

# Cultural Daily

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## Roger Corman Remembered

Elisa Leonelli · Sunday, May 12th, 2024

I first met Roger Corman on May 19, 1978, photographed him in his office and interviewed him for the Italian newsweekly *L'Europeo*. He passed on May 9, at age 98.

I interviewed Corman again on September 13, 2013 at an exclusive round table for the journalists of the Hollywood Foreign Press.



Here's some excerpts from my 1978 article, translated from Italian

For over 20 years [Roger Corman](#), nicknamed King of the Bs, produced so called exploitation films about sex, violence, and horror, paying low wages, but no one complained because actors like Peter Fonda, Jack Nicholson, Dennis Hopper, David Carradine, Bruce Dern, Robert De Niro, Barbara Hershey, Diane Ladd, directors like Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Peter Bogdanovich, Ron Howard, Jonathan Demme, recognized this as an opportunity to learn how to make movies like in a film school.

Corman directed *Machine Gun Kelly* (1958) starring Charles Bronson, *A Bucket of Blood* (1959), *The Little Shop of Horrors* (1960), *The Wild Angels* (1966) with Peter Fonda and Bruce Dern, *The Trip* (1967) with Peter Fonda and Susan Strasberg, *Bloody Mama* (1970) with Shelley Winters. He produced *Dementia 13* (1963) directed by Francis Ford Coppola, *Targets* (1968) by Peter Bogdanovich, *Boxcar Bertha* (1972) by Martin Scorsese, *Caged Heat* (1974) and *Fighting Mad* (1976) by [Jonathan Demme](#), *Grand Theft Auto* (1977) by Ron Howard.



Corman produced *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1960), *The Pit and the Pendulum* (1961), *The Raven* (1963) starring Vincent Price, and other movies based on short stories by Edgar Allan Poe.

He expressed his concept of horror: “I follow the Freudian theory that horror is born out of childhood fears. Alone at night a child is afraid of the dark, of thunder, of what happens behind their parents’ closed door. As adults we know the answers to these fears, but a horror movie has to succeed in breaking through the conscious mind and reawaken these unconscious childhood fears.”

In February 1989 I photographed [Vincent Price](#) at his home, as the Los Angeles Correspondent for the Italian film monthly [CIAK](#).



Corman gave precise instructions to his directors on the elements that must be included in their movies: sex but not pornography, violence but no dead bodies, rapid action, a sense of humor, and always a commentary on our society. He explained: “This way spectators get a deeper kind of movie, action and excitement on one level, but also some thought on another level. This gives me as a creator, and the people who work for me, an opportunity to express what we think about the world.”

His production company, New World Pictures, also distributed classic foreign films such as *Amarcord* (1973) by Federico Fellini, *Cries and Whispers* (1972) by Ingmar Bergman, *The Story of Adele H.* (1975) by Francois Truffaut, *Dersu Uzala* (1975) by Akira Kurosawa. Corman confessed: “These films represent my personal taste in cinema more than the films that I produce.”

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