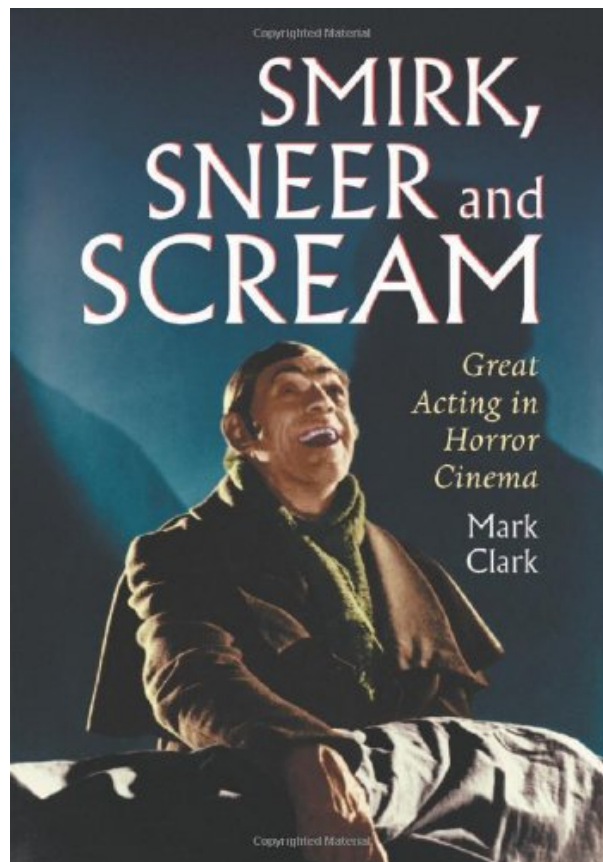
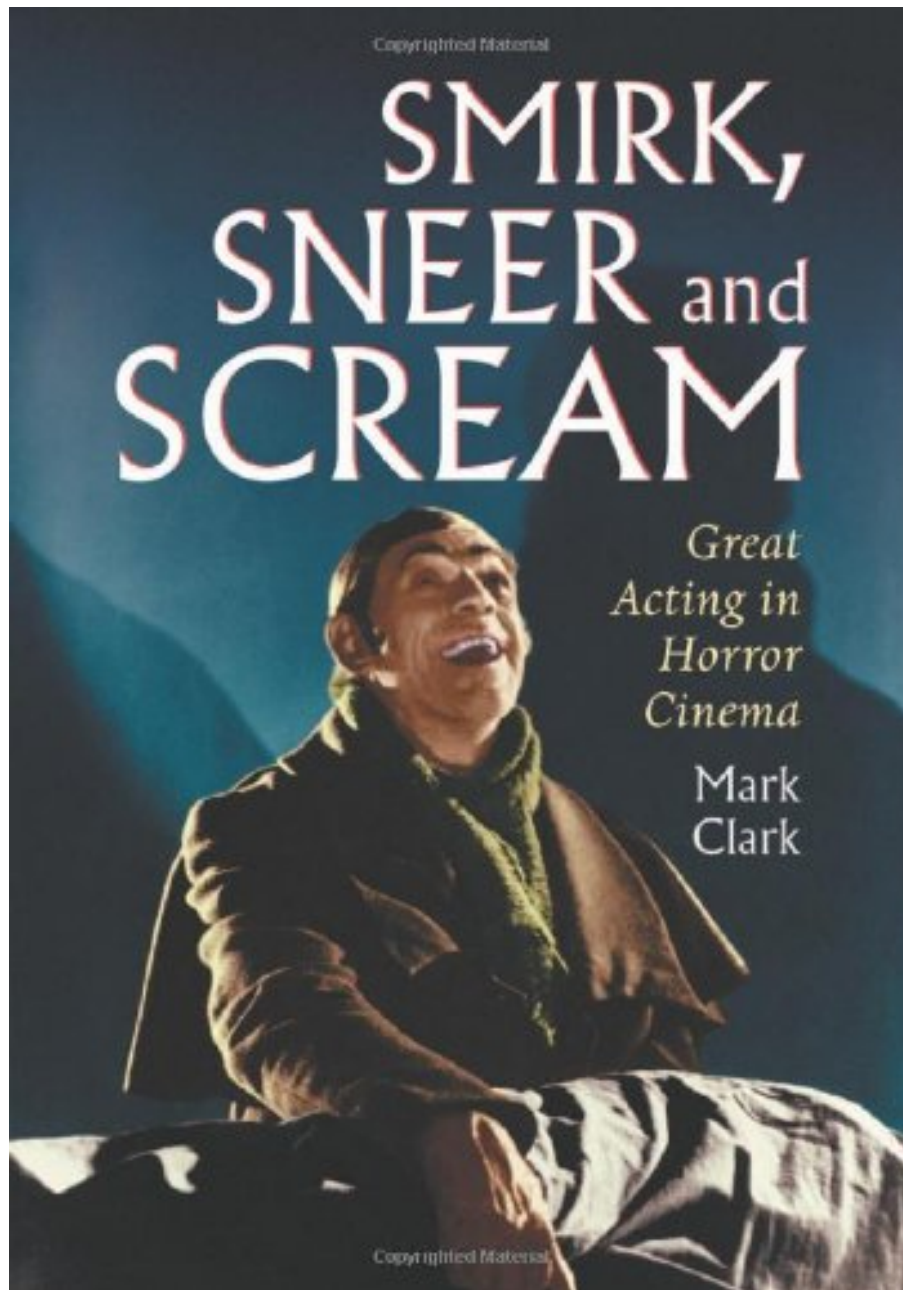


SMIRK, SNEER AND SCREAM: GREAT ACTING IN HORROR CINEMA BY MARK CLARK



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About the Author

Film critic Mark Clark lives in Columbus, Ohio.

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While you may think the old adage about oil and water being unable to mix applies perfectly to the cinema of terror and the craft of great acting, many a grease-painted scare and fluid performance have been combined in the strange alchemy that is the horror film. From the silent mastery of Lon Chaney's *The Phantom of the Opera* to the cultured cannibalism of Anthony Hopkins in *The Silence of the Lambs*, the genre has seen an impressive number of noteworthy portrayals, far removed from the stereotypical leering monster and terrified maiden. Part One of this work highlights the stars of this screen style - those whose numerous roles and outstanding performances made their names synonymous with horror cinema. Part Two covers actors who, although not normally associated with the genre, still contributed to its history. Part Three covers the great actresses in horror films and highlights their acting achievement. An appendix lists all the Academy Award nominations and winners in the horror genre.

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Film critic Mark Clark lives in Columbus, Ohio.

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6 of 6 people found the following review helpful.

Fun and informative

By Lee Price

SMIRK, SNEER AND SCREAM closely examines a broad range of great performances in horror movies, from as early as Lon Chaney in *THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA* to Anthony Hopkins in *SILENCE OF THE LAMBS*. The book has three sections, with the first covering 12 horror stars with in-depth examinations of some of their greatest performances, the second section examining key horror roles played by nine mainstream actors, and the third section looking at nine superlative performances by actresses in horror movies. In addition to close dissection of performances by these actors, there are brief overviews of other actors who have contributed to the horror genre.

Clark has a very warm, and often humorous, writing style, so even though the book is packed with detailed descriptions of individual performances, it is often very funny and sometimes refreshingly personal. He's very open about the frankly subjective nature of his approach. It's a fun book to read.

Clark's emphasis on acting is very welcome. There have been many general surveys of the horror genre,

biographies of horror film stars, and even auteurial approaches to the great horror directors. The decision to concentrate on acting is overdue, allowing the book to fill an important niche. As Clark writes: "After all, filmgoers during horror cinema's Golden Age didn't pay to see the latest James Whale or Tod Browning picture. Most paid no attention at all to the director's credit. Audiences paid to see Boris Karloff or Bela Lugosi or, on a few happy occasions, both."

The book is at its strongest and most memorable when it gets down to very close study of the performances. Some of Clark's opinion are a little off the mainstream, but that just makes it more interesting. While the sections on major horror stars like Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi are excellent, my favorite sections covered more obscure horror luminaries, like Dwight Frye, George Zucco, and Lionel Atwill. All in all, it's a fun and informative book for movie enthusiasts and horror fans.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

Deceptively insightful

By R. Tinnell

Do not let this book's rather flippant title fool you. Mark Clark engages in thoughtful, relevant criticism of the subject matter. He even manages to re-engage the reader in discussion of films one would think had already been talked to death. In an era when much of what passes for "criticism" is in reality extended plot summaries with very little analysis, Clark delivers the real thing. If you are a student of horror cinema (and/or acting) this is a must have.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

THE ACTORS GET THEIR DUE

By Tim Janson

There have been a lot of wonderful books released over the past decade on the subject of classic horror films of the 30's, 40's, and 50's, with many coming from McFarland & Co., who are also the publishers of this book. While most of these books focus on the films or biographical accounts of the actors, Mark Clark's book spotlights the great performances in horror films, a decidedly refreshing take. Clark seeks to give credit for these wonderful performances that often have been ignored by mainstream film critics.

As mentioned in the introduction, Clark mainly looks at the classic horrors of the 30's through the 50's because that's what he likes and it's what he grew up watching. Clark is a "monster kid" one of those lucky youngsters who grew up in the 50's and 60's watching the classics on late night TV. Plus as he points out, classics and old are relative terms. Some consider "Halloween" to be an old horror film.

The first part features the well-known horror stars in roughly chronological order beginning with Lon Chaney. Each actor covered features a close look at one to as many as four or five of their most notable roles, but also has smaller sidebars on some of their other notable performances. For example, on Chaney Clark features *The Phantom of the Opera* as his most famous film, but then also notes the lost film *"London After Midnight"* as the first American film that dealt with vampirism.

Karloff gets the largest treatment from Clark with no less than seven of his films featured, and who can blame him..."*Frankenstein*", "*The Mummy*", "*The Black Cat*", "*The Walking Dead*", "*The Body Snatcher*", all are recognized classics of the horror genre. Clark Keenly points out that Karloff did more with his body language, facial expressions, and a few grunts in "*Frankenstein*" than most actors can do with hundreds of lines of dialog. Although Clark does mention it in Karloff's other notable performances, I think his work in "*The Mask of Fu Manchu*" deserved to be note as one of his best roles. Karloff is at his most sinister as the sinister oriental menace.

Next up is Bela Lugosi and in a rare circumstance, two actors (Karloff & Lugosi) are noted for great

performances in the same film: 1934's "The Black Cat". Lugosi's role as the avenging Dr. Werdegast afforded him the rare opportunity to play the heroic role to Karloff's villainous Hjalmar Poelzig. Other great Lugosi films covered are "White Zombie", "Murders in the Rue Morgue", "Son of Frankenstein", and, of course, "Dracula".

Clark goes on to look at other great horror stars including the overlooked George Zucco and Lionel Atwill, Lon Chaney Jr., Peter Lorre, Vincent Price, Peter Cushing, and Christopher Lee. While they don't get full sections, I credit Clark for also not forgetting to mention some lesser known horror stars such as Tod Slaughter, J. Carrol Naish, Rondo Hatton, and Tor Johnson.

There's also a chapter on leading ladies horror that runs the gamut from Gloria Holden in "Dracula's Daughter" all the way to Jodie Foster in "Silence of the Lambs" although the fact is that most of these women only made perhaps one true horror film in their careers while true scream queens like Fay Wray and Evelyn Ankers are relegated to the "Other Leading Ladies" section. It's the only thing I can really find fault with in this great book. For fans of classic horror, Clark even provides a comprehensive bibliography.

Reviewed by Tim Janson

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