



De Mol revives Hammer horror

East and Sinclair join studio board

By [PAMELA MCCLINTOCK](#)

Dutch producer John De Mol is reviving famed British horror studio Hammer Film Prods., which built its name on a string of pics released in the 1950s and 1960s under the Hammer House of Horror label.

Private equity firm Cyrte Investments, led by de Mol, has acquired the rights to Hammer's library, home of roughly 300 titles featuring the likes of Count Dracula, Frankenstein and the Mummy as well as the popular "Quatermass" franchise.

Reinvigorated Hammer studio --which hasn't done any production to speak of since the mid-1980s -- will be run by former Liberty Global execs Simon Oakes and Marc Schipper. Oakes played a leading role in brokering the deal.

"Hammer is a great British media brand that has lain dormant but lived on in people's imaginations. It is more intelligent and character-driven than traditional American 'goreography,' and we intend to capitalize on this and make it a global brand," Oakes said in a statement.

Guy East and Nigel Sinclair of L.A.-based Spitfire Pictures have joined the Hammer board and plan to produce two to three horror pics or thrillers a year for the U.K.-based studio.

Production house will pursue both film and television. It is said to already be in talks with a U.K. broadcaster about a Hammer Horror TV series.

Founded in 1934, Hammer Films commenced its successful horror run in 1955 with "The Quatermass Experiment." Hammer went on to dominate the horror market with its low-budget titles, even in the U.S., where the studio inked deals with American distribs, including Warner Bros.

Hammer Films toppled from its perch with the saturation of the horror market in the late 1960s and 1970s and the loss of disturb deals. While Hammer continued to produce, its once-lucrative formula began to tarnish.

Cyrte was set up by de Mol, one of the founders of reality TV powerhouse Endemol and creator of "Big Brother."

Cyrte bought Hammer Films from Hammer Entertainment, owned by a consortium of investors who relied on the back catalog and merchandise for revenue instead of new productions.

Hammer Films will rely on an investment of \$50 million to ramp up production. Oakes and his team are expected to announce their first projects at the Cannes Film Festival.