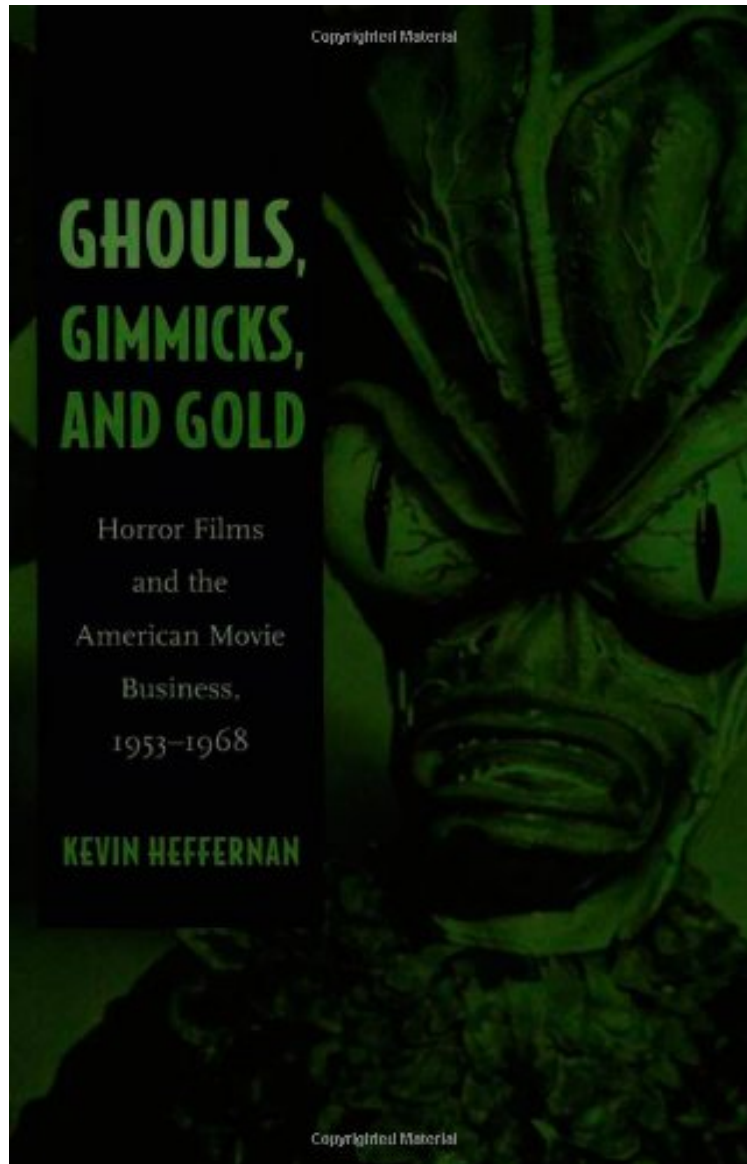


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## Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953-1968

*Kevin Heffernan*

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before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold: Horror Films and the American Movie Business, 1953-1968:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A must read for vintage horror film fans! By Michael Favareille This book is a well-written piece dealing with the period of horror films that many people remember--That of the early 1950's-late 1960's (i.e. From the start of 3-D films to the release of Night of the Living Dead). It largely argues that the horror boom during this time was due to two things: 1. Theaters needed product for their screens 2. TV stations (UHF stations in particular) needing movies for their programming In a good sub-argument, it also mentions about the rise of imported horror from Britain and Italy (largely due to tax and other economic issues and also as a reciprocal to the expansion of the US film industry overseas). Lots of good research and it is written in a way where you get plenty of information, but yet it does not feel like a dry read. The chapter on horror film TV syndication packages is a highlight for me (outside of a talk that the author did about 2 years prior to publication at a UC Berkeley conference on Trash Cinema, I had not seen anybody do any research on this before.) I also recommend the work of Eric Schaefer (who has a sequel coming to his book *Bold! Daring! Shocking! True!*), when combining these works would give you a well-grounded education on horror and exploitation film cultures.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. History behind what made horror films tick By hellosari Some very interesting material. My favorite chapter was explaining the rise in 3D horror films to the mainstream, mostly because they were trying to draw viewers back to the theater who were staying at home to watch TV. It's still true today. Also not pretentious or hard to read which is hard to find in film books these days. What a gem!

4 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Bait and Switch By Michael Samerdyke "Ghouls, Gimmicks and Gold" would have been better off titled "Decline and Fall of the Neighborhood Cinema." That is because the real subject of this book is not the horror genre. Instead Heffernan uses the horror genre as a lens to show the increasing pressures on the neighborhood cinemas as the big studios retrenched after the Paramount decision and made fewer films at the same time that TV made more and more people stay home in front of the tube. Yes, Heffernan has some interesting comments about "House of Wax" and "Curse of Frankenstein" but by and large he ignores the content of the films to focus on how the films let the theater owners stave off the end for a little bit longer. I absolutely hit the wall with this book when I read the chapter that covered in detail which films were part of which TV syndication package. At that point, I realized that Heffernan had written a book for business historians and not for people interested in horror movies.

The Creature from the Black Lagoon, the Tingler, the Mole People they stalked and oozed into audiences minds during the era that followed Boris Karloff's Frankenstein and preceded terrors like Freddy Krueger (*A Nightmare on Elm Street*) and Chucky (*Child's Play*). *Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold* pulls off the masks and wipes away the slime to reveal how the monsters that frightened audiences in the 1950s and 1960s and the movies they crawled and staggered through reflected fundamental changes in the film industry. Providing the first economic history of the horror film, Kevin Heffernan shows how the production, distribution, and exhibition of horror movies changed as the studio era gave way to the conglomeration of New Hollywood. Heffernan argues that major cultural and economic shifts in the production and reception of horror films began at the time of the 3-d film cycle of 1953-54 and ended with the 1968 adoption of the Motion Picture Association of America's ratings system and the subsequent development of the adult horror movie epitomized by *Rosemary's Baby*. He describes how this period presented a number of daunting challenges for movie exhibitors: the high costs of technological upgrade, competition with television, declining movie attendance, and a diminishing number of annual releases from the major movie studios. He explains that the production and distribution branches of the movie industry responded to these trends by cultivating a youth audience, co-producing features with the film industries of Europe and Asia, selling films to television, and intensifying representations of sex and violence. Shining through *Ghouls, Gimmicks, and Gold* is the delight of the true horror movie buff, the fan thrilled to find *The Brain that Wouldn't Die* on television at 3 am.

As someone who grew up watching late-night chiller feature series on television, reading *Famous Monsters of Filmland* magazine, listening to haunted house sound effects records, and making my own super-8 monster movies, I read Kevin Heffernan's book with nostalgia and delight. He provides the historical, cultural, and economic context for many of the texts and artifacts of my own misbegotten youth. Henry Jenkins, coeditor of *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*