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or those of us who are veteran movie buffs and confirmed Late Show addicts, the phrase "vampire movie"

means something very specific: a set of images and a storyline that we've seen in movie after movie and that remain almost unchanged from the best movie to the worst. However, for director Joel Schumacher, stars Dianne Wiest, Corey Haim and Kiefer Sutherland and for the people at Warner Brothers, the phrase "vampire movie" means something quite different these days. It means **The Lost Boys** — a different set of images and a storyline so far removed from the traditional mold that it has the potential to surprise and frighten even the most jaded vampire fan.

You see, up until now, virtually every vampire movie has been the same vampire movie. Ever since Max Schreck slithered across the screen in the 1922 classic *Nosferatu* the movies have been giving us remake after remake of *Dracula*. Whatever the title, if the ad said "vampire", we knew we could expect to see the Count, suave and sinister; his mad henchperson; his creaking castle; the Good Woman he lusts after and the Strong Young Man and Wise Old Doctor who oppose him. From time to time some element might be changed or updated — remember what *Fright Night* did to the Wise Old Doctor in the guise of Roddy McDowall? — but the characters, the atmosphere and the familiar, satisfying storyline seldom wavered. No wonder we vampire fans think we've seen it all.

But we haven't seen anything like **The Lost Boys** promises. In place of the Count in his castle in Transylvanian never-never land, we have the **Lost Boys** themselves, a gang of ragged, homeless youths living on the edges of contemporary California society. In place of the traditional set of good guys, we have the 1980s version of the nuclear family — a single mother and her two teenage sons living in a small beach town with grandfather while they try to start a new life. In place of the Count's unholy lusts, we have the gang's attraction to the family group and its plans to take control through the older son's romantic interest in the **Lost Boy's** sole female member.

When Bela Lugosi brought *Dracula* to the screen in 1933, it was seen as a fable of European decadence versus American vigor and that's been the tone for vampire films ever since. **The Lost Boys**, however, seems to center on a more contemporary conflict; the battle between the family and the street gang, between the home and the mall culture. It's a conflict that could give **The Lost Boys** something almost unheard of in horror films — social relevance.

But social relevance or no social



Kiefer Sutherland portrays David, the charismatic leader

# THE LOST BOYS



Jamie Jamison, Corey Haim and Corey Feldman

relevance, a horror movie is nothing without its shudders and thrills and **The Lost Boys** has been put together by a cast and production team with ample talent to do the job. Producer Richard Donner himself directed 1987's top thriller so far, *Lethal Weapon*, and his partner, Harvey Bernhard, wrote the original treatment for *The Omen* and produced all three of the phenomenally successful series.

Director Joel Schumacher wrote a trio of comedies and directed two more before coming to mass popular and critical acclaim with the more serious *St. Elmo's Fire*, a film which established him as one of Hollywood's most promising young directors.

The cast is equally strong, from

the legendary Broadway star Barnard Hughes as the grandfather to Oscar-nominee Dianne Wiest as the beleaguered mother. Wiest has already displayed her skills at physical acting as the battered wife in *Independence Day* and her talent for timing in *Hannah and Her Sisters*. Her role in **The Lost Boys** will call forth both sides of her talent to bring credibility to an essentially fantastic situation.

But the plum role in any vampire film goes to the vampire. Kiefer Sutherland has already displayed his talents in unsympathetic roles as the town bully in *Stand By Me*, while in the 1985 Genie award-winning *The Bay Boy* he showed what he could do with a sympathetic, sensitive boy on the verge of

manhood. Sympathy and hatefulness are apparent in all the classic screen vampires, from Max Schreck in 1922 to Frank Langella in 1978. But without the tradition of the Count to draw on, Sutherland, whose presence more than slightly recalls his father's, will have to find new means of bringing life to the undead.

But bringing new life to the vampire seems to be what **The Lost Boys** is all about and that, despite the Count's deserved and enduring popularity, will be a very welcome change.

— Andrew Dowler

