

Six Degrees Of Roger Corman

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There's no corner of pop culture that Roger Corman hasn't touched — or taken inspiration from. Here's a quick look at just three areas where the connections he's made might surprise you.

Oscar Connections

Roger Corman took home an honorary Oscar of his own in November 2009, but his operation has long been producing Academy Award winners. Some examples:

- **Francis Ford Coppola** (Best Director, *The Godfather Part II*) Got his start when Corman hired him to turn old Soviet sci-fi footage into the 1960 film *Battle Beyond the Sun*.



John Shearer/Getty Images

Sandra Bullock at the 82nd Annual Academy Awards.

- **Jack Nicholson** (Best Actor, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, 1975) Made his screen debut in Corman's *The Cry Baby Killer* (1958).

- **Janusz Kaminski** (Best Cinematography, *Schindler's List*, 1993) He shot *The Terror Within II* for Corman just two years before his Oscar for Steven Spielberg's drama.

- **James Horner** (Best Score and Best Song, *Titanic*, 1997) Wrote an epic score for the 1980 space opera *Battle Beyond the Stars*; Corman has recycled it in countless films.

- **Sandra Bullock** (Best Actress, *The Blind Side*, 2009) Corman's 1993 environmental thriller *Fire on the Amazon* is one film she doesn't brag about. Maybe it's the sexy nude scene.

Corman's Best Cameos

Corman enjoys appearing in the films of former proteges. Some standout roles:

- **The Howling** directed by Joe Dante (1981) In a barroom scene, Corman spoofed his own tightwad image, checking the coin return of a pay phone for loose change.

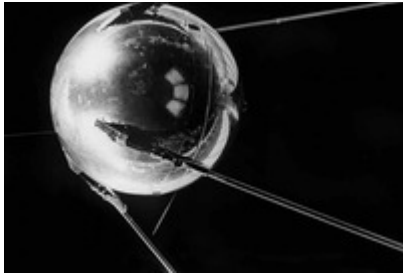
- **The Silence of the Lambs**, directed by Jonathan Demme (1991) Corman looked authoritative as the head of the FBI in this Best Picture winner.

- **Philadelphia**, directed by Jonathan Demme (1993) Corman aced the key role of a canny businessman whose testimony on the witness stand puts Tom Hanks in a bad light.

- **Apollo 13**, directed by Ron Howard (1995) Corman played a congressman quizzing NASA about cost-containment.

- **Looney Tunes: Back in Action**, directed by Joe Dante (2003) Corman was cast as a film director peeved by Daffy Duck's shenanigans.





OFF/AFP/Getty Images
Sputnik 1, photographed in 1957.

An Eye On The Headlines

Corman has always found inspiration in the big events of the day. Some examples:

- ***War of the Satellites*** (1958) When the Russians launched Sputnik, Corman conceived this outer-space quickie. Shot in three weeks, it screened in drive-ins soon thereafter.
- ***The Intruder*** (1962) Corman tackled the serious issue of school desegregation when few others dared. William Shatner stars as a stranger who arrives in a small Southern town to stir up trouble.
- ***The Wild Angels*** (1966) Corman's inspiration was a magazine cover depicting a biker funeral. The Hells Angels played themselves, and this classic biker flick led directly to 1969's *Easy Rider*.
- ***Quake*** (1992) San Francisco's Loma Prieta earthquake prompted this woman-in-distress thriller. As soon as the ground stopped shaking, Corman sent a crew to shoot authentic footage of the rubble.
- ***The Hunt for Noriega*** Circa 1990, when Panama's deposed military dictator eluded his captors, Corman sprang into action. A writer was hired, but the deal got canceled one day later when Noriega was found.

Beverly Gray, formerly Corman's story editor, is the author of the unauthorized biography Roger Corman: Blood-Sucking Vampires, Flesh-Eating Cockroaches, and Driller Killers.

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