

another look at

# the ARTS

## The Exorcist

If you're one of the few remaining souls who hasn't yet seen *The Exorcist*, and if you're still contemplating laying out the \$3 admission charge, do yourself a favour. Read the book first.

William Peter Blatty wrote the novel, allegedly based on an actual case which he found buried in the archives of Georgetown University in Washington, D.C. He also wrote the screenplay for and produced the movie.

The novel is basically about loneliness although I doubt the theme was developed consciously. Blatty does tell an interesting story—it's one of those books that is truly hard to put down once you start it (I read it in six hours)—but one gets the impression that his style is more the result of skilful editing rather than of inborn talent.

The story begins in Iraq. The exorcist, Father Merin finds an amulet of the ancient demon Pazuzu at an archeological dig. Merin has already exorcised Pazuzu from one body; it is the demon who later possesses the girl, Regan.

Blatty takes time in the book to describe the gradual process of possession, cutting into the flow of the story to

have his characters read various authorities on the subject. One is also allowed to see how close Chris MacNeil is to her daughter, a sweet, ordinary well-behaved child.

The film version, which Blatty apparently wrote without help, is incredibly choppy. One is introduced to the characters and then thrown into a series of visually disgusting scenes dealing with the physical degradation of the possessed girl. Blatty has taken the "high" points of the novel for his screenplay, retaining only the barest of story lines.

We find Merin digging in the dirt in Iraq, but have no hint that he is a priest, and we are more or less left in the dark as to why he's so hung up on statues of a winged demon.

The film later gives the impression that it is the Devil himself who has taken possession of Regan's body, and you have to wonder why he bothers, something that is tentatively explained in the book. Merin advances a theory that the demon takes a body, not because it hopes to influence the possessed, but because it hopes to influence those around the possessed.

We first come into real contact with the priests who play a major role in the novel the night of Chris' house party. Blatty does a marvelous job of depicting the Jesuit priests as flesh and blood human beings. In contrast, the priests in the film move around like mannequins, their main function apparently to take up space on the set.

The first major change in Regan's personality occurs at the party. Regan, who has been put to bed, suddenly appears downstairs where she approaches an astronaut who is nervous about an upcoming flight to the moon. "You're going to die up there," she tells him, urinating gushingly onto the carpet.

For starters, the bit of film that would have introduced the astronaut apparently got left on the cutting room floor. This should be a rather heavy scene. Instead, the child comes across as a little brat with poor bladder control. The audience is left giggling in embarrassment. In the novel, Damian Karras is introduced as the Jesuit seminary's resident psychiatrist who fears his own loss of faith in God. The film gives the impression that he is merely hung up at leaving his mother to join the priesthood.

The novel also tells more of a situation developing at the seminary's church. While Regan's body is gradually being taken over, a series of desecrations occur at the church, the type of desecrations normally associated with the celebration of Black Mass. First human excrement is found on the altar, along with a counterfeit altar card which describes in excellent Church Latin, a homosexual encounter between the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene.

Detective Kinderman comes into the story when the director of Chris' movie is found dead beneath Regan's bedroom window, with his head turned completely around. The pathologist reports that it is highly unlikely that the man's neck was twisted in his fall. We learn through the detective's investigation and readings that twisting the head in that manner is a method of ritual murder used by Satanists to rid themselves of enemies.

This tenuous lead brings Kinderman to Karras because he feels the murder could be connected with the church desecrations. The investigation also later connects the blasphemies with Regan although Kinderman will not believe she has anything to do with the murder.

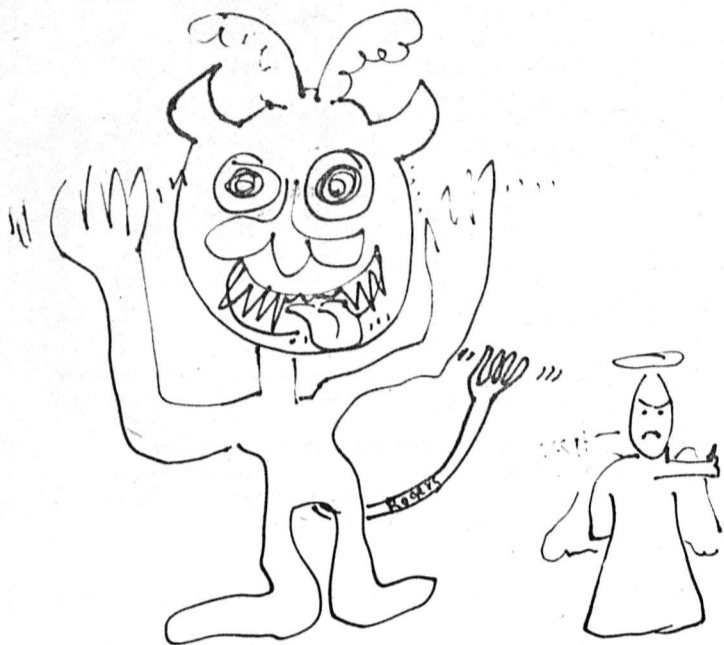
In the book, Kinderman, a "Colombo" type, gives the reader a lot of pertinent information. Unfortunately, none of his importance carries over into the movie. One feels that the character was either included in the script because he was a major character in the novel, or else that most of the role was later cut by Blatty.

The film would be better if things were merely left out, rather than left unexplained as they are. I heard many puzzled comments from the crowd. For example, the viewing audience is never told those little pills Merin keeps popping are nitroglycerine for his bad heart.

The acting was good, considering what the actors had to work with. The technical effects are very good. Unfortunately, the movie as a whole is only a little better than awful.

The film's basic appeal is in its ability to provoke audience reaction to visual stimulus. If you like a film with little plot, but one still guaranteed to scare the pants off you, by all means go see it.

Allyn Cadogan



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Progress on CKSR-FM appears to be moving at a fast clip, according to station staff. The licence application to the Canadian Radio-Television Commission is progressing well, and should be submitted by the end of April.

CKSR is now seeking applications from students large to fill two positions on a Board of Directors for the Station. Applicants should have some knowledge of electronic media, and a keen interest in developing policy, and providing an overall guide to programming and community relations.

Interested persons may reply in writing to:

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The deadline for applications is April 11th