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Intro To Film

Dr. Timothy Shea 2

***Nosferatu VS Dracula***

I chose to analyze two world renowned vampire films. One of them being made in the early 1920’s while the other in 2000. I wanted to explore the differences in the plot and cinematic elements. I figured since there is an 80-year time gap, it would give me a good sense of the era in which both films took place.

As some of you may know one of the famous silent horror films *Nosferatu* is what we call an *“*oldie”*.* This film was created during a time of German Expressionism. That is a style of movie making. The shaky frames are where this originated.The film *Nosferatu* is a later adaptation of Bram Stoker’s famous *Dracula* novel. Made in 1922, the film is in black and white and the graphics are mediocre. It has an eerie feel to it and the music is also a bit over bearing. The actions from the characters would occur in one frame and in another dialogue would follow shortly after. The cinematic elements were choppy, but you could still get a general idea of what’s going on.

The plot of this movie is structured in a detailed way despite the not so great cinematic elements. The lead character (Hutter) goes on a journey to Transylvania to sell a castle to Count Orlok. He feels uneasy because towns people turn him away when he asks about the castle. They tell him strange things happen, and death normally follows. As the film goes on Hutter is able to sell the house, but later comes to a terrible conclusion. He believes Orlok is a vampire. By the time he can take action the count is already on his way to Hutter’s hometown to cause havoc. Hutter is racing to get home to save his town from the Count’s evil agenda.

Moving to the cinematic elements, I tried to keep in mind of the time period. The movie as a whole was not smooth at all. The frames were slightly shaking and the transitions were amateur. A fade was used to transition the scenes. As the circle closes over the frame, it skips and shakes. As the next frame appears the circle opens and is again skipping and shaking. As the film began I noticed the lighting was very choppy. Most of the film was shot with natural lighting, but there were some dark moments as well. The music doesn’t help the lighting or frame changes. It’s very constant and will sometimes get very low when a character is walking. It’s very loud and when a climactic scene is happening it sends chills down your spine from the loud eeriness.

The shots for this film were amazing despite the sound and quality. I picked up on some cowboy shots, and full shots in the middle and end of the film. At some points the camera would lag. In a specific scene a man is setting his dinner table and when he goes to sit down the camera flickers and he’s in the chair. I also picked up on the long shots. Those mostly occurred when Hutter was walking through fields, or if the director wanted to show off the landscape. All in all, this film was beautiful and paved the way for many vampire movies to come.

The next film I will be discussing is Dracula. Made in 2000 the graphics and cinematic elements are more clear. The plot is completely different as well. We have Abraham Van Helsing who captures Dracula and imprisons him in a place called Carfax Abbey. There are no castles, rats, and stormy nights like in *Nosferatu.* In the present day, Van Helsing survives off Dracula’s blood. The problem comes when robbers steal Dracula’s coffin believing it contains riches and treasures. Van Helsing then has to set out to capture Dracula again as he tries to escape again.

The shots in the film are more clear and do not lag. I mostly see medium shots with the occasional close up at a suspenseful scene. There were hardly any cowboy shots in this film, but I did notice two shots. The director wants us to really see the characters and pay attention every detail on them. There were some tracking shots in the beginning of the film, but the camera was facing behind the subject. It showed more emphasis about what the subject was about to come in contact with. I often caught myself trying to peak over the subject’s shoulders to see what was ahead.

The sound in *Dracula* rose at suspenseful moments but was not over bearing. It slowly picked up, but once the actions happen, it doesn’t linger. That actually was a relief because music that lingers after the action can be a bit annoying.

Both films are unique in their own way. Horror films in the 1920’s had mostly the same props and objects. A haunted castle of some sort, a dark and stormy night, and a demon. Films in the present (2000 in this case) had a demon, but no haunted castle or dark and stormy night. They both have some similarities that I found quite interesting. They both had most of the same shots. Medium shots, tracking shots, two shots, etc. Even though *Nosferatu* was an older film, it shot the angles perfectly. The only major issues it had over *Dracula* was that the frames were shaking. Also, the majority of the movie played loud obnoxious music that only got louder during climatic periods. The music in *Dracula* never got that loud and certainly didn’t distract you from what was going on.

I personally give both of these movies 4 solid stars. For *Nosferatu ,* despite its graphic flaws , the storyline was perfect and kept my attention most of the time. *Dracula* was good as well, and I loved the plot and how everything unfolded. Two world classics I would suggest for anyone to view.