# CARNIVAL OF SOULS (1962)

**Directed by Herk Harvey**

**WEDNESDAY October 21st 7PM**

**SATURDAY October 24th 2pm / 7pm**

***16mm - Black & White - 1h 18m***



Doom used to mean something else. In Old English a dōm was a judgment; a verdict, a law, a decree. It survives quietly in words we use every day: kingdom, wisdom, freedom. Only later, with the concept of Judgment Day hanging over it, did the word slide toward ruin. Now it scrolls past us all day, and we have a name for the people who can't look away; doomers, certain that all the frantic activity around us is a rearrangement of deck chairs on the Titanic, business as usual with death reading over our shoulder.

**Carnival of Souls** lives inside that feeling. A car goes off a bridge in a Kansas drag race; Mary Henry staggers out of the river, takes a job as a church organist in a new town, rents a room, and carries on. Only the organ won't behave, the town becomes increasingly hostile, and a pale man keeps appearing in her periphery. The film moves with the logic of a dream; sound falls away, space folds on itself, a face surfaces in glass and is gone... and nothing is explained.

Herk Harvey spent his career making hundreds of safety films for an industrial studio in Lawrence; cheerful instructions on how not to get hurt. His one feature, shot in three weeks with his coworkers and a ruined pleasure palace on the Great Salt Lake, is about the person no safety film reaches. Its distributor gutted it and went bust, and it survived on late-night television until it had found Romero, and eventually the rest of us.

Dreams are lonely things. However accurately we might describe them, we can’t truly communicate their totality. Mary tries to tell a doctor, a neighbor, anyone, what is happening to her, and watches the words fall short. Plenty of us know some version of that right now: sensing something is wrong while everyone around us stays placidly busy, and then wondering if we're the ones out of step. Harvey doesn't tell you who's right; he leaves you in the room with it, and an organ playing somewhere you can't quite locate.