and offer surprising clues for what might be a true grave of the child of the dragon, or Dracula, as he is better known.

Performances are:

- * Friday and Saturday, The Bandstand in Pier Road, 11am, 1.30pm and 4.30pm.
- * Sunday, Whitby Pavilion, 3pm.
- * Monday, Coliseum, 2pm; The Mission to Seafarers Centre, 6pm.

All tickets are available in advance from Whitby Tourist Information Centre in Langborne Road.

They are priced £5 adults, £3 children and a family ticket costs £13. The Bandstand performance will in an enclosed area and the ticket charge will still apply.

All proceeds will go to support Point Blank's charitable work in schools across the region.

Whitby Gazette, 19 May.

Plea on Dracula TV show

A TV producer is asking Whitby Gazette readers for their help in a programme he is making. David Jarvis is working on a programme for Yorkshire and Tyne Tees television called *Lights, Camera, Location*.

One of the programmes is about the influence of Whitby on Dracula.

He is looking for people who may remember, were involved as an extra, who worked on set, or even just remembers the 1977 BBC version of *Dracula* – starring Louis Jordan – being shot in Whitby at the Abbey and on the 199 Steps.

Anyone who wants to get in touch can call David Jarvis on (0191) 4409973 or email: dave.jarvis@itv.com

Whitby Gazette, 27 May.
