

= Vampyr =

Vampyr (German : Vampyr ? Der Traum des Allan Grey , " Vampire : the Dream of Allan Grey " ; German pronunciation : [vam?pi?? ?]) is a 1932 German ? French horror film directed by Danish director Carl Theodor Dreyer . The film was written by Dreyer and Christen Jul based on elements from J. Sheridan Le Fanu 's collection of supernatural stories In a Glass Darkly . Vampyr was funded by Nicolas de Gunzburg who starred in the film under the name of Julian West among a mostly non @-@ professional cast . Gunzburg plays the role of Allan Grey , a student of the occult who enters the village of Courtempierre , which is under the curse of a vampire .

Vampyr was challenging for Dreyer to make as it was his first sound film and had to be recorded in three languages . To overcome this , very little dialogue was used in the film and much of the story is told with silent film @-@ styled title cards . The film was shot entirely on location and to enhance the atmospheric content , Dreyer opted for a washed out , soft focus photographic technique . The audio editing was done in Berlin where the character 's voices , sound effects , and score were added to the film .

Vampyr had a delayed release in Germany and opened to a generally negative reception from audiences and critics . Dreyer edited the film after its German premiere and it opened to more mixed opinions at its French debut . The film was long considered a low point in Dreyer 's career , but modern critical reception to the film has become much more favorable with critics praising the film 's disorienting visual effects and atmosphere .

= = Plot = =

On a late evening , Allan Gray arrives at an inn close to the village of Courtempierre and he rents a room to sleep . Gray is awakened suddenly by an old man , who enters the room and leaves a square packet on Gray 's table ; " To be opened upon my death " is written on the wrapping paper . Gray takes the package and walks outside . Shadows guide him to an old castle , where he sees the shadows dancing and wandering on their own . Gray also sees an elderly woman and encounters another old man . Gray leaves the castle and walks to a manor . Looking through one of the windows , Gray sees the man who gave him the package earlier . The man is suddenly murdered by gunshot . Gray is let into the house by servants , who rush to the aid of the fallen man but it is too late to save him . The servants ask Gray to stay the night . Gisèle , the youngest daughter of the Lord of the manor , takes Gray to the library and tells him that her sister , Léone , is gravely ill . Just then they see Léone walking outside . They follow her , and find her unconscious on the ground with fresh bite wounds . They have her carried inside . Gray remembers the parcel and opens it . Inside is a book about horrific demons called Vampyrs .

By reading the book , Gray learns that Léone is a victim of a Vampyr . Vampyrs can force humans into submission . The village doctor visits Léone at the manor , and Gray recognizes him as the old man he saw in the castle . The doctor tells Gray that a blood transfusion is needed and Gray offers his blood to save Léone . Exhausted from blood loss , Gray sleeps . He wakes sensing danger and rushes to Léone , where he surprises the doctor as he is attempting to poison the girl . The doctor flees the manor , and Gray finds that Gisèle is gone . Gray follows the doctor back to the castle , where Gray has a vision of himself being buried alive . After the vision subsides , he rescues Gisèle but the doctor escapes . The old servant of the manor finds Gray 's Vampyr book and discovers that a Vampyr can be defeated by driving an iron bar through its heart . The servant meets Allan Gray at Marguerite Chopin 's grave behind the village Chapel . They open the grave and find the old woman perfectly preserved . They hammer a large metal bar through her heart , killing her . The village doctor is hiding in an old mill , but finds himself locked in a chamber where flour sacks are filled . The old servant arrives and activates the mill 's machinery , filling the chamber with flour and suffocating the doctor . The curse of the Vampyr is lifted and Léone recovers . Gisèle and Gray cross a foggy river by boat and find themselves in a bright clearing .

= = Cast = =

Nicolas de Gunzburg as Allan Gray , a young wanderer , who vaguely resembles a young , slightly better @-@ looking H. P. Lovecraft , and whose studies of occult matters have made him a dreamer . Gray 's view of the world in the film is described as a blur of the real and unreal .

Rena Mandel as Gis  le , L  one 's younger sister and the daughter of the Lord of the Manor . Gis  le is kidnapped by the Village Doctor late in the film .

Sybille Schmitz as L  one , Gis  le 's older sister , who is in thrall to the vampire and finds her strength dwindling day by day .

Jan Hieronimko as the Village Doctor , a pawn of the vampire , Marguerite Chopin , who seems to sleep in a coffin , hinting that he too may be a vampire . The village doctor kidnaps Gis  le late in the film .

Henriette G  rard as Marguerite Chopin , the vampire , an elderly woman whose hold extends beyond her immediate victims . Many villagers , including the village doctor , are her minions .

Maurice Schutz as the Lord of the Manor , Gis  le and L  one 's father who offers Gray a book about vampirism to help Gray save his daughters . After his murder , he returns briefly as a spirit and takes revenge on the village doctor and a soldier who had helped Marguerite Chopin .

Albert Bras as an Old Servant , a servant at the manor house . After the death of his master , he finds Gray 's book on vampirism and , aided by Gray , ends the vampire 's reign of terror .

N. Babanini as Seine Frau (His Wife)

Jane Mora as a Nurse

Georges Boidin as the Limping Soldier

= = Production = =

= = = Development = = =

Director Carl Theodor Dreyer began planning *Vampyr* in late 1929 , a year after the release of his previous film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* . The production company behind Dreyer 's previous film had plans for Dreyer to make another film , but the project was dropped which led to Dreyer deciding to go outside the studio system to make his next film . Being Dreyer 's first sound film , it was made under difficult circumstances as the arrival of sound put the European film industry in turmoil . In France , film studios lagged behind technologically with the first French sound films being shot on sound stages in England . Dreyer went to England to study sound film , where he got together with Danish writer Christen Jul who was living in London at the time . Dreyer decided to create a story based on the supernatural and read over thirty mystery stories and found a number of re @-@ occurring elements including doors opening mysteriously and door handles moving with no one knowing why . Dreyer decided that " We can jolly well make this stuff too " . In London and New York , the stage version of *Dracula* had been a large hit in 1927 . Dreyer and Jul created a story based on vampires which Dreyer considered to be " fashionable things at the time " . *Vampyr* is based on elements from J. Sheridan Le Fanu 's *In a Glass Darkly* , a collection of five stories first published in 1872 . Dreyer draws from two of the stories for *Vampyr* , one being *Carmilla* , a vampire story with a lesbian subtext and the other being *The Room in the Dragon Volant* about a live burial . Dreyer found it difficult to decide on a title for the film . It may have initially been titled *Destiny* and then *Shadows of Hell* . When the film was presented in the film journal *Close Up* it was titled *The Strange Adventure of David Gray* .

= = = Pre @-@ production = = =

Dreyer returned to France to begin casting and location scouting . At the time in France , there was a small movement of artistic independently financed films , including Luis Bu  uel 's *L '  ge d 'Or* and Jean Cocteau 's *The Blood of a Poet* which were both released in 1930 . Through Valentine Hugo , Dreyer met Nicolas de Gunzburg , an aristocrat who agreed to finance Dreyer 's next film in return

for playing the lead role in it . Gunzberg had arguments with his family about becoming an actor , so he created the pseudonym Julian West , a name that would be the same in all three languages that the film was going to be shot in .

Most of the cast in *Vampyr* were not professional actors . Jan Hieronimko , who plays the village doctor , was found on a late night metro train in Paris . When approached to act in the film , Hieronimko stared blankly and did not reply . Hieronimko later contacted Dreyer 's crew and agreed to join the film . Many of the other non @-@ professional actors in the film were found in similar fashion in shops and cafes . The only professional actors in the film were Maurice Schutz , who plays the Lord of the Manor , and Sybille Schmitz , who plays his daughter Léone . Many crew members of *Vampyr* had worked with Dreyer on his previous film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* . Returning crew members included cinematographer Rudolph Maté and art director Hermann Warm .

The entire film was shot on actual locations with many scenes shot in Courtempierre , France . Dreyer and his cinematographer Rudolph Maté took part in scouting for locations for *Vampyr* . Dreyer left most of his scouting to an assistant , who Dreyer instructed to find " a factory in ruins , a chopped up phantom , worthy of the imagination of Edgar Allan Poe . Somewhere in Paris . We can 't travel far . " In the original script , the village doctor was supposed to flee the village and get trapped in a swamp . On looking for a suitable mire , the crew found a mill where they saw white shadows around the windows and doors . After seeing this place , they changed the film 's ending to take place at this mill where the doctor dies by suffocating under the milled flour .

= = = Filming = = =

Vampyr was filmed between 1930 and 1931 . Everything being shot on location , as Dreyer believed it would be beneficial by lending the dream @-@ like ghost world of the film as well as allowing them to save money by not having to rent studio space . Dreyer originally wanted *Vampyr* to be a silent film , as it uses many elements of the silent era such as title cards to explain the story . Dialogue in the film was kept to a minimum . For the scenes with dialogue , the actors mouthed their lines in French , German and English so their lip movements would correspond to the voices that were going to be recorded in post @-@ production . There is no record of the English version being completed . The scenes in the chateau were shot in April and May 1930 . The chateau also acted as housing for the cast and crew during the filming . Life in the chateau was unpleasant for them as it was cold and infested with rats . The church yard scenes were shot in August 1930 . The church was not an actual church , but a barn with a number of tombstones placed around it . This set was designed by the art director Hermann Warm .

Critic and writer Kim Newman described *Vampyr* 's style as closer to the experimental features such as *Un chien andalou* than a " quickie horror film " made after the release of *Dracula* (1931) . Dreyer originally was going to film *Vampyr* in what he described as a " heavy style " but changed direction after cinematographer Maté showed him one shot that came out fuzzy and blurred . This washed out look was an effect Dreyer desired , and he had Maté shoot the film through a piece of gauze held three feet (.9 m) away from the camera to re @-@ create this look . For other visuals in the film , Dreyer found inspiration from the fine arts . Actress Rena Mandel , who plays Gisèle , said that Dreyer showed her reproductions of paintings of Francisco Goya during filming . In Denmark , a journalist and friend of Dreyer , Henry Hellsen wrote in detail about the film and the artworks it appeared to draw on . When being asked about the intention of the film at the Berlin premiere , Dreyer replied that he " had not any particular intention . I just wanted to make a film different from all other films . I wanted , if you will , to break new ground for the cinema . That is all . And do you think this intention has succeeded ? Yes , I have broken new ground " . The filming of *Vampyr* was completed the middle of 1931 .

= = = Post @-@ production = = =

Dreyer shot and edited the film in France and then brought it to Berlin where it was post @-@

synchronized in both German and French . Dreyer did the audio work at Universum Film AG , as they had the best sound equipment available to him at the time . Most of the actors did not dub their own voices . The only voices of the actors that are their own in the film are of Schmitz and Gunzburg . The sounds of dogs , parrots , and other animals in the film were fake and were done by professional imitators . Wolfgang Zeller composed the film 's score and worked with Dreyer to develop the music .

There are differences between the German and French releases of the film . The character Allan Grey is named David Gray for the German release , which Dreyer attributed to a mistake . The German censors ordered cuts to the film that still exist today in some prints . The scenes which had to be toned down include the doctor 's death under the milled flour and the vampire 's death from the stake . There are other scenes that were shot and included in the script that do not exist in any current prints of *Vampyr* . These scenes reveal the vampire in the factory recoiling against a shadow of a Christian cross as well as a ferryman guiding Gray and Gisèle by getting young children to build a fire and sing a hymn to guide them back to the shore .

Dreyer had prepared a Danish version of the film which was based on the German version with Danish subtitles and title cards . The distributor could not afford to have the title cards completed in the manner they appear in the German version , which were instead finished with a more simple style . The distributor also wanted to make the pages in the book shown in the film as plain title cards which Dreyer did not allow , saying that " the old book is not an text in the ordinary sense , but an actor . Just as much as the others . "

= = Release = =

The premiere of *Vampyr* in Germany was delayed by UFA , as the studio wanted the American films *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* to be released first . The Berlin premiere was 6 May 1932 . At this premiere , the audience booed the film which led to Dreyer cutting several scenes out of the film after the first showing . The film was distributed in France by Société Générale de Cinema who also distributed Dreyer 's previous film *The Passion of Joan of Arc* . The Paris premiere was in September 1932 where *Vampyr* was the opening attraction of a new cinema on the Boulevard Raspail . At a showing of the film in Vienna , audiences demanded their money back . When this was denied , a riot broke out that led to police having to restore order with night sticks . When the film premiered in Copenhagen , Denmark in March 1933 , Dreyer did not show up . In the USA , the film premiered with English subtitles under the title " Not Against The Flesh " ; an English @-@ dubbed version , edited severely as to both the film continuity and the music track , appeared a few years later on the roadshow circuit as " Castle of Doom " . Dreyer soon had a nervous breakdown and went to a mental hospital in France . The film was a financial failure .

= = = Critical reception = = =

Press in Europe ranged from mixed to negative . The press in Germany did not like the film . At the Berlin premiere , a writer for *The New York Times* wrote " Whatever you think of the director Charles [sic] Theodor Dreyer , there is no denying that he is ' different . ' He does things that make people talk about him . You may find his films ridiculous ? but you won 't forget them ... Although in many ways [*Vampyr*] was one of the worst films I have ever attended , there were some scenes in it that gripped with brutal directness " . Press reaction to the film in Paris was mixed . Reporter Herbert Matthews of *The New York Times* wrote that *Vampyr* was " a hallucinating film " , that " either held the spectators spellbound as in a long nightmare or else moved them to hysterical laughter " . For many years after *Vampyr* 's initial release , the film was viewed by critics as one of Dreyer 's weaker works .

More modern reception for *Vampyr* has been more positive . The review aggregator website Rotten Tomatoes reports that 100 % of critics have given the film positive reviews , based upon a sample of 24 , with an average rating of 8 @. @ 6 / 10 . Todd Kristel of the online film database Allmovie gave the film four and a half stars out of five , stating that " *Vampyr* isn 't the easiest classic film to enjoy ,

even if you are a fan of 1930s horror movies ... If you're patient with the slow pacing and ambiguous story line of *Vampyr*, you'll find that this film offers many striking images " and that although the film is " not exciting in terms of pacing , it 's a good choice if you want to see a film that establishes a compelling mood " . Jonathan Rosenbaum of the *Chicago Reader* wrote the " The greatness of Carl Dreyer 's [*Vampyr*] derives partly from its handling of the vampire theme in terms of sexuality and eroticism and partly from its highly distinctive , dreamy look , but it also has something to do with Dreyer 's radical recasting of narrative form " . J. Hoberman of the *Village Voice* wrote that " *Vampyr* is Dreyer 's most radical film ? maybe one of my dozen favorite movies by any director " . Anton Bitel of Channel 4 awarded the film four and a half stars out of five , comparing it to the silent vampire film *Nosferatu* , stating that it is " lesser known (but in many ways superior) " and that the film is " a triumph of the irrational , Dreyer 's eerie memento mori never allows either protagonist or viewer fully to wake up from its surreal nightmare " .

In the early 2010s , *Time Out* conducted a poll with several authors , directors , actors and critics who have worked within the horror genre to vote for their top horror films . *Vampyr* placed at number 50 on their top 100 list .

= = = Home media = = =

Vampyr has been released with low quality image and sound as the original German and French sound and film negatives are lost . Prints of the French and German versions of the film exist but most of them are either incomplete or damaged . *Vampyr* was released in the United States under the titles of *The Vampire and Castle of Doom* and in the United Kingdom under the title of *The Strange Adventures of David Gray* . Many of these prints are severely cut , such as the re @-@ dubbed 60 @-@ minute English @-@ language *Castle of Doom* print .

Vampyr was originally released on DVD on 13 May 1998 by Image Entertainment which ran at an abridged 72 @-@ minute running time . Image 's release of *Vampyr* is a straight port of the Laserdisc that film restorer David Shepard produced in 1991 . The subtitles are large and ingrained due to the source print having Danish subtitles which have been blacked out and covered . This DVD also included the short film *The Mascot* as a bonus feature . The Criterion Collection released a two @-@ disc edition of *Vampyr* on 22 July 2008 . This edition of the DVD includes the original German version of the film , along with a book featuring Dreyer and Christen Jul 's original screenplay and Sheridan Le Fanu 's 1872 story " *Carmilla* " . A Region 2 DVD of the film was released by Eureka Films on 25 August 2008 . The Eureka release contains the same bonus material as the Criterion Collection discs , but also includes a commentary from director Guillermo del Toro .