



Blood Money: A History of the First Teen Slasher Film Cycle

By Richard Nowell

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Scholars have consistently applied psychoanalytic models to representations of gender in early teen slasher films such as *Black Christmas* (1974), *Halloween* (1978) and *Friday the 13th* (1980) in order to claim that these were formulaic, excessively violent exploitation films, fashioned to satisfy the misogynist fantasies of teenage boys and grind house patrons. However, by examining the commercial logic, strategies and objectives of the American and Canadian independents that produced the films and the companies that distributed them in the US, *Blood Money* demonstrates that filmmakers and marketers actually went to extraordinary lengths to make early teen slashers attractive to female youth, to minimize displays of violence, gore and suffering and to invite comparisons to a wide range of post-classical Hollywood's biggest hits; including *Love Story* (1970), *The Exorcist* (1973), *Saturday Night Fever* (1977), *Grease* and *Animal House* (both 1978).

Blood Money is a remarkable piece of scholarship that highlights the many forces that helped establish the teen slasher as a key component of the North American film industry's repertoire of youth-market product.

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Editorial Review

Review

"Richard Nowell's meticulously researched, engagingly presented and forcefully argued study offers new insights into how films, filmmaking and film marketing operated in the North American film industry of the 1970s and early 1980s. It is an exemplary piece of work, which will hopefully inspire other scholars to work along similar lines." - Peter Krämer, Senior Lecturer in Film Studies, University of East Anglia, UK; author of *The New Hollywood: From Bonnie and Clyde to Star Wars* (2005).

"Challenging numerous myths along the way, this impeccably researched study sheds new light not only on slasher films and cycles, but on the nature, structure and practices of independent production in North America in the 1970s and 1980s. Highly recommended." - Professor Steve Neale, University of Exeter

"This is a bold and innovative piece of original scholarship which recontextualizes not only a misunderstood and dismissed group of films, but also provides a new understanding of an entire period in post-studio Hollywood. Richard Nowell does nothing short of shattering a generation of reductive, speculative, and ill-informed writing on the early cycle of teen slasher films through a fine-grained, detailed historical account of their place in North American film production and distribution and their often audacious and original deployment of commercial elements from a range of Hollywood genres and box office hits. *Blood Money* moves with seeming effortlessness from proposing a completely new account of the arc of production cycles through the movie marketplace to proposing an original model of spectator engagement to dealing a rigorously-researched death blow to the demonstrably false assertion that these films foreground protracted scenes of male violence against women cynically calculated to appeal to a predominantly male audience. Future historians of the horror genre who ignore *Blood Money's* insights into a major transitional period in the relationship between independent producers and the major studios will do so at their own peril." - Kevin Heffernan, author of *Ghoul, Gimmick, and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953-1968*.

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About the Author

Richard Nowell teaches American Cinema at the American Studies Department of Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic. He has served as a guest editor of the journal *Illuminace*, and he has published articles in several journals including the *New Review of Film & Television Studies*, *Post Script*, the *Journal of Film and Video*, *InMedia*, and *Cinema Journal*.

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