



Previews and Events

Dracula: Restored and Uncut

Dracula

Director: Terence Fisher
©/Production Company: Hammer Film Productions
Executive Producer: Michael Carreras
Producer: Anthony Hinds
Associate Producer: Anthony Nelson Keys
Production Accountant: W.H.V. Able *
Production Manager: Don Weeks
Studio Manager: Arthur Kelly *
Assistant Director: Robert Lynn
2nd Assistant Director: Tom Walls *
3rd Assistant Director: Hugh Harlow *
Continuity: Doreen Dearnaley
Screenplay: Jimmy Sangster
Based on the novel by: Bram Stoker
Director of Photography: Jack Asher
Camera Operator: Len Harris
Focus Puller: Harry Oakes *
Grip: Alf Lay *
Chief Electrician: Jack Curtis *
Stills Photography: Tom Edwards
Special Effects: Sydney Pearson
Supervising Editor: James Needs
Editor: Bill Lenny
Art Director: Bernard Robinson
Property Master: Tommy Money *
Master Plasterer: Arthur Banks *
Wardrobe: Molly Arbuthnot
Make-up: Phil Leakey
Assistant Make-up: Roy Ashton
Hair Stylist: Henry Montsash
Music: James Bernard
Music Supervisor: John Hollingsworth
Sound Recordist: Jock May
Studio: Bray Film Studios
Cast:
Peter Cushing (*Dr Van Helsing*)
Christopher Lee (*Count Dracula*)
Michael Gough (*Arthur Holmwood*)
Melissa Stribling (*Mina Holmwood*)
Carol Marsh (*Lucy Holmwood*)
Olga Dickie (*Gerda*)
John Van Eyssen (*Jonathan Harker*)
Valerie Gaunt (*vampire woman*)
Janina Faye (*Tania*)
Barbara Archer (*Inga*)
Charles Lloyd Pack (*Doctor Seward*)
George Merritt (*policeman*)
George Woodbridge (*landlord*)
George Benson (*frontier official*)
Miles Malleeson (*undertaker*)
Geoffrey Bayldon (*porter*)
Paul Cole (*lad*)
Guy Mills (*coachdriver*) *
Richard Morgan (*driver's companion*) *
John Mossman (*hearse driver*) *
UK 1958©
82 mins
Digital 4K (restoration)

* Uncredited

Dracula cemented Christopher Lee and Peter Cushing as one of horror cinema's most iconic screen pairings, launched Hammer Films into the stratosphere and changed British horror and pop culture forever. In defiance of the censorship the film experienced on release, a new 4K restoration from Hammer reinstates footage unseen since 1958 outside of Japan. This special screening will include an extended introduction, with special guests celebrating the film and its restoration.

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Hammer Films resurrected the horror film in 1957 with its spirited, colourful take on Mary Shelley's foundational text (reimagining the major screen monster myth of an earlier generation). *The Curse of Frankenstein* was directed by Terence Fisher, written by Jimmy Sangster and photographed by Jack Asher, with sets by Bernard Robinson, make-up by Phil Leakey and star turns by Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee. In 1931, Universal Pictures made *Frankenstein* as a follow-up to their *Dracula*; Hammer reversed the order but furthered its gothic ascendancy by having the *Curse* team deliver an even more startling adaptation of Bram Stoker's vampire novel.

Dracula (1958) – *Horror of Dracula* in the US – surpassed *Curse* in every way and inspired even more sequels, spinoffs and imitations, with a rerelease in UK cinemas and a definitive 4K Blu-ray box-set out this month. Soon after his star-making appearance as the Count, Lee was in Italy parodying himself in a comedy, *Tempi duri per I vampiri* (*Uncle Was a Vampire*, 1959). Within months of that, Cushing's Van Helsing was tackling a new arch-nemesis in *The Brides of Dracula* (1960).

Sangster's script for *Dracula* cuts down Stoker's densely populated, continent-spanning plot to something more contained. Action takes place either side of a border between Klausenburg (Cluj, in Romania) and Carlsstadt (a district of Düsseldorf, Germany). This Middle Europe is an imaginary territory populated by fussy British character actors who heft steins but mostly conduct themselves as if they were in a Dickens film. Indeed, the improvised finale in which Van Helsing pulls down the curtains in Castle Dracula to let in the sunlight and dispel the Count is very like the finish of David Lean's *Great Expectations* (1946), in which the shrinking 'monster' is Martita Hunt, who would show up in *The Brides of Dracula*. Sangster repeats the trick of building a story around a Cushing character's often-frustrated plan, which worked so well in *Curse*, where the Baron wants to create a perfect creature but lesser people hinder and compromise his vision. Top-billed Cushing is the star of *Dracula* and the film is about Van Helsing's determination to end a monster's reign of terror, despite the unreliability of everyone he enlists in his crusade. In most versions of *Dracula*, the plot motor is the bloodlust which leads Lee to leave the castle in search of fresh territory. Here, Lee's Count is someone who wants his library catalogued. Jonathan Harker (John Van Eyssen) comes to Castle Dracula as Van Helsing's agent, plotting to assassinate the vampire (though he's ill-prepared and swiftly blunders to his death).

Dracula's actions in the remainder of the film are motivated by revenge, not due to the temerity of Van Helsing, but because of Harker's staking of his vampire companion (Valerie Gaunt). He goes after Harker's fiancée Lucy (Carol Marsh) and sister-in-law Mina (Melissa Stribling) as replacements. The approach puts the Count on the back foot as a villain: undoubtedly evil, he's also someone

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+ intro by film critic
Kambole Campbell
Mon 16 Nov 14:00

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+ intro by Josephine Botting, BFI National
Archive curator
Tue 17 Nov 18:10

Restored: Valerie and Her Week of Wonders

Valérie a týden divů + intro by writer Virginie Sélavý
Sun 22 Nov 15:15

Relaxed Screening: The Watermelon Woman

+ intro and discussion
Mon 23 Nov 18:20

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whose hospitality is sorely abused by an employee out to kill him. Lee's imposing, cloaked vampire is an affront to Victorian morality – he switches from polite if chilly aristocrat to feral, snarling, bloody-fanged beast, and his merest glance is enough to enslave women. Once bitten, Lucy and Mina become sly, duplicitous and eager to be exsanguinated. They collaborate with their new master and make fools of family and friends who try to help. Van Helsing is only warm when examining the little girl (Janina Faye) Lucy has tried to lure into the bushes. Otherwise, his rudeness and impatience with lesser mortals inhibit his effectiveness as a crusader. His bluster fails to impress a border official (George Benson), who is then bribed by the less morally inflexible Arthur (Michael Gough) to provide vital clues.

In a 2013 *Sight and Sound* Blu-ray review, Philip Kemp noted, 'The blood, and Dracula's final bodily dissolution, evidently exercised the BBFC more than the film's eroticism, and several cuts were demanded. It's this shortened version that's been released on VHS and DVD until now, with muddy colour and in the wrong ratio. But an uncut print was preserved in a Japanese archive. It was badly damaged in a fire, but the last four reels survived, rather battered. Thanks to valiant restoration work by the BFI, Molinare and Deluxe 142, excised scenes have been cleaned up and seamlessly reinserted, the colour reggraded and the correct 1.66:1 ratio restored.'

A certain amount of legend-printing was involved, as Hammer's Steve Rogers says: 'There was only ever one version of *Dracula* filmed – the one Terence Fisher made for Hammer. It was subsequently censored by the BBFC in the UK, and slightly less censored in America. In Japan, and apparently some parts of Europe, it was shown uncensored, which is why it's become known to posterity as "The Japanese Version", even though it's not – a situation muddled when producer Tony Hinds told a film magazine in 1958 that they were creating an extended version with more blood in it just for Japan. They weren't. It's just that the Japanese weren't expected to censor the original film. Different countries censored films in different ways but, seemingly, Japan had a higher tolerance for such things. This is why, when a fan called Simon Rowson doggedly tracked down an incomplete, water-and-fire-damaged copy of "The Japanese Version" in 2011, great rejoicing was witnessed worldwide and elements of that damaged print were edited into the then-current *Dracula* restoration. Everyone believed that was as good as it would ever get. When Hammer and The Warner Archive Collection partnered up, it was known that Warners held the best materials for restoration – the negatives – but they had recently discovered a can marked up as "Japanese inserts". On examination it was discovered that not only did this can include pristine versions of the censored shots that had previously been recovered in poor condition, but there was also an additional shot not in the Japanese print. Maybe *Dracula* was censored in Japan after all?'

Two key sequences – Dracula's seduction of Mina and his later disintegration – are vastly more effective in this new big-screen and Blu-ray version, though the restored footage amounts to shots of a few seconds in length. As vital is the work done to finesse the image, presenting Jack Asher's cinematography with a clarity, a richness and a detail that proves a revelation. Note the skulls in Dracula's crypt, the pea-green wallpaper in the house of sickness and the clutter in the library. In addition, we now can see from the piles of random volumes strewn about that, indeed, the Count does badly need someone to catalogue and reshelve his book collection.

Kim Newman, *Sight and Sound*, November 2026