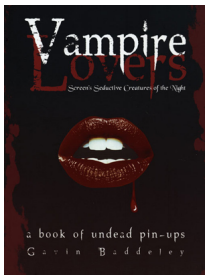
VAMPIRE LOVERS is, for the most part, just what it appears to be: another quickie attempt to cash in on the trendy bloodsuckers of TWILIGHT, THE VAMPIRE DIARIES and TRUE BLOOD. The book (available from the UK’s Plexus Press) is stuffed with publicity stills of coiffed and pouting vamp actors, alongside story recaps and interview quotes purloined from other sources. So why is this book being given the time of day by FANGORIA? Read on.

VAMPIRE LOVERS is arranged chronologically in its mission to sketch a loose history of what the cover calls “undead pin-ups”: sallow-skinned rebel angels who send teen girls’ hearts aflutter before draining those same hearts of their contents. The starting roster chosen here holds no surprises: TWILIGHT’s ubiquitous Edward, followed by INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE’s Lestat and BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER’s Angel/Spike duo. Author Gavin Baddeley, an experienced music and Goth-culture writer (his many credits including co-penning a book on Satanism with metal singer Dani Filth), deserves credit for inserting some negative perspective—including quoting Stephen King’s famous dis of TWILIGHT creator Stephenie Meyer—into his extensive TWILIGHT lead-in, providing a rare dose of balance in dealing with a phenomenon that is usually either breathlessly fawned over or attacked with angry invective.



As with any list that attempts to codify aspects of the very subjective horror genre, contentious

choices abound. VAMPIRE LOVERS’ inclusions and omissions can be either infuriating or delightful. FRIGHT NIGHT’s suave and menacing Jerry Dandridge (Chris Sarandon) is missing, but six entire pages are devoted to Richard Roxburgh’s risible portrayal of Count Dracula from 2004’s disastrous VAN HELSING? Roxburgh’s presence in the book alongside towering Dracula icons such as Christopher Lee and Bela Lugosi cannot be rationally explained, other than as some kind of cheeky sarcasm on the author’s part. Baddeley eventually wins redemption by championing Grace Jones’ underappreciated turn as the titular VAMP from 1986, as well as Udo Kier’s campy Count from ANDY WARHOL’S DRACULA. As expected, the bulk of the book’s ink is focused on male incarnations of the vampire, although token attention is paid to gentlemen readers with sections on THE VAMPIRE LOVERS’ Ingrid Pitt and Salma Hayek’s sultry undulations in FROM DUSK TILL DAWN.

Baddeley’s sneaky stirring in of spicy cult gems with the flavors of the month is what makes discussing this book worthwhile. How many other teenybopper tomes from the supermarket racks reference BLACULA or DAUGHTERS OF DARKNESS? Make no mistake: VAMPIRE LOVERS is not at all intended for horror-educated Fangorians, or even those with slighter genre experience. It will reveal no new information or insights, and most of the films discussed within are already sitting on your DVD shelf. Instead, this book is for your kid sisters, sporting their Team Edward T-shirts down at the mall. It’s for your co-workers who giggle and gasp from behind clutched throw pillows at TRUE BLOOD’s racy thrills and dripping hemoglobin.

Thanks to its diversity and long memory, VAMPIRE LOVERS has the potential to act as a gateway drug to sturdier stuff; when the staid teenybopper context of today’s vamps no longer satisfies, the book can be a signpost to sharper fangs. Not all followers of Hollywood’s current wave of exsanguinated idols will eventually succumb to the charms of DARK SHADOWS and Hammer Glamour, but for those who may, VAMPIRE LOVERS is a solid primer. And for we who already happily dwell in darker recesses, why not pass this book along to some unsuspecting acquaintances and see if they bite back?

{jcomments on}