



MEMBER PICKS

The Witches of Eastwick

'A fantastic cast at the peak of their game... Jack Nicholson's incredible wardrobe, strong female leads and let's not forget Susan Sarandon's hair!'
Eleanor Watkins, BFI Member

Up Jumped the Devil or, The Jack in Pandora's Box: Can 'The Witches of Eastwick' de-spook genre theory? Raymond Durnat puts the case for the cross-brewing of genres

Most prevalent genre theories assume that genres must replicate semi-rigid, largely 'pre-scribed' structures of ideas; whence problems with (1) genre hybrids, (2) distinguishing genres, topical clusters, and strings of films sharing similar ingredients, (3) surprise, innovation and change. *The Witches of Eastwick* provides an unusually clear test case.

The Genres of Eastwick

It cross-breeds the following genres-or-strings (each of which overlaps with several others):

A. Newer Genres:

- 1. Supernatural SFX (Neo-Materialism):** Demons and (a) Female anatomy (*The Exorcist*, *Carrie*); (b) Apocalyptic scenery-shaking (*Ghostbusters*): *Ghostbusters* is 3 men vs. female demon-carrier; this is 'Devil-busters' (3 women vs. male demon-incarnation).
- 2. Gross-Out Comedy:** With its piggish-sleazy male and cascading vomit, this = 'National Lampoon's Animal Coven'.
- 3. Romantic Fantasy:** Frustrated people meet Super-Being: *Splash* (high-IQ mermaid), *Weird Science* (computer-perfected female totem), *Cocoon*, *E.T.*, *Back to the Future*. This film contrives a triple shuffle: the Super-Being is a slob, the mere humans become lightning-conducting, flying Wonder-Women, and suffer a lot.
- 4. The Capitalist-Daydream Life de Luxe:** As in *Arthur*, *Trading Places*, *The Toy*, spoiled-rotten rich brats move through palatial-domestic environments. (Premature prototype: *Cinderfella*, 1960).
- 5. Feminist Themes:** (a) As in *Nine to Five*, feminine trio dethrone unworthy male (but basically different types, settings, issues); (b) Sisterhood is strength (*The Turning Point*, *Julia*); (c) Superwoman flies out (see under 3 + *Supergirl*); (d) Liberating female sexuality: Daryl Van Horne (Jack Nicholson) looks like a handy sex-and-soul stimulus-object for female sharing.

N.B., Situations (a) and (c) look contradictory but are compatible: this devil *seems* amenable but *becomes* dominant.

B. Traditional Genres:

- 6. Women's Drama** (competing term, 7, **Soap Opera**; 8, **Melodrama**): Whichever term we adopt, can this co-genre with, for example, *Our Mother's House*, *The Pumpkin Eater*, to name two other 'weird maternity' stories?

9. **Horror Film** (in the sense of 'Supernatural Melodrama').

10. **Supernatural Comedy**: *I Married a Witch*, *Bewitched*, both transparently metaphoric for secular-sex comedy.

11. **Small-town Comedy**: After Capra's good angel in *It's a Wonderful Life*, this is 'It's a Diabolical Life'.

12. **Comedy of Manners** (in expanded sense of 'Comedy of Life-Style'):

With special emphasis on Scandal/Embarrassment/Spectacular Public Humiliation/Grossly Bad Manners. The genre favours shame over guilt, generating cheerful cynicism by attributing guilt, a moral emotion, to shame, a social-power one. Three relevant subgenres: (a) Sex-War Comedy-Drama; (b) Comedy of Nervous Breakdown; (c) Comedy of Male Incoherence: Jack Nicholson's crazy-mixed-up devil is the precise antithesis to Jerry Lewis, with some remarkably systematic 'oppositions' to *The Ladies' Man* (1962).

C. Recurrent Themes:

13. 'Hallelujah I'm a Nut': (*You Can't Take It with You*, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, *Beyond Therapy*).

14. 'Momism Rules Okay': Sensible Women vs. Sneaky Males (*Bluebeard's Eighth Wife*, *I Was a Male War Bride*, *Some Like It Hot*).

15. 'Weird Nativities': (*2001*, *Rosemary's Baby*).

Deconstructing the Devil

Tricky Old Nicky or, That New Devil, Inconsequence:

Jack Nicholson's Van Horne = Jerry Lewis + Bill Murray (who = John Wayne + cynical slob). And what a bundle of contradictions, what a compact of incoherences, is his weirdly changing bodyshape, his crazy-quilt costumes, his corkscrewy spiel! He's (1) 'Your average horny little devil' (the mere male); (2) every kind of rebel against conformity (his wardrobe is a gaudy kaleidoscope of non-grey flannel); (3) snob Old America (Dutch name); (4) vulgar millionaire; (5) plush-pad hippy; (6) Hugh Hefner-ish *Playboy* philosopher; (7) The Spirit of Consumer Hedonism; (8) the lonely male single who needs mothering; (9) the peacefully sensuous liberated male who'd be quite happy to be a woman; (10) the Sugar-Nobodaddy bearing gifts; (11) the shame-free brat; and more yet ... He's a whirligig of styles and norms; the confusion of Everything-Is-Permitted-If-You-Think-So. He's the All-American Screwtape ...

Raymond Durnat, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, September 1987

THE WITCHES OF EASTWICK

Director: George Miller
Production Companies: Warner Bros., Guber-Peters Company, Kennedy Miller Productions
Executive Producers: Rob Cohen, Don Devlin
Producers: Neil Canton, Peter Guber, Jon Peters
Unit Production Manager: Michael S. Glick
Production Supervisor (ILM): Chrissie England
Production Co-ordinator (Boston): Spencer Howard
Location Managers: Sam Mercer, Charles Harrington
Production Aides: Robin Wilf, William Messing, Leo Murphy, Laurie Balton, Lisa Niedenthal, Antonia Bogdanovich, Andrew Herman Weltman, James Chessanthis
Production Support (ILM): Jenny Fulle, Leigh Blicher, Chris Duddy, Greg Beaumonte, Lanny Cermak, Mike Mackenzie, Scott Squires, Udo Pampel, Vincent Tilker, Cheryl Durham, Bob Fernley, Karen Dube, Pamela J. Kaye
Assistant Directors: Chris Soldo, Robert Yannetti
Casting: Wallis Nicita
Screenplay: Michael Cristofer
Based on the novel by: John Updike
Director of Photography: Vilmos Zsigmond
Optical Photography Supervisor (ILM): Ed Jones
Camera Operators: Ray De La Motte, Harald Ortenburger, Peter Norman
Tennis Sequence Motion Control Camera Operators (ILM): Bruce Walters, Jon Alexander
Visual Effects Supervisors: Michael Owens, Kathryn Witte, Warren Franklin
Visual Effects Photography (ILM): Kim Marks, Pat Turner
Matte Photography Supervisor (ILM): Craig Barron
Matte Artist (ILM): Sean Joyce
Special Effects Supervisor: Michael Lanteri
Special Effects: Clay Pinney, Thomas Ryba, Robert Spurlock, Donald R. Elliot, Louis Lanteri
Tennis Sequence Creature Construction: Eben Stromquist
Model Shop Supervisors (ILM): Barbara Affonso, John Reed
Tennis Sequence Model Maker (ILM): Victoria Lewis
Tennis Sequence Animation Department Supervisor (ILM): Ellen Lichtwardt
Tennis Sequence Animation (ILM): John Armstrong, Chris Green
Tennis Sequence Roto (ILM): Sandy Houston, Rebecca Heskes, Sandy Ford
Editors: Richard Francis-Bruce, Hubert C. de La Bouillerie
Visual Effects Editor (ILM): Howard Stein
Production Designer: Polly Platt
Art Directors: Mark Mansbridge, Dave Carson
Set Designers: Robert Sessa, Stan Tropp
Set Decorator: Joe D. Mitchell
Production Illustrator: Sherman Labby
Costume Designers: Aggie Guerard Rodgers, Linda Henrikson
Men's Costumers: Eddie Marks, Eric H. Sandberg
Women's Costumers: Robin Borman, Pamela Havens
Make-up: Ben Nye III, Leonard Engelman
Special Make-up Effects Designed/Created by: Rob Bottin, Fernando Favila
Bottin Effects Crew: Richard White, Henry Alvarez, Art Pimentel, Vincent Prentice, Tammy Fites

Title Design: Anthony Goldschmidt
Tennis Sequence Optical Co-ordinator (ILM): Lori J. Nelson
Tennis Sequence Optical Line-up (ILM): Brad Kuehn
Opticals: Pacific Title
Music Composed and Conducted by: John Williams
Orchestrations: Herbert W. Spencer
Music Supervisor: Keith Holzman
Music Editor: Ken Wannberg
Music Recording: Armin Steiner
Violin Coach: Richard S. Kaufman
Cello Coach: Virginia Burward-Hoy
Sound Recording: Art Rochester
Sound Re-recording: Wayne Artman, Tom Beckert, Tom E. Dahl
Supervising Sound Editor: Robert R. Rutledge
Sound Effects Editors: John R. Newlan, Charles E. Smith, Robert Waxman, Susan Dudeck, Jerry Stanford
Supervising ADR Editor: James Beshears
ADR Editors: Lauren Palmer, Mary E. Andrews
Supervising Foley Editor: David B. Cohen
Foley Artists: Gary Hecker, Alicia Stevenson
Stunt Co-ordinator: Alan Gibbs
Stunts: Paula Moody, Spike Silver, Donna Evans, Christine Baur
Animal Handler: Paul Calabria

Cast

Jack Nicholson (*Daryl Van Horne*)
Cher (*Alexandra Medford*)
Susan Sarandon (*Jane Spofford*)
Michelle Pfeiffer (*Sukie Ridgemont*)
Veronica Cartwright (*Felicia Alden*)
Richard Jenkins (*Clyde Alden*)
Keith Jochim (*Walter Neff*)
Carel Struycken (*Fidel*)
Helen Lloyd Breed (*Mrs Biddle*)
Caroline Struzik (*Carol Medford*)
Michele Sincavage, Nicol Sincavage, Heather Coleman, Carolyn Ditmars, Cynthia Ditmars, Christine Ditmars (*Ridgemont children*)
Craig Burket, Abraham Mishkind, Christopher Verrette (*string quartet*)
Becca Lish (*Mrs Neff*)
Ruth Maynard (*Mrs Biddle's friend*)
Lansdale Chatfield (*1st doctor*)
Carole Ita White (*cashier*)
Babbie Green, Jane A. Johnston, Merrily Horowitz, Harriet Medin (*women at market*)
Margot Dionne (*nurse*)
James T. Boyle (*2nd doctor*)
John Blood (*deli counterman*)
Ron Campbell (*ice-cream counterman*)
Eugene Boles (*minister*)
Corey Carrier, Kate Barret, Dan Edson, Anthony Falco, Kevin Goodwin, Tara Halfpenny, David Hazel, Melanie Hewitt, Matt Kane, Anne Lindgren, Jessica Macdonald, Corinna Minnar, Scott Nickerson, Stephen Oakes, Ann Senechal, James Staunton, Amy Warner (*Lenox school band*)

USA 1987
118 mins

BFI PLAYER

We are always open online on BFI Player where you can watch the best new, cult & classic cinema on demand. Showcasing hand-picked landmark British and independent titles, films are available to watch in three distinct ways: Subscription, Rentals & Free to view.

See something different today on player.bfi.org.uk

Join the **BFI mailing list** for regular programme updates.

Not yet registered? Create a new account at www.bfi.org.uk/signup

BFI SOUTHBANK

Welcome to the home of great film and TV, with three cinemas and a studio, a world-class library, regular exhibitions and a pioneering Mediatheque with 1000s of free titles for you to explore. Browse special-edition merchandise in the BFI Shop.

We're also pleased to offer you a unique new space, the BFI Riverfront – with unrivalled riverside views of Waterloo Bridge and beyond, a delicious seasonal menu, plus a stylish balcony bar for cocktails or special events. Come and enjoy a pre-cinema dinner or a drink on the balcony as the sun goes down.