

HERE
COMES

ELVIRA





CONTENTS

Cast and Crew 4

Foreword 7
by Sam Irvin

**The Evolution of the Living Dead Girl:
Elvira and the Women Who Made Her** 11
by Kat Ellinger

More Than Just a Great Set of Boobs... 21
by Patterson Lundquist

About the Restoration 34

CAST

Elvira as Herself
W. Morgan Sheppard as Vincent Talbot
Daniel Greene as Bob Redding
Susan Kellermann as Patty
Jeff Conaway as Travis
Edie McClurg as Chastity Pariah

CREW

Directed by **James Signorelli**
Produced by **Eric Gardner** and **Mark Pierson**
Written by **Sam Egan**, **John Paragon** and **Cassandra Peterson**
Director of Photography **Hanania Baer**
Edited by **Battle Davis**
Music by **James Campbell**





FOREWORD

by Sam Irvin

I was starstruck when I met Cassandra Peterson in 1991 at a Hollywood party. I told her how much I adored her movie *Elvira, Mistress of the Dark* – and she very sweetly told me how much she enjoyed my revenge comedy *Guilty as Charged*. Then she said, “If I ever make a second Elvira movie, I want you to direct it.” I didn’t think she was serious until nine years later when I landed the gig-of-my-wildest-dreams to direct *Elvira’s Haunted Hills*. The dame keeps her word, folks! Now we’re BFFs for life. When Cassandra was asked to do an audio commentary for *Mistress of the Dark*, I volunteered – or, rather *demand*ed to produce it. For free! Even though I had nothing to do with that first movie, I am such a superfan, I couldn’t resist. And, besides, I owe her big time. She wanted her co-writer John Paragon (*Mistress of the Dark*, *Haunted Hills*, *Pee-wee’s Playhouse*) to join her; in the movie, he played the nose-picking gas station attendant who gets blown-up real good. I insisted on adding Edie McClurg to the mix since her Chastity Pariah is to Elvira what Blofeld is to James Bond. You know. Worst nightmares. Anyway, all three of them had connected in the early 1980s as members of The Groundlings, the improv comedy hotbed in L.A. The rest is history, as they say. And I am proud as punch to have been a tiny breeze beneath the wings of our all-time favorite camp vamp: Elvira, Mistress of the Dark.



From left to right: John Paragon, Sam Irvin, Cassandra Peterson and Edie McClurg





THE EVOLUTION OF THE LIVING DEAD GIRL: ELVIRA AND THE WOMEN WHO MADE HER

by Kat Ellinger

In his essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, Edgar Allan Poe famously said: “the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world.” And of course, he was right. Horror film’s obsession with dead women is testament to this fact and the intertwining of sex and death remains at the core of genre cinema, even to this day. Yet, what often remains unacknowledged is that Poe was drawing from a much deeper tradition when he made his declaration, which in turn influenced later cinematic interpretations of the vamp. It is there you will find the origins of Elvira.

Put simply: during the 19th century, people just couldn’t get enough of paintings featuring dead women. This trend started earlier on, really picking up speed during the Victorian age, thanks in part to writers like Poe, Gothic fiction and French Symbolism, amongst other trends. And if the dead were considered sexy, what became regarded as even sexier was the idea of women *almost* dead, but still living. For example, as Elisabeth Bronfen declares, in her book *Over Her Dead Body*, “between February 1914 and January 1915 the Swiss painter Ferdinand Hodler made over seventy sketches, gouaches and oil painting of his mistress Valentine Gode-Darel, as she was dying of cancer.”¹

Hodler wasn’t alone in his obsession, and neither was Poe. The topic was so popular at one time, not only did Bronfen dedicate an entire book to the subject, but Bram Dijkstra’s *Idols of Perversity* saw fit to track the evolution of women in art portrayed as dead or nearly dead throughout the 1800s and beyond. Dijkstra’s theories link the common sexual element of this art to the passivity of the central figures – something definitely incongruous to the force of nature that is Elvira, with her heaving chest, bawdy one-liners and sexual aggression. However, it is important to recognise that her great-great-grandmothers started out here, in Charles Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*) and with 19th century icon Sarah Bernhardt.

1 - Bronfen, Elisabeth (1992) *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*, p.39. Manchester University Press.

A celebrity of consumptive chic, Sarah Bernhardt was a French actress and model who became a star in the latter half of the 1800s. Her case is an interesting one for the way she built a public image that made her a sex symbol based, in part, on her proclivity for sleeping in an open coffin. As Dijkstra states:

Sarah Bernhardt, of course [...] was all too aware of the fascination which the theme of the weak-witted, expiring woman exerted over the male of her time, and she used this knowledge wherever she could cultivate her own eccentric image, not least by carting about [...] what she described as her own coffin, and by letting it be known she was not averse to sleeping in this rather narrow cot to emphasize the (to her admirers evidently delicious) fact of her own mortality.²

With her dark hair, and skin as pale as moonlight, Bernhardt in her time became the very first living dead girl celebrity icon. It is to her that countless others owe a debt, including Elvira. Bernhardt was immortalised in a photograph named “the coffin portrait” where she lies, eyes closed, arms crossed over her chest, adorned with flowers in a silk lined coffin. The morbid nature of the image is clear, and she was worshipped for it. It is the same image that crops up time and time again in vampire cinema; yet it’s the fact we know her heart’s still beating which makes it all the more transgressive and seductive.

Taking the lead from Poe, Charles Baudelaire (a writer who translated Poe for French readers) channelled the spirit of the American author into his own brand of Gothic, which in turn helped kickstart the movement of French symbolist literature (Gothic’s more cynical, abstract cousin). Baudelaire was far more perverse than Poe ever dared to be. Poems in his volume *Les Fleurs du mal* were banned for their lesbian themes. He also often linked sex with death in the most graphic ways. What’s important in the case of Elvira is the way in which Baudelaire created woman as sin incarnate – vampires, but not of the supernatural kind. These were some of the first *femmes fatales*, as they would be known in cinema: women decimated by ether and other recreational drugs of the time, or riddled with disease, absolutely corrupt and able to destroy a man by seduction. Other French writers also waded into the territory. Barbey d’Aurevilly’s *Les Diaboliques* (published in 1874) was devoted entirely to the ruinous nature of women. Jean Lorrain, whose short story *A Glass of Blood* became the basis for Jean Rollin’s late seventies Euro Cult horror *Fascination* (1979), took a similar line in his short story collections such as *Nightmares of an Ether Drinker*, and although many of these amazing stories – and they really are, for instance d’Aurevilly takes much pleasure in the slapstick comedy involved in a man disposing of a girl’s dead body, after she seduces him and then promptly dies through passion, in the room adjacent to her

2 - Dijkstra, Bram (1986) *Idols of Perversity: Fantasies of Feminine Evil in Fin-de-Siècle Culture*, p.45. Oxford Paperbacks.

parents – have never been adapted for cinema, their spirit lives on through the creation of the vamp.

As Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock outlines:

while ideas about vampires and cinema are both culturally specific and dynamic, one constant that stretches back to the earliest days of cinema is the connection between vampires, liberated libido, and hyperbolic gender. [...] In film’s first decades, however, the vampire was not the charismatic or hypnotic male seducer, not a suave Bela Lugosi or commanding Christopher Lee stealing our women [...] but instead a predatory female, the *belle dame sans merci*, who contravened the laws of nature by actively controlling and debilitating men.³

For Weinstock, screen icon Theda Bara was at the heart of this movement. The original vamp – the keyword became her nickname – Bara, although most of her films are now considered lost, became synonymous with the character type. Very little exists now of Bara’s film career; however, if we consider the provocative imagery she left behind, her influence on later vamp icons becomes startlingly obvious. For example, in one still she is seen naked (aside from a scarf) and posing with a skeleton; in another she is wearing black and stroking a raven. Her exaggerated eyeliner, seen in promotional stills produced for her role as Cleopatra, would later find popularity in Gothic subculture – think Siouxsie Sioux of the Banshees – while one photo depicts her with waist-long black hair, aside from a white stripe, and a fishtail dress, a look that would later find a contemporary home on characters like Lily Munster and Morticia Addams. Most importantly, Theda Bara would define female sexuality as a powerful force. Although this was used to promote moral messages in the films she made, she remained unrepentant, famously saying, “to be good is to be forgotten. I am going to be so bad, I will always be remembered.”

The (not so) missing “bad girl” link between Theda Bara and Elvira was Vampira. Much has been said about the legal mess between Vampira’s creator, Maila Nurmi, and Elvira, aka Cassandra Peterson, when it came to the ownership of the intellectual property behind both characters. The result was a court case, which Nurmi lost, after launching a copyright dispute. Politics aside, there is no denying Maila Nurmi was an innovator and her creation an icon for ’50s monster kids. Sadly, much like her predecessor Theda Bara, the bulk of Vampira’s legacy is lost – only scraps of her original television show remain today. She is mainly remembered for the part she played (although uncharacteristically mute in the role,

3 - Weinstock, Jeffrey Andrew (2013) *Sans Fangs: Theda Bara, A Fool There Was, and the Cinematic Vamp*. In Brode, Douglas and Deyneka, Leah (eds.) *Dracula’s Daughters: The Female Vampire on Film*, p.37. Scarecrow Press.



she was known for her cracking one liners) in Ed Wood's *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959). Vampira's look was inspired by the cartoons of Charles Addams, the creator of *The Addams Family*. However, as Nurmi explained,

Vampira was not exactly derived from Morticia (Addams). Here's how it went – at first I did the Addams lady exactly as a masquerade ball. A TV studio asked me to portray the character without the consent of Charles Addams. So I kept the dress only (but the skirt still way up)... Also, of course, I kept the fact that the lady was a Victorian vampire... Morticia was a matron, mother and head of a pedestrian household. Morticia was a vamp and a bachelor girl distinctly averse to things pedestrian. I wanted the job but was unwilling to steal so broadly from a respected artist. I thought if I had brought the studio something visually similar, they would accept it. Here is the concoction as I wrote the recipe:

2oz Theda Bara (*Vamp*, vamp)
2oz Morticia (morbid Victoriana)
3oz Norma Desmond (*Sunset Blvd*)
4oz Tallulah Bankhead (the voice, dah-ling)
2oz Marilyn Monroe (Demons are a ghou's best friend)
3oz Katie Hepburn (Victorian English)
2oz Bette Davis (mama, baby)
3oz Billie Burke (dilettante insouciance)
3oz Marlene Dietrich (singing voice)
8oz Bizarre Magazine pin up (big boobs, waist cincher, mesh hose, high shoes and long nails)
Shake vigorously until steaming.⁴

Elvira took Vampira's original recipe, but added in 10oz of rock 'n' roll, making her Living Dead Girl 2.0, upgraded by Peterson to suit a post-punk generation of MTV kids, while adding in a sex positive spin. Peterson told *Fangoria*,

I had to come up with a look, and my best friend at the time was an artist named Robert Redding, so we got together and came up with some drawings, some ideas. The first one that we really liked was based on Sharon Tate from *The Fearless Vampire Killers*, with a pink-and-white tattered gossamer gown, my own long, red curly hair, and dead-girl

4 - Cotter, Robert Michael "Bob" (2016) *Vampira and Her Daughters: Women Horror Movie Hosts from the 1950s into the Internet Era*, p.153. McFarland.

makeup with pale skin, dark eyes and red lips. We took that picture in, and they were like, "No, no, no, you can't look like that; you have to be wearing all black and have black hair." I thought that was so typical, but we went back to the drawing board and Robert came up with a version of me all black, but tried to make it sexy and update it a little. The hair was based on his favorite singer in the world, Ronnie Spector from the Ronettes, he got the makeup out of a kabuki book he had and the dress was made as sexy as humanly possible.⁵

What people often overlook about Peterson's feature debut *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* – Elvira was already hot property by this point, after becoming a successful horror host with *Elvira's Movie Macabre* for LA-based KCAL-TV, and then a home video series *ThrillerVideo* – is the fact that not only was the film a pastiche of classic horror, it was also fuelled by some really clever social satire, delivered beautifully by Peterson who was adept at comic timing from her training with comedy improv group The Groundlings (which also harvested Paul Reubens, aka Pee Wee Herman). The script uses masses of in-jokes, some of which work on different levels – for example "haven't you ever seen a Roger Corman film?" relates to the fact the film was produced by Corman's New World Pictures, while simultaneously pointing to his earlier Gothic films – making it a film for horror fans, made by horror fans. The script is rife with references including everything from '50s sci-fi drive-in classics to Brian De Palma's *Carrie* (1976).

In addition to this, the film came at a time when pastiche was all the rage and horror comedy ruled. The decade started with throwback films like *The Monster Club* (1980), which continued on through the decade until the late eighties with *The Monster Squad* (1988), *Killer Klowns from Outer Space* (1988) and, a year before *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* was released, *Fright Night* (1987), which seemed to riff on Elvira's direct predecessor, KCAL-TV's horror host Larry Vincent, featuring Roddy McDowall as Peter Vincent (also an amalgamation of Vincent Price and Peter Cushing), a washed up horror host who sets out to battle with real vampires. *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* was, if nothing else, on point for the times.

Central to the story is Elvira fighting for her right to follow her dreams and earn a living as a single independent woman. On her journey, she meets several sleazy men she is able to destroy with her sharp wit, and while she still advocates for her right to party and have sex with whomever she wants, she gets to defy the standard set out by the decade's slasher trend, to be a "bad girl" and win. This is something Theda Bara would never have been allowed to do. If you take into consideration that Peterson was also working in a male-

5 - McVicar, W Brice (2015) *The Evolution of Elvira*, pp 37-38. *Fangoria* Magazine, issue #344.

dominated genre which allowed for very few women to reach “icon” status, it becomes really quite remarkable. The actress said of Elvira:

I do know one thing: when I first started doing San Diego Comic-Con, it was in like, a basement of something at some hotel, and I swear to God, I'd be the only woman there. Maybe there'd be a couple of wives helping the comic-book guys set up, but otherwise it would be nothing but men. I love that, over the years, when I go to any big convention anywhere in the world, it has become 50/50 now. I'm really happy to see that change, and I hope I was somehow instrumental in it.⁶

Whatever you think of the film, her ability to tackle sexism in the industry, and yet still own her sexuality, is one thing you can't take away from Peterson or her creation. Admittedly the eighties did see the rise of the Scream Queen, with stars like Linnea Quigley, Brinke Stevens and Michelle Bauer working on the direct-to-video circuit, but Elvira was one of the first to set the tone. Just like her predecessors Sarah Bernhardt, Theda Bara and Maila Nurmi, she did it on her own terms. However, unlike them, and partly because of the cultural climate, she wasn't forced to compromise. She might carry a little part of each and every one of them, but, Elvira will always be very much her own woman. There has never been another like her since, nor is there ever likely to be: the one true Mistress of the Dark and ultimate Living Dead Girl.

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6 - Ibid p.38



MORE THAN JUST A GREAT SET OF BOOBS...

by Patterson Lundquist

When it comes to longevity, Elvira's *Mistress of the Dark* proves that her appeal is even more than a great pair of legs as well.

In retrospect, being a child in the 1980s was a thrilling time. MTV was in its adolescent years back when they still showed music videos. Edgy horror films were breaking box office records while terrifying audiences. When hilarious cinematic romps like *Ghostbusters* proved to Hollywood that horror could be funny and earn big bucks, the market for scary yet comical horror films began to grow. Television still signed-off late at night and there were barely more than thirty channels to choose from... That is if you had that new "pay" television service called "cable." For those who did, pubescent boys stared at the scrambled screens of adult cable channels in hopes of seeing an exposed breast... or more. For those who didn't have cable, we had Elvira. But it wasn't always that way.

You see, the "horror host" concept was born late one night long, long ago. Over the decades leading up to the era of Elvira, the horror hosting scene was populated across the United States. Most of the major cities had their own horror hosts at the local stations. After all, when studios licensed collections of films to local affiliates for broadcast they would receive a few romance films, some comedies, a western or two and a handful of B-grade (or worse) horror films. Since the local stations spent the cash for broadcast rights, they had to find some way to get viewers to watch the awful horror films that came in the package. The horror host was born. From every imaginable look and style, almost every local market from small town to big city had someone in a costume hosting films you'd never watch otherwise.

Then it happened. Somewhere between the dusk of 1983 and the dawn of 1984 a sultry vampish Valley Girl clad in all black with more hair and make-up than 10 women combined appeared on the national scene. She was as funny as she was sexy. Her sharp wit and sharper commentary on the lousy horror films she hosted made her an immediate success. Unsuspecting viewers across the United States found themselves becoming infatuated with the horror hostess Los Angeles had fallen in love with since her debut just a few years earlier in 1981. Before long "Elvira" was no longer a hidden gem of the local Los Angeles airwaves. As *Movie Macabre* began syndication across the United States, "Elvira" was no

longer just the title of a popular country song by the Oak Ridge Boys. Elvira was the name of a sexy, cool chick with big boobs and big hair that made all those old, bad movies worth suffering through.

Seemingly overnight Elvira was *everywhere*. Her slinky visage reached into liquor stores and grocery stores as the first “spooks-woman” for Coors Light. This pairing brought the character out of television screens and into stores. Sure, it may have just been cardboard stand-up, but people actually were said to have gotten into fights over who got to keep the cardboard Elvira stand-up after Halloween. Shelves were stacked full with Elvira costumes and accessories. Elvira’s Halloween merchandise became nearly equal to the bulk of all standard Halloween supplies! Elvira’s costume suddenly became the #1 best-selling women’s costume (and has remained in the top ranks ever since). Elvira’s commercials were on televisions nationwide during primetime hours; she made the talk show rounds, all while she stretched out comfortably in the evenings on her red velvet couch, cheesing it up for audiences nationwide. The leap from the small screen to the big screen was the next logical step.

A feature film may have been the obvious move, but how does one expand a character like Elvira to fill out an entire feature-length film? *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* plays on the idea that Elvira herself is indeed Elvira *as herself*. Not more than a few minutes into the film we are led to believe that we will see Elvira become more “normal.” Yet after a silly changing scene in her dressing room the curvaceous brunette vamp emerges from behind the dressing screen in, you guessed it... another black dress, identical to the one we all had come to love! In that brief moment it is established that Elvira is Elvira 24 hours a day, 7 days a week! It’s not just a costume she’s wearing. It’s not an act we’ve been watching on television all these years! This is just the way Elvira is, *all the time*. Much in the same vein as the 1960s television sitcom *The Munsters*, Elvira is from head-to-toe what situation comedy calls ‘a fish out of water.’ Elvira stands out in more ways than one... or two – wherever she is, whatever she does. In fact Elvira identifies this in the film – “my appearance is kind of a shock to everybody.” Even though the film relies heavily on Elvira’s ample assets, outrageous outfit and over-the-top hair and makeup, it is her quick wit and often childlike playfulness that endears her to the audience.

When Elvira isn’t drawing gasps from her appearance, her innuendo and liberal use of double entendre carries her comedy right up to the edge of indecent without crossing the line. One of Elvira’s most endearing traits is that she *seems* oblivious of the double meaning behind a majority of her one-liners. However, just when you start to think Elvira couldn’t be that clueless she reveals she’s in on the joke with a sly smile or wink. Indeed, she’s not merely in on the jokes, she’s doing them on purpose. It’s been debated since the film’s

release that die-hard fans of *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* may have felt let-down by the lack of overt sexuality in the film. It’s true that a very modest – even for the time – striptease segment revealed merely a silhouette of Elvira’s bare bountiful cleavage. Cassandra Peterson has stated at various times long since the film debuted that it was never her intention to take Elvira into ‘R’ rated territory. It was a choice that has allowed the film and Elvira herself to enjoy a wider fan base for decades.

While the humour is bawdy and the sight-gags are in copious amount, the light-hearted tone of the film is retained in even the craziest of situations. Combining the built-in appeal of Elvira with the situations she encounters does require the suspension of disbelief for modern audiences. Yet when considering the context of the late 1980s it simply works. That being said, Cassandra has confirmed that she was not happy that the studio (NBC Studios) was convinced that the only way to appeal to a teenage demographic would require that the film included teenage supporting characters. This was something Cassandra Peterson has stated numerous times she didn’t agree with and fought against initially. In retrospect, however, she admits it still worked really well.

While modern films seem tangled up in the process of explaining the history of a character, *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* does it effortlessly and without eating up too much screen time. This is achieved by the fact Elvira was already well established in American mainstream pop culture. Just about anyone you asked had either seen her show on television, watched an interview, noticed a cardboard display in a store, read about her in a magazine or wore her costume on Halloween. With Elvira so well established, only a few scattered moments throughout the film were needed to create a foundation upon which viewers would accept the existence of such a wild character. This allowed the film to rely on what viewers already knew; Elvira is smart, funny, sexy and can take care of herself. When she’s not dodging the advances of sleazy guys, she’s wooing the local hunk. While juggling her creepy uncle Vincent she’s finding a way to make ends meet. The entire time she’s coping with the town busy-body Chastity Pariah, while effortlessly captivating the teenagers who have never seen anyone like her before in their uptight small town.

When you combine these elements into one film, you have a winning combination. With comedy utilizing innuendo, paired with continual sight-gags, the audiences are kept in stitches. Adding just enough sexual tension between the sultry siren and the local hunk creates a comical cat-and-mouse scenario with Elvira playing the aforementioned cat. Put in a pinch of the spooky macabre with a zap of a supernatural threat and a power struggle to even the playing field with her great uncle Vincent. Drop it all into a location in stark contrast to the steamy star for amusing visuals. Round it all up by establishing a roster of supporting characters who both loathe the heroine and secretly envy her.



Lastly, represent all the local youth rallying in support when things get rough. When all gears are turning the film is a surprising success. Why surprising? Even in 1988 it was a far stretch to imagine that a horror hostess who had been limited to a small television box late at night could carry an entire feature-length motion picture. Yet Elvira did it with finesse and a sense of effortlessness that remains evident even to this day.

So the question after so many years remains: How come *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* wasn't the box office blockbuster it should have been? There have been a variety of opinions floating around over the years that have implied that it was a lack of interest in the titular character. Some have wondered if she was well-known enough to carry a theatrical release. Others suggest the climate of the United States was far too focused on "purity" and that parents wouldn't allow their children to see that kind of film. It is in my own, not-so-humble opinion that the falling flat of the film rests entirely on the financial collapse of New World Pictures.

Just as distribution of the film had begun the company's weak financial stability had already begun to crumble. Essentially, the money that would have put reels of *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* in all the major theatre markets in the United States suddenly was gone. Quite literally – and as Cassandra Peterson has stated multiple times – "You can't be number one nationwide regardless of how good you are if you're only in a few theatres. If you're not in 3,500 theatres it doesn't matter if you're number one in 350 theatres, which it was. Elvira was number one in every theatre she was in. Elvira was beating *Gorillas in the Mist* for crap's sake! *Gorillas in the Mist* was in more theatres though, so there was just no chance for Elvira to succeed in the box office with New World going under during distribution. She never had a chance."

While critical reviews were mixed, audiences loved the film. I vividly remember hearing children at school talking about the movie. In fact, a girl in my class came to school just after the premiere wearing a black leather studded bracelet she was given when she saw the film on opening night. I and a few other kids in our class were excited about seeing the movie. At the time none of us knew what was happening behind the scenes. Namely, New World Pictures had gone under. When my mother and I headed to the theatre a week or so later, *Elvira* was no longer showing. It would feel like a century before I saw the movie on television when it was broadcast in July of 1991 on NBC. Since I had missed it on the big screen I was thrilled to finally watch it. The fact that *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* was broadcast on NBC in primetime with the tassel twirling scene intact completely debunks the idea that the failure of the film was because people thought Elvira was too sexy. Anyone who suggests that either wasn't alive during the time or didn't live in the United States.

As time has revealed, regardless of critical reviews and box office numbers, *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark* has withstood the test of time. Often history reveals that the hidden gems of the past are not appreciated until years later. In the time since the film's initial release, it has slowly worked its way across the globe. Over the decades the film's fan base has grown exponentially. What dedicated Elvira fans hold dear has become the means for Elvira gaining new legions of fans. The careful crafting of Elvira's persona in the film has served a greater purpose for many people in terms far more significant than Cassandra Peterson has admitted she ever thought possible.

To the casual observer, Elvira is a horror-loving, sexy smart-mouth with an addiction to make-up, hairspray and corny jokes. Even this many years later, Elvira is trapped in a celluloid time paradox from a bygone era where social extroversion and personal excess clashed with what some have described as mainstream 1980s conservatism. Elvira is from a period of time where the public ideals of acceptable behaviour and personal appearance were more important than a person's actual character and accountability. This is made perfectly clear by how famous Elvira has become *and remained*.

While there are those who may outwardly recoil from Elvira, oftentimes they inwardly embrace her. Elvira's ability to be sexy and smart, sharp yet sweet, vulnerable though strong gives her the ability to drift like a delicate mist into the thorny depths of the most repressed person. Simply put, even with all of her outrageousness, Elvira *is* relatable. Her strong points are either ours or ones we – as fans and non-fans alike – admire. Elvira marches to the beat of her own drum, she is her own person. Elvira needs no one to validate her. Elvira needs no one to save her in times of trouble. Elvira is different; she knows it and embraces it. She's Elvira – like fake fruit, she doesn't bruise that easy. Simply put, she's Elvira and she's doing just fine.

For anyone who may still question her success, they need only to look at the crowds she still draws and the faces of those who admire her. Elvira's fans hail from all walks of life. For corporate executives she represents a savvy entrepreneur who built her own empire. For small business owners, she represents perseverance in spite of the "machine." From the single ladies to the housewives she embodies strength in the face of feminist obstacles. From young children to grandmothers she shines as a sparkle of ageless youth and carefree spirit. From gay men to straight men she represents the image of ideal female individuality; she's the woman they want, or the woman they want to be more like.

For me, a dedicated fan, she is the woman who taught me to have the guts to be true to myself.

What started for me as a costume on Halloween turned into a “job” as an Elvira look-alike, which I had for a number of years. It was a job that carried me to Hollywood at Cassandra Peterson’s request to work alongside her, dressed as Elvira on television. I look back on the first handful of twenty years in Elvira “drag” as training for being true to myself. As a self-conscious kid well into my late teens, what I felt I couldn’t say or do, I *could do* and say *as Elvira*. Walking out into public as Elvira showed me that it really doesn’t matter what other people think of you. The revelation of this fact remained inside me long after the costume and makeup came off. Elvira’s self-confidence served as a voice in my mind whenever I began to doubt myself. Even to this day I hear an echo of her voice in moments when I feel slightly self-conscious.

As I write this, it has been quite a while since I put “Elvira” back on and I do not know if, or when, I will again. Yet, the core message of Elvira’s character remains with me. She truly revealed something to me that has never left my heart. It’s something we all need to know about ourselves. It’s something that I hope everyone realizes sooner rather than later.

“I am me. Take it or leave it. Either way, I’ll be just fine.”

For that, Cassandra Peterson, I will forever thank you.

Patterson Lundquist is an actor, producer and director as well as the world’s leading Elvira impersonator. He co-starred alongside Cassandra “Elvira” Peterson at her request on her 2007 FOX Reality Series The Search for the Next Elvira, as a judge and make-up artist for the finalists. Since then he has gone on to work in association with other notable actors such as Tippi Hedren, Loni Anderson and Dee Wallace. He is also the exclusive social media manger and e-commerce designer for entertainment icon Barbara Eden of I Dream of Jeannie.







ABOUT THE RESTORATION

Elvira: Mistress of the Dark has been exclusively restored by Arrow Films and is presented in its original aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with stereo audio.

An original 35mm interpositive was scanned in 2K resolution at Deluxe/EFilm, Burbank. The film was graded on Digital Vision's Nucoda Film Master and restored at R3Store Studios in London. The original stereo mix was remastered by Lakeshore Entertainment.

All materials for this restoration were made available by Mike Lechner/Lakeshore Entertainment.

Restoration supervised by James White, Arrow Films

R3Store Studios: Gerry Gedge, Jo Griffin, Andrew O'Hagan, Rich Watson, Jenny Collins

PRODUCTION CREDITS

Disc and Booklet Produced by **Ewan Cant, Sven Thomas Weber**

Executive Producers **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**

Technical Producer **James White**

QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**

Blu-ray Mastering & Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**

Artist **Sara Deck**

Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

Alex Agran, Jason Buckley, James Chandler, Roland Feliciano, Sam Irvin, Michael Krueger, Patterson Lundquist, Shade Rupe, James Signorelli and Tony Timpone.





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