

**Hutchings, Peter. *The A-Z of Horror Cinema*. A-Z Guides 100. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2009. 379 pp. ISBN 9780810868878. \$45.00**

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Peter Hutching's *The A-Z of Horror Cinema* is a quick, concise reference guide to horror, written by a scholar whose doctoral thesis concentrated on British horror film. To date, Hutchings has published four book-length studies of British horror (*Hammer and Beyond: The British Horror Film*, Palgrave, 1993; *Dracula: A British Film Guide*, Taurus, 2003; *The Horror Film*, Longman, 2004; and *Historical Dictionary of Horror Cinema*, Scarecrow, 2008), so he was an excellent choice for this Scarecrow volume, no. 100 in a series of A to Z guides.

The international guide begins with a chronology of major events in the evolution of horror and horror film, beginning in 1764, with the publication of the classic Gothic novel, Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* and ends in 2007 with the advent of "torture porn" (films such as *Grindhouse*, *Hostel Part 2*, and *Captivity*). The chronology covers film developments and new genres in many countries, not all of them Western, and Hutching's detailed introduction chronicles the origins of horror cinema and includes a helpful bibliography.

Throughout the text, dictionary definitions and extended essays are concise but comprehensively researched, with referrals to related definitions being placed in bold print. Notable actors, producers, writers, and directors of horror film are all covered in essay format, extended entries. Occasionally a broad topic such as "American Horror" is introduced, and when this occurs Hutchings allows for more depth, in this case devoting four pages. Throughout the book, interesting facts and factoids are revealed: for example, Hutchings relates that William Peter Blatty, the author of *The Exorcist*, was a comedy writer before his gravitating to horror. He notes that Wes Craven, responsible for the *Scream* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* series, was a college teacher before becoming a horror film writer/director.

Hutchings also delineates the various types of horror genres, introducing them with terms such as “Black Horror,” movies in which the villains and heroes are portrayed by African Americans. In this case, he cites films such as *Candyman* and *Night of the Living Dead*. He notes how the 1970’s brought the “body horror” concept into being, with such films as *Rabid*, *The Brood*, and *The Fly*. Hutchings defines these films as those which involved humans losing the conscious control of their bodies, noting that such movies often involved some type of mutilation and transformation. In addition, actors who originated key creatures or roles in horror film are discussed. Examples include Doug Bradley, the performer behind the evil Pinhead from the *Hellraiser* series and Carol Borland, who is famous for only one film—Tod Browning’s *Mark of the Vampire* (in which she plays a chilling Elvira-ish vampire maid). Themes in horror film are discussed, and films informed by these are listed. Themes such as cannibalism, disease, disembodied hands, eyes, and insects, are all treated separately, as are important motifs, such as the “final girl,” a term coined by academic Carol J. Clover (the final girl is the slasher film heroine who is the last to survive and who defeats the monster in many cases).

As for directors, Hutchings’ selection offers much to the aficionado and the scholar: Roger Corman, the king of low budget B films, has four pages devoted to him. Composers of major scores for the genre are also listed, such as Jerry Goldsmith (The Omen series) and, of course, Bernard Hermann (of Hitchcock film fame). All told, Peter Hutching’s *The A-Z of Horror Cinema* covers every aspect of the horror film industry, with an international scope. It will be a welcome quick reference for any type library.