



Fascination: The Celluloid Dreams Of Jean Rollin

By David Hinds

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The presbytery has lost none of its charm, nor the garden its colours.

Fiancée of Dracula

“Disguise those corpses, destroy their clothes, and make sure that they remain dead forever. Don't forget, they are vampires.”

The Rape of the Vampire

May 1968. Parisian streets are awash with violence and public unrest. In a small cinema, a surreal vampire film causes a riot: The audience smashes up the auditorium, tear out the seats, and chase the film's director onto the street with violent intent. This is the premiere screening of Jean Rollin's feature debut, *The Rape of the Vampire*.

An outsider of French cinema, Rollin's films are unique and dreamlike. They offer tales of mystery and nostalgia -- of lost love, childhood, obsolescence and seductive female vampires with a thirst for blood and sex. Rollin made strange, evocative and deeply personal horror films. But he was also at the heart of the French pornographic revolution after the abolishment of censorship, and discovered porn queen Brigitte Lahaie, later to star in many of his films.

Funding his own projects, Rollin defiantly made the films he wanted make and in so doing created a fantastique genre unlike any other. Films like *The Nude Vampire*, *The Living Dead Girl*, *Fascination* and *The Grapes of Death* are now celebrated as the work of an auteur, one who confounds preconceived notions of what constitutes 'Eurotrash' cinema.

This book is the first of its kind in the English language. It is devoted to the director and all his films, across all genres. Written with full co-operation from

Jean Rollin, shortly before his death in 2010, it contains exclusive interviews and archive material.

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- Sales Rank: #914063 in Books
- Published on: 2016-05-15
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x .50" w x 5.00" l, .0 pounds

- Binding: Paperback
- 280 pages

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Editorial Review

About the Author

A late child of the video nasty generation, David Hinds is a lifelong cult movie and exploitation film addict. He is an independent filmmaker and directed the feature films 'The House On Cuckoo Lane' and 'This Changed Earth'. He is also the creator of the industrial music group Deathtripping.

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ORCHESTRATOR OF STORMS

Jean Michel Rollin le Gentil was born on November 3, 1938 in Paris, France. His parents were separated and Rollin lived with his mother. His father was a theatre actor and director, who worked on Baudelaire classics and avant-garde productions. Rollin would frequently attend his father's performances. Although the content of the plays had little or no direct influence on Rollin's work, the world of storytelling and artistic expression was with him since childhood.

From an early age, cinema made a great impression upon him. At the tender age of five, he was fascinated by the French film, *Capitaine Fracasse* (1942), directed by Abel Gance. The storm sequence in particular captivated Rollin, and it was from this point that he knew he wanted to be an 'orchestrator of storms ... [and] ... a creator of images'.

Rollin would obsessively visit the Cineaque, a motion picture theatre within a railway station. It was primarily built for passengers to kill time whilst waiting between train connections. Here Rollin watched American serials, returning week after week to catch the next instalment. The spirit and style of these serials remained present throughout his career, most obviously in *Les Trottoirs de Bangkok* (The Sidewalks of Bangkok) and *Les Échappées* (The Escapees). He also emulated their fragmented structure in his two-part melodrama *Le Viol du Vampire* and in his five-part serial novel *Les Deux Orphelines Vampires*. The other films he saw at the cinema during this period, such as *The Mysterious Dr Satan* (1940), popular American serials and the work of Cecil B. DeMille, heavily influenced his early forays into scriptwriting.

The unique, chaotic atmosphere of the Cineaque is never likely to recur in Western civilization. Rather than the films changing on the screen, the audience continuously changed. People rarely sat through an entire screening. They would constantly be entering and leaving. The announcements of arriving and departing trains blared within the cinema itself, and when the trains passed, the building would shake and the deafening roar of the locomotives would fill the air. This particular time and location became one of Rollin's greatest personal souvenirs of cinema and its ambience has worked its way, subconsciously, into the fabric of his films.

The train station is a recurrent image in Rollin's work, appearing in *La Rose de Fer*, *Lèvres de Sang*, *Les Raisins de la Mort* and *Les Deux Orphelines Vampires*. While the Cineaque...

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