



**MARK OF THE
DEVIL**

MARK OF THE DEVIL

CAST

HERBERT LOM as Lord Cumberland
UDO KIER as Count Christian von Meruh
OLIVERA KATARINA as Vanessa Benedikt (as Olivera Vuco)
REGGIE NALDER as Albino
HERBERT FUX as Jeff Wilkens – Executioner
JOHANNES BUZALSKI as Advocato
MICHAEL MAIEN as Baron Daumer
GABY FUCHS as Deidre von Bergenstein
ADRIAN HOVEN as Nobleman
INGEBORG SCHÖNER as Nobelman's Wife

CREW

Directed by **MICHAEL ARMSTRONG**
Produced by **ADRIAN HOVEN**
Original Story and Screenplay by
SERGIO CASSTNER and **PERCY PARKER**
(aka **MICHAEL ARMSTRONG** and **ADRIAN HOVEN**)
Original Music by **MICHAEL HOLM**
Cinematography by **ERNST W. KALINKE**
Edited by **SIEGRUN JÄGER**





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VICIOUS AND DISGUSTING

by Adrian Smith

WARNING: this essay contains significant plot spoilers.

In 1969 Michael Armstrong was 26 years old and had just completed *The Haunted House of Horror*, a co-production between Tigon Pictures and American International Pictures. Whilst looking for his next project he was offered a script from Germany. With Herbert Lom already attached to star, *The Witch-Hunter Dr Dracula* was written by former German matinee idol Adrian Hoven. The story sounded like something Jess Franco might have come up with: Dracula poses as a witch-finder whilst being driven around in a coach by an Egyptian mummy, with mutilation, hardcore sex and Hitler-style speeches thrown in for good measure¹. Michael Armstrong was interested in the general concept despite the script itself being, in his opinion, awful. Inspired by the success and bleak tone of his friend Michael Reeves' *Witchfinder General* (1968), he completely rewrote and retitled it (under the pseudonym Sergio Casstner). As *Mark of the Devil* Armstrong created a bloody and brutal critique of state-funded brutality and religious corruption with a doomed romance at its centre. And not an Egyptian mummy in sight.

Mark of the Devil was to be something of a departure for Gloria, the German film company funding the production. Formed shortly after the end of WWII by Ilse Kubaschewski, the country's first female film tycoon, Gloria had specialised in female-oriented melodramas and what was known as *Heimatfilme*, dramas with a heavy focus on the benefits of a rural life. Hoven had been a *Heimatfilme* heart-throb. Gloria also imported American TV series such as Disney's *Zorro* (1957-1959) for theatrical distribution and entered into international co-productions,

1. Interview with Michael Armstrong, *Starburst*, Issue 41, 1982



including the Italian portmanteau *I tre volti* (*The Three Faces*, 1964). However, by the end of the 1960s revenue was drying up and Gloria were desperate for any films to distribute. This may explain why they would get involved in co-financing *Mark of the Devil*, a film which would not sit comfortably with their back catalogue². Whilst Gloria were to handle the German market, a company called Atlas International dealt with the foreign distribution.

Both Lom and Gloria approved of Armstrong's new script, but Hoven, who had wanted to direct and star but was refused both, was furious. He appeared to resent that a much younger, and in his eyes less experienced director was being allowed to take over the production. In order to placate him Gloria allowed Hoven to take on the role of producer. He then cast himself in a supporting role, as well as his own children. Keeping Hoven involved may have helped the film appeal to German audiences, but it proved to be a nightmare for Armstrong. They fought daily throughout the production, which took place over six weeks in the Austrian village of Mauterndorf on a budget of £120,000. Hoven seemed intent on criticising every camera angle and creative decision Armstrong made, and also insisted on shooting some of his own scenes. Two years later Hoven finally got his own way when he went back to the same village in Austria to shoot *Hexen geschändet und zu Tode gequält* (translation: *Witches Desecrated and Tortured to the Death*), aka *Mark of the Devil Part II*. Armstrong received a writer's credit due to some of the same character names being used again, but he had no actual involvement in the production. Hoven also returned to the same village in 1971 for *The Erotic Adventures of Siegfried*, which suggests another reason he was angry about the *Mark of the Devil* script changes: Armstrong had cut out most of the sex.

As Hoven negotiated final approval of the finished film, Armstrong was packed onto the first flight back to the UK once shooting was completed. To the director's surprise the material had generally been treated well. The big shock however

2. See Bergfelder, T. *International Adventures: German Popular Cinema and European Co-Productions in the 1960s*, 2005, for further information

was that Hoven completely removed the ending. As scripted and shot, when Vanessa (Olivera Katarina) is cradling Christian's (Udo Kier) dead body, she is so distraught that she sees many of the dead victims of torture rise up from their graves to claim Christian as one of their own. This would have been an amazing climax to the film, shifting the tone from bleak to surreal in a matter of seconds. Clearly Hoven was unimpressed with this glimpse into the psyche of a grieving woman as he allegedly had the footage destroyed. All that remains are some production stills which give us a sense of how ingenious Armstrong's original vision would have been.

Despite the difficult production the final film, known variously as *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält* (*Witches Tortured to the Death*), *Brenn, Hexe, Brenn* (*Burn, Witch, Burn*) or its English title *Mark of the Devil*, is remarkably coherent and traumatic. Armstrong's use of real torture implements, which he found in the Mauterndorf Museum, added to the verisimilitude which made the shocking violence unpalatable. Once released the film created something of a storm of controversy and was cut for its domestic audiences. In America, due to the lack of regulation, *Mark of the Devil* was distributed uncut by Hallmark, with the marketing gimmick of a free sick bag provided for every patron.

In the UK the film was picked up by Edwin John Fancey, an independent distributor who had juggled various companies since the 1930s, and by the 1970s had most of his immediate family working alongside him. Fancey had once spent time in prison for stabbing his accountant in the groin, merely for having the temerity to question some of his business practices. The injury was so severe that the accountant had to have a leg amputated. Never one to display artistic pretensions, Fancey had built his business around mainly distributing European exploitation and sexploitation, whether through E.J. Fancey Productions, D.U.K. Films, New Realm Pictures, S.F. (Film) Distributors or Border Films. It was Fancey who had given Armstrong his first break into film, both financing his short *The Image* (1967, starring a young David Bowie) and providing locations around the Fancey family home.

Perhaps anticipating the potential furore should *Mark of the Devil* be distributed in the UK, Michael Fancey, son of E.J., invited John Trevelyan, who was soon to retire from running the British Board of Film Censors (BBFC), for a private screening. Trevelyan's response was to suggest they make cuts to the film before submitting it officially for censorship. This suggestion was not carried out, with Fancey citing contractual obligations to Atlas International. This meant that the censors at the BBFC were obliged to sit through the entire uncut film. Their initial reaction? "Vicious and disgusting." They also recommended that a certificate be refused entirely. It has been widely believed that the film was actually banned, but this was never the case. After consultation with Trevelyan, the BBFC provided a list of required cuts to make the film acceptable for an X certificate. These included:

- Drastically reduce the scene of women being burned at the stake, removing all shots in which they appear to be in contact with the flames.
- Remove the entire episode in which a young couple are seen making love in a bedroom, and afterwards Albino and his henchmen break down the door, try to rape the girl, and stab the man.
- Remove all shots and sounds of the Baron being tortured by thumb-screws, or by having a fire lit under him.
- Remove all shots and sounds of the Baron being set upon a bed of spikes and flogged.
- Remove the entire scene in which Diedre (sic) is tortured and her tongue is torn out, and all shots of her bleeding face and mouth afterwards.
- Remove the incident in which the man is stabbed in the eye, and shots of him holding his bleeding eye afterwards.
- Remove all shots and sounds of the man on the rack, including shots and sounds of him being flogged.
- Remove all shots and sounds of the rape of the puppet master's wife by

Cumberland, stopping the scene as he chases her into the bedroom.

- Remove the flash shot of the Baron's head being severed, and the shot of his body twitching afterwards.
- Remove the shot showing a dead man with a severed arm and bleeding stump.
- Remove all shots showing the spiked belt which is placed round Christian's waist, leaving only the suggestion that he is hung up and killed in an unknown way.

Altogether the required cuts amounted to 2,100 feet of film; approximately twenty-four minutes running time. With these cuts reluctantly made, the BBFC awarded an X certificate to *Mark of the Devil* in January 1971. Fancey, using New Realm Pictures, hoped to distribute the film through the ABC chain of cinemas, but the cuts had made the film virtually incomprehensible and no exhibitors were interested in taking it.

1971 was something of a landmark year in British film censorship. The rules regarding X-certificate films had just changed so that X meant audiences had to be 18 years or over rather than the previously required 16. Also, after more than a decade at the top, Trevelyan retired, handing the reins to Stephen Murphy who immediately had to deal with the double-whammy of *A Clockwork Orange* and *The Devils*. The latter film, with its graphic torture and depravity, survived the BBFC reasonably unscathed, something which clearly annoyed Fancey. He wrote to them in September of that year to request another viewing of *Mark of the Devil* in the hope that under this new regime of permissiveness and enlightenment the film might receive an easier ride. Stephen Murphy's response revealed how the Fancey group of companies were viewed at the BBFC:

Dear Malcolm,

How many more nasty little films have you got in the cupboard? I am beginning to think that, as a family, you require a full-time Censor!



Two months later the second screening had still not taken place, and Fancey's frustration was beginning to show when he reacted to Murphy's claim to "have quite enough problems without getting involved in 'MARK OF THE DEVIL'". Fancey responded:

I am very dissatisfied with the present Secretary of the British Board of Film Censors but there is an old saying 'the best of a bad job' and I suppose that classifies you.

Having finally arranged a screening of the film with Stephen Murphy by December 1971, Fancey gave this tongue-in-cheek remark, suggesting that he was keen to wash his hands of the whole affair:

Best of British luck with 'MARK OF THE DEVIL'. I will not offer to see it again with you as I have now seen it approximately one hundred times and one hundred and one might break the camel's back.

For reasons not clear from the documentation, it appears that despite this agreement in December, the BBFC did not actually watch *Mark of the Devil* again until almost eighteen months later. In May 1973 Stephen Murphy sent this final letter to Fancey:

Dear Mr. Fancey,

We have seen 'MARK OF THE DEVIL' yet again. It remains one of the most revolting pieces of exploitation of violence that I have ever seen. There is no prospect of the Board passing the picture in this form, and I can not (sic) think that any Local Authority in Britain would be likely to accept it. Will you kindly take this as a firm and final rejection?

Perhaps taking that remark as a challenge, New Realm Distributors did try

to submit *Mark of the Devil* to various local authorities including the Greater London Council (GLC). Due to the unusual legal arrangements regarding film classification, BBFC certificates were only advisory and local authorities could choose to pass films for public exhibition that had not been awarded a certificate. However in this case *Mark of the Devil*, submitted for consideration alongside Mario Bava's *Bay of Blood*, was refused permission for public exhibition in Greater London, as well as every other local authority it was sent to. Despite being awarded an X certificate in 1971, *Mark of the Devil* never received a theatrical release in the UK.

In 1993 Redemption Films resubmitted the uncut film to what was now the British Board of Film Classification. Despite the name change there were still cuts demanded which amounted to more than four minutes. Described by the BBFC as a film whose "primary urge is with the dynamics of inquisitorial torture," they conceded that some things the original examiners had objected to were no longer a problem. However the cuts still required for a VHS release were:

- In scene where blonde is stretched on rack remove all close shots of hands and fingers being tortured; pan down her body as sobs can remain.
- Remove entire scene of blonde tortured on rack, including shots of branding and all sight of breast nudity.
- Remove scene of man forced on to bed of spikes, including screams, sight of blood from buttocks and blood on feet.
- Remove sequence of removal of blonde woman's tongue, starting with sight of fitting contraption round her head, and including closing shot of blood dripping from mouth.
- Remove all three close shots of stiletto pushed into man's stomach as he is held against painting.
- After shot of bearded man whipping body below screen, remove sight of shackled feet and striated back.



- Severely reduce sequence where bearded man attempts to rape woman on bed, cutting just after first close shot of hand clutching sheet but before sight of bodice pulled down to give prominence to heaving breast. Resume on extreme close up of man's eyes just before scene cuts to rabbit.
- In sequence in which suspended man is tortured to death with spiked metal belt, remove all three shots of him hanging, in agony, with belt around his waist.¹

Another ten years later a DVD was released by Anchor Bay Entertainment which was also cut, although by only 38 seconds. Three cuts were made to the scene in which the blonde woman is tortured on the rack. The cuts removed her naked breasts as it was an unacceptable combination of sexually titillating and violent images under the BBFC guidelines at that time. In 2012 their sexual violence policy was revised after public consultation. The research states:

"Most participants in the 2012 research felt that merely combining violent images with nudity, even sexualised nudity, was not necessarily a problem in itself. These viewers drew a clear distinction between rape, where eroticising detail could be potentially harmful, and violence which is shot in a titillatory way."²

This means that finally, after more than forty years, the full-blooded, full-frontal version of *Mark of the Devil* can be released onto an unsuspecting UK public. We're going to need some more sick bags.

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1. All correspondence and documentation taken from original material in the BBFC archive

2. BBFC press release: BBFC is to adjust sexual and sadistic violence policy to take into account key areas of public concern, dated 10th December 2012

FUCK YOU! I MADE 200 MOVIES!

by Anthony Nield

Strange though it may sound, Udo Kier made his big-screen debut playing 'Boy'. For those who have grown accustomed to him as a kind of elder statesman character actor, ready to lend some menace to Hollywood movies and horror pics, there is something slightly disconcerting about seeing Kier looking so young, so fresh-faced and so *handsome* in Mike Sarne's 1966 CinemaScope short *Road to Saint Tropez*. He'd been spotted in London by the director and deemed perfect for the role of an opportunist gigolo taking advantage of older women on the French Riviera. Kier had no intention of becoming an actor – he was in the UK to learn English and escape his German upbringing – and yet here he is, almost five decades later, with more than 150 films to his name.

Not that the early experiences always ran quite so smoothly. Immediately after *Road to Saint Tropez*, Kier auditioned for a part in Norman J. Warren's *Her Private Hell*, only to lose out to Daniel Ollier. (The screen test survives – including footage of Kier dancing to the Spencer Davis Group – and can be found on the BFI Flipside edition of the film.) Rather than continue his luck within the British film industry, he instead opted to globetrot, making films in Austria, Italy and Greece, an odd bunch that suggested a number of directions his career could take. *Shameless* (*Schamlos*, 1968), a punchy black and white crime flick from Austria, cast Kier as a young psycho, a part he very clearly enjoyed. Big studio outing *The Salzburg Connection* (made for Twentieth Century Fox in 1972) saw him slip easily into the role of henchman, there to deliver a bit of intermittent sadism whenever the script demanded. *Season of the Senses* (*La stagione dei sensi*, 1969) and *Mark of the Devil* (*Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält*, 1970) provided leads on opposite side of the good-and-evil divide, while the Greek pictures, *Provocation* (*Proklisis*, 1972) and *Conflict of Emotions* (*Oi erotomaneis*, 1973), were both erotica.



The key performances of this period came when, following a chance meeting on an aeroplane, Paul Morrissey cast Kier as Baron Frankenstein in *Flesh for Frankenstein* in 1973 and as Count Dracula in *Blood for Dracula* the following year. These were significant parts for a number of reasons, not least because the actor looked to be genuinely at home in their surroundings. Famously produced by Andy Warhol, *Flesh for Frankenstein* and *Blood for Dracula* were horror movies of a distinct variety: very self-aware, very funny and very, very gory. Morrissey also allowed Kier to speak in his own thick German accent when most seventies directors were keen to have him dubbed with a slight American twang: see *Mark of the Devil*, *Exposé* (aka *House on Straw Hill*, 1976) and *Suspiria* (1977). Indeed, you get the sense that these films were allowing us to see the real Udo, emphasising his lizard-like looks and letting him relish the bitchy dialogue and general absurdity; the scene in *Flesh for Frankenstein* in which we watch him “fuck life in the gallbladder” is arguably the defining moment of his early career. (Although that bit in *Exposé* when he kicks Karl Howman in the bollocks is just as memorable.)

Having established himself as an actor, Kier was beginning to make more considered choices as to the kinds of films he should be in. Admittedly, his track record was hardly perfect – as anyone who has sat through *Spermula* (1976) will tell you – but much of the work from the late seventies is, at the very least, interesting. He co-starred with Peter Hall and Delphine Seyrig in *The Last Word* (*Der letzte Schrei*, 1975); worked with Just Jaeckin on his follow-up to *Emmanuelle*, an adaptation of *The Story of O* (*L'Histoire d'O*, 1975); re-teamed with his *Season of the Senses* writer, Dario Argento, for *Suspiria*; and re-acquainted himself with a filmmaker he'd first met as a teenager in Cologne, namely Rainer Werner Fassbinder, and became a part of his acting troupe.

Kier acted for Fassbinder five times between 1977 and the director's death in 1982. Sometimes these were significant roles – as with *The Stationmaster's Wife* (*Bolwieser*, 1977) and *The Third Generation* (*Die dritte Generation*, 1979) – at other times not so much, as with the uncredited cameo in *Lola* (1981). Yet the





working relationship did mean that other auteurs began to notice the actor and soon he was also appearing in films for the likes of Gábor Bódy, Miklós Jancsó and Walerian Borowczyk, who cast him as Jack the Ripper in *Lulu* (1980) and Dr. Jekyll (but not Mr. Hyde, who was played to terrifying effect by Gérard Zalcberg) in *Docteur Jekyll et les femmes* (1981). The death of Fassbinder, however, had a massive effect and Kier barely acted outside of West Germany for the rest of the eighties. Moreover, the choices tended towards less heavyweight fare: the simple women-in-prison exploitation thrills of *Escape from Blood Plantation (Die Insel der blutigen Plantage*, 1983) or the oddball sci-fi comedies of *Pankow '95* (1983) and *Die Einsteiger* (1985). Only occasionally would he be asked to put in a performance, as with Monika Treut's *Seduction: The Cruel Woman (Verführung: Die grausame Frau*, 1985), although he always rose to the challenge.

Fassbinder's replacement, as it were, came in the form of Christoph Schlingensiefel, another director who would die young. (He passed in 2010, as a result of lung cancer, aged 49.) They began working together on the short *Die Schlacht der Idioten* (1986), which plays like a child's charming reimagining of a silent movie, and would go on to collaborate a further eight times. Schlingensiefel's brand of cinema was deeply political, biting satirical and trashy in its execution. *The German Chainsaw Massacre (Das deutsche Kettensägen Massaker*, 1990), for example, confronted the reunification of Germany with a combination of gore, goofiness and subversion.

Amid the Schlingensiefel films, a meeting with Lars von Trier at a film festival kickstarted a return to a more international brand of filmmaking. The Danish director first cast Kier in his 1988 TV adaptation of *Medea*, based on the unrealised screenplay by Carl Theodor Dreyer, although it was the festival success of 1991's *Europa* (which was in competition at Cannes and came away with three prizes) that really created waves. Indeed, it was *Europa* and a standout turn in Gus Van Sant's *My Own Private Idaho* the same year which seemed to remind audiences and critics the world over that Kier was still around

and still making movies. Madonna, having seen the Van Sant film, put him in her infamous *Sex* book (published in 1992). Soon enough he was co-starring with the likes of Michael J. Fox (*The Concierge*, 1993), Jim Carrey (*Ace Ventura Pet Detective*, 1994) and Pamela Anderson (*Barb Wire*, 1996) as well as turning up on US television series like *Red Shoe Diaries* (an episode entitled *Runaway* from 1993) and *Nash Bridges* (1996) opposite Don Johnson.

Naturally, it was only a matter of time before Hollywood remembered his horror movie past and began to offer him parts in the genre that had helped establish him. *Blade* (1998) fittingly cast him as a vampire elder, harking back to *Blood for Dracula* as well as his lesser-known turns as creatures of the night in *Die Einsteiger* and *Die Schlacht der Idioten*, but it was arguably the millennium and its attendant angst that really made the difference, bringing roles in *End of Days* (1999), *Megiddo: The Omega Code 2* (2001) and *Revelation* (2001) in quick succession. (2000's *Doomsday*, despite the title, was a silly action thriller in which Kier played a terrorist in possession of a nuclear weapon.) Before long, scarcely a few months go by without another horror pic emerging: there he is barely surviving the opening credits in *FearDotCom* (2002), playing an oddball neighbour in *Love Object* (2003) or *HeadSpace* (2005), or making another of his regular appearances for Rob Zombie (to date having shown up in his mock *Grindhouse* trailer *Werewolf Women of the SS*, *Halloween* [both 2007] and *The Lords of Salem* [2012]). He's also worked more than once with Uwe Boll (*BloodRayne* [2005] and *Far Cry* [2008]), reunited once again with Dario Argento for *Mother of Tears (La terza madre*, 2007), acted for Asylum Pictures (*Evil Eyes*, 2004) and done an episode of *Masters of Horror* with John Carpenter (*Cigarette Burns*, 2005).

Whilst some of these efforts have genuine merit – I'd pick *Shadow of a Vampire* (2000), E. Elias Merhige's inventive take on the making of F.W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* as the high point – Kier has arguably diluted his horror image with so many lacklustre movies. Whereas once he appeared in high art horrors such as



Suspiria and *Docteur Jekyll et les femmes* or the censor-bothering likes of *Mark of the Devil* and *Flesh for Frankenstein*, now he is deemed safe enough that he can voice a villainous parrot in the latest TV cartoon incarnation of *Scooby Doo*.

One of the advantages of becoming so prolific is that it has allowed Kier to maintain the interests which have dominated his career among the glut of so-so genre efforts. Despite moving to Los Angeles during the making of *My Own Private Idaho*, he has maintained a connection with German cinema through student shorts (*Ausgeborten*, 1995), populist comedies (*Nür über meine Leiche* [1995] and *1½ Knights: In Search of the Ravishing Princess Herzelinde* [*1½ Ritter: Auf der Suche nach der hinreißenden Herzelinde*, 2008]) or the work of homegrown auteurs such as Fatih Akin (*Soul Kitchen*, 2009) and Dani Levy (*Das Leben ist zu lang*, 2010). Indeed, if the right director comes along, then it would appear that Kier simply cannot say no. His collaborations with von Trier have now reached double figures, he has finally made movies with New German Cinema figureheads Werner Herzog (*Invincible* [2001] and *My Son, My Son, What Have Ye Done* [2009]) and Wim Wenders (*A Trick of the Light* [*Die Gebrüder Skladanowsky*, 1995] and *The End of Violence* [1997]), while the idiosyncratic Canadian filmmaker Guy Maddin is turning to him regularly, their latest project being a series of 100 shorts that seek to recreate (and re-imagine) lost works from the silent era.

Kier summed up his career during a recent interview with *Empire* magazine as follows: "When I'm depressed and the weather is bad I look up my page on the IMDb and I have my coffee and feel better. There are even films on there I don't know about! I phone my friends and say, 'Fuck you! I made 200 movies!' 100 are bad, 50 you could watch, and 50 are good. I think as an actor if you can say you make 50 good films, amen." He's exaggerating the figures somewhat but he's not wrong. There are some very good films in there, more than most actors make, and even some of the bad ones are made worthwhile thanks to him.

THE FACE THAT LAUNCHED A THOUSAND TRIPS

by David Del Valle

Originally published in *Video Watchdog* 17, May/June 1993

One evening during the summer of 1969, I found myself on Hollywood Boulevard en route to the premiere of *Fellini Satyricon*. As fate would have it, Reggie Nalder walked right past me dressed in a pale blue leather jumpsuit, a brown leather handbag over his shoulder. The assassin from Alfred Hitchcock's 1956 remake of *The Man Who Knew Too Much* was out for a stroll. I started walking behind him noticing how everyone that passed his way did a double take to make sure they hadn't seen a spectre from some half-remembered cinema nightmare. "The face that launched a thousand trips." That was an appropriate counterculture expression in 1969 to describe the impact of Reggie Nalder's visage on the general public.

By 1977, I was a theatrical agent in Beverly Hills. One afternoon at a cocktail party for the Paul Kohner Agency on Sunset Boulevard, I ran into Reggie Nalder again. He was a client of Kohner's, but a dissatisfied one. Paul Kohner was a legend among agents in Hollywood. He represented such émigrés as Billy Wilder, Klaus Kinski and, early in his career, Erich von Stroheim.

By the end of the afternoon I convinced Reggie Nalder to become a client of Del Valle, Franklin & Levine. With that, I would see him on a regular basis for the rest of his life.



In his later years Reggie withdrew from his social circle of artists and bohemians. In August of 1991, I returned from San Francisco to find a message from him on my answering machine saying "Auf Wiedersehen". I thought little of it at the time but later I was shocked to discover my mysterious and enigmatic friend had succumbed to bone cancer on 19 November 1991.

Reggie Nalder was a character actor whose aura of mystery and demonic physiognomy placed him in the forefront of Euro-horror personalities. His real-life drama was worthy of Sax Rohmer with a dash of Edgar Wallace. It is only appropriate that he be remembered in the same breath as Klaus Kinski, Anton Diffring and Udo Kier. This interview was done with him in 1989 but never published in his lifetime.

David Del Valle: Tell me about your early background as a performer.

Reggie Nalder: Acting was a family tradition. Both my father and my uncle were actors. My mother was a celebrated courtesan who also acted in German films from 1919 to 1929. My uncle owned and operated a notorious cabaret in Vienna which was appropriately named Hölle (Hell, in German) in the basement of the Theater an der Wien throughout the 1920s. There are no filmed records of what went on in such a place. My early memories are filled with decadent, smoke-filled parlours where anything goes.

DDV: This environment must have been instrumental in your love of the theatrical.

RN: When you are born into such an environment you know nothing else. I took dance, ballet and painting classes. This enabled me to help my uncle by painting backdrops and suggesting tableaux for the cabaret. It was a fantasy world and the only thing that changed it was the Nazis. I fled Vienna and arrived in Paris where all my theatrical experience would be put to the test. I had no money

and had to find work in very un-theatrical venues. By the time the Nazis came to Paris I was established in cabaret, specialising in a dance called the Apache. It was considered shocking at the time as the woman, my partner, was made subservient during the dance. In fact, she was dominated and loved it.

DDV: This sounds intriguing...

RN: It was. My partner became my lover and we performed in private for those that could afford it. At one point I employed a hunchback to procure customers for our more exotic shows. Believe me, sex has always been a best-seller. We were very successful. It disgusted me to perform for the Nazis but survival made me do things that seem impossible now.

DDV: Did you attempt a film career at this point?

RN: Reggie Nalder as the Vampire? Not really. I wanted to. But it didn't happen until the war was over. One of my first [pictures] was *Le signal rouge* with Erich von Stroheim that was filmed in Austria with French money in 1948. It allowed Mr von Stroheim the chance to go home to Vienna. He was a genius. The mayor gave him the key to the city. He was so highly regarded in France. I was honoured to be in the same city with this man. So to make a film with him meant I was on my way.

DDV: What other films did you do at that time?

RN: I also did *Échec au porteur* (aka *Not Delivered*, 1959) with Jeanne Moreau, a divine actress to work with. She was kind to the cast and crew alike. I loved her. Also *Demain sera un autre jour* (the working title of Rene Clément's *The Day and the Hour* [*Le jour et l'heure*, 1962]). It starred Simone Signoret who was what you Americans call an "earth mother". She was mad for her husband (Yves Montand) who was unfaithful. And she was always looking out for people like me who were starting out in films. Simone was all heart. I wish she could

have been happier in her private life. I would not meet a woman like her again until Melina Mercouri years later, larger than life. But, unlike Simone, Melina was happy at all times.

DDV: Weren't you also in *Adventures of Captain Fabian*?

RN: Yes, with your great pal Vincent Price! *Adventures of Captain Fabian* was shot in France in the summer of 1950. It was an amazing film for many reasons. Micheline Presle was the evil woman in the picture and a great friend. She had seen my cabaret act in Paris during the war. Errol Flynn was producing the film and the whole production was centred on him. Well, the cast and the crew spent weeks on salary without a frame of film being shot because Flynn was off being Errol Flynn and wasting a lot of money. Finally, William Marshall [the director] walked off and Flynn directed the film from that point on. A disaster! Flynn was a great guy. He was well liked by the crew but he was no film director. It was a paid vacation for all of us. My part was small. I did get to work with a little monkey in that film. I love animals so much but I travel too often to own one. Vincent and I had one good scene together toward the end. I saw him again back in Hollywood. He came up to my apartment in Hollywood and we had cocktails. He seemed to be having some problems with his wife at the time. I lost touch with Vincent soon after.

DDV: Let's move on to the film that made you world-famous, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*.

RN: Hitchcock was responsible for my coming to America, and I owe him a great deal. I didn't realise how much this film would change my life. I am recognised all over the world as "the man at the Albert Hall". Hitchcock never gave actors any real direction [and] I was a bit put off at first. You really didn't know where you stood with him. He told very crude and dirty stories like a schoolboy. He knew exactly what he wanted from you, and once you were there he felt it was up to you not to disappoint him.



DDV: What else do you recall about the filming?

RN: Doris Day was such a pro and Hitchcock gave her little encouragement. She always felt unsure, which is exactly what he wanted. A writer named Donald Spoto asked me about this film and I told him that Hitchcock asked me to regard the man I was going to assassinate as if he were a beautiful woman gazing lovingly at the target before I shoot him. What I didn't tell Mr Spoto was that Hitchcock stared right at my crotch whenever he talked to me, never once looking me in the eye. At the time I was convinced he must be perverted. I already knew he was a genius.

DDV: What was your favourite moment from that experience?

RN: Oh, the touring. I went to all the major cities in America and some in Europe. Of course, the Cannes Film Festival was unforgettable. I felt like a star. I posed for publicity pictures by the Carlton Hotel with Melina Mercouri and her husband, Jules Dassin. In fact, I was the centre of attention. One reporter remarked that the one scene at Albert Hall would be remembered as one of Hitchcock's greatest set-pieces.

DDV: Did you come to Hollywood after that?

RN: Yes. After the Hitchcock film Paul Kohner got me a lot of television. I guest-starred in villainous roles, of course, in *77 Sunset Strip* and *Surfside 6*. I did one feature with Rock Hudson called *The Spiral Road* (1962). I played a witch doctor that helps Hudson who is lost in the jungle. A very nice guy, Rock Hudson. Very polite and completely professional. He looked like a movie star.

DDV: You also did two episodes of Boris Karloff's *Thriller*.

RN: My favourite was *The Terror in Teakwood* that was directed by Paul Henreid. The lead actor, Guy Rolfe, was very ill during the filming, very weak and pale at the time. I remember the scene where I lead him to the tomb and describe the casket and the funeral service to him. When my speech was finished, Paul said, "Cut!" and the crew burst into applause. I felt like I'd just won an Oscar.

DDV: Did you meet Karloff at the time?

RN: No. But I met him briefly during the second one, *The Return of Andrew Bentley*. John Newland, who also played the lead, directed it. There was also a talented actress named Antoinette Bower with whom I remain good friends today. I had no dialogue, just a black cape and a "familiar" who looked like a man in a furry costume. Newland did needlepoint between takes and loved Hollywood gossip. A sweet guy and a good director.

DDV: You also had a small role in *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962) around this time.

RN: I remember working only one day on that film. Frank Sinatra remembered my face from the Hitchcock film and thought it would complement the other spies. So John Frankenheimer asked for me. I had no dialogue in that one either. About the same time I remember working on a prison film where I had dialogue and it was later re-dubbed with another actor. I hated it.

DDV: That would be *Convicts Four* (1962) with Ben Gazzara. Vincent Price played an art critic in that one.

RN: Yes, of course. I played one of the prisoners and I suppose my voice wasn't hard or tough enough.



DDV: I understand that the Hitchcock film was also responsible for your casting in Argento's first feature, *L'Uccello dalle piume di cristallo* (*The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*, 1969).

RN: I went to Rome to see Argento who asked for me through my Paris agent. He worshipped at Hitchcock's shrine and insisted I be an assassin who gets killed immediately in his film. I enjoyed Argento very much, a strange guy fond of using his hands to direct. We worked well together. He wanted me to appear in *Suspiria* (1977). I was to have been a professor in it. I was about to do *Casanova* (1976) for Fellini and one scene was all he offered. I would love to work for him [Argento] now.

DDV: Fellini must be on your list of geniuses that have directed you.

RN: Of course! *Casanova* was a dream for me as an actor, but a nightmare for poor Fellini as he was always trying to get money. He is like a child, very sensitive. Aware of all that goes on around him. Fellini was wearing a big straw hat on the set and toward the end of my scenes pictures were taken of me wearing Fellini's hat. He put his arm around me and hugged me like a bear. I wanted to be around him always.

DDV: It was during this period of European activity that you made those two infamous German films, *Hexen bis aufs Blut gequält* (*Mark of the Devil*, 1970) and *Hexen geschändet und zu Tode gequält* (*Mark of the Devil Part II*, 1972). Wasn't Sybil Danning supposed to be in *Mark of the Devil Part II*?

RN: Yes. She was cast. I like Sybil. Adrian Hoven was married at that time and had a roving eye for beautiful women. He began a relationship with Sybil that was so intense he had a heart attack trying to keep up with her. He gave her all of his antique furniture that she put in her apartment in Vienna. His wife discovered this and demanded the furniture back or she would get a divorce. That ended any possibility of filming with her.



DDV: The second one had Anton Diffring instead of Herbert Lom. What do you recall of it?

RN: Tony Diffring became a close friend of mine and I enjoyed working with him. It was our only film together. There was a scene of me having violent sex with a nun that was cut, as well as much more violence, sexual and otherwise, toward the nuns. A fan sent me a tape of *Mark of the Devil Part II* and I couldn't believe how much was cut from what we had shot originally, especially the scene where a nun is impaled on a giant wooden phallus until blood is everywhere.

DDV: Sounds like those vomit bags went to the wrong movie! You also did a *Dracula* film for Albert Band. How was that?

RN: It was called *Zoltan: Hound of Dracula* (aka *Dracula's Dog*, 1978). It was okay, I guess. Albert Band was a nice guy to work for and Joe [Jose] Ferrer was a great actor. We felt embarrassed for a while. As usual I had no dialogue for most of the film. I only speak in the flashbacks. I also did an episode of *McCloud* and John Carradine played Dracula. I played his butler.

DDV: Speaking of TV movies, Curtis Harrington told me that he fought like a tiger with NBC to cast you in *The Dead Don't Die* (1974).

RN: Curtis is a friend and I suppose he did. I remember Joan Blondell very well. She was very frail when we shot the scene where I am lying dead on the floor of the shop. After a take she whispered to me, "I can't get up." She had knelt by my side but could not get up. George Hamilton was a real pro on that too. The scene where I rise from the coffin even frightened him! Curtis is a real master of this type of film.

DDV: *Salem's Lot* (1979) was also done for television with a shorter version released in Europe as a feature. Tell me something about making it.

RN: I had met James Mason before at the Cannes Film Festival. He is one of our best actors, highly regarded in Europe, a joy to work with. The director, Tobe Hooper, had asked for me from the start. The makeup and contact lenses were painful but I got used to them. I liked the money best of all. The scene where David Soul stakes me took many retakes because Tobe wanted me to die in a certain way. I never saw the other version but the cuts wouldn't have affected me anyway.

DDV: You played the title character in *The Devil and Max Devlin* (1981) with Bill Cosby.

RN: Yes, I played the Devil. I went out to the Disney studio and read for that one. Once again I had few lines to say. I hated working with Bill Cosby. He is a pig. I first met him in Rome where I did an episode of *I Spy*. Bill Cosby is rude, arrogant and very untalented. He walked right by me on the set as if I were a piece of furniture. I tried to be polite but he made it impossible. I have rarely ever worked with someone like him before or since.

DDV: Your *Star Trek* episode [*Journey to Babel*] is memorable to me and made it possible to go to that amazing 20th Anniversary party on the Paramount backlot.

RN: It always shocks me that people remembered things so trivial. When we arrived I didn't even have to tell them my name. The boy at the door knew my episode and the character's name. There were so many stars assembled in one place and all because of *Star Trek*. Amazing.



DDV: You once wrote a treatment for a film you would like to see produced. What was it?

RN: It is entitled *Forgotten Idols* and it is based somewhat on my mother. It takes place in the 1920s, and the lead character is a celebrated stage actress who retires at the height of her career. It is a mystery. No one makes this type of film nowadays. I will keep offering until someone is intrigued.

DDV: I know this is a little sensitive but didn't you do a porno *Dracula*?

RN: You mean *Dracula Sucks* (1979), of course. It was a very nerve-wracking experience. The Marshak Brothers, who wrote the script in pencil on large sheets of paper, handing it to us seconds before we did a take, did it. Nobody knew their lines because they were being changed all of the time. We were all staying in a small motel in Palmdale, California. And people were going in and out of people's rooms all night. It was an orgy. John Holmes was the star of the film but he stayed on the castle set. I finally saw what he was so famous for, and it looked like a huge snake in repose! If you know what I mean!

DDV: You weren't credited as Reggie Nalder on that one, were you?

RN: No. I was called Detlef van Berg. But everyone that saw it knew who it was. I don't care. Work is work. And the Marshaks were happy with it.

DDV: I also saw your last skin flick called *Blue Ice* (1985). What's that about?

RN: What do you think? Sex, of course! I play a Nazi general who likes to watch sex acts. It was shot in San Francisco over two weekends. So it was like a vacation for me. But promise me you will never see it!

ABOUT THE TRANSFER

Mark of the Devil is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.66:1 with mono 1.0 sound.

Mark of the Devil was digitally restored for this release by Turbine with all work done at DigiSite and Imagion Facilities in Germany.

The original negative was transferred, graded and restored in High Definition. For a few scenes, a dupe negative had to be sourced, resulting in some inconsistencies in presentation. This is down to historic censorship issues with the film, in which scenes of extreme violence were originally removed.

The original English Soundtrack that accompanies the film exhibits occasional lapses in picture synch, owing to the fact that a great many voices were dubbed in post-production.

Special Thanks: Michael Armstrong, Till Kráfczik/Atlas Film

Additional Grading: David Mackenzie

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PRODUCTION CREDITS

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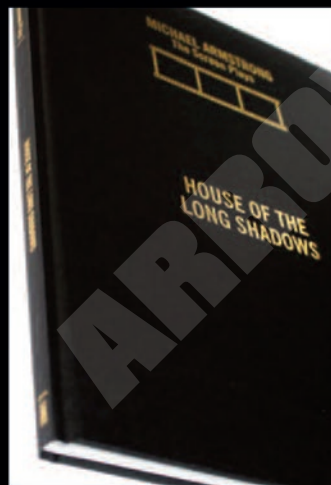
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