

Scarlet Street

The Magazine of Mystery and Horror

No. 7/Summer 1992/\$4.95 U.S./\$5.95 Can.

Exclusive Interview!

VINCENT PRICE



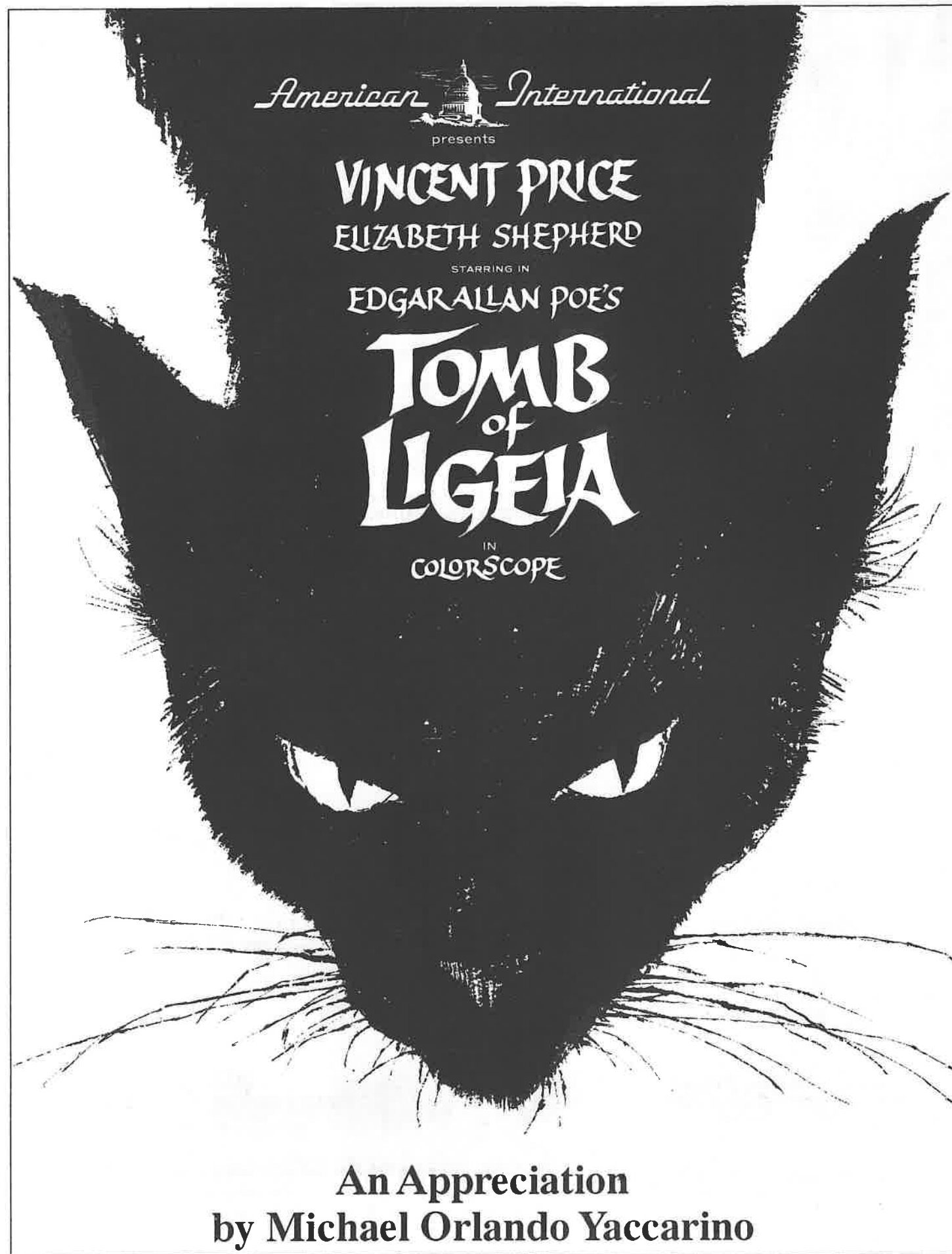
BATMAN RETURNS



THE SUSSEX VAMPIRE



Vampire Circus Star
JOHN MOULDER-BROWN



The work of Edgar Allan Poe has been translated to the screen more than any other writer of horror literature. His terrifying imagination has served, sometimes quite freely, as the basis for many film adaptations—some memorable, many embarrassingly forgettable. Most notable are the films of producer/director Roger Corman, made for American International Pictures in the 1960s. Of Corman's many wonderful Poe-inspired films, *TOMB OF LIGEIA* (1965) is certainly the most faithful to its author in word and spirit. Fittingly enough, it is the last time Corman directed a Poe picture.

There are many noteworthy aspects of the film. Vincent Price, as the ambiguous Verden Fell, gives a performance marked by subtle nuances seldom seen in his many more outlandish roles. Elizabeth Shepherd (as Ligeia and Rowena) is truly splendid. The production values are excellent, especially the art direction by Colin Southcott and the color cinematography by Arthur Grant. Corman keeps everything tantalizingly restrained until the horror-filled finale.

Among the film's many fine features, Robert Towne's screenplay deserves special praise and exploration. Towne not only stays true to the source material, but also expands the text and its implications. In the screenwriter's masterful hands, *TOMB OF LIGEIA* unfolds as a thoroughly adult, frightening fairy tale.

The original short story, simply entitled "Ligeia", concerns the utter obsession of an unnamed narrator for his darkly beautiful and mysterious wife, the Lady Ligeia. Their strange co-existence is cut short by her untimely death. Months later, the distraught, opium-addicted widower leaves their home on the Rhine and moves to a crumbling abbey "in one of the wildest and least frequented portions of fair England".

Soon the narrator transforms the place into a phantasmagoric lair filled with Egyptian sarcophagi, arabesque-covered tapestries, and golden candelabra. He marries the Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine ("in a moment of mental alienation", he adds). Their unhappy marriage is overshadowed by the haunting memory of Ligeia. Two months later, Rowena is taken ill and dies. It is inferred that Ligeia, from beyond the grave, has caused Rowena's death.

Keeping vigil over his deceased wife, the narrator spends the night watching the corpse is revived again

and again of its own will. Finally, Rowena rises—now transformed into the Lady Ligeia.

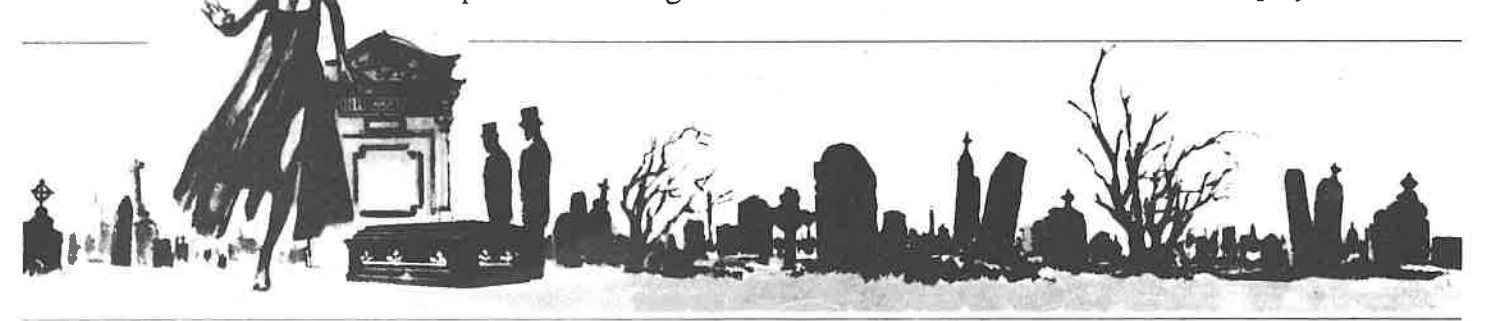
Throughout the story, Ligeia proclaims that the world is a godless place ruled by tragedy and invisible woe. She articulates these beliefs in the form of a hauntingly disturbing poem, "The Conqueror Worm". Most important, Poe's tale begins with a fragment, echoed throughout, which is attributed to the 17th-century scholar Joseph Glanvill: "And the will therein lieth, which dieth not. . . Man does not yield himself to the angels, nor unto death utterly, save only through the weakness of his feeble will".

One of the central questions raised by the text is whether, in reality, Rowena has been taken over by Ligeia with her "eager vehemence of desire for life". It must be noted that the story is a first-person narrative told from the drug-affected perspective of the narrator. It can be strongly argued that the fantastic ending of the tale is simply a hallucination brought on by grief, opium, and possible psychosis. Or maybe not.

Unlike Poe's account, *TOMB OF LIGEIA* is told in a fairly objective, third-person style, with a notable excursion into an imaginatively-handled dream sequence. Even so, during the climax, we observe Fell alone with the re-animated Ligeia. Therefore, the possibility that the film's events are supernatural in origin is left open to speculation. In fact, although it is not offered in the original story, a plausible explanation for Fell's wildly obsessive behavior is advanced in the film.

During the final sequences, the servant Kenrick (Oliver Johnston) reveals that, on her deathbed, Ligeia captured Fell in her deadly gaze and ordered him, through sheer force of will, to care for her even after she dies. In the chilling scene that follows, Rowena attempts to break the hypnotic spell by re-creating this deathbed scene, casting herself in the role of Ligeia and commanding Fell to finally accept her demise. Rowena almost loses her own life in the grim procedure. However, is it truly a comfort when Rowena's former fiancé, Christopher (John Westbrook), lifts the shroudlike veil from her face and realizes that she is still alive? Rowena holds him in her gaze and speaks his name, but is it really Rowena, or has Ligeia's indomitable spirit simply found a new resting place?

The most dramatically significant difference between Poe's text and the Towne screenplay is in the de-





ABOVE: The Lady Rowena (Elizabeth Shepherd) gives over her will to her hypnotic husband, Verden Fell (Vincent Price), in the American International Picture TOMB OF LIGEIA (1965). NEXT PAGE: A section of the TOMB OF LIGEIA pressbook.

velopment of the character of Rowena. In the original story, she is little more than the sickly second wife of the opium-deranged narrator, and, eventually, a host for Ligeia's undying will. Towne's Rowena is made of much stronger stuff.

In the film, we first encounter Rowena as she daringly gallops across the moors during a fox hunt. She is the only woman among a group of aristocratic sportsmen. (Her father affectionately refers to her as "a willful bitch.") The proper, boring Christopher cannot satisfy her with the prospect of a life within rigid 19th-century upper-class English society. In fact, it is her "willful" nature that leads Rowena to her first, fateful meeting with Verden Fell. While trespassing on Fell's property, she is thrown from her horse and lands upon Ligeia's grave.

The black-clad and brooding Verden Fell embodies many qualities attractive to Rowena, qualities that are missing from her current life. Tellingly, it is Fell's offer of romance in the Gothic tradition (with a hint of cruel passion) that entices her most. She soon realizes that she has married into a situation more bizarre than she could have imagined, but, unlike the formless Lady Trevanion of the original text, Towne's resourceful Rowena takes action from the very start to uncover her husband's mysterious behavior.

Michael Orlando Yaccarino is a graduate of the New York University Film School and has completed an internship at the Film Study Center of the Museum of Modern Art. He is a devotee of the horror cinema.

In recent correspondence with Roger Corman, the director commented on the memorable performances given by Vincent Price and Elizabeth Shepherd:

Bob [Towne] and I felt we wanted to make Rowena a stronger character than she was in the original tale. This was, of course, a conscious choice, and after we hired Elizabeth, we worked on this quite a bit. Vincent and I deliberately tried to realize a somewhat more restrained performance because the film was to a large extent a love story as well as a horror film, and in fact I think it was one of the best of the Poe pictures, although MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH [1964] and THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER [1960] would be my personal favorites.

Poe's brief story is largely composed of finely-wrought, macabre descriptions born of the narrator's outré state of mind. The actual events of the text can be summed up in several sentences. Using Poe as his starting point, Towne elaborated upon the tale, including many completely original narrative events and evocative touches that are true to the spirit of Poe and his "Ligeia".

In one of the film's most memorable sequences, Rowena nearly loses her life in a bell tower. The sequence begins outside as Fell reveals to Christopher the mysterious disappearance of Ligeia's death date from the inscription upon her tomb—with the

Continued on page 54

Price Calls "Tomb of Ligeia" Most Terrifying of Poe Films

"It is the most terrifying Poe film ever made," actor Vincent Price says of "The Tomb of Ligeia," the new American International Pictures terror production based upon the works of Edgar Allan Poe.

Brilliantly and imaginatively directed by Roger Corman, the new cinema version of the Maryland poet's terror tales introduces English actress Elizabeth Shepherd in the title role of a beautiful, voluptuous woman whose will is so powerful, so evil, that it survives her own death.

Her determination to exert her will upon the living brings a strange delight to her surviving husband and naked horror to the girl he later falls in love with and marries.

In the end, Ligeia's evil brings both to the point of madness and into a situation from which death would be a welcome relief.

Filmed in Color and Scope largely on location in and around a sinister, 1000-year-old Abbey in Norfolk, England, the supporting cast of "Tomb of Ligeia" includes John Westbrook, Derek Francis, Oliver Johnston and Robert Adam.

British Village Ignores "Tomb of Ligeia" As Its Parson Does a Walk On

All the world knows the British are blasé but when the 100-man cast and crew for American International's new horror production "Tomb of Ligeia" invaded the sleepy village of Swaffham near the Deer Leap Woods of Norfolk, England, the filmmakers were in for the surprise of a lifetime.

Despite the fact that Vincent Price and his co-star Elizabeth Shepherd were enacting a strange wedding sequence in their tiny, 900-year-old Church of St. John, villagers were too busy harvesting the local fruit crop to notice. Even the Rector took such passive interest that he inadvertently walked right through one of the principal scenes of photography.

"You must excuse me," he told Director Roger Corman, "but the work of the Parish must go on."

It has been going on, the "Tomb of Ligeia" actors learned, at the same unhurried, disinterested pace for more than 1000 years in the rolling Surrey countryside.



VINCENT PRICE

1 COL. SCENE MAT 1-H

British Palmist Thinks Price May Succeed

British predictionist Winston Clark, who has read the palms of many film stars predicted during the filming of American International's "Tomb of Ligeia" at Shepperton Studios in London that actor, author and art connoisseur Vincent Price may have a bright and successful future.

"He has achieved inner happiness and that is going to be the solid basis for some very good work in the future," Mr. Clark said.

Price, at 52, has appeared in more than 90 full length films ranging from classics like "Laura" and "Dragonwyck" to the highly successful series of AIP productions based upon the works of Edgar Allan Poe of which "Tomb of Ligeia" is the eighth.

AIP's NEW ENGLISH ACTRESS DENIES SHE'S SNOBBISH

By VINCENT SMITH

LONDON—A quick journey to Swaffham near the Deer Leap Woods of Surrey where American International Pictures was filming its new horror production "Tomb of Ligeia" based on a philosophy expressed in an Edgar Allan Poe short story proved more horrifying off stage than on the set for I discovered there an actress who denies she is a snob.

Many a civilian, as you know, has long held the impression that actresses are most insufferable snobs who design to believe themselves talented enough with the right to act out the ways other people should live. At least that is an impression this reporter has long held.

But upon meeting young, 27-year-old Elizabeth Shepherd, who makes her American film debut in "Tomb of Ligeia" I was intrigued to hear a most plausible answer for some of the unseemly conduct of members of her profession.

"It isn't snobbishness or a Garbo complex which causes actresses to keep their telephone numbers a secret. It's simply that once you get your picture in the newspapers you start getting the most obscene phone calls," she explained.

A blue-eyed blonde of rare, undoctored beauty, I could well understand the interest of men in knowing her phone number. Why I know several fellows who would be satisfied simply to know her zip code number and I told her so.

And, of course, the clever British girl had a ready reply for even that quip.

"My section of London is alive with people, traffic and cats but its so full of history that even American tourists treat it with respect. It hasn't a zip code but it does have a heavenly name—The Angel, Islington."

Horrified by now that this beauty is neither snobbish nor would any man dare be fresh in a London neighborhood named The Angel, I turned the conversation to the popular subject of The Beatles.

But, alas, I was again to be foiled.

"The current obsession with ex-

treme youth and their antics is self-defeating," she observed. "Why the young ones are made so knowing and self-conscious by adult concern with what they do that they are not really young any more."

Of course, this caused another switch in the conversation and I asked about her co-starring role opposite Vincent Price in "Tomb of Ligeia," commenting daringly that what I had seen of the filming it is quite unconventional since out Miss Shepherd plays both Rowena, the quick, and Ligeia, the dead—virtually terrorizing herself to the brink of insanity as the story develops.

Most significant of all, I observed, is the fact that Rowena boldly invades Vincent Price's cobwebby old castle bent on marrying him.

"I'm very happy with the role of Rowena," my lovely interviewee countered. "Her kind of directness is exciting. I've also done things because I wanted to do them. I've been impulsive, but I haven't deliberately flouted convention. It just happened."

And thusly clobbered in my every question by this thinking young woman I quickly thumbed the studio prep biography I held in my hand and turned the talk to her acting career which has embraced some distinguished stage success at the Old Vic and at Wyndhams where she appeared in "Period of Adjustment."

"Sometimes I get very tired of being just an actor's girl," she blue-eyed me. "I want just to be a pretty face."

So when you see this lovely new English stage star making her international film debut in "Tomb of Ligeia" on your local screen remember she is no snob, she would rather be just another pretty face, and you have my permission to conduct the next interview.

Familiar British Voice Heard In 'Tomb Of Ligeia'

An actor whose voice is as well known to Britishers as that of James Cagney or Peter Lorre is to American's plays the young romantic lead in "Tomb of Ligeia," American International's latest terror drama based upon the works of Edgar Allan Poe.

He is John Westbrook, whose voice is known to millions in Britain as the reader of "A Book at Bedtime" for the BBC. He plays a supporting role to Vincent Price who stars in the spine tingling opening

at the Theatre. Westbrook's 15-minute BBC program airs at 11 p.m. nightly and takes the form of an installment of a novel. He is so highly regarded as a narrator that his reputation has recently been extended to America where he appeared in New York and Washington.

In Manhattan, he narrated "The Play of Daniel" produced by the Prometheus Society and in Washington he spoke Corman's narrative production of the Stravinsky opera "Oedipus Rex."

He plays the role of Christopher, whose love for the bride of Vincent Price puts him through arduous trials when she becomes embroiled in the horrendous saga of a woman who defies death.



JOHN WESTBROOK

"Tomb of Ligeia" Best of Poe Tales

Of all the tales of terror by Edgar Allan Poe probably none achieves such an atmosphere of brooding horror as his short story which has now been brought to the screen by American International Pictures as "Tomb of Ligeia."

Starring Vincent Price and Elizabeth Shepherd, this blood-chilling adventure into the macabre, set in 19th century England, is about a beautiful, voluptuous woman whose will is so powerful, so evil, that it survives her own death.

The husband she has left behind seems terrified but pleased by her posthumous machinations and it is his new bride who experiences naked horror which brings her to the brink of madness.

In a fantastic climax, one that remains easily the most nightmarish and horrifying in movie history, the whole appalling secret of Ligeia's strange power is exposed.

Filmed in Color and Scope largely on location in a 1000-year-old Abbey in Norfolk, England, this eighth AIP production based upon a Poe work is directed by Roger Corman.

The supporting cast included John Westbrook, Derek Francis, Oliver Johnston and Robert Adam. The screenplay is by Robert Towne.



ELIZABETH SHEPHERD — as Ligeia

1 COL. SCENE MAT 1-F



ELIZABETH SHEPHERD — as Rowena

1 COL. SCENE MAT 1-G

DUAL ROLE DEBUT — English stage actress Elizabeth Shepherd makes her American motion picture debut playing the dual roles of Rowena, the quick, and Ligeia, the dead, in American International Pictures' new Poe terror production "Tomb of Ligeia" opening at the Theatre.

NEW AIP FILM FIND BRINGS CLASSICAL BACKGROUND TO ROLE IN POE'S 'TOMB OF LIGEIA'

The dual role of Ligeia and Rowena played by English actress Elizabeth Shepherd in American International's "Tomb of Ligeia" has been described by her as the chance of a life time for which she spent a life time in preparation.

She was discovered for the role by Director Roger Corman who has made seven previous AIP terror films based upon the classic works of Edgar Allan Poe and she brings to the part a long and impressive list of credits in classic stage plays.

Born 27 years ago in London, Elizabeth began her stage career while attending Bristol University when she joined a small group of dedicated people who wanted to interpret Shakespeare more imaginatively to the young.

She made three recordings of "Twelfth Night," "Macbeth" and "Julius Caesar" with the Globe Shakespeare Company for a publisher of educational recordings.

Then after graduation, she played Juliet in a Bristol production of "Romeo and Juliet," essayed the role of a middle-aged woman in Ugo Betti's "The Investigator" in a London Sunday Times drama festival during which she was introduced to theatrical agent Peter Eade.

Eade recruited her for the Manchester Library Theatre, a breeding ground of stars. She stayed with them a year, playing in works as varied as those of Shakespeare and Lorca, and then joined a touring company sponsored by the Arts Council of Great Britain.

With the Council, Elizabeth played "Romeo and Juliet" and in Peter Ustinov's contemporary "Romanoff and Juliet" after which she joined the Nottingham Playhouse for plays as widely different as "Hamlet," in which she played Ophelia, and "The Man With the Golden Arm," in which she essayed the role originated by Kim Novak.

Thus finely backgrounded in the theatre, she made her West End stage debut in Tennessee Williams' "Period of Adjustment" and molded a fine television career in adaptations of "Wolpole's 'The Cathedral,'" Dickens' "Bleak House," Cronin's "The Citadel" and many other plays.

Her role in American International's "Tomb of Ligeia" is a virtual tour de force for the 120-pound blonde, blue-eyed Elizabeth. She portrays a woman who believes so strongly that death need not be accepted she is able to weave a web of horror for her widower and his bride after her death.



HEROIC RESCUE — Vincent Price carries Elizabeth Shepherd, who has injured her ankle, to his home in a scene from American International's new Poe terror production "The Tomb of Ligeia" opening at the Theatre on

NEW AIP POE THRILLER OPENS HERE TOMORROW

The newest in American International's series of Poe terror films "Tomb of Ligeia" opens at the Theatre on

Starring Vincent Price and a new English beauty, Elizabeth Shepherd, the spine-tingling drama is the story of a woman so evil that her will survives her death and terrorizes her widower and the girl he later marries.

Filmed in Color and Scope on location in a 1000-year-old English abbey, "Tomb of Ligeia" is the eighth AIP film based upon the classic works of Edgar Allan Poe. All are the directorial work of Roger Corman. The screenplay is by Robert Towne.



Horror veteran Vincent Price (LEFT) fine-tunes a scene with director Roger Corman (RIGHT) on location during the shooting of AIP's *TOMB OF LIGEIA*.

added revelation that he, Fell, might be unconsciously responsible for the deed. Meanwhile, within the abbey, Rowena matches wits with Fell's devilish feline pet, a cat who may be housing the spirit of the dear departed Ligeia.

With Fell's black, wrap-around spectacles clasped between its fangs, the cat swiftly ascends the perilous steps of the tower's interior. Blinded by defiance of this vengeful creature, Rowena follows the cat until she is left helpless on a dangerous ledge. Over this delicate chase scene, Fell can be heard paraphrasing an especially poetic passage from the original tale, in which he describes Ligeia's power over him and her struggle for life itself. "Nor lie in death forever. . . ." intones Price's velvet voice as Shepherd moves along decaying, shadowy corridors and up treacherous stairways. He likens the Lady Ligeia to a "moving candle" and explains that he can hear "the lightness of her footfall in the fluttering of a moth's wing against a closed windowpane". In a failed attempt to reach the cat, Rowena inadvertently sets the derelict bell in motion. Hearing the unexpected peals, Fell and Christopher speed to the tower.

Rowena is soon rescued and finds temporary comfort in Fell's arms, unaware of what is to come. This sequence is immediately followed by a scene depicting their wedding day. The two events are linked by the sound of the ringing bells as they blend from one scene to the next. (One of Poe's most famous poems, "The Bells", describes their many uses, from announcing birth to heralding death. Also, it should be briefly noted that the name "Fell" calls to mind "fall", as in "The Fall of the House of Usher", another tale concerning a reclusive man plagued by an unnatural attachment to a woman—in this case Roderick Usher's sister, who is the object of Usher's obsessions.)

Probably the most obvious and ingeniously used homage to Poe is the inclusion of the black cat in the proceedings. The fiendish feline, who does not appear in the original story, works on many levels in the film. In Poe's well-known tale "The Black Cat", a deranged husband murders his wife and entombs her corpse behind a cellar wall, inadvertently trapping a devilish black cat whose wails result in the husband's exposure. In the context of the story, the figure of the cat becomes a metaphor for the murderous narrator's unconscious guilt. (Similarly, in Poe's "The Tell-

Tale Heart", the perpetrator of a heinous crime is plagued by a past sin that will not remain hidden.)

In *TOMB OF LIGEIA*, Fell mentions his deceased wife's devotion to the beliefs of the ancient Egyptians, which, by inference, include reincarnation. Although never blatantly stated, there is the possibility that the cat harbors Ligeia's vengeful soul, back from the grave to destroy her husband's second marriage. In any case, the mysterious feline acts as a catalyst in several important sequences. When Rowena and Fell first meet during the hunt, the cat makes off with the dead fox's body. (The fox makes a bloody reappearance in a subsequent scene.) Later, as noted, the cat almost entices Rowena to her death in the bell tower. In the final sequence, the frenzied animal blinds its master. Fell kills the beast and meets his own fiery demise in the arms of his beloved and evil first wife.

The film opened to favorable reaction in the United Kingdom. The *London Times* remarked, "Here at last Mr. Corman has done what it always seemed he might be able some time to do: make a film which could without absurdity be spoken of in the same breath as Cocteau's *ORPHEE* (1950)." In the United States, New York City's Museum of Modern Art gave the film a special four-day screening. *Newsweek* magazine said of *TOMB OF LIGEIA* that it "may not be the best of his [Corman's] series of Edgar Allan Poe divertimentos, but it is the most far-out, and, in the last half hour or so, his most concentrated piece of black magic." The *New York Times* praised the film for its "excellent Gothic settings, arresting color schemes and camera mobility".

The previous films in the AIP/Poe series were characteristically outlandish in their performances, sets, costumes, and scores. Expansion of the source material was extensive, but necessary in producing a feature-length film. Perhaps it is *TOMB OF LIGEIA*'s curiously successful blend of the horrific and the romantic, presented in a muted but colorful style, that results in its uniqueness within the series. It arguably captures the spirit of Poe more than any of Corman's previous films (more than any other screen adaptation of the writer's work, for that matter). As a result of the film's many virtues, when Vincent Price intones "Give your will over to mine. . . .", we in the audience most certainly do.

TOMB OF LIGEIA Credits

Alta Vista Film Productions. Distributor: American International Pictures. Eastmancolor by Pathé/35mm (Colorscope). A Roger Corman production. Producers: Pat Green, Roger Corman. Assistant Producer: Paul Mayersberg. Director: Roger Corman. Screenplay: Robert Towne. Photography: Arthur Grant. Art Director: Colin Southcott. Main Titles: Francis Rodker. Film Editor: Alfred Cox. Music composed and conducted by Kenneth V. Jones. Sound Design: Les Wiggins, Don Ranasinghe. Sound Recording: Bert Ross, John Aldred. Assistant Director: David Tringham. Make-up: George Blackler. Hair Styles: Pearl Orton. Special Effects: Ted Samuels. Running time: 81 minutes.

Cast

Vincent Price (Verden Fell), Elizabeth Shepherd (Lady Ligeia/Lady Rowena), John Westbrook (Christopher Gough), Oliver Johnston (Kenrick), Derek Francis (Lord Trevanion), Richard Vernon (Dr. Vivian), Ronald Adam (parson), Frank Thornton (Peperel), Denis Gilmore (livery boy).

Vincent Price

The Merchant of Menace

Interview by Michael Orlando Yaccarino

Vincent Price is the consummate American horror-film actor of the last half of this century, carrying the torch passed on by Chaney and Karloff. Unlike many of his predecessors and contemporaries, Price has effortlessly crossed genres and media to create a memorable legacy of quality film and stage performances, books, and lectures. The common link among his endeavors is the masterful skill and razor-sharp wit that accompany the star's frequent successes.

Vincent Leonard Price was born on May 27, 1911, into a prominent and respected family in St. Louis, Missouri. As a result of being part of this loving and progressive family, he came into contact with the arts at a very early age. His exposure to theatre, movies, music, fine cooking, and art during these years helped shape his later life. While studying art at Yale and London's Courtauld Institute, Price's interest in the theatre blossomed. It was through his association with an amateur theatrical company in England that he landed his first major role, Prince Albert in *VICTORIA REGINA* (1935).

Shortly after, Price was featured in a series of Hollywood movies as a young and handsome leading man opposite such actresses as Constance Bennett in *SERVICE DE LUXE* (1938), Bette Davis in *THE PRIVATE LIVES OF ELIZABETH AND ESSEX* (1939), and, most memorably, Gene Tierney in one of the era's greatest murder mysteries, *LAURA* (1944). In 1939 he had his first cinematic encounter with Boris Karloff and Basil Rathbone, in Universal's pseudo-Shakespearean shocker *TOWER OF LONDON*. Price

continued throughout the 40s and early 50s in a variety of quality pictures, but it was his sinister performance in the 3-D extravaganza *HOUSE OF WAX* (1953) that proved him to be an actor who could forever be counted on to

including *THE FLY* (1958) and *RETURN OF THE FLY* (1959). Price starred in William Castle's *HOUSE ON HAUNTED HILL* (1958) and *THE TINGLER* (1959), which offered not only shock value, but also flying skeletons and buzzing theatre seats. Beginning with *HOUSE OF USHER* in 1960, Price established a long and fruitful association with Roger Corman, resulting in an unforgettable series of colorful Poe-inspired films.

To connoisseurs of the horror film, the name 'Vincent Price' is synonymous with the field's unique and brilliantly portrayed villains—in other words, our heroes. He is the wildly insane Nicholas Medina, lowering the infernal pendulum upon his nemesis within the echoing pit of his man-made hell (1961's *THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM*). As the tragically misunderstood Edward Lionheart, he must eventually die in a blazing finale rather than bow to those who would mock him (1973's *THEATRE OF BLOOD*). He is the devilish Dr. Anton Phibes, who savagely (and hysterically) murders a group of London physicians, all in the name of marital bliss (1971's *THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES*). Most satisfying of all, he escapes the law as he serenely sails off into eternal glory upon a grand golden barge (1972's *DR. PHIBES RISES AGAIN*).

Among his many marvelously rendered horror roles, Price's embodiment of the doomed Verden Fell in Roger Corman's *TOMB OF LIGEIA* (1965) stands out. Here, in an exclusive interview, the actor discusses his views on the making of that film, his career, and a life fully lived.



Vincent Price on the set of *MYSTERY!*

frighten the wits out of his audience—much to their pleasure.

From 1953 on, though he maintained roles in non-horror films (his nastiness as Baka in Cecil B. De Mille's 1956 epic *THE TEN COMMANDMENTS* inspired Charlton Heston's Moses to strangle him), his career took a decided turn toward the macabre. He appeared in some of the 50s' most memorable horror films,

Scarlet Street: You once referred to *TOMB OF LIGEIA* as perhaps Roger Corman's most "far-out" horror film. What was its genesis?

Vincent Price: For a long time I had had an idea to do a film in a ruin—playing it almost as if the ruin were a stripped theatrical set. I talked to Roger about it. We agreed that something like this would be difficult to do in America, since nothing would be as authentically old as what we had in mind. He promised that one day we'd do it and so he found this wonderful location. It was an abbey in Norfolk, England, that had been stripped during the time of Henry VIII. Somehow or other, the location had more of a structural thing about it that worked. And, of course, it made this marvelous atmosphere because you didn't know whether you were inside or outside.

SS: The AIP/Poe films were based on very brief tales by the master of the macabre. Was it difficult to expand such a short story as "Ligeia" into a full-length film?

VP: It's a big problem, you know, to turn a short story into a long movie. Consequently, you always had to add something else to Poe to get a cohesive whole of his story. I think *TOMB OF LIGEIA* came closer to Poe than any other of them. A lot of this was because of the Robert Towne screenplay. It's a hard subject to do. I mean, necrophilia is hardly the scenario for a hit picture!

SS: So you were pleased with the result?

VP: It somehow came off, I think, very well. I thought Elizabeth [Shepherd] was wonderful in it. And I thought my stuff came off as well as anything I did with Roger. I had a wonderful time making it, because I was up there in that beautiful country and able to go around and see some of the incredible things that were still there. I did a picture later on called *THE CONQUEROR WORM*, which was done near there. In fact, we only had to take down two television antennas to be back in the 16th century.

SS: During the making of *TOMB OF LIGEIA*, did any unusual off-screen moments occur?

VP: There was a famous sort of occurrence that happened during the shooting of the final scenes, when the house burns down. You know, they painted the set with highly inflammable liquid rubber cement. Of course, there were signs up all over the set warning of this, because it gives off a gas when ignited. Elizabeth and I were positioned under some ruined timber that had fallen on us that was quite heavy. Somebody walked onto the set and lit a match and the whole thing exploded before the camera was rolling. Poor Roger got set back a day, and on those pictures you didn't get set back a day. The whole set had to be cooled and repainted and then we had to start all over again. It was really terrifying—reality carried a little too far. Elizabeth and I had to drag ourselves out from under the timber. I grabbed poor Elizabeth by the hair and dragged her off the set so quick!

SS: Your scenes with the cat were wonderfully choreographed in the film. How well did you get along with your feline supporting actor?

VP: You know, I've done two or

three things with cats. And never say "a cat", because "a cat" does only one trick. And so you have "cats"—it sounds practically like the musical once you get through! On one picture, a television thing I did with a cat, we had nine of them in place of one. Because there was one cat who would lick you, one who would jump on your lap, and one who would jump on your shoulder. So *TOMB OF LIGEIA* was done with several cats. There's no such thing as training a cat—you just grab him by the tail and hope he'll jump. And he jumped! It was really kind of frightening, because they can open up their claws and really rip you to bits. But we got it done.

SS: In the past, you have expressed your feeling that Roger Corman's work as a director and producer was unappreciated in the 60s and 70s. Why do you think that was the case?

VP: Roger Corman's work at that time was unappreciated because, if you tried to do anything and make it pay, you were accused of being commercial. I think today they've found out that the goddamn pictures cost so much money you can't make it back. But Roger was making pictures in a hurry for very low budgets that



56 SCARLET STREET

PAGAN VIDEO PRESENTS FANGS

Produced and distributed exclusively through Pagan Video! Only \$19.95, plus \$2.00 for postage and handling!

\$5.00 off Fangs with purchase of any other tape.

Plus many other titles available for \$20.00, postage paid, including:

GODZILLA (original Japanese version)

THE HUMAN VAPOR '63

THE ALLIGATOR PEOPLE '59

THE SNAKE WOMAN '60

BURKE AND HARE '71

ANGRY RED PLANET '59

EVIL OF DRACULA '75

HOUSE OF THE DAMNED '63

PLANETS AGAINST US '63

THESE ARE THE DAMNED '63

HORROR RISES FROM THE TOMB '72

MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE '71

FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE '74

TERROR IN THE HAUNTED HOUSE '58

THE ABOMINABLE SNOWMAN '57

CORRIDORS OF BLOOD '59

THE CRAVING (aka El Retorno Del Hombre Lobo) '80

CREATION OF THE HUMANOIDS '62

DARK PLACES '72

DEATHDREAM '72

THE DEMONS '72

DEVIL DOLL '64

DAY OF THE TRIFFIDS '63

THE DEVIL WITHIN HER '75

DEVIL GIRL FROM MARS '55

DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS '71

THE DEVIL BAT'S DAUGHTER '46

THE DEVIL'S WEDDING NIGHT '73

THE DEVIL AND DANIEL WEBSTER '41

DESTROY ALL MONSTERS (in Japanese) '67

Plus hundreds more! Each \$20.00, postage paid title comes with a cartoon and trailer! For a catalog, just send \$2.00!

VHS only, please! All orders are sent first class!

Send check or money order to:

Bruce G. Hallenbeck, Box 753, Valatie, NY 12184

(N.Y. State Residents please add 7% sales tax)



© 1971 American International Pictures

ABOVE: The bad doctor (Vincent Price) prepares to make use of his patented acid-dispenser in 1971's *THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES*. **PREVIOUS PAGE:** Still under the powerful influence of his dead wife, Verden Fell (Vincent Price) mistakes Rowena (Elizabeth Shepherd) for the wicked Ligeia in 1965's *TOMB OF LIGEIA*.

were very good films. Part of Roger's genius, along with his directorial genius, is the fact that he surrounded himself with incredibly talented people. I mean, to have Nick Roeg on camera for *MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH*—it's incredible! He's one of the great cameramen, besides later becoming a brilliant director. Arthur Grant, a top cameraman, shot *TOMB OF LIGEIA*. Roger somehow conned him into thinking that it was a great idea to do something fast! Roger's films were wonderfully done and marvelously produced. And, you know, they've become really sort of classic films. When they first came out, they were given short shrift, as it were. But now the critics all turn around and say how wonderful they are.

SS: *Corman's films were infamous for their tight shooting schedules. Did you find this a hindrance to your performance?*

VP: It's divine to work on such a tight schedule. There's no waste. The thing of sitting around on a set! I was talking to Tim Burton the other day. Tim is now three weeks behind schedule and ten billion dollars over budget [On the current *BATMAN RETURNS*—Ed.] One hears this, and I'm sure a lot of it is just due to a complete waste of time because these films are so big that they're unwieldy. They just don't move quickly. But you can do a picture in three weeks or four or ten months—it doesn't matter; it depends on how well organized it is. And Roger was very organized.

SS: *Working under such constraints, Corman must have expected his actors to know their scripts and craft well.*

VP: Roger absolutely depended on us as actors working on such a tight schedule. He had not only the whole burden of the production but that of being the director, too. He had a tremendous sort of discipline about telling the actors what he wanted them to do. Being on location, of course, we could discuss it afterward at meals and things like that. And you just concentrated and it's much more fun and productive to do it quickly than to take forever to do it.

SS: *Was there room for spontaneity in the Corman films?*

VP: You could improvise within the time limit you had. But, when you know you have limited time, you don't fool around. You don't

"Bluebeard hangs all those ladies in a room. I wouldn't be caught dead doing something like that. You know, one should always treat the ladies nicely. . . torture them a little, but don't hang them up by their hair."

have actors who come on the set and don't know their lines and then want to argue about it. To hell with them! You know, I say to hell with them right away from the beginning, anyway. I've worked too many of those. We worked very hard to get those pictures off the ground. It wasn't just love and fun. It was really hard work. We'd do 15 or 16 set-ups a day. If a company does 12 set-ups, they think they're good! Something like *BATMAN* or *HOOK* takes forever to complete. Maggie Smith, who's a great friend of mine, told me that on *HOOK* there was sometimes only one set-up a day. My God, that would be so exhausting!

SS: *Your passion for the visual arts is well known. Throughout your life, you have demonstrated that there is a rich heritage of the arts in this country. Do you think that your countrymen are finally coming around to that viewpoint?*

VP: I think they are beginning to get an idea, now, that America has something to offer to the arts. We have always had. I did a book once—a sort of treasury of American art—and in doing research, I was just overcome with the problems of the American artist and his struggle to be recognized. Mainly because we are such snobs in this country. We have a foreign policy in art like Bush's domestic policy—there's no domestic policy. I think the realization began with Jackson Pollock and some of those painters who shocked us into understanding that we were as creative and innovative as the Europeans. I think we've begun to have a feeling that maybe we have something to say that is unique. I'm a big fan of American art—a great admirer of the American artist and how he survives. But movies—there was a period when it had to be a French, German, or Japanese film to earn any sort of recognition. Now, we realize we had invented it. We are the people who know how to make movies.

SS: *It must be ironic, then, that so many people have mistaken you for a British actor.*

VP: Well, when you're born in St. Louis, Missouri, it's hard to be English!

SS: *How do your views on fine art relate to Edgar Allan Poe?*

VP: Poe is a typical example of the American artist whose influence in Europe was enormous. You know, Baudelaire and other writers, as well as some of the great painters like Manet, were very influenced

by Poe. So many of the visual artists illustrated "The Raven" or something else of his. Poe was an innovative man who invented the detective novel—who was really one of the great artists of all time. They understood in Europe, but people in this country didn't understand him because he was American. I think they do, now. You know, it was fun to work on the Poe pictures. But they finally got to the point where they'd take a picture and type it a bit by giving it a Poe title—even if it had nothing to do with his work whatsoever. *THE CONQUEROR WORM* was the most ridiculous title for *WITCHFINDER GENERAL*. It took me six months to find the Goddamn poem! But I knew it must be Edgar Allan Poe.

SS: *With your Poe-based characters, you had source material to utilize in preparing for the films. But the role of Dr. Anton Phibes was completely original and created with you in mind. As an actor, what did you draw upon to flesh out your performances in the two Phibes films?*

VP: Well, the Phibes films were a send-up of some of the things that I had done before. I could go back to what was the origin of them—the Poe series—and just make them a little bit ridiculous. It's like oper-

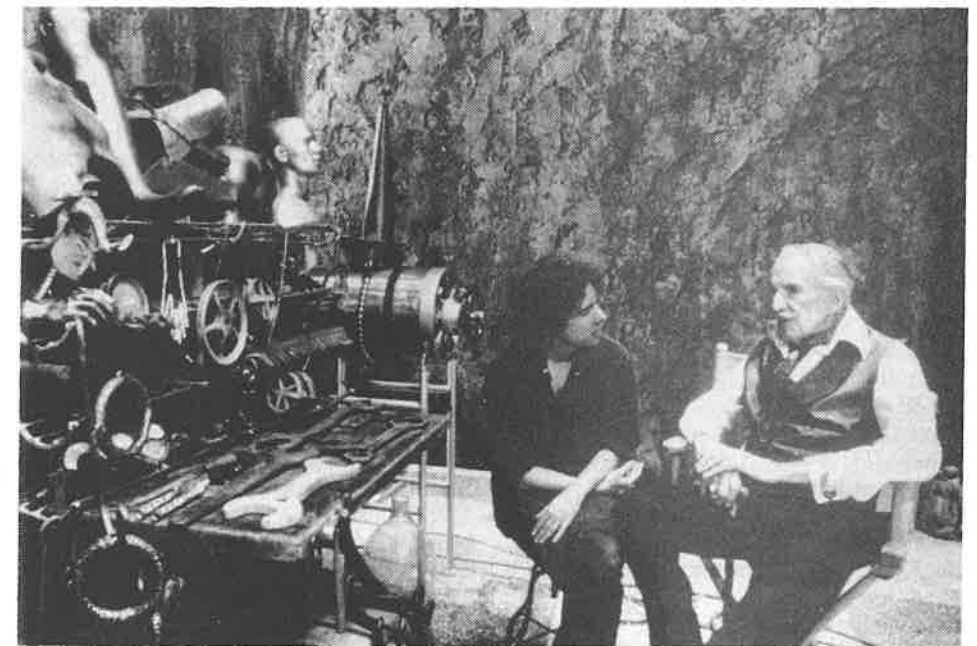
etta. Gilbert and Sullivan couldn't have existed if "serious" opera hadn't, because it's a take-off, a send-up of Grand Opera. Their operettas are hysterically funny, but divinely beautiful at the same time. With the Phibes pictures, there was no going to the source because there was no source except myself and Edgar Allan Poe. And, of course, working with Bob Fuest, who directed both *THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES* and *DR. PHIBES RISES AGAIN*, was inspirational. He was one of the funniest men in the world, with a wild, mad sense of the ridiculous. Bob was quite different from Roger in that respect. Roger's sense of humor was like a guillotine. Bob was really a wickedly funny man and as inventive as they come. I mean, he came up with Phibes' mechanized orchestra, which was a wonderful idea. He was brilliant.

SS: *Speaking of operetta, you performed in RUDDIGORE in England and for the PBS Gilbert and Sullivan series. Was it an enjoyable experience?*

VP: I loved singing for *RUDDIGORE*. The whole cast was English except me. And, you know, the English do it so well. We did it outside of London and it was a killer! I was told I only had five days to prepare for the role. So, before I arrived, I worked like a dog to learn every word, every song, and every note. When I went to the first read-through, I knew every note, every tempo, and everything else.

SS: *Let's jump to your involvement with MYSTERY! Did you help in the decision to choose Diana Rigg as your replacement as series host?*

VP: I was very instrumental in suggesting Diana. Because I became sick and couldn't use my voice the way I wanted, I quit. The producers had a lot of ideas for a



Director and admirer Tim Burton shares a quiet moment with Vincent Price on the set of *EDWARD SCISSORHANDS* (1990).



LEFT: Dr. Anton Phibes (Vincent Price) croaks yet another victim (Alex Scott) in 1971's *THE ABOMINABLE DR. PHIBES*. RIGHT: Price met wife-to-be Coral Browne when he permed her to death in 1973's *THEATRE OF BLOOD*. The likely lad on the left is Diana Rigg!



replacement, which they'd always run by me. Diana's name finally came up because of *THEATRE OF BLOOD*. You know, it's just my theory, but I do think the host should be a man. Well, particularly with Alistair Cooke as the host of *MASTERPIECE THEATRE*; you need a man to tell a story like that—to set it up. Other than that, you couldn't get anybody better than Diana. She's been successful at it.

SS: Recently, through your work with director Tim Burton, you have made it back to the big screen in *EDWARD SCISSOR-HANDS*. It is obvious that he understands your persona and treats you with great respect as an actor.

VP: Tim Burton has been so dear. There's never been an article about him in which he doesn't mention me. The beginning of our association came through the making of his wonderful little short about me. It's called *VINCENT*. I think it's available on videotape now. That film was the beginning of his career, in fact, so he's been very dear about my influence on his work and sense of humor. I think he's a brilliant young man.

SS: Do you have current or future acting plans—with or without Tim Burton?

VP: I am to do a walk-on in Tim's new picture, *BATMAN RETURNS*. Literally, a walk-on: I walk through a scene! I don't know what he has in mind. But that's about all I'm doing. It's simply because I'm 80 years old and there it is. Somebody offered me a television show the other day called *LIFE BEGINS AT EIGHTY*. I said you're out of your cotton-picking mind! Where are you going to wheel in the contestants? Boring... it's very boring to get old. Unless you have really robust health, which few people do, it's a trying time. To hell with the Golden Years!

SS: Within your horror-film career, you have played everything from an insane Spanish inquisitor to a gleefully mad doc-

tor who outwits the forces of "good". What is your reaction to therapists who claim that horror movies are detrimental to impressionable minds?

VP: You can prove them wrong by asking them what they read to their kids. In many cases, it's *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, which are more frightening than any picture I ever made. I mean, Rumpelstiltskin falls into a million pieces! Bluebeard hangs all those ladies in a room. I wouldn't be caught dead doing something like that. You know, one should always treat the ladies nicely... torture them a little, but don't hang them up by their hair. No, those types of accusations are ridiculous. They're just the result of somebody who wants something to talk about.

SS: You once said that the most important person you had ever known was your wife, Coral Browne. Many of her fans were deeply upset upon learning of her death last year.

VP: You know, Alan Bates just came over to say hello, which I thought was sweet. He's in town for just one day. He had a wonderful relationship with Coral through their work on *AN ENGLISHMAN ABROAD*. I was very touched that he would come to see me. I miss her terribly. We did work together on several occasions—we met during the filming of *THEATRE OF BLOOD*; we did a Jean Anouilh play, *WALTZ OF THE TOREADORS*; and bits and pieces for television. She had an entirely different career than I did.

SS: You have made about 100 films. Do you have a favorite?

VP: I think *THEATRE OF BLOOD* is the best of the lot. You know, that incredible cast consisted of a group of actors who had all played Shakespeare many times—and I had done one Shakespearean play in my life [*RICHARD III* in 1953—Ed.]. And here I was playing the great Shakespearean ham of his time! And to be able

to sell it to them, my co-stars, meant that I could play it and have enough sense about it to be able to send it up a bit. I did eight Shakespearean parts in the film. I think that was the best feeling of achievement and satisfaction that I ever had from a film. SS: You did not receive formal training as an actor. Would you consider yourself a "natural"?

VP: I didn't set out early in my life to be an actor. I studied art. I think I was a "natural" for my first theatrical part as Prince Albert opposite Helen Hayes in *VICTORIA REGINA*. Since I had lived quite a lot in Germany, I could speak German. Therefore, I could fake my character's accent. It also helped that the part called for someone who was six foot four, which I am, and had my looks and hair. Just everything worked out right for that role. But then, Miss Hayes made me go out during our month off every summer to learn my job. I'd go and play everything I could get my hands on, because the best way to act is to act.

SS: Besides your performance in *THEATRE OF BLOOD*, what do you feel is your best work?

VP: I believe my role as Oscar Wilde in the one-man show *DIVERSIONS & DELIGHTS* was my other great achievement as an actor. It was really extraordinary. It was the only time ever in my whole career when I really, completely fell into the character. I would walk out on that stage and say "My name is Oscar Fingal O'Flahertie Wilde", and four minutes later I was not Vincent Price—which is a divine feeling. I was really able to escape into that character, into the wit and brilliance of the man.

SS: Back to your beliefs regarding the arts: What do you think about the current state of cultural affairs in this country?

Continued on page 95

Memories of Ligeia

An Interview with Elizabeth Shepherd

by Michael Orlando Yaccarino

A versatile theatrical actress, Elizabeth Shepherd frequently appears in productions throughout the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom. Her repertoire ranges from the classics of Shakespeare to the great works of Chekhov, Shaw, and Williams. Also, she is no stranger to film and television. Currently, she is appearing in *THE DREAMLAND* by John Roby and Raymond Storey at The Theatre of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. In this exclusive interview, the charming and direct actress recalls her memorable performance in *TOMB OF LIGEIA* with exceptional insight.

Scarlet Street: How were you chosen for the dual role of Ligeia and Rowena?

Elizabeth Shepherd: I first heard of *TOMB OF LIGEIA* from Paul Mayersburg, who was Roger Corman's assistant on the movie. I auditioned knowing nothing about Roger's reputation, nothing about Vincent Price's fame in the genre—but loving the Edgar Allan Poe story. When I was told it was a dual role, I presumed it would be mostly Ligeia and a little Rowena, as in Poe. Imagine my surprise on receiving the script! Incidentally, Paul Mayersburg—who, of course, went on to become a critic and commentator, as well as the writer of *THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH*—directed the second-unit shoot of the "honeymoon" montage, which was tacked on after principal photography, using doubles. Vincent and I did the voice-overs in post-production, and I thought the settings were stunning, but I never felt that our doubles quite captured our walk!

SS: What was your initial reaction to the very different characters you were required to portray?

ES: At first I felt indignant on Ligeia's behalf that she had necessarily become the "evil" one in this version of the story, and that we never see how exceptionally gifted and extraordinary a woman Poe imagined her to be—qualities which inspired the obsession and make Verden so susceptible to the spell of her will.

However, I became totally won over by the wonderfully spiritual, brave, and passionate woman who emerged as Rowena. Robert Towne and Roger had been at great pains to research the psychology behind the hypnotic spell, its source, its power, and its cure.

SS: So, in the end, you were pleased with the conception of the characters...

ES: The script makes powerful emotional sense, and Rowena is a great role—not to



The luminous Elizabeth Shepherd made her American motion-picture debut—here, complete with cat scratches—in the dual role of Rowena/Ligeia in 1965's *TOMB OF LIGEIA*.

mention the challenge of being the lurking Ligeia, too, with all her formidable charms. I prepared for the roles very seriously, and I think Vincent was pleased, perhaps a little surprised, to find his co-star so eager to rehearse our scenes and talk about our relationship!

SS: Did the film require unusual preparation on your part?

ES: Well, the one thing I had to learn especially for the movie was how to ride a horse sidesaddle. The wranglers who provided the horses and organized the hunting sequence taught me at their stables. My teacher, Dorothy, was also my double, although in the end I did all my own riding except for the hunt itself. There were three identical horses—one for the hunt and jumps, another which was lively and used for cantering into shot, and lastly a docile one for standing shots and close-ups. That was supposed to be the one I would ride most, being easy to handle. However, the obedient animal seemed to me far too lackluster for Rowena's taste and temperament, so I chose to manage the vivacious one instead. The scary part was the rearing of the horse at the tomb, and my fall.

SS: Did this preparation help you in finding the character of Rowena?

ES: Becoming a horsewoman myself was the key to knowing what it felt like to be Lady Rowena Trevanion of Tremaine. The role was satisfying to play because she develops so richly during the course of the story—from initial defiance and curiosity, to genuine sympathy and love, to joy, to puzzlement, fear, anger, terror, determination, and finally enormous courage to confront Ligeia and save the man they both love.

SS: Of all the women in American International's Poe films, Rowena is certainly the most resourceful.

ES: I am proud of her. As to how the film plays now—I had not seen the film for at least 18 years when it was screened as part of the film series at my son's boarding



Trapped in the bell tower: the most riveting sequence from TOMB OF LIGEIA.

school in Ojai, California, in the early 1980s. I was present to talk about the movie afterwards, and was anticipating with interest and some trepidation my own reaction, and that of a hall full of opinionated and discerning teenagers. They loved it. I was amazed to discover what a really good film it is, particularly in light of the way the so-called horror genre has developed, with all its gory violence. The film is full of Poe's own mystery and, most

important, imagination. Also, it is healthy to see the power of darkness convincingly exorcised by an equally compelling power of light and love. Nowadays, the dark side is usually infinitely more potent and attractive!

SS: That's so true!

ES: Another reason the film stands the test of time so well is that it is excellent storytelling. Instead of endless montage sequences and special effects to propel the



ABOVE: Verden Fell (Vincent Price) meets second wife Rowena (Elizabeth Shepherd) when her temperamental horse deposits her at the grave of first wife Ligeia. Here, Fell tends to Rowena's injured ankle with the help of servant Kenrick (Oliver Johnston). NEXT PAGE: Vincent Price and Elizabeth Shepherd in TOMB OF LIGEIA's soul-snatching dénouement.

action and manipulate the audience, Corman relies on a solid script and then lets the characters speak for themselves.

SS: How did you work with Corman to develop the role of Rowena?

ES: Roger was actually rather preoccupied while we were filming LIGEIA, because his contract with AIP was ending and he was having problems with another film company about his deal for his next projects. We didn't discuss things too much once he had entrusted me with the role. Clear, straightforward, truthful, bold, alert—these are the qualities he wanted to see in Rowena.

SS: Corman is well-known for keeping his shooting schedules very tight. Was that true of LIGEIA?

ES: Yes, speed and efficiency were his hallmarks, but we had five whole weeks, which was a luxuriant schedule for a Corman movie. The first week was on location in Norfolk, filming at Castle Acre, which is a ruined abbey, beautifully kept by The National Trust. Five weeks meant that Corman could be, visually, more ambitious than usual, which certainly enhances the movie. But not a minute was wasted. I can remember arriving on location in time to start shooting the next day. We were all settling into the hotel when word came:

"Roger says there's enough light to start now—be there as soon as possible!" Pandemonium! The hairstyle hadn't been decided, the dress didn't fit, and John Westbrook and I were desperately learning our lines in the car. It was the scene in which Rowena tells Christopher that she feels that Ligeia is haunting the abbey. Notice the unique hairdo! Fortunately, the scene looks good, but the sound quality was poor, so I had the chance to add a more confident vocal quality to the scene in post-sync.

SS: Do any similar frenzied experiences come to mind?

ES: Yes, indeed! In fact, it was the very last shot of the film, too, which was hectic. It was the close-up of Ligeia's face in the coffin when her eyes fly open and stare. A crucial shot. And we only had a short time to catch it before losing light, having to wrap forever. The sun was directly in my eyes. I could not hold them open without blinking or watering. But I had to. I can remember pressing my arms and legs so hard against the sides of the coffin that they hurt more than my eyes did, and just willing myself to widen my eyes. I guess that was Ligeia herself at work. These pressures of time certainly focused concentration and kept the energy high.

SS: With the scheduling demands, there could not have been many chances for second takes?

ES: Well, the only time I sensed Roger being relentless was in the sequence in which Rowena is releasing Verden from the spell, in the "Ligeia turret" near the

"... I knelt on the floor face to face with this poor cat who was looking at me as if to say, 'I wish this was over, I know I look absolutely ridiculous wearing these dark glasses tied to my nose...!'"

end. I was standing looking up at Vincent, so close to that blazing brazier at my back that I was not only boiling hot, I was scorching! I had to stop. But the set-up was exactly what Roger wanted. "Never mind, keep going," he said. So I did. It certainly added to the intensity of the situation.

SS: Many feel that, of the AIP films, LIGEIA is closest to Poe. Have you ever seen the other films in the series?

ES: I have seen the other films, and I agree with those who say LIGEIA is the most substantial and truest to Poe. Although the story was enhanced and the powers of mesmerism rather than the fumes of opium are emphasized, the spirit and power and literacy of Poe is all there. THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH came out while we were shooting, and I was amused to see our very same fire irons and the very same chandelier in that film, too—props from the Corman repertory company!

SS: What are your memories of your co-star, Vincent Price?

ES: Aside from having the most eloquent voice on earth, he has enormous personal charm and charisma. I loved working with Vincent Price; he made everything seem easy. He is such a superb actor, and extraordinarily generous. As I mentioned earlier, he was very open to working on our scenes together, which certainly put me at ease. I remember watching him create that moment at Ligeia's funeral when

and the priest says, "Blasphemy!", and Verden snaps the book closed in his face and declares, "Benediction!". It is daring, it is full of panache and utterly believable—passion and high style combined. But, I must say, for all of his intensity in the film, off-screen he had a wickedly witty sense of humor. He kept us laughing.

SS: Vincent Price had a few amusing comments concerning your feline co-star.

ES: Oh, what vivid memories I have of that cat! Actually, there were several identical black cats, and the most talented of all was the amateur cat, borrowed from an elderly woman in Norfolk: her own pet, and a naturally accomplished actor. When this cat glared at me from Ligeia's tombstone I felt really threatened. We played well together. But there's a sad story: you remember the scene at Ligeia's funeral when the cat jumps onto the coffin and Verden brushes it aside? Well, the cat jumped, Vincent swiped it, the cat leapt off, ran away, and was never seen again. It was tragic.

We broke filming and searched, but the cat was nowhere to be found. I do hope she came home eventually—I have often wondered.

SS: So, the trained cats left something to be desired?

ES: The professional cats had far less character. Sometimes it felt as if Rowena was menacing the cat instead of otherwise. I remember laughing as I knelt on the floor face to face with this poor cat who was looking at me as if to say, "I wish this was over, I know I look absolutely ridiculous wearing these dark glasses tied to my nose..." One of my most bizarre experiences as an actor was having a cat repeatedly thrown at my face. It was a wonder I did not get scratched for real! The screen scratch was a prop cat's paw applied to my cheek in close-up with "blood" in the claws.

SS: Was there anything in the film, not originally planned, that you contributed?

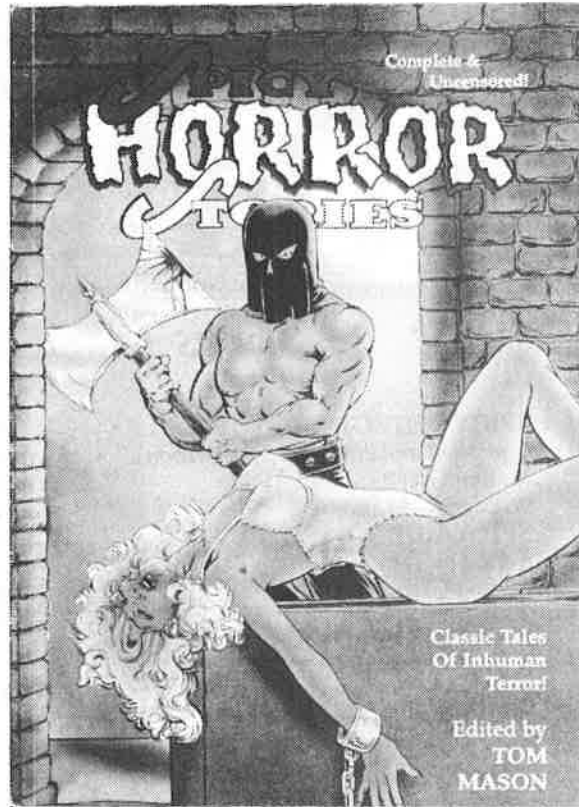
ES: Visually, my contribution was the red riding habit. When I was shown the wardrobe, the beige costume, which I wear when I ride over to visit the abbey and have my second encounter with Verden, was intended for the hunting sequence, also. I felt strongly that it was too subdued as an introduction to a woman of Rowena's spirit. First impressions are important. So I persuaded Roger to have the hunting red made for me. I'm glad he agreed; I think it is effective. Also, in the hypnotism scene, the song I sing, "I have a bonnet trimmed with blue", was in the script, but the transformation from Rowena to Ligeia

Continued on page 95



cartoons I used to watch as a child. No matter how scary those stories were, at the end the bogeyman of the week was always revealed to be nothing more than a common thief out to con somebody. This is the case with *Spicy Horror Stories*, with the exception of Donald Graham's "Satan Lives For My Love", in which a slight thread of the supernatural cannot be so easily explained away.

Ironically, *Spicy Mystery* contains all the monsters and other assorted weirdness; even though its cover (depicting a bathing-suit-clad woman holding a smoking gun, while a dead man floats in the pool behind her) suggests that it is a sequel to *Spicy Detective*. "Princess of Dreams", by Robert Leslie Bellem, reads like a NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET movie. Written in 1938, the story deals with the concept that, if you are killed in your dream, you die in real life. "The Door On The Stairs", by Charles A. Baker, Jr., is another good tale, concerning time travel. Although the climax takes place in a torture chamber, it is not as overly lurid as its companion stories.



Finally, there's *Spicy Western Stories*, which takes its plots from the strait-laced cowboy movies of by-gone Saturday matinees and jazzes them up with sex and violence. My favorite story here is "The Moving Finger", by Edwin Truett. The title character, who is also the narrator, is a quirky sheriff who would rather read than deal with any big problems in his one-horse town. Outlaws would send him advance word of their arrival, giving him enough time to pack up a bunch of books to read by the river for a few days, returning only when the bandits were long gone. Much to his dismay, however, he finds himself wrapped up in a deadly love triangle.

Of all the books, I would recommend *Spicy Detective* and *Spicy Mystery*. Keep in mind that the stories I chose are not the best of the lot; they are simply better than the *Spicy* average. Remember, too, that these tales were not known for the quality of their writing, but they are vivid enough to offer a few hours of sultry, sordid fun.

—Sean Farrell



Vincent Price and Coral Browne

PRICE

Continued from page 60

VP: I read something the other day—that we are not only economically impoverished, but culturally impoverished as well. I think it's true and it has a lot to do with why we're economically impoverished. If we don't make cars as good as the Japanese, it's a matter of "know-how", isn't it? And we don't know how. I've just learned why we can't sell cars to Japan—they drive on the opposite side of the road than we do. We send them cars with the steering wheel on the wrong side for them. Why should they buy them? It's just ridiculous—they'd have to get an American chauffeur with one slant eye!

SS: A final question: How would you like to be remembered?

VP: I would like to be remembered by something I strongly believe in—that there is a great difference between earning a living and knowing how to live. Well, I think an awful lot of people earn a living to put it in their bellies. It should be put in your head. When you get to old age, it is the experience of life that is really the only thing that sustains you. I find now that I'm a bit crippled with a lot of physical problems; I don't go out much. The thing that sustains me is what I've learned about how to live—that I really don't have to go to a restaurant three times a week to be seen

truly remarkable life. Thank you for your thoughts on it.

VP: I've enjoyed it enormously.

SHEPHERD

Continued from page 63

was vague. I discovered the hook on the word "will" in the song, and was able then to use it as Ligeia. I am pleased with that scene; it works well. The changing of key as I sing happens because it was compiled from different takes, but it gives a strange, eerie effect, which I like.

SS: In retrospect, are there any elements that you would change in the film?

ES: Perhaps we could clarify more vividly the ebb and flow of Ligeia's spirit into and out of Rowena's body. It was difficult to make clear exactly what was happening, and I am not sure that we altogether succeeded. I would like to have had the chance to develop Ligeia more fully. But nevertheless her presence is felt.

somewhere because I don't want to be seen somewhere. I would rather have a good meal at home that I cooked because I studied cooking. You know, I went to Venice about four years ago because I wanted to learn Northern Italian cooking. I've studied cooking my whole life because I think that that's one of the most important things man has achieved—to know what to do with food. But most people kill it. They don't have any sort of sensitivity about food or drink or anything else. So anyway, that's what I mean—to learn how to live. And you pray to God that you will be able to earn enough money to do that.

SS: Well, speaking for the entire staff of Scarlet Street, you have always been one of our heroes. You have led a

SS: Is there anything that you, personally, would like a viewer to be aware of while watching *TOMB OF LIGEIA*?

ES: I would advise viewers to see the film on video cassette, or preferably in the cinema. On TV, very often the final nightmare/dream sequence, which predicts what is to come, is cut. Without it, a whole emotional dimension is missing, as Rowena realizes her worst fears coming true. It spoils the rhythm of the climax of the film if we do not have déjà vu. It also makes clearer, I believe, the almost fatal wound when Rowena cuts her hand after smashing the mirror. Aside from that, just open your heart to a good story and let your imagination go.

Next Issue's Line-Up

Peter Cushing

Bram Stoker's

DRACULA

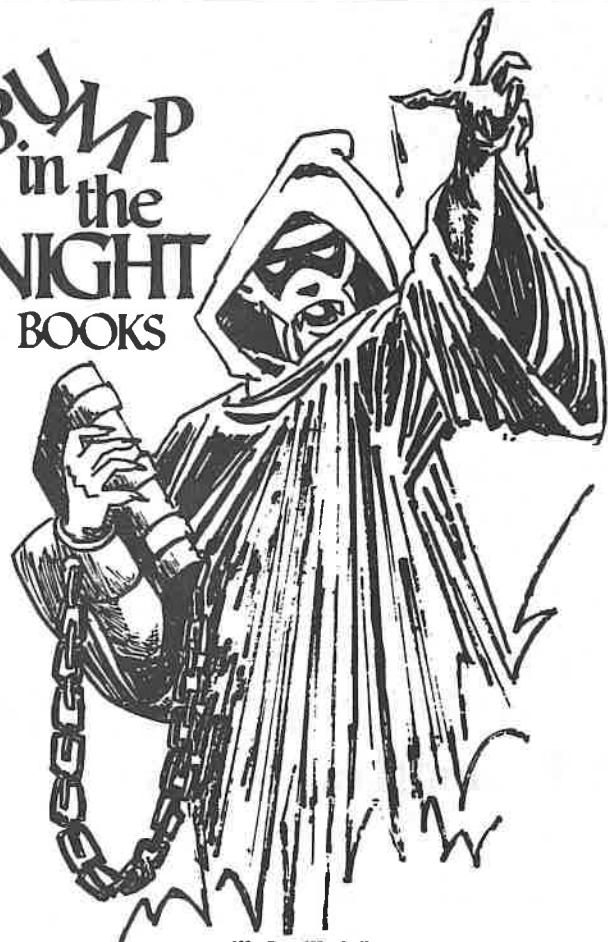
Christopher Lee

Rosalie Williams

DARK SHADOWS

Veronica Carlson

BUMP
in the
NIGHT
BOOKS



We Buy We Sell
Send for our Catalogue

133-135 Elfretha Alley, Philadelphia, PA 19106/215/925-4840/0113
Specialist in Imaginative Fiction

ATTENTION Columbo Fans!

Do you wish there was someone you could discuss everyone's favorite rumped but clever Lieutenant with? Well, look no further. Subscribe to the Columbo Newsletter: episode reviews, articles, letters, interviews, etc. For your 4 issues for 1992/93 (first one free!), please send \$9.00 to:

Columbo Newsletter

P.O. Box 1703

Pittsburgh, PA 15230-1703

And just one more thing...
Send your letters and articles too!

Now Producing High-Quality
Resin Model Kits
Vincent Price In "House of Wax"
\$59.95 & more

•Also-Still Acquiring
Japanese Kits •



CREATORS UNLIMITED™

4932 Forest Park Drive, Lou., Ky 40219
(502) 964-1211

Send \$1.00 & SASE For Catalog