

The Terror (1963 film)

The Terror is a 1963 Independent American grindhouse horror film produced and directed by Roger Corman. The plot concerns a French officer who is seduced by an intriguing woman who is also a shapeshifting devil. It was filmed on sets left over from other AIP productions, including *The Haunted Palace*. The film was also released as *Lady of the Shadows*, *The Castle of Terror*, and *The Haunting*; it was later featured as an episode of *Cinema Insomnia*^[2] and *Elvira's Movie Macabre*.

The film is sometimes linked to Corman's Poe cycle, a series of films based on the works of Edgar Allan Poe; however, *The Terror* is not based on any text written by Poe.^[3]

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Plot

In 1806, Andre Duvalier, a French soldier lost in the Confederation of the Rhine, is saved by Helene, a young woman who bears a resemblance to Ilsa von Leppe, the wife of Baron von Leppe who died 20 years before. Andre sets out to investigate Helene's true identity and, in doing so, learns the Baron's darkest secret: after he found Ilsa with another man, the Baron killed his wife while his servant killed her lover.

Over the last two years, the Baron has been tormented by Ilsa's ghost, who has beseeched him to kill himself so that they can be together forever. After much hesitation, the Baron decides to do so and atone for his crimes. Unbeknownst to him, Ilsa's ghost is being commanded to haunt him by a peasant witch named Katrina.

<i>The Terror</i>	
	
Theatrical release poster by Reynold Brown	
Directed by	Roger Corman
Uncredited:	Francis Ford Coppola Monte Hellman Jack Hill Jack Nicholson
Produced by	Roger Corman
Written by	Leo Gordon Jack Hill
Starring	Boris Karloff Jack Nicholson Sandra Knight Dick Miller Jonathan Haze
Music by	Ronald Stein
Uncredited:	Les Baxter
Cinematography	John Mathew Nickolaus, Jr.
Uncredited:	

After preventing the Baron from killing himself, Andre and Stefan, the Baron's major domo, capture Katrina and force her into compliance. Katrina then reveals herself to be the mother of a man named Eric, whom she believes that the Baron killed 20 years before and hopes to avenge his death by damning his soul to Hell. In a stunning revelation, Stefan reveals that *Eric* was Ilsa's lover, that it was *the Baron* who had died 20 years ago, not Eric, and that Eric felt so guilty about it that he took the Baron's place, pretending to be him (thus explaining why the Baron had never left the castle in the past 20 years). Over the years, Eric has convinced himself that *he* is the true Baron von Leppe.

Realizing her error too late, Katrina goes with Andre and Stefan to stop Eric from flooding the castle crypt. Katrina's pact with the devil, however, makes her unable to walk on consecrated ground and she ends up burning to death after being struck by lightning.

At the von Leppe castle, Eric floods the crypt as Ilsa's ghost attempts to kill him and Stefan struggles to stop her. By the time Andre gains access to the crypt, it is already starting to cave in and he is only able to save Helene. The two share a moment outside the castle before Helene turns into a rotting corpse.

	Floyd Crosby Conrad Hall
Edited by	Stuart O'Brien
Production company	Filmgroup
Distributed by	American International Pictures
Release date	June 17, 1963
	1991 (France)
Running time	81 minutes
Country	United States
Language	English
Box office	9,915 admissions (France) (1991) ^[1]

Cast

- Boris Karloff as Baron von Leppe/Eric, a corrupt aristocratic man who murdered the baron and his wife and poses as the baron of an abandoned castle.
- Jack Nicholson as Andre Duvalier, a soldier of Napoleon's army who finds himself lost after fleeing his men during battle.
- Dick Miller as Stefan, the Baron's son and trustful servant who serves the impostor.
- Sandra Knight as Helene/Ilsa, the shapeshifting demon of the witch who poses as the baron's deceased wife.
- Dorothy Neumann as Katrina the witch, a peasant woman and the mother of Eric who was driven out of the village for heresy and witchcraft.
- Jonathan Haze as Gustaf, a lost village man who became the mentally ill servant of the witch.

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Full movie

Production notes

Corman decided to make the film to take advantage of sets left over from *The Raven*. He paid Leo Gordon \$1,600 to write a script, and made a deal with Boris Karloff to be available for two days' filming for a small amount of money, plus a deferred payment of \$15,000 that would be paid if the film earned more than \$150,000.^{[4][5]}

Boris Karloff later recalled:

Corman had the sketchiest outline of a story. I read it and begged him not to do it. He said "That's alright Boris, I know what I'm going to do. I want you for two days on this." I was in every shot, of course. Sometimes I was just walking through and then I would change my jacket and walk back. He nearly killed me on the last day. He had me in a tank of cold water for about two hours. After he got me in the can he suspended operations and went off and directed two or three operations to get the money, I suppose... [The sets] were so magnificent... As they were being pulled down around our ears, Roger was dashing around with me and a camera, two steps ahead of the wreckers. It was very funny.^[6]

Corman says he had "a previous deal" with Nicholson, Miller and Knight to work two days on the film.^[7]

Karloff's scenes were shot in two days by Corman, who later said, "I didn't have the money to shoot the rest of the picture union, which meant I couldn't direct myself because I was personally signed with the unions. So I would say that at one time half the young filmmakers in Hollywood did pieces on *The Terror*."^[7]

Corman says that when he cut together Karloff's footage, he realized that "it didn't make sense" so he filmed a scene between Dick Miller and Jack Nicholson (in close-up because the sets had been taken down) and got them to explain the plot.^[8]

Corman sent Francis Ford Coppola to Big Sur for three days to shoot additional footage. He ended up staying 11 days. Monte Hellman, Jack Hill, Dennis Jacob and Jack Nicholson also directed some scenes. Corman says, "Jack Nicholson finally directed himself when we ran out of directors; and I think a couple of other guys worked in there."^[7] In the opening credits, Francis Ford Coppola is simply credited as 'Francis Coppola'.

Leftover sets from other AIP films were used when shooting the film, notably those from *The Haunted Palace*, a Vincent Price horror film made earlier the same year. The tree against which Sandra Knight expires in *The Terror* is the same one to which Price was tied and burned in *The Haunted Palace*.

The uniform worn by Jack Nicholson was used by Marlon Brando in *Désirée* (1954).^[4]

Reception

The film was released on a double feature with *Dementia 13*.^[9]

The *Los Angeles Times* thought it was "spooky" with a "slow, lazy plot" and "Excellent photography and settings... it moves like a stately pavan but the authors exhibit some of that old Edgar Allan Poe touch for haunted happenings".^[10]

Review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes shows a 36% score based on 11 reviews, with an average rating of 5.0/10.^[11]

Later version

Today, the film is in the public domain, since there is no copyright notice in the credits for the film.^[12]

In the early 1990s, actor Dick Miller, who plays Karloff's major domo, was hired to shoot new scenes to use as a framing sequence for an overseas version of *The Terror*. Under this scheme, the main action of the film is presented in flashback. This was done for Corman to establish some sort of copyright in the movie. Dick Miller says the payment for these scenes was the most he had ever received from Corman.^[4]

Legacy

In May 1966, Corman told Karloff he would not be getting his deferred \$15,000 since the film never made \$150,000. However, he said he would pay the money if Karloff worked on a new undetermined future project for Corman. This turned out to be the Peter Bogdanovich film *Targets* (1968), which extensively used clips from *The Terror*.^[5] Karloff was paid his deferred fee once he agreed to be in *Targets*.^[4]

In 2010, the film was featured in the second episode of the revived, syndicated TV series *Elvira's Movie Macabre*.

The climax scene was shown in the 2013 film *Avenged*.

Home video

The Terror, restored from original 35mm elements, was released April 26, 2011 from Film Chest and HD Cinema Classics. It is presented in widescreen with an aspect ratio of 16 x 9 and 5.1 surround sound mix. Enclosed is a collectible postcard reproduction of the original movie poster and the special features include Spanish subtitles, a before-and-after film restoration demo and a trailer.^{[13][14]}

See also

- [List of American films of 1963](#)
- [The Corman-Poe Cycle](#)
- [List of films in the public domain in the United States](#)
- [List of ghost films](#)
- [Targets](#)

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14. Blu-ray.com Reviews (<http://www.blu-ray.com/movies/The-Terror-Blu-ray/19615/#Review>)

External links

- *The Terror* (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZVfCM_Uulw) on YouTube
 - *The Terror* (<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0057569/>) on IMDb
 - *The Terror* (<https://archive.org/details/RogerCormansTheTerror720p>) is available for free download at the Internet Archive
 - *The Terror* (<https://www.allmovie.com/movie/v49113>) at AllMovie
 - *The Terror* (<http://www.tcm.turner.com/tcmdb/title/title.jsp?stid=23680>) at the TCM Movie Database
 - *The Terror* (<https://catalog.afi.com/Catalog/moviedetails/20526>) at the American Film Institute Catalog
 - Trailer (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M9eYJ4zYQVA>) on YouTube
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