

This Bite Hits the Mark

By

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Along with the Brat Pack movies, vampire fare ruled the 80s. These include *The Lost Boys*, *Fright Night*, *Vamp*, *Near Dark*, and *Vampire's Kiss*. But the best – and most influential – bite flick from that decade is Tony Scott's *The Hunger* (1983), which was recently released on DVD.

Set in modern-day New York City, *The Hunger* is based on Whitley Strieber's (*Communion: A True Story*, *The Wolfen*) eponymous novel. Catherine Deneuve and David Bowie are ultra-chic, well-off vampires not affected by sunlight. But after 200 years of blood-tied bliss, he suddenly begins to age rapidly. So Deneuve consults with a renowned specialist (Sarandon) to stop his accelerated aging. But Sarandon is unsuccessful, and Deneuve cruises for a new mate.

The Hunger has many notable firsts. In his first Hollywood effort, Scott (*Top Gun*, *Beverly Hills Cop II*) skillfully leads the name and future stars through the shaky script. Willem Dafoe (who later played a bloodsucker in *Shadow of the Vampire*) is a small-time hood, and Ann Magnuson and her lover are club denizens seduced by Bowie and Deneuve in the chilling opening sequence. (The club band is Bauhaus, playing its classic "Bela Lugosi's Dead.")

Scott's approach with *The Hunger* is radically different from other directors of 80s vampire films. He does not make it campy and overly violent. And he deftly mixes deliberate pacing, sumptuous ambiance, mesmerizing music, and snappy visuals to create a highly stylized dread. Along with the opening, the sequence that best exemplifies these elements is Deneuve's sly seduction of Sarandon and their sensuous, believable lesbian encounter.

A critical and box-office dud, *The Hunger* is now a justly revered 80s cult classic. With its stylish suspense, scares, and erotic bite, Scott and his stellar cast hit a horror high.