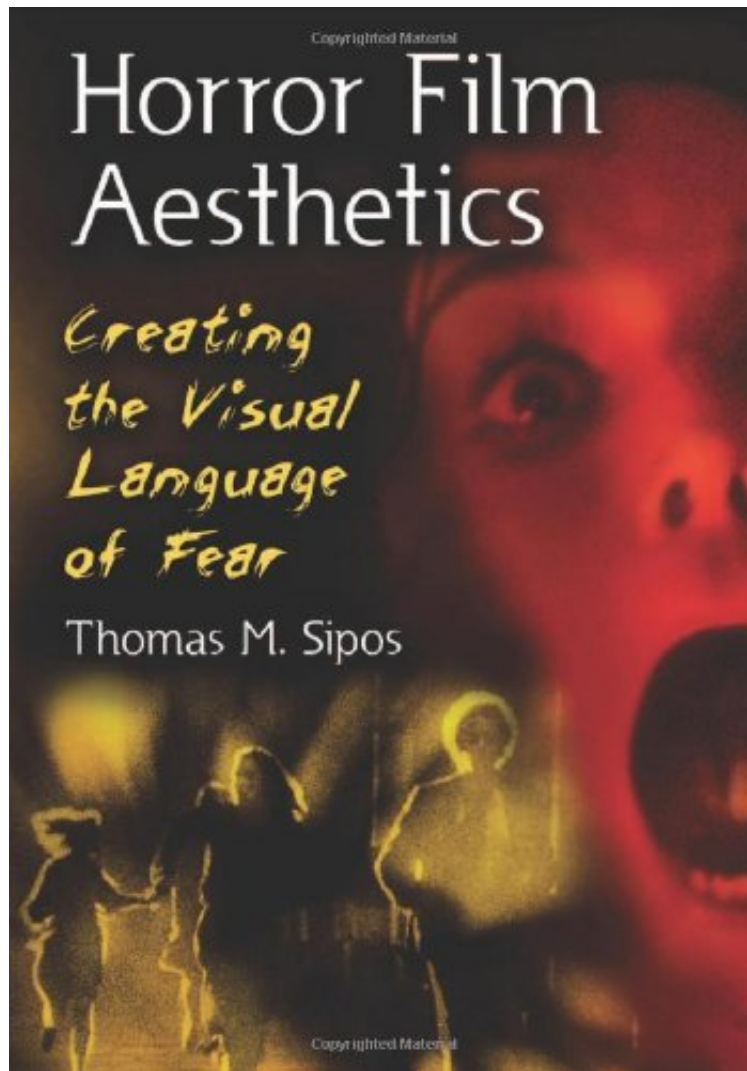


Horror Film Aesthetics: Creating The Visual Language of Fear

Thomas M. Sipos

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Thomas M. Sipos : Horror Film Aesthetics: Creating The Visual Language of Fear before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Horror Film Aesthetics: Creating The Visual Language of Fear:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Not a Drop of Sentimentality for Old-Time Hollywood!By JONThis would be a superb film school textbook. I'm not a big horror fan or film expert, I teach other university subjects. But soon after starting the book, I was seeing establishing shots, 180-lines, focal planes, eyeline-matches, two shots, dolly zooms,...-- none of which I was aware of before-- not just in horror, but in all films and TV. This has made me a more active viewer and made viewing more fun. This book is a great way to get your film school 101 overall, especially for

horror. Highly valuable for fans and filmmakers. For the latter, the text is packed with tips for low-budgeters. Instruction goes smoothly because the book is written with absolute clarity in highly effective language. Almost every point made is immediately supported by concrete example, in many cases using choice frames from select films. With few exceptions, concepts are never invoked until defined and explained. For the exceptions, reference is made to where in the book the concept is more properly introduced. I give only 4/5 stars because there are no homework exercises. Should the text be adopted in cinema school, I recommend the author prep a booklet or an interactive website for self-quizzing. Test questions easily suggest themselves from the text ("Which of the four images is a medium close-up?", "Was this image shot with a telephoto lens or a fisheye lens? How can you tell?")...

If you want a concise, systematic, highly accessible treatment that demystifies technical film production so that you understand it, not just verbally, but genuinely, this book is for you. It's also engrossing reading; I was pulled back to the book again and again and finished in just a few days. Horror Film Aesthetics also deserves high praise for tone and style. The language of many a film writer gives the feeling the author is an A-hole. Not so with Sipos. Though written in contemporary American idiom, the style is not flashy. There is no bending over backwards to try to be hip, no appeals to a supposed common spirit of the community of horror fans. Nor is the work in the slightest politically correct. Refreshingly, there's no celebrity worship and not a drop of sentimentality for old-time Hollywood. Where the author does inject himself into the text, it is appropriate, e.g., to play the role of viewer or artist. Where he inserts his opinion, it is backed-up with argument and identified as such. The only agenda seems to be clear explication and forthright confrontation of the matters at hand. It's now a cliché for introductory courses to start out with a statement like, "One of our biggest problems in (economics)(music)(philosophy),... is to define what (economics)(music)(philosophy),... is. He-heh-heh!" Then the instructor slogs through a boring but requisite, history-laden discussion. Sipos's introduction to horror, in contrast, is intricate and fascinating. He carefully distinguishes between film genre and film style, compares horror to neighboring and overlapping genres, and sorts out its major subgenres. If you're like me, you'll be amused and delighted as you read over the fine points of "uberpsychos" and "naturalistic gore fests", among numerous other topics. And you'll know what films are what after you finish. In addition to laying out technique, the book answers big questions along the way. No, film criticism is not entirely subjective (there do exist a priori aesthetic criteria that disinterested observers can agree upon). Yes, B-movies are often aesthetically better than A-movies (A-movies, for example, predictably fail to kill-off their A-list stars, except maybe at the end). Yes, some rapists and serial killers are horror fans and they are negatively influenced by film content (but they are a small minority and are ultimately responsible for their own actions). At a couple spots, incisive philosophical-theological insights are offered: horror speaks to our angst at not knowing what really happens after we die, some horror films infuse the viewer with the bone-chilling awe of a Biblical prophet confronting God or an angel. In sum effect, the book makes the case that horror is unquestionably a legitimate art form in its own right that particularly contributes to informing and inspiring humanity. If you're into film or horror at all, buy this book. You won't be disappointed.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An insightful guide
By Jo A. Hinkle I love horror films of all kinds. I was born in '61 and I've been watching them since I was old enough to sit up on my own and watch TV. And I love reading about horror films. Horror Film Aesthetics gave me A LOT of insight into things most people don't normally pay attention to when watching a horror film, or any film for that matter. Camera angles, lighting, focus, camera movement all contribute to creating the atmosphere of a film, something which is especially important in a horror film. I will probably have to go back and re-read this book again just to take in everything Mr. Sipos explains. His book is fairly detailed in topics such as POV (point of view), lighting, focus...etc... If you're looking for a cursory discussion of horror films and special effects then this isn't your book. However, if you are interested in how the film achieves its look and final impact through the use of the techniques mentioned above then buy it and enjoy!

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Lit
By Skynet One of the greatest literature works for those looking to delve deeper in the understanding of film

This richly informed study analyzes how various cinematic tools and techniques have been used to create horror on screen--the aesthetic elements, sometimes not consciously noticed, that help to unnerve, frighten, shock or entertain an audience. The first two chapters define the genre and describe the use of pragmatic aesthetics (when filmmakers put technical and budgetary compromises to artistic effect). Subsequent chapters cover mise-en-scene, framing, photography, lighting, editing and sound, and a final chapter is devoted to the aesthetic appeals of horror cinema.

"very highly recommended"--Midwest Book ; "this isn't some guy speaking from a pulpit of theory; he's someone who actually uses this specialized knowledge in his work. The knowledge herein would therefore be most beneficial to those who actually hope to work in the horror field, or anyone wishing to be more conscious of the pleasures they take in the craft of the genre"--Video Watchdog.
About the Author Thomas M. Sipos has worked as a script reader, actor or extra on more than 70 productions and has contributed to Filmfax, Midnight Marquee and other magazines.