

# Giving The Devil His Due: Satan And Cinema

Star Wars fans when they saw the poster for The Phantom Menace for the first time:



In the realms of storytelling and filmmaking, there are countless elements that captivate audience members and provoke a wide range of emotions. One of the most intriguing and controversial elements is the portrayal of Satan or the devil. Throughout cinematic history, filmmakers have been fascinated by the character of Satan, exploring different dimensions of evil and tempting audiences into

exploring the dark side of human nature. This article will delve into the complex relationship between Satan and cinema, examining how this character has been depicted, interpreted, and mesmerized audiences for decades.

## The Early Portrayals: Seductive and Mysterious

In the early days of cinema, Satan was often depicted as a seductive and mysterious figure. Filmmakers embraced his allure, portraying him as a cunning manipulator capable of preying on human weaknesses. Classic films such as "The Devil and Daniel Webster" (1941) and "Angel Heart" (1987) played with the idea of selling one's soul to the Devil in exchange for power or desire. These portrayals not only fueled the viewers' fascination with the allure of evil but also served as cautionary tales about the consequences of moral compromise.



## Giving the Devil His Due: Satan and Cinema

by Jeffrey Andrew Weinstock (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language : English  
File size : 3975 KB  
Text-to-Speech : Enabled  
Screen Reader : Supported  
Enhanced typesetting : Enabled  
Word Wise : Enabled  
Print length : 221 pages



## Hellish Horror: Satan as the Ultimate Villain

As the horror genre gained popularity, Satan became the ultimate villain, representing pure evil and torment. Films like "The Exorcist" (1973) and "Rosemary's Baby" (1968) shocked audiences with their terrifying portrayals of demonic possession and Satan worship. The use of atmospheric storytelling,

religious symbolism, and psychological terror allowed filmmakers to tap into the viewers' deepest fears and create some of the most unsettling cinematic experiences in history.

## **Humanizing the Devil: Sympathy for Lucifer**

While Satan is typically depicted as the embodiment of evil, some filmmakers have dared to humanize this iconic figure. Movies like "Constantine" (2005) and "Devil's Advocate" (1997) offer alternative perspectives, delving into the complexities of Lucifer's character. These films explore the idea of redemption and question whether Satan can still experience emotions like love and regret. By humanizing the Devil, these movies challenge societal norms and provoke thought-provoking discussions about good and evil.

## **Expanding Boundaries: Satan in Non-Western Cinema**

The fascination with Satan is not limited to Western cinema. In non-Western cultures, the devil figure has been portrayed differently, reflecting diverse mythologies and beliefs. Movies like "A Chinese Ghost Story" (1987) showcase the incorporation of elements from Chinese folklore, where supernatural entities often resemble demons or evil spirits. These films provide a captivating opportunity to explore Satan's depiction beyond Western religious frameworks, providing a fresh perspective for international audiences.

## **The Legacy Lives On**

Satan's rich legacy continues to thrive in modern cinema. Recent films like "Hereditary" (2018) and "The Witch" (2015) have reignited the trend of demonic mythology, exploring the unknown and delving into the darkest corners of the human psyche. Audiences are still captivated by the portrayal of Satan, eagerly anticipating the next terrifying depiction that will leave them questioning their own beliefs and reflecting on the nature of evil.

Satan and cinema have long been intertwined, capturing the fascination of filmmakers and audiences alike. From seductive and mysterious figures to monstrous embodiments of pure evil, Satan has evolved and adapted within the realm of storytelling. By exploring this complex relationship, both as a cautionary tale and a source of fascination, filmmakers have pushed the boundaries of cinema, igniting discussions about morality, redemption, and the nature of human nature itself. Whether it's through horror, drama, or fantasy, Satan continues to captivate the big screen, reminding audiences that evil will always have its place in cinematic history.



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Finalist, 2021 Bram Stoker Awards (Superior Achievement in Non-Fiction)

The first collection of essays to address Satan's ubiquitous and popular appearances in film

Lucifer and cinema have been intertwined since the origins of the medium. As humankind's greatest antagonist and the incarnation of pure evil, the cinematic devil embodies our own culturally specific anxieties and desires, reflecting

moviegoers' collective conceptions of good and evil, right and wrong, sin and salvation. *Giving the Devil His Due* is the first book of its kind to examine the history and significance of Satan onscreen.

This collection explores how the devil is not just one monster among many, nor is he the "prince of darkness" merely because he has repeatedly flickered across cinema screens in darkened rooms since the origins of the medium. Satan is instead a force active in our lives. Films featuring the devil, therefore, are not just flights of fancy but narratives, sometimes reinforcing, sometimes calling into question, a familiar belief system.

From the inception of motion pictures in the 1890s and continuing into the twenty-first century, these essays examine what cinematic representations tell us about the art of filmmaking, the desires of the film-going public, what the cultural moments of the films reflect, and the reciprocal influence they exert. Loosely organized chronologically by film, though some chapters address more than one film, this collection studies such classic movies as *Faust*, *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Omen*, *Angel Heart*, *The Witch*, and *The Last Temptation of Christ*, as well as the appearance of the Devil in Disney animation.

Guiding the contributions to this volume is the overarching idea that cinematic representations of Satan reflect not only the hypnotic powers of cinema to explore and depict the fantastic but also shifting social anxieties and desires that concern human morality and our place in the universe.

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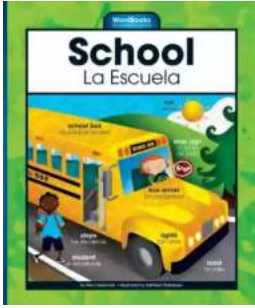
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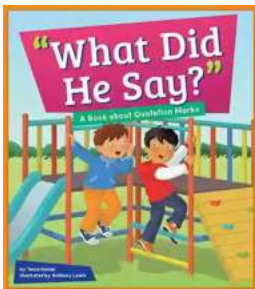
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