

Strand Theatre Shelbyville, Inc.

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House on Haunted Hill ? This Weekend!

Written by David on October, 1 2009

The following review does not express the opinion of the Strand Theatre.

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How can a 15th century drawing by Rembrandt inspire a modern masterpiece of horror? In the often convoluted and esoteric world of the arts stranger things frequently and usually occur, especially when creativity and vision coincide.

Regarding the Rembrandt mystery the answer is a simple, twisted web of strings that connects the Dutch master with Boris Karloff, Vincent Price and Alfred Hitchcock and modern cinema.

This six degrees of classic horror begins in St. Louis and continues this weekend in Shelbyville at the Strand Theatre where patrons will get two chances to view the crux of this puzzle, the 1959 film "House on Haunted Hill," starring Price. This classic tale of five people locked into a haunted mansion by "the king of horror" is showing at 8 p.m. Friday and 11 p.m. on Saturday night at the city's downtown venue.

As for the artistic mystery, viewers should carefully scrutinize this B-movie inspirational tale for clues about Hitchcock's later masterpiece "Psycho," and its quiet anti-hero, Norman Bates.

The riddle of Rembrandt began when 12-year-old Price bought a drawing which fired a passion for art that led to London and an MFA in Art History. Along this winding way, he slid ever so casually into theater and then film. Price, it seems, was a human being imbued with quite a few passions and dreams and often said, "A man who limits his interest, limits his mind."

Stricken with acting, the young Vincent returned to America, worked beside Karloff, and soon gained a reputation as a merchant of menace known for his black humor, creaky voice and understated terror. "I sometimes feel that I'm impersonating the dark unconscious of the whole human race, I know this sounds sick, but I love it," he said after filming "House on Haunted Hill."

This macabre film-noir film featuring a mad weekend of terror in a mansion owned by Price's anti-hero was widely acclaimed upon its release in 1959 and especially impressed a rather portly Englishman. After seeing the opening of the "House on Haunted Hill," a young Alfred Hitchcock then and there decided that he could and would create his own low-budget B-movie epic. Thus, one can say that Price, inspired by Rembrandt, is the creative, wicked uncle of Bates, the quintessential anti-hero bent upon revenge.

Price, however, should fittingly have the last word from beyond the grave on this topic. "I don't" he said, "play monsters. I play men besieged by fate and out for revenge."

Images on this post:

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