

Night Of The Hunter

We recently came upon an old horror movie (1955) called [Night of the Hunter](#). And if you've noticed, I don't really write movie reviews anymore – I watch a lot of movies and there is too much other stuff going on in my life... but Night of the Hunter is surprisingly intriguing for a black-and-white horror flick, so I want to recommend it.



In Night of the Hunter, a little kid named Johnny is left with an incredibly adult responsibility when his father is arrested for robbing a bank and killed in prison – Johnny must now take care of his little sister Pearl and hide the stolen money – never to tell anyone where it is. Johnny's father talks in his sleep in prison, and his insane cellmate learns of the money and the kids. The cellmate, played by Robert Mitchum, dons the personality of a preacher and manages to charm the children's mother into making him their new stepfather, even though he is only interested in the hidden treasure. What follows is a riveting cat-and-mouse game between the children and the bad guy, and while old-fashioned, the movie managed to become quite an intriguing horror / suspense film. I would share the trailer since they have it on youtube, but apparently the producers were attempting to attract a different type of audience as the trailer plays up the very few sexual aspects of the film – which really isn't representative of the film at all; the trailer completely misrepresents the film and that's why I'm not going to show it. There was good acting, great directing, and talented camera shots and cinematography that really helped to heighten

the suspense. Some of the characters are incredibly old-fashioned (a friend of the childrens' mother tells her that she "can't raise those children without a man", suggesting that she find a man, ANY man to help her – this idea is completely irrelevant in today's society where single moms are commonplace), but it's easy and kind of fun to transport yourself back in time in order to sympathize and begin to understand the plight of these characters. The movie is set in the Depression era; a time when kids were often more of a financial burden than their parents could handle. In many cases, it was thought to be best for them if they were left to take care of themselves, often before they were teenagers. This aspect of the movie also explains Johnny's determination to take care of his little sister, as well as to explain other events in the movie that are best to be left unsaid here – I certainly don't want to spoil anything. Overall, Night of the Hunter is a riveting, classic horror movie experience that effectively transcends the decades-long gap between its release and modern horror movies – which all too often rely on blood, violence and gore to entertain.

After watching the movie, I looked up the actors on imdb.com, and I was surprised to learn that young Johnny is played by Peter Graves – a popular actor best known to me as Capt. Clarence Oveur in the Airplane! movies. It was quite novel to see him in a movie as a kid when I was familiar with his later-in-life acting roles... And I was also surprised to see that the childrens' mother was portrayed by the late Shelley Winters, an actress that I knew best as Roseanne's Nana Mary on the 90's sitcom Roseanne – no wonder I didn't recognize her nearly 40 years earlier!

And a final note – Night of the Hunter is based on a novel, one I will have to add to my 'books to read' list... er, make that my 'books to read if I ever finish the Harry Potter series' list. □