

# Fascination

France | 1979 | 88 minutes

## Credits

**Director** Jean Rollin  
**Screenplay** Jean Rollin  
**Photography** Georgie Fromentin  
**Music** Philippe d' Aram

## Cast

**Elisabeth** Franca Maï  
**Eva** Brigitte Lahaie  
**Marc** Jean-Marie Lemaire  
**Hélène** Fanny Magier

## In Brief

After stiffing his outlaw brethren from their cut of a purse of gold coins, a thief seeks refuge from the pistol wielding gang in a near by chateau. Outwardly abandoned, the bandit promptly discovers that the residence is in fact occupied by two young ladies in waiting. Both Elisabeth and Eva have arrived days before the rest of the staff and appear to quite enjoy being alone in the large, empty estate. The two ladies roll out the welcome mat for the cornered thief, yielding to any and all of his requests in an attempt to keep their unexpected visitor from departing before sundown. Intrigued and in no rush to leave the castle until night can provide appropriate cover, the crook is informed of an impending social gathering that is to take place at midnight and where death herself is scheduled to appear as the guest of honor.

[www.dvddrive-in.com](http://www.dvddrive-in.com)

Some find the experience of tasting blood to be exciting, sexually arousing, and empowering. A condition known as “clinical vampirism” is an obsession for consuming blood due to a belief in its ability to grant life enhancing vitality. Given the awareness of this vampiric tendency in some, it’s not surprising that history is filled with unsolved murders of victims who appear to have been killed under conditions strongly suggestive of vampirism. Jean Rollin’s 1979 opus, *Fascination*, is an interesting and bewitching take on the idea of craving blood that is coupled with the director’s superior visual style and erotic nature.

Jean Rollin’s *FASCINATION* is an intriguing tale set in 1905 that begins with mesmerizing visuals that captivate and draw the viewer in, before the story unfolds. At the start, we are treated to the lovely sight of an antique phonograph set on a bridged pathway over a body of water where two women in white (Brigitte Lahaie and Franca Mai) are enjoying a ballroom style dance. Elsewhere on a different day in a bloody butcher house, high society women in fancy dress stand around and participate in the “latest fashion” of drinking ox blood as a therapy for anemia, which I felt to be an interesting take on vampirism, and it also feels like a mockery of sorts for wine tasting clubs. The beautiful but grim sight of these ladies drinking blood from a wine glass standing in a pool of blood is a darkly poetic visual done in a way only Rollin could and is an image that will stick with you forever.

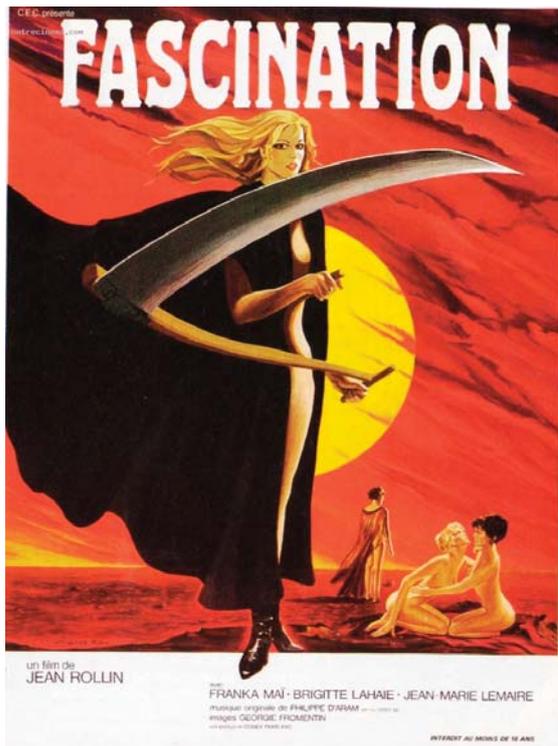
The unfortunate protagonist of the story, Marc (Jean-Marie Lemaire), is a well-dressed swindler fleeing from a group of bandits after double crossing them and making off with a bounty of gold. The pursuit leads him to take cover in the same chateau where the lovely maidens from before were enjoying a dance on the water bridge.

Here is where the bulk of the film takes place, a beautiful chateau amidst a picturesque setting of fog, water, and winter trees, with a long water bridge that serves as the only way in and the only way out. The doom themed music reverberating during Marc’s flight, as he draws ever closer to the mansion, definitely suggests that he is headed to a far more deadly destination. The situation Marc ultimately finds himself in at the chateau is a lot of fun and very interesting, and it also proves that the film is not just excellent eye candy but a great story as well.



After searching around the chateau’s very nicely decorated Gothic interior, he comes across 2 women in white, Eva and Elisabeth (Lahaie and Mai), who claim to be cleaning and preparing the chateau before the owners return from Paris. Being the man with the gun, he immediately takes over and locks the 2 ladies up so he can count his gold and think of a plan for losing his enemies outside. It should be obvious that there is a lot more to Eva and Elisabeth than meets the eye, because they somehow manage to have fun with their current situation.

Outside the chateau the bandits bide their time choosing not to



enter and wait until nightfall. It may seem odd that they don't go in after him, but it's best to go with the fact that they are just awaiting the right moment to strike.

After Marc locks Eva and Elisabeth up in one of the Chateau's rooms, Elisabeth grabs a key hidden under a decorative fabric and shows it to Eva, and they laugh as if this is just a silly game. Without any worry or regard for their current situation, they begin to kiss and caress each other before the pistol wielding swindler walks in and witnesses the endearing sight and smiles while proclaiming "I see that I don't frighten you anymore". They admirably respond to him in a sarcastic manner as he annoyingly slams the door. Apparently these ladies aren't going to let this guy ruin their fun, and the previous thought is continued as they embrace each other in a wonderful dim lighted love scene, made quite relaxing with a lovely piano theme.

After being distracted a bit, the story is back under way as Marc enjoying the sight and feel of his gold is startled to get a kiss on the neck from behind by Eva, whom he believed to be locked up. "I just wanted to kiss you she says", as it's becoming apparent that these 2 captive maidens are starting to play some serious mind games with their captor. They ultimately take control of the situation with their cleverness and charm and shower the man with generosity by seducing him and allowing him the pleasure of having intercourse with Eva, who even marches outside afterwards and disposes of his enemies. This is by first fooling the bandits by offering them the gold bounty before offing them in style with a scythe while dressed as death. Why are these 2 being so generous to him? Is it to get the gold, or is it something far more sinister?

The film has been great so far, but the best is yet to come.

It turns out there is a reason they are keeping him there. Apparently the staff won't be coming back for another two days and another mysterious company is expected at nightfall. After recalling the women in the slaughter house at the beginning of the film, I can't help think that Marc may not be so lucky after all.

When night falls, a colorful set of visitors in visually appealing Gothic attire arrive, which is suspiciously suggestive of vampire mythology. Are they really vampires or just a strange cult of blood drinkers who may want to try something a little different than ox blood? The film never makes it clear, but I figure that was the intention.

The arrival of these classy bizarre guests as they cross the Chateau's water bridge is the turning point of the film and things begin to get real interesting since Marc is the only male amongst this female gathering. Now that it's one man and seven flirtatious young ladies apparently looking to have a good time, he decides to have fun and make the best of his current situation. I mean how often does this sort of thing happen? And even though he is suspicious of the strange scenario, he's not fully convinced that he's in any real danger at all. How events unfold from here, I'll leave for you to check out.

FASCINATION is a great film from Jean Rollin who's never disappointed me as far as the horror films are concerned. I found this film to be a goldmine for great screen grabs, and I personally believe that numerous frames in FASCINATION are great cinematographic works of art that should be displayed in some art museum. While it may not be groundbreaking, the story of Marc's strange escapades in a human mouse trap (figuratively speaking) is very entertaining. Sexy, funny, beautiful, atmospheric, brimming with mystery, and sort of creepy, Rollin's FASCINATION really has it all, and I honestly can't think of much reason to dislike it. RIP and thank you Mr. Rollin.

Giovanni Susina ([www.atthemansionofmadness.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.atthemansionofmadness.blogspot.co.uk))

EDINBURGH  
FILM  
GUILD

Le Fantastique