

= I Vampiri =

I Vampiri (lit . The Vampires) is a 1957 Italian horror film . The film was directed by Riccardo Freda and completed by the film 's cinematographer , Mario Bava . It stars Gianna Maria Canale , Carlo D 'Angelo and Dario Michaelis . The film is about a series of murders on young women who are found with all their blood drained . The newspapers describes the killer as the Vampire and young journalist Pierre Lantin researches the crimes . Lantin investigates the mysterious Du Grand family who lives in a castle occupied by Gisele Du Grand who is in love with Lantin . She lives with her aunt who hides her face in a veil as well as the scientist Julian Du Grand who is trying to find the secret to eternal youth .

The film was developed during a growth in the Italian film industry which allowed for the market to expand beyond a local Italian audience , and would allow Italian film makers to explore new genres of filmmaking . Freda made a deal with producers at the Italian film studio Titanus to create a low budget horror film by writing a story in one day and filming it in two weeks . The producers agreed and Freda began filming . On the final day of shooting , Freda left the set which led to the cinematographer Mario Bava to direct the rest of the film , which changed various plot points and added the inclusion of stock footage .

On the film 's release in 1957 , it became Italy 's first horror film of the sound era . It was not successful in Italy , which Freda interpreted as an audience not interested in horror films made by Italians . The film was released theatrically as The Devil 's Commandment and Lust of the Vampire in the United States and United Kingdom respectively . English critics predominantly discuss the film in terms of its cinematography and place in film history . Despite being the first of the Italian horror films , it was not until the British film Dracula (1958) and the international hit Black Sunday were released that a greater amount of horror films began being produced in Italy .

= = Plot = =

In 1957 Paris , a series of mysterious killings are committed against young women of the same blood type who are found dead and drained of their blood . These killings are reported in the press as being performed by a murderer coined The Vampire . The journalist Pierre Lantin (Dario Michaelis) begins to investigate , and becomes more involved when his fiancée , the dancer Nora Duval is kidnapped . As Inspector Chantal (Carlo D 'Angelo) examines the crime scene , Lantin arrives predicting that the crime was committed by The Vampire . Lantin investigates the school that the latest murder happened at to search for clues and finds that the woman was being followed by a tall man before the murder . Elsewhere , a man named Joseph (Paul Muller) begs for " his fix " in a dark room is told to go after a woman named Lorette (Wandisa Guida) and that he " know what to do " at Rue Saint Etienne . Joseph arrives at the location and is spotted by Lantin but manages to get away from him . Joseph arrives at the clinic of Professor Julian Du Grand (Antoine Balpêtré) and demands money to leave town or he will report what 's happening to the police . He is strangled by Du Grand 's assistant when a shadowed woman named Marguerite arrives and states that if the police track them down , it will be the end of Du Grands career . A newspaper headline later reveals that Professor Julian Du Grand has died unexpectedly .

After a funeral procession for Julian , a group of men arrive and reveal that the body buried was that of Joseph . Joseph 's corpse is taken to a castle where he is experimented on by Julian who is attempting discover the secret for eternal life . Later , Lorette meets a blind man in the street who asks her to drop off a letter . On dropping the letter off , she is kidnapped and finds herself locked in a bedroom with the skeletons of the The Vampire 's previous victims . As the police try and track down Lorette 's kidnappers , Lantin is reassigned from following the Vampire story and is set to cover a ball at the castle of Du Grand . At the castle , he meets Gisele (Gianna Maria Canale) who expresses admiration for Lantin as he reminds her of his father . Lantin leaves the party and is pursued by the photographer Donald . Lantin states he does not want to lead on Gisele with her emotions which leads to Donald re @-@ entering the castle to profess his love for Gisele . Gisele turns him down as her face begins to grow old before his eyes as she reveals that each person

killed restores her youth for a short time . Knowing her secret , she reaches for a pistol and murders Donald . Gisele then calls upon Professor Julian to make her eternally young . Julian states that under her fragile emotional state it may not work , but begins an experimental transfer Lorette 's youth and beauty to Giselle .

Gisele meets Pierre the next day when she is picking up a painting where he spots odd behavior in her such as writing with the wrong hand , which leads him to return to her castle to investigate further . Gisele begins growing ill from her previous experiment and calls upon Professor Julian to aid her . As he leaves , Joseph awakens in Julian 's lab . Pierre triggers an alarm which has him race out the castle where he meets the disoriented Joseph . Pierre takes Joseph to the police station where he reveals he was the kidnapper of the young women but the people in the castle are the real murderers . The police arrive looking for Marguerite but only find Gisele who denies any knowledge of Joseph . Pierre and the police explore the castle without finding clues . On leaving , Gisele begins transforming back into Marguerite before their eyes prompting for an emergency search of the castle . A gun battle ensues between Professor Du Grands assistant and the police leaving the assistant and Professor Du Grand shot . This leads the police to open his grave where they find Lorette . Lorette is sent home and Inspector Chantal reveals that Giselle confessed to the crimes and died shortly after .

= = Production = =

= = = Background and development = = =

Around the time *I Vampiri* was in development , Italian film productions had grown exponentially . Italian film productions rose from 25 films in 1945 , to 204 in 1954 . This growth allowed film makers in Italy to approach new genres and new styles not attempted before . In 1956 , the chief executive officer of Titanus , Goffredo Lombardo , stated that Italian film productions should be aimed a European market opposed to just an Italian one . During the production of the film *Beatrice Cenci* (1956) , director Riccardo Freda and his friend , cinematographer Mario Bava discussed the idea of developing a horror film . Horror films had been previously banned in Italy during the 1930s and 1940s , while a new taste for the macabre was developing . Italian film historian Goffredo Fofi stated in 1963 that " ghosts , monsters and the taste for the horrible appears when a society that became wealthy and evolves by industrializing , and are accompanied by a state of well @-@ being which began to exist and expand in Italy only since a few years "

Freda 's ambition to make a horror film derived from his desire to make films in the fantastique style , feeling that only the Americans and German expressionists were able to make such films in the past . Freda approached film producer Luigi Carpentieri with the idea of the film despite not having a treatment ready . Promising them that he would have something for them by the next day , he returned with a tape of his treatment that was complete with sound effects . Carpentieri phoned Goffredo Lombardo to convince him further . Freda followed up his tape with the promise that his script could pass the censors and could be filmed in 12 days . This convinced the producer who allowed Freda to create what became *I Vampiri* .

= = = Pre @-@ production = = =

The screenplay of *I Vampiri* is credited to Piero Regnoli and the fictional writer and scenarist Rijk Sijöström . The story of the film features contributions from Freda , who has only mentioned Regnoli during the writing process . Both Freda and Regnoli have uncredited roles in the film as the autopsy doctor and Mr.Bourgeois respectively . Freda had the film set in the 1950s opposed the 18th or 19th Century to lower the cost of re @-@ creating a period set as well as making the film 's plot feel like it could actually happen . The film 's story borrows from uncredited stories . This includes the crimes committed by Gianna Maria Canale 's character Giselle Du Grand , which are based upon the legend of Elizabeth Bathory who bathed in the blood of virgins to stay young . Another influence that

Freda acknowledged was Edgar Allan Poe 's short story " The Fall of the House of Usher " , with its suggested parallel between decaying , dissipated interiors and the Canale 's vampire @-@ like character .

Gianna Maria Canale took the female lead in the film despite not initially wanting the role . The film was the last of her many films she made with Freda . Freda and Canale had first worked together on *Il cavaliere misterioso* (1948) ; their relationship led to Freda leaving his wife to go with Canale to Brazil where they made two more films . On their return to Italy , Canale would have the female lead role in nearly all his films including *The Iron Swordsman* , *Sins of Rome* and *Theodora , Slave Empress* .

= = = Production = = =

Filming began in Rome in 1956 . The film was a low budget production as Lombardo did not care for horror films . Freda and his crew utilized mostly existing sets with only a single scene at the Aniene river filmed outside the studio . The film was shot in black and white by cinematographer Mario Bava , who felt that that style would better suit the special effects in the film and keep the budget down . Bava worked on the special effects on the film without credit . One of his effects involved Gianna Maria Canale aging make @-@ up that would only be revealed when certain coloured lights were revealed on her . This effect had been done previously in older films such as *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931) and contemporary films including *The Man Who Turned to Stone* (1957) .

Freda 's deal with his producers failed when he left the set on the twelfth day of production . After an argument with the producers , Freda left the production allowing Mario Bava to step in to finish the film in the next two days . Reasons for Freda leaving production differ , and range from Freda having a misunderstanding with the producers , to Bava stating that Freda was taking too long to make the film . Bava 's ending was different than Freda 's initial ending which involved finding the heroine hanged . Among the changes Bava made to finish the film , included changing the supporting character of the journalist becoming the lead and removing a sub @-@ plot about a dismembered criminal who returns to life on being reassembled . Bava also extended other portions of the film with stock footage and montages of newspaper presses .

= = Release = =

I Vampiri was released in Italy on 5 April 1957 in San Remo . It grossed a total of 125 @.@ 3 million Italian lire on its initial theatrical run . The film was not a box office success in either Italy or France . It was released in the United States in 1960 in a heavily altered version under the title *The Devil 's Commandment* . This version of the film featured new scenes written by J. V. Rhems and filmed by Ronald Honthauer in New York . In the United Kingdom , the film was released under the title *Lust of the Vampire* . Mario Bava biographer Tim Lucas wrote in 1992 that a version of the film also titled *Lust of the Vampire* was assembled in the United States which incorporates scenes of nudity .

= = = Home media = = =

A photonovel version of *I Vampiri* was released in Italy . Photo novels were similar to comic strips in that they use a succession of panels and speech captions . The main difference is that they rely on photographs of films opposed to illustrations . *I Vampiri* 's photonovel was titled *Quella che voleva amare* (English : *The One Who Wanted to Be Loved*) which appeared in *I Vostri Film* in August 1958 .

I Vampiri was released uncut for the first time on DVD in the United States in 2001 by Image Entertainment . IGN gave a positive review of the DVD , referring to the image quality as " stunning " and that the film was the original cut , " not the butchered *Devil 's Commandment* version aired on late night television over the years . " It was also released on DVD as a bonus feature from Arrow

Films on their Black Sunday blu @-@ ray on February 4 , 2013 .

= = Critical reception = =

In a contemporary review , The Monthly Film Bulletin described the film as a " bizarre and grisly Italian effort " that " drags in everything from drug addiction to perpetual youth , crypts to skeletons , but has only a few moments which can claim to be genuinely macabre . " The review praised the special effects involving a transition between a young to aged woman and back again , and concluded that " if only story , treatment and performance ... had been comparable , the film might have been really high in its class . " Variety described the film as an " attempt at a horror film which doesn 't quite come off with only a few moments in succeeding in being chilling . " The review concluded that the film was " strictly for devotees of the genre " In Italy , La Stampa noted the surprise that the film avoided being banned by Italian censors and that when the film takes on thriller motives , it achieves some effective moments .

In their retrospective review , AllMovie wrote " While I Vampiri is more important for its place in history than for its ultimate effectiveness as a film , it is nevertheless an entertaining horror flick . " Danny Shipka , who discussed this film in his book on European exploitation films , noted that the film " set the standard for visual style that would be the foundation for most Italian Gothic films of this nature . " He also described the film as " a little ponderous and talky " while praising Canale 's transformation scenes and the " masterful filming of cobwebs , creaking doors , and decay , along with great lighting " . IGN wrote that " anyone interested in the history of [Italian horror cinema] should see the film " and that the film was " showing its age and is incredibly tame compared with the gore shockers that Italy would eventually become famous for " . Martyn Conterio , in his book on Black Sunday stated that it would be " pushing it to declare I Vampiri as a neglected masterpiece , but it is a hugely underrated work and very cleverly sets out what a horror film with a modern edge and sensibility could achieve . " Louis Paul wrote a negative review of the film in his book Italian Horror Film Directors , opining that the film suffered some damaging influences from neorealist cinema , which turned on very static scenes . He also opined that the film spends too much time with Dario Michaelis character , and the " mind @-@ numbingly dull and endless police procedural scenes "

= = Aftermath and influence = =

Freda felt that I Vampiri did not succeed financially in Italy due to the country 's audience reluctance to an Italian interpretation of the horror genre . For Freda 's next film , Caltiki ? The Immortal Monster , he used an English pseudonym of Robert Hampton to give the impression that the film was not Italian . Freda attempted a gothic horror film again five years later with his film The Horrible Dr. Hichcock . Other crew members would go on to direct horror films following I Vampiri , such as screenwriter Piero Regnoli who directed The Playgirls and the Vampire (1960) and Bava who became the cinematographer on Freda 's Caltiki as well as directing Black Sunday (1960) .

I Vampiri was the first Italian horror film of the sound era , following the lone silent horror film Il mostro di Frankenstein (1920) Despite the film being the first Italian film of the sound era , it did not start a new wave of Italian horror productions . The British Film Institute stated that it required the international success of Mario Bava 's Black Sunday to initiate the start of horror films in Italy . Italian screenwriter Ernesto Gastaldi suggested that it was when Terence Fisher 's film Dracula (1958) was released in Italy that a " hailstorm of vampire movies flooded the screens " .