Fango Flashback: "REPULSION" (1965)

Written by Tony Timpone
Thursday, 25 October 2012 09:29

REPULSION, Polish director Roman Polanski's answer to Alfred Hitchock's PSYCHO, also follows the violent decline of a lonely, troubled person haunted by the demons of the mind. Released in 1965 and part of Polanski's influential "apartment trilogy" (followed by 1968's ROSEMARY'S BABY and 1976's THE TENANT), REPULSION begins a special nine-day engagement with a new, sharp 35mm print at New York City's Film Forum (209 West Houston; [212] 727-8110) from October 31 through November 8. Named one of FANGORIA's Top 300 horror films of all time in issue #300, REPULSION remains essential viewing for fright aficionados.

The achingly beautiful Catherine Deneuve stars as Carol, a Belgian immigrant living in a London flat with her sister, Helen (Yvonne Furneaux). Carol, who works in a high-end beauty salon, is painfully shy and distracted. But that's not her only problem. She's also sexually frigid (she recoils from even the most innocent touch of a man), depressed and prone to frightening hallucinations. When her sister decides to go on a holiday with her philandering boyfriend (Ian Hendry), Carol, left alone, goes off the deep end and undergoes a schizophrenic break, murdering any man unlucky enough to walk through her door.

We spend most of REPULSION watching Carol come apart as her nightmares take hold of her fragile psyche. She sees the walls split by earthquake-sized cracks…disembodied arms grasp her from the hallway corridor…a sweaty man molests her in bed… REPULSION's omnipresent sound design also puts us in a state of unease; the few things interrupting the silence of Carol's apartment include a loud clock and the young nuns playing in the courtyard below (an interesting contrast: the religious ladies below are joyful in their chastity, while Carol herself is destroyed by it). This story won't end well for Carol…

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