Corman, Roger (1926-) Encyclopedia Article

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Corman, Roger (1926—)

The king of "B" movies, Roger Corman has produced and/or directed more than two hundred films, half of which have made a profit. After graduating from Stanford with an engineering degree, Corman went into the movie business, working his way up from messenger boy to screenwriter. After a studio tampered with his first screenplay, he decided to produce his own films. *The Monster from the Ocean Floor* (1954) established the Corman formula, as noted in *Baseline*'s *Encyclopedia of Film:* "Quirky characters; offbeat plots laced with social commentary, clever use of special effects, sets, and cinematography; employment of fresh talent; and above all, minuscule budgets (under $100,000) and breakneck shooting schedules (5-10 days)." Corman's movies, such as *The Little Shop of Horrors, Machine Gun Kelly,* and the six Edgar Allan Poe pictures starring Vincent Price, became instant cult classics in the 1950s and 1960s. Always quick to spot and sponsor talent, Corman formed his own production company, which became a training ground for such A-list directors and actors as Francis Ford Coppola, Martin Scorsese, Jonathan Demme, Jack Nicholson, Robert De Niro, and Dennis Hopper. With his eye for talent, knack for business, and willingness to take risks, Roger Corman made low-budget movies a staple of American popular culture.

Further Reading:

Arkoff, Samuel Z., and Richard Trubo. *Flying through Hollywood by the Seat of My Pants.* New York, Birch Lane Press, 1992.

Corman, Roger, and Jim Jerome. *How I Made a Hundred Movies in Hollywood and Never Lost a Dime.* New York, DaCapo Press, 1998.

Monaco, James, and the editors of *Baseline. Encyclopedia of Film.* New York, Perigee, 1991.