

The Impact of French Extremity on Global Horror Cinema

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The New French Extremity

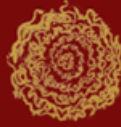
Source - Youtube Screenshots/Horror Movie Syllabus (All images are used for reference)



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New French Extremity was a movement that pushed the boundaries of global horror in the 2000s with its graphic violence, taboo themes, and innovative storytelling. It inspired a wave of transgressive and challenging horror films worldwide. It demonstrated the power of extreme cinema to provoke strong reactions and challenge audiences. It served as a cultural reflection of France's tumultuous history and its ongoing struggles with identity and morality. By engaging with extreme content, these films challenge viewers to confront uncomfortable truths about society, prompting discussions about violence, gender, and the human condition. This cinematic movement, therefore, not only reflects the specific historical and political context of its emergence but also critiques the very structures that contributed to the crises faced by contemporary France.

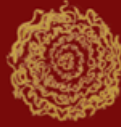
The New French Extremity was distinguished by its explicit representations of violence, sexuality, and forbidden subjects. It used to include uncompromising depictions of violence, frank sexuality, and the exploration of dark, taboo ideas. The films challenge traditional attitudes and push the limits of what is acceptable on screen. They engage in a profound thematic investigation of problems like morality, identity, and nihilism. These films' violent material and forbidden issues have sparked major debate, both acclaim and criticism, for their desire to shock and confront audiences (Cinema Waves Blog, n.d.).



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Horror movie remakes: Shot From *Let Me In* (2010) on the left and *Let The Right One In* (2008) on the right

Source - CBR

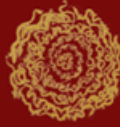
It is known to everyone that if a movie is getting very popular or even is getting very popular, there is a very good chance that it will be getting remade in other countries. Maybe it will be made with a bigger budget than the original, or it may be a more stylized version of the movie. However, in the case of the films from the New French Extremity, the films get often toned down as they are way over the top with blood, gore, and violence in the first place. The French cinema did not hold back from getting graphic visuals to the screen, which range from watching a man get his face blown off by a gunshot to even cutting open a pregnant woman's body with a pair of scissors while she is still alive. And yes, both scenes are from the same movie, *Inside* (2007), directed by Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo. And this is just one example of the raw violence in the movies from New French Extremity.



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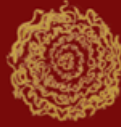


A shot from *Inside* (2007)
Source - Bloody Disgusting



A shot from *Inside* (2017)
Source - Bloody Disgusting





In 2017, *Inside* (2007) received a remake by the same name. Even though the remake addressed the similar themes of obsession and revenge as the original, it was less graphic in the imagery (Tommy Lethbridge, 2024). One can understand that movies are made for profit also, and if there is any content that is simply not for normal folks to watch during happy hours, it means monetary loss for the producers and crew involved. But that does not mean they should mean for audiences to miss out on the thrill and adrenaline rush of the tense hour.



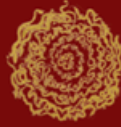
Shots from *Martyrs* (2008)

Source - IMDB and Vocal Media



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Another very violent film from the New French Extremity is *Martyrs* (2008). It follows two young ladies, Lucie and Anna, who are tormented beyond death (as strange as it may sound, but really). The plot of the movie revolves around 2 girls who are trapped by a secret society and are subjected to extreme torture in their quest to know what happens in the afterlife. The film is known for its nonlinear narrative structure, fragmented plot, and immersive, confrontational style that challenges societal norms and moral boundaries. It explores dark themes of morality, identity, and existentialism (S.K. Sapiano, 2023).



Shots from *Martyrs* (2015)

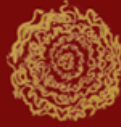
Source - IMDB



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It was inevitable that one of the most violent and brutal films ever made would receive an American remake. It was released in 2015. However, it was pretty much impossible to recreate something as raw as the original. Both films revolve around a sadistic cult and their quest to learn about the afterlife, the remake feels too bland and tamer compared to its original counterpart (Tommy Lethbridge, 2024).



Shot from film - *Suicide Club* (2001)

Source - Monkeys Fighting Robots



Shot from the film - *Tokyo Gore Police* (2008)

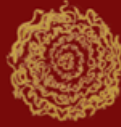
Source - Monkeys Fighting Robots



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The French extremity cinema is also credited with sparking a broader "New Extremity" or "Extreme Cinema" movement that spread to other countries, including the "Asia Extreme" films from directors in Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong. The graphic depictions of violence and transgressive themes in New French Extremity films influenced the rise of other extreme horror subgenres in Hollywood and beyond. The movement's daring approach and desire to push boundaries have left an indelible impression on future generations of French filmmakers, pushing the frontiers of what is permitted on screen. The New French Extremity's emphasis on the body, abjection, and the examination of forbidden issues spawned a broader movement in "body films" and subversive art filmmaking across Europe (Museum of Arts and Design, n.d.).



Lars Von Trier

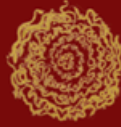
Source - The Guardian



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Gaspar Noé

Source - Variety

Directors from various countries have drawn inspiration from the movement's willingness to explore taboo subjects and challenge cinematic conventions. The graphic style and thematic depth of New French Extremity films can be seen in works by filmmakers such as Lars von Trier and Gaspar Noé, who incorporate similar elements of transgression and discomfort in their narratives (Cinema Waves Blog, n.d.).

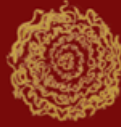
The New French Extremity has significantly influenced global horror cinema, introducing a distinctive style characterized by graphic violence, explicit sexuality, and a focus on the human body. This movement, which emerged in the late 1990s and early 2000s, reflects broader societal anxieties and challenges conventional storytelling, resonates with audiences worldwide. The New French Extremity has left a lasting mark on global horror cinema, reshaping the genre through its graphic content, thematic depth, and cultural critique. Its influence continues to resonate, encouraging filmmakers to explore the boundaries of horror and the complexities of human experience.



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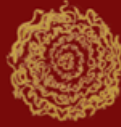


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