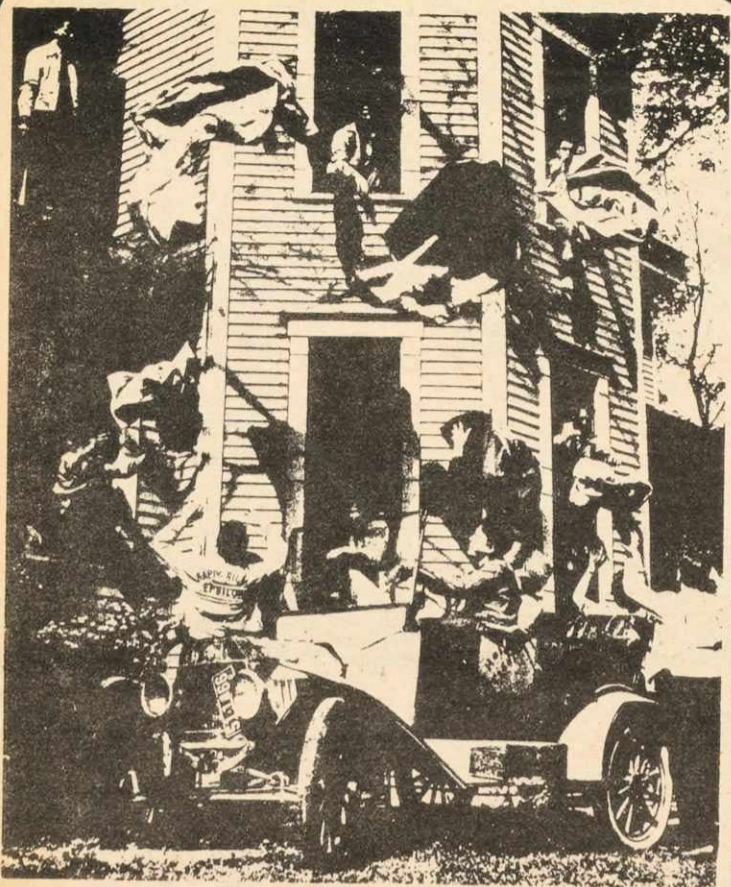


Uncle Damien and Anti Christ



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The
CUTTING FACTORY Ltd.



by Michael McCarthy

Movie Review — *The Final Conflict*

This movie leaves one with ambivalent feelings: there are some pretty marvellous things about it, and there are some bloody awful aspects as well.

Briefly, the story continues the inspiring tale of Damien Thorn, son of Satan whose birth was covered in *The Omen* while *Damien* brought us his childhood. Now he is a devilishly good-looking, confidence inspiring, cavalier and devil-may-care chap of 32 who is U.S. Ambassador to the U.K. He arranged this latter so that he can be on hand for the second birth of "the Nazarean". Thorn endeavours to have his followers kill all male babies born on the blessed day (have I heard this one somewhere before?) while a group of monks try to kill him and save the Christ.

As you may have guessed, one of the problems with the film is the plot. It is rather silly to anyone who finds it hard to accept Christian mythology, and even to those who do, the idea of an Antichrist invulnerable to everything on earth except seven daggers conveniently unearthed at the start of the show may wear thin. As might the idea that a group of Italian monks can gain access to astronomer's calculations giving the exact birthspot of the new Christ whereas the head of a huge corporation and a U.S. ambassador cannot. Having the group of assassins die one by one with ridiculous ease until only one is left is also a rather trite device. The dialogue often slips into clichés about "sacred tasks", and "pure evil", and "the raptures of evil and vice in my father's king-

dom."

On the other hand, Sam Neill is terrific as Damien. He manages to exude an aura of ultimate evil, not just your petty greed, lust, and cheating type of mundane badness, but real honest-to-Satan rotten make-everyone-suffer-for-the-pleasure-of-it, and anything-is-better-than-a-numbing-eternity-in-the-flaccid-bosom-of-christ, I-want-to-feel-pain-when-I-have-an-orgasm evil. At the same time, he is handsome, charming, intelligent, and downright fascinating. You can understand why he has followers, and the theme of man's destructive but compelling attraction to supreme evil is well handled. Also, suspense gimmicks such as quick scene changes in the middle of a climactic moment without giving you time to recover from one shock or prepare for another are well deployed by director Graham Baker, and there is a splendidly ghastly scene in which a mother irons her baby's face.

Unfortunately, the ending is very weak. One never knows how the Christ child is saved and hidden from Damien, and we are subjected to a disgusting display of holy light and choirs singing while the Antichrist dies, while some group of mad monks chant something which might be "glory", or possibly "boring". Nonetheless, I was almost ready to sit through it again, just to allow myself to be fascinated once more by the alluring utterness of evil as manipulated by Sam Neill. At any rate, Damien dies saying to Christ, "You have won nothing", so maybe they are trying to set us up for another sequel, hopefully with the same sense of evil, but less hokey.

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