



Exorcist II: The Heretic

Director: John Boorman
Production Company: Warner Bros.
Producers: Richard Lederer, John Boorman
Associate Producer: Charles Orme
Production Managers: John Coonan, William C. Gerrity
Location Manager: John James
2nd Unit Director/Creative Associate: Rospo Pallenberg
Assistant Directors: Phil Rawlins, Victor Hsu
Screenplay: William Goodhart
Original Characters: William Peter Blatty
Director of Photography: William A. Fraker
Special Locust Photography: Sean Morris, David Thompson
2nd Unit Photographers: David Quaid, Ken Eddy, Diane Eddy
Special Photographic Effects: Albert J. Whitlock, Van Der Veer Photo Company
Process Consultant: Bill Hansard
Special Effects: Chuck Gaspar, Wayne Edgar, Jim Blount, Jeff Jarvis, Roy Kelly
Editor: Tom Priestley
Associate Editor: Axel Hubert
Production Designer: Richard MacDonald
Art Directors: Jack T. Collis, Gene Rudolf
Set Decorator: John Austin
Regan's Drawings: Katrine Boorman
Scenic Artist: Ron Strang
Costumes: Robert De Mora
Special Make-up: Dick Smith
Make-up: Gary Liddiard
Title Design: Dan Perri
Music Composed and Conducted by: Ennio Morricone
Choreography: Daniel Joseph Giagni
Sound Recording: Walter Goss
Sound Re-recording: Arthur Piantadosi, Les Fresholtz, Michael Minkler
Sound Effects: Jim Atkinson
Synchronisation Effects Editor: Russ Hill
Entomologist: Steven Kutcher
African Technical Consultant: Fiseha Dimetros
Hypnosis Consultant: Kenneth Fineman
Cast:
Linda Blair (*Regan MacNeil*)
Richard Burton (*Father Philip Lamont*)
Louise Fletcher (*Dr Gene Tuskin*)
Max von Sydow (*Father Merrin*)
Kitty Winn (*Sharon Spencer*)
Paul Henreid (*Cardinal Jaros*)
James Earl Jones (*older Kokumo*)
Ned Beatty (*Edwards*)
Belinha Beatty (*Liz*)
Rose Portillo (*Spanish girl*)
Barbara Cason (*Mrs Phalar*)
Tiffany Kinney (*deaf girl*)
Joey Green (*young Kokumo*)
Fiseha Dimetros (*young Monk*)
Ken Renard (*abbot*)
John Joyce (*monk*)
Hank Garrett (*conductor*)
Lorry Goldman (*accident victim*)
Bill Grant (*taxi driver*)
Shane Butterworth, Joely Adams (*Tuskin children*)
Vladek Sheybal (*voice of Pazuzu*)
USA 1977
102 mins
35mm

A BFI National Archive print

Muse of Fire: Richard Burton

Exorcist II: The Heretic

Boorman's follow-up to the Friedkin-Blatty hit was plagued by production problems and savaged by critics, but it has more going for it than its reputation suggests. Not least of which is Burton's compelling turn as troubled priest Father Lamont, sent to investigate the death of von Sydow's Father Merrin four years on from the original exorcism. Favouring mysticism over outright horror, it's an oddity worthy of reappraisal.

A contemporary review

A unique case of mixed magic, Boorman's sequel to Blatty/Friedkin's notorious shocker is neither the potboiling disaster that initial reactions in the States would suggest, nor the pure spiritual odyssey for which the authors hoped. What is immediately most striking about the film (in contrast to its cynical predecessor) is its innocence: with a stunning array of special effects, from cameras plummeting, twisting and diving over African landscapes (at the invitation of the demon: 'Come, fly the teeth of the wind, share my wings') to the recreations of primitive scenery in which fierce, burning colours suggest a world still in a state of primal flux, Boorman and his collaborators have created a metaphysical adventure which suggests that the director is still trying to make *Lord of the Rings*.

The scene where Regan, at the bidding of Pazuzu, drifts in her sleep out of her skyscraper-top apartment of glass and flapping white drapery, and teeters at the very brink of the building surrounded by cooing doves, is inevitably reminiscent of Franju's poetic fancy of innocence threatened, and suggests why the film's metaphors for the Manichean struggle of good and evil connect so little with the traps and temptations of the real world.

Explicit sexual references seem peculiarly out of place, perhaps explaining why the one such exchange between Lamont and Tuskin (cut in Boorman's subsequent refashioning of the film) drew titters from the initial American audiences. Similarly, that Pazuzu ultimately appears to Lamont in the form of a seductively inviting Regan is an incongruity: although Richard Burton's performance suggests a kind of nervous harassment about the priest, Lamont's crisis of faith has so far seemed to have little to do with doubts about celibacy.

But the real confusion begins when the film attempts to establish a rationale for its admirably realised visionary qualities – and although it is in many ways a homelier, more consistent and likeable effort than Boorman's previous film, it is no more successful than *Zardoz* at investigating and explaining the splendid illogic of its interior vision. It is precisely the philosophical-psychological elements which have been subjected to rethinking and reshaping since the film's first release.

To an extent, the weaknesses are attributable to what has necessarily been imported from *The Exorcist*: Linda Blair is unable to convey more than simple pubescent sweetness, and the idea that she represents some special power for good, thus naturally attracting the malice of Pazuzu, is unconvincingly imposed. It seems, in fact, to have been dropped in as an afterthought, and is scarcely developed beyond the objectionable scene in which Regan draws speech out of an autistic child like a rabbit from a hat.

Muse of Fire: Richard Burton

Look Back at Richard Burton

Tue 2 Dec 18:15

The Last Days of Dolwyn

Tue 2 Dec 20:30 (+ intro by actor Kate Burton, Richard Burton's daughter); Sun 14 Dec 12:00

The Night of the Iguana

Fri 5 Dec 18:10; Mon 22 Dec 20:25

My Cousin Rachel

Fri 5 Dec 20:50; Sat 6 Dec 14:00

Now Barabbas Was a Robber...

Sat 6 Dec 11:50; Fri 12 Dec 20:50

Look Back in Anger

Sat 6 Dec 16:10; Mon 15 Dec 20:50

A Subject of Scandal and Concern + extended intro by John Wyver, writer and television producer
Sun 7 Dec 12:45

The Comedians

Sun 7 Dec 15:00 (+ intro by season co-curator James Bell); Sun 21 Dec 14:30

Boom!

Mon 8 Dec 18:10 (+ intro by Charlotte Frances Burton, Richard Burton's granddaughter);
Sat 27 Dec 14:15

The Spy Who Came in From the Cold

Mon 8 Dec 20:30 (+ intro by Charlotte Frances Burton, Richard Burton's granddaughter);
Wed 17 Dec 18:10

Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?

Sat 13 Dec 17:50; Mon 29 Dec 20:30

1984

Mon 15 Dec 18:20 (+ intro by Lucy Bolton, Queen Mary University of London); Sat 27 Dec 20:45

Philosophical Screens: 1984

Mon 15 Dec 20:30 Blue Room

Exorcist II: The Heretic

Fri 19 Dec 20:45; Sun 28 Dec 18:30

Equus

Sat 20 Dec 12:00; Tue 30 Dec 17:45

Where Eagles Dare

Sat 20 Dec 17:20; Sun 28 Dec 14:45

Villain

Tue 23 Dec 18:10; Sun 28 Dec 12:00

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Harder to understand is the failure of Father Lamont to make much impact, in either dramatic or intellectual terms. An archetypal Boorman hero in outline – a spiritual adventurer, his trajectory strung between his crisis of nerve and his passion for the truth – he looks from the very beginning (and here Burton's persona may have been decisive) fatally compromised and burdened by defeat.

His ideas, moreover – that Regan's case involves profound questions of good and evil and not just of psychological disturbance, that great spiritual forces wait to be unleashed in man and serve the powers of light or darkness – are too perfunctorily stated to seem more than the prattling of a crank, and may have been made more so by the removal (after some offended reviews) of such philosophical underpinnings as the reference to Teilhard de Chardin's notion of a 'world mind'. That science and religion may be at the beginning of such a collaboration is hinted at, rather ludicrously, in the use made of the hocus-pocus 'synchroniser' machine, and scarcely verified by the self-conscious exchanges between Lamont and Dr Tuskin.

Nervously drifting and unfocused as the film's ideas may be, its extravagant visuals are still sustained by the gristle of its humour – an irony which seems to have been totally missed and which, in the context of a film announcing some new spiritual leap in the dark, is a kind of *reductio ad absurdum* of all the forms and trappings of belief. A scene between Regan and Lamont in the Natural History Museum, framed against a representation of the Rock Churches of Ethiopia, gives way to a scene in the Vatican, framed against a gaudy mural of the faith; later, in his African pilgrimage, Lamont is given as guide a white man who declares, 'Religion's my business. Plastic saints, icons, buddhas, voodoo gris-gris ... Ecumenical Edwards, they call me.' The irreverence is a useful reminder that as well as metaphysical explorer, Boorman's screen personality has always been that of metaphysical joker.

Richard Combs, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, October 1977

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