# Art/porn classic Café Flesh to be re-released



The 1982 film "Café Flesh," directed by Stephen Sayadian under the pseudonym Rinse Dream, is set to make a notable return, being re-released in a newly restored print. The film, a surreal post-apocalyptic tale, explores themes of intimacy and alienation in a world ravaged by a nuclear event known as "the Nuclear Kiss," which has rendered 99% of the population unable to experience intimacy without suffering nausea, forcing the remaining 1% — the "Sex Positives" — to perform for a jaded audience known as the "Sex Negatives."

Originally released in 1982, "Café Flesh" struggled to find an audience, receiving a largely negative reception during its initial run. However, it gained traction within the midnight movie circuit, where cult classics like "The Rocky Horror Picture Show" and "Eraserhead" flourished. Notably, cultural figures such as Hunter S. Thompson and Frank Zappa praised the film, and contemporary artists like Vera Drew cite its influence on their work. Drew, an award-winning director, commented: “I will be rewatching this movie (and probably ripping it off) for the rest of my life.”

Set against a backdrop of 1980s tensions, including a looming nuclear threat and the early years of the AIDS crisis, “Café Flesh” is characterised by unconventional production design. Sayadian, now 71, remarked in an interview that the film reflects on the “golden age of Hollywood” while simultaneously subverting traditional pornographic tropes. He describes the film as embodying “the structure of pornography” akin to classic musicals, with disjointed narratives punctuated by musical interludes.

In discussing his creative process, Sayadian revealed that the film's distinctive visual style and narrative choices stemmed from his previous experiences at the counter-culture magazine Hustler, where he created satirical adverts. His first foray into filmmaking was the $60,000 production "Nightdreams," but "Café Flesh" escalated this ambition with a budget of $90,000 and a filming schedule of just ten days.

The unconventional nature of “Café Flesh” extended to its portrayal of sexual encounters, which defied genre expectations. Sayadian opted for a rapid transition from clothing to explicit close-ups, effectively underscoring the film’s themes of alienation and the lack of genuine intimacy among the Sex Positives. “Whenever the actors got passionate, I’d stop the take,” he explained, aiming to convey a world where desire is no longer fulfilling or pleasurable.

Viewer reception has varied greatly over the years. Jane Giles, who was instrumental in programming screenings of the film at the Scala cinema in the late 1980s, recalled the film’s initially controversial run, saying, “After that first run in 1986, it was withdrawn from exhibition because local councils were getting queasy about showing films that didn’t have BBFC certificates.” However, when it was reinstated for screenings, audiences flocked to see it, often forming long queues.

Critics initially struggled to categorise "Café Flesh," leading to mixed reviews. The film was seen by some as an affront to traditional pornography, earning it a swift dismissal from commercial cinemas shortly after its release. Sayadian noted the confusion of financiers who had not fully grasped the film's intent before production began, leading to an unexpectedly intense reaction to its thematic content and representation of sexuality.

Despite the divisive opinions surrounding its explicit material, "Café Flesh" has garnered recognition for its artistic statements, offering commentary on societal issues of the era while maintaining a narrative core that resonates beyond conventional pornography. The film's resurgence with a restored print raises questions about its reception in contemporary culture, as attitudes towards explicit material continue to evolve.

As the film prepares to re-enter the public consciousness, it will be interesting to observe how new audiences interpret its unique blend of sex, societal critique, and creative vision. Jane Giles expressed some uncertainty about the film's reception today, suggesting that audiences might find elements of it surprising but intriguing, particularly the depictions that characterise the film's style.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.tapatalk.com/groups/monsterkidclassichorrorforum/cafe-flesh-4k-from-mondo-macabre-t95745.html> - This URL supports the claim of 'Café Flesh' being re-released in a newly restored print, specifically mentioning a 4K restoration by Mondo Macabre. It also touches on the film's unique nature and its cult following.
* <https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0083707/> - IMDb provides information about the film, including its release date, cast, and plot, which corroborates details about the story of 'Café Flesh' and its setting in a post-apocalyptic world.