

Cat's Eye

US : 1985 : dir. Lewis Teague
 : Famous Films / Dino de Laurentis / M.G.M / United Artists : 93 min
 prod: Martha J Schumacher : scr: Stephen King : dir.ph.: Jack Cardiff
[Drew Barrymore](#)
 James Woods; Alan King; Kenneth McMillan; Robert Hays; Candy Clark; James Naughton;
 Patricia Kalember; Charles Dutton

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*Has fame got a few surprises in store for **you**, my lady.*
Source: Rating the Movies

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 2001 review:

"Trio of heavy-handed Stephen King stories, short on irony, long on mean-spiritedness. Shot in J-D-C Scope. *1/2 "

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"Three semi-horror stories linked by a cat. This omnibus is weak in every department."

"It creeps in on foggy feet" - **Variety**

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
 review:

"Horror anthologies are not easy to pull off, but this trio of Stephen King yarns should keep fans of the macabre purring contentedly. Episodes deal with (1) A chain smoker trying to filter his problem away through a smoke prevention clinic, (2) a crooked gambler who bets his wife's lover he can't walk around a tiny ledge twenty storeys up, and (3) a small fry whose bedroom is invaded by a property-wrecking troll

until her falsely accused pussycat puts his paw down and saves her. *** ”

The Time Out Film Guide review:

“Two short stories and an original screenplayette by Stephen King, linked by a stray catalyst pussyfooting to the rescue of Barrymore, who is being menaced by a toothy troll which patters out of the woodwork every night. *En route* to this episode, the moggy is catapulted into two other adventures: one about a firm employing unorthodox methods to persuade its clients to quit smoking, the other about a mobster getting a high-rise out of the discomfiture of his wife’s lover. This is King in skittenish mode, liable to induce catalepsy, but there is one sequence to treasure when the wonderful Woods, suffering from nicotine withdrawal, undergoes fag-filled hallucinations.”

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

“Writer Stephen King and director Lewis Teague, who brought us **"CUJO"**, reteam for this even better horror release: a trilogy of terror in the much-missed **"Night Gallery"** anthology style. It’s good, old-fashioned, tell-me-a-scary-story fun. Rated PG-13 for violence and gruesome scenes. ***1/2 ”

[no listing in "Speelfilm Encyclopedie", "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "Radio Times Guide to Films", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

One generally has different criteria of satisfaction from a cinema trip, a film on video, and a film watched on TV. By the first two counts this one certainly falls short of expectations, but it’s entertaining enough taken as a ninety-minute **"Twilight Zone"** edition, and better by far than the multi-director big screen spinoff of that name. The tone is similar to King’s other anthology **"CREEPSHOW"**, but without the overt creepiness, or the awful comic cameo from the author himself. The meandering cat is actually a fairly spurious linking device between the three unconnected stories (**"CREEPSHOW"** used a boys’ horror comic to the same purpose), but no worse than the lame passengers-in-a-train-compartment / tourists-in-a-crypt / case-studies-at-an-asylum device favoured by British horror anthologies.

James Woods is such an electrifying actor that his segment – the jokiest – lingers in the memory longest. Bullied into consulting a company (with Sicilian leanings) that “assists” people in giving up smoking, he’s shown a cat being tortured in a sealed room with an electrified floor. If he should try sneaking a crafty smoke, he’s told, his wife will take her turn in that room, and he will be required to watch. The penalties for second and third lapses are correspondingly draconian. Drew Barrymore has a brief part in this segment as Woods’ daughter (in dark hair and glasses) at a special school. The movie clip which the frazzled Woods is watching on TV at home is from King’s **"THE DEAD ZONE"**. “I don’t know who writes this crap!” he observes. Since the money of smoking customers is not welcome in public cinemas anymore, best to watch this one at home in any case, where you can enjoy a hearty cigarette.

The middle segment is one for vertigo sufferers. Jealous gambler husband abducts his wife’s faded tennis star lover, and offers him the choice between being railroaded on drugs charges or taking a stroll around the apartment building – on a five-inch ledge twenty storeys up. It’s quite a white-knuckle predicament for anyone who gets dizzy more than five feet off the ground. Important safety tip: wear pigeon-proof boots when edging gingerly around high buildings. (Walter Matthau had a very similar experience in **"PLAZA SUITE"**.)

The final segment is the most Spielbergian, replete with Carlo Rimbaldi modelwork, CGI effects and apple-pie family. The invading gremlin (which steals children’s breath while they sleep) is pretty well done, enhanced by some lively grunting/sniggering voice work. The climactic duel between the cat and the betassled gremlin (while Barrymore’s parents batter

frantically at her bedroom door) is needlessly over-extended, the outcome never in doubt, but at least King resisted the cardinal error of tacking on a “goodness me, here comes another one!” closing shot (as in “**CRITTERS**”, “**GODZILLA**” and scores of others).

On the animal protection question, no doubt the producers kept scrupulously within the animal welfare guidelines, but someone was scaring the cat somehow to produce the required facial reactions, and the scene where it is leaping about trying to escape the electrified floor still remains disturbing to watch. Cats are highly intelligent creatures, but incapable of faking fear or anxiety. They cannot be trained to hiss without meaning it. If that’s the effect the director wants, the genuine response has to be elicited. I prefer not to see cats frightened intentionally.

See subject index under **ANIMALS**, **BEDTIME**, **STEPHEN KING ADAPTATIONS** and **PORTMANTEAU FILMS**.