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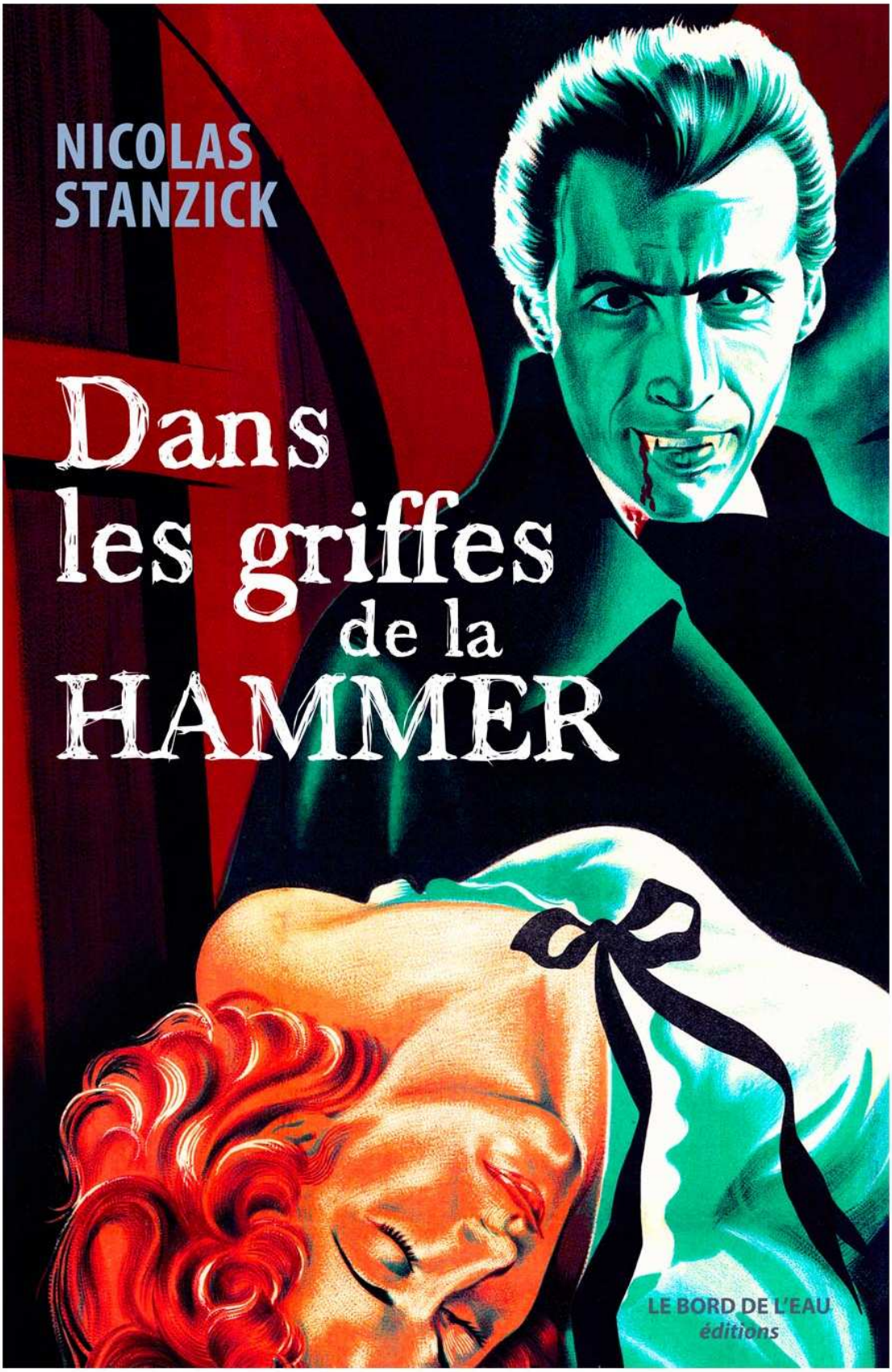

NEW EDITION 2010

FIRST FRENCH BOOK ON THE "CULT STUDIO" OF FANTASTIC CINEMA

Terence Fisher, Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing… More than a date in the history of cinema, from which horror films could at last take over its erotic and violent dimension, the gothic cycle produced by the British firm Hammer Films was in France a mere subversion symbol. From 1957 onwards have successively streamed *The Curse of Frankenstein, The Curse of the Werewolf* or *Dracula Prince of Darkness* as well, what develops an amazing "battle of Hernani", in which do occur aesthetic fights, cine-fans passions, on a background of pop revolution and politico-cultural disruptions.

Relating those events as an exciting story, which has been enlivened by marathon interviewes, Nicolas Stanzick publishes not only the first work in France which was devoted to the Hammer's Firm, but he injects fresh blood into the wealthy anglo-saxon literature which already exists on this subject. Here is the story of the unanimous condemnation of a certain style, and at the same time, that of the birth of french fantastic- cine-phily, little joyfully liberal and popular community, proudly claimed as followers of a sex-and-blood cinema. Here is the chronicle of those "snipers" who handed down to us intact Hammer-Mythology, more than fifty years after *Horror of Dracula*, and precisely when, like the bloodthirsty-earl, the famous English studio is rising from its ashes.

The Curse of the Werewolf (1961)

A NEW EXTENDED EDITION

After a first edition in 2008 and a selection for the *Fancy Great Prize 2010* (*Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire* 2010), *Le Bord de l'eau Editions* publish a new extended version of *Dans les griffes de la Hammer* with :

- a foreword by Jimmy Sangster, scenarist of the Hammer's classics
- enriched text
- unpublished interviewes
- 24 pages of colour photo, 35 pages of black and white photo

HAMMER FILMS

Mysterious gothic castles lost in the mist, unrestrained-behavioured monsters and luscious young women, either lascivious preys or terrible predators… Here are some of the cult-pictures which offers the most famous British Production Firm, the so-Hammer Films. The studio was founded in the year 1935, and got its lastable fame thanks to its prolific gothic cycle which began in 1957. At the origin of this two decades success story, there was a shrewd trading ideas: re-using Dracula, Frankenstein, werewolves or mummies, that is the basics of fantastic creatures from the Hollywoodian 30's. The net result was true artistic success. Those films, most of time signed by Terence Fisher and played by "firm-trained stars", such as Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee, are radically new ones. Cinema horror is from now up synonymous with flaming Technicolor, blood voluptuously flows at the screen, eroticism is fully aware assumed, and myths brought up to date so that they may harsh caricature conservative value of that time. As for this type of cinema, the Hammer's will embody some new Golden Age which will generate many emulators.

Frankenstein Created Woman (1967)

Through several dozens of films, amid them some absolute master-pieces such as *Horror of Dracula* (1958), *The Hound of Baskerville* (1959), *The Curse of the Werewolf*, (1961), *The Revenge of Frankenstein* (1958) or *Doctor Jekyll and Sister Hyde* (1971),the Hammer has let establish European B movies' pedigree before it ceased producting anything in 1979. The blockbuster Era which opens then has struck down this little studio, but doesn't make it be forgotten : Lucas, Scorsese, Carpenter, Romero, Jackson, Tarantino or Burton – we just mention those names – all of them, by their films or statements, did have claimed one day to draw their inspiration from their taste for this from now on mythical studio. After having been manytimes fantasized about, at last the resurrection of the firm became a reality, as Endemol Group bought it up in 2007. Now it has procuced a vampirical sery in 2008, *Beyond the Rave*, the Hammer gets ready to bring out ,in the course of 2010, its first full-length film since 30 years : *The Resident*. Of course, our inescapable Christopher Lee, back from *Star Wars* and *The Lord of the Rings,* can be seen at the screen.

INTERVIEW WITH NICOLAS STANZICK

Born in 1978 in Poitiers, Nicolas Stanzick soon became fascinated by fantastic films, rock music and counter-culture in the general sense. After history studies at the Sorbonne, he collaborated on *Le Nouvel Observateur*, *La Saison télévisée*, *L'Ecran fantastique, Repérages, France Culture* as a critic and on the *Dictionnaire du cinéma populaire français (*Nouveau Monde, 2004*)* as a writer. Selected for the Fancy Great Prize 2010, *Dans les griffes de la Hammer* is his first work. In parallel, he carries on with his musical career as the guitarist and composer of his band, *Ultrazeen*.

Why did you endeavour to write a French story about the so-British Hammer Film Productions?

Nicolas Stanzick: 'Merely because this idea that looks strange provided the material for a fascinating and unpublished story. Here, on Cartesian lands, we were initiated to fantastic films thanks to Hammer. And that was not so easy.... For instance, who does remember that we had to wait for the release of Fisher's *Frankenstein* and *Dracula* to make books by Stoker and Shelley translated into proper translations? Who knows that before the famous *Horror of Dracula,* the name of the Earl was unknown and vampirism was a very blurred notion for most French? Can we imagine today what the conditions of the projections of these cursed films were in popular cinemas that were often considered as corruptive, depraved and dangerous? Does today's cine-phile, used to cultural relativism, take the measure of the mediatic reaction the irruption of the Hammer created in 1957 or the spectacular critical change that recognized Fisher as a great director after 1968?... Well, focusing on the exploitation and the reception of the Hammer in France was a means to engrave this part of the history of cinema in the cultural history of the 1960's - 1970's. Even better, that was a means to reveal a part of the private truth of these films using the point of views of the many eyes that watched them, either positively or negatively. And beyond that point, that was a way of relating the history of France's fantastic cinema lovers, using their birth emblem, the Hammer'.

***Dans les griffes de la Hammer* is divided into two equal parts. On one side, we find your novel dealing with the phenomenon created by the Hammer in France, and on the other side, interviews with famous French fantastic cinephiles narrating their personal experiences with the Hammer. Why did you decide to split your book?**

N.S: 'These two parts were created to talk to each other. By the way, I think the reader can start the book reading the second part. *Cinephilie* is a strange passion which is always shared between intellects and private emotions. For me, it was compulsory to convey more that a theoretical reflexion and to give my book a real human dimension. My interviews with these critics, creators of reviews or militants of counter-culture were more than witnessing assets: they were the very basis of that French history of the Hammer that I endeavoured to write'.

PRESS REVIEW

FRANCE CULTURE

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CHARLIE HEBDO

« A fascinating road movie inside an unknown underground culture. »

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FRANCE 3

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a rich source of imagination that has been quite forgotten. »

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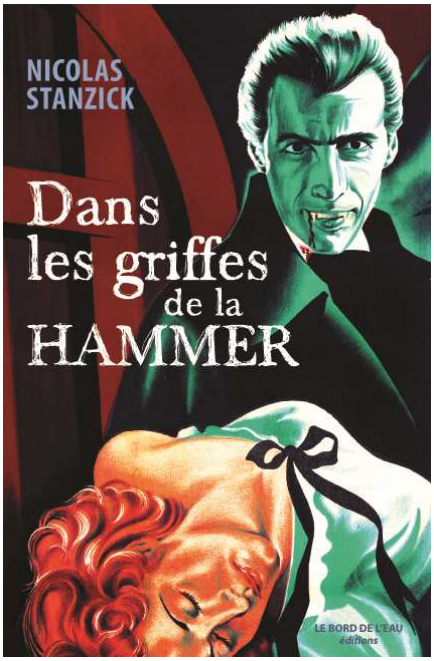

TITLE : Dans les griffes de la Hammer

AUTHOR : Nicolas Stanzick

EDITOR : Le Bord de l'eau

CO-EDITOR : Soft-Prod

COLLECTION : Ciné-Mythologies

FORMAT : 23x15cm

ISBN : 978-2-35687-068-1

SUBJECT : cinéma

PAGINATION : 490 pages

ICONOGRAPHY : 24p. in colour, 35p. in black and white

PRICE : 30 euros

RELEASE DATE : June, the18th 2010

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