

# Nosferatu the Book

By Gerald Pratley

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THIS IS is a very curious novel, masquerading as a biography, about the German film director, F. W. Murnau, remembered for his legendary horror film, *Nosferatu* and his American classic, *Sunrise*. The author describes his book as "a work of imagination" and "an original life" and this leaves the reader wondering just what is true and what is invented. This is not without interest as we wander the streets and the UFA studios of Berlin during the twenties but how much is Murnau, and what is not, in conversations rendered and behaviour described, is open to question. In tones somewhat impressionistic in the German film tradition, Murnau remains shadowy and elusive.

## Also Recommended

*The Genius of the System; Hollywood Filmmaking in the Studio Era* by Thomas Schatz (Faber, \$35.00, 1998) and *"You Ain't Heard Nothing Yet" -- The American Talking Film History and Memory 1927-1949* -- by Andrew Sarris (Oxford University Press, N.Y., 1998, 573 pages, \$65.00) two revealing studies, the first impersonal, the second personal, of the history of business and art in American movies with two different views on the influence of the studio system

*Easy Riders, Raging Bulls: How the Sex-Drugs and Rock'n Roll Generation Saved Hollywood* by Peter Biskind (Simon and Schuster, N.Y. 1998, 506 pages, \$35.00)

We are left with doubts -- was Hollywood really saved and if so, was it worth the price looking at the films which came after? *So Close to the State/s* (The Emergence of Canadian Feature Film Policy) by Michael Dorland (University of Toronto Press, 1998, 199 pages, US\$19.95) is a painstaking piece of research in assessing the various stages of government support for the making of feature films. Well written with a wide knowledge of what this now-complicated business has become, it leaves the reader wondering why so little has been achieved after so much money has been expended.

And for film students *The Newsroom: The Complete Scripts* by Ken Finkleman (McClelland & Stewart, Toronto, 352 pages, \$19.95) is just that -- every word from the thirteen episodes of the over-rated series which lampooned the staff of a CBC-like news programme.

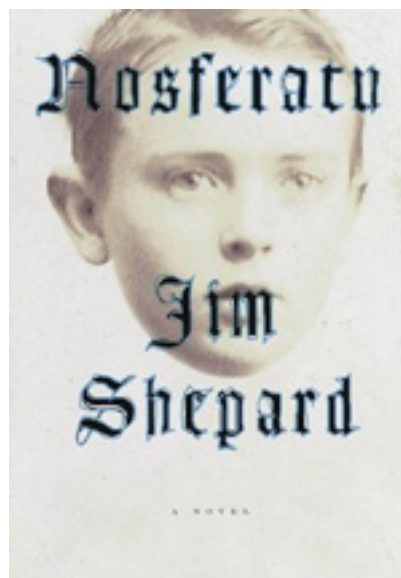


Figure 1: **TITLE:** *NOSFERATU* ¶ **AUTHOR:** Jim Shepard ¶ **PUBLISHER:** Alfred Knopf, 1998, 215pp.

## Author Information

Gerald PRATLEY, OC, LLD, started his career as film critic with the CBC. In 1969, he founded the Ontario Film Institute which he directed until 1990. He has written several books and numerous articles on film, including *Torn Sprockets*, a history of Canadian cinema. He taught Film History in universities in Toronto and Waterloo, Canada and holds three honorary degrees from Canadian and US universities.

**Gerald A. Pratley** (1923-2011) was born and educated in London, England, and came to Canada in 1946. He started working in Toronto for the CBC as a scriptwriter. He was drawn toward working in motion pictures, and became, in 1948, the CBC's first film critic and commentator.

Gerald Pratley broadcast three programmes a week, *Pratley at the Movies*, *The Movie Scene*, *Music From the Films*, and others, until 1975. During this time he also became the first post-war chairman of the Toronto Film Society, chairman of the Toronto and District Film Council and co-founder of the A-G-E Film Society and correspondent for international magazines such as *Films and Filming*, *Film In Review*, *Variety*, *Hollywood Quarterly* and *International Film Guide*. During the 1950s he wrote for *Canadian Film Weekly* and *Canadian Film Digest*.

He became known as a speaker on all aspects of motion picture art and industry, and was invited to teach film history at the University of Toronto, York University, University of Waterloo, Seneca College and Ryerson Polytechnical University, with individual lectures being given at many other Canadian and US universities and colleges. He has served as a member of various judging panels of competitions and festivals, being one of the members of the first Canadian Film Awards in 1949.

From 1970 to 1975 he was the director of the Stratford (Ontario) International Film Festival, and from 1969 to 1976 he was Chairman of the International Jury of the Canadian Film Awards. He has attended all the world's leading festivals of film, and in particular, for 30 years, the Cannes Festival as CBC correspondent. He has written six books, *The Films of Frankenheimer: Forty Years in Film*; *The Cinema of John Frankenheimer*; *The Cinema of Otto Preminger*; *The Cinema of David Lean*; *The Cinema of John Huston*, and *Torn Sprockets*, a history of the Canadian cinema.

Gerald Pratley has served on the Advisory Boards of the film departments of Ryerson Polytechnical University and Humber College, and as a member of the programme committee of TV Ontario. In 1968 he became the founder-director of the Ontario Film Institute of the Province of Ontario, an organization which has distinguished itself in archival holdings and public service and is known since 1990 as the Cinematheque of Ontario. He taught Film History courses at the Department of Film and Photography, Ryerson Polytechnic University, Toronto and the University of Waterloo.

In 1984, Gerald Pratley was made a Member of the Order of Canada and in 2003 **Officer of the Order of Canada** for his service to Canada through film appreciation. He holds Honorary Degrees in Letters and Fine Arts from York and Waterloo Universities (Ont., Canada) and Bowling Green State University (Ohio, USA).

In 2002, Gerald Pratley received a **Special Genie Award** from the Academy of Canadian Cinema & Television in recognition of his lifelong dedication to the promotion and his exceptional support of Canadian cinema.

He died on 14 March 2011 in Ontario, Canada.