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CAST

George C. Scott Lt. William F. Kinderman
Ed Flanders Father Dyer
Brad Dourif The Gemini Killer
Jason Miller Patient X
Nicol Williamson Father Morning
Scott Wilson Dr. Temple
Nancy Fish Nurse Allerton
George DiGenzo Stedman
Don Gordon Ryan
Lee Richardson University President
Grand L. Bush Sergeant Atkins
Mary Jackson Mrs. Clelia
Viveca Lindfors Nurse X
Ken Lerner Dr. Freedman
Tracy Thorne Nurse Keating

CREW

Written and Directed by **William Peter Blatty**
Produced by **Carter DeHaven**
Executive Producers **James G. Robinson, Joe Roth**
Associate Producer **Steve Jaffe**
Based upon the novel by **William Peter Blatty**
Edited by **Peter Lee Thompson, Todd C. Ramsay**
Director of Photography **Gerry Fisher B.S.C.**
Music by **Barry DeVorzon**
Production Designer **Leslie Dilley**
Costume Designer **Dana Lyman**
Art Directors **Robert C. Goldstein, Henry Shaffer**



“I BELIEVE IN SLIME AND STINK” DESPAIR, DEFEAT AND FACING THE FACT THAT IT’S NOT SUCH A WONDERFUL LIFE IN THE EXORCIST III

by Lee Gambin

In William Peter Blatty’s horror works, an interest in humankind’s capacity for cruelty and the dire consequences of society’s cynicism runs parallel with the supernatural themes explored. In his screenplay for *The Exorcist* (1973), actress Chris MacNeil (Ellen Burstyn) struggles in a world riddled with real life evils whilst facing the incomprehensible fact that her young daughter Regan (Linda Blair) is possessed by the devil. Divorce, an absentee father, alcoholism, the legacy of Nazism, flippancy afforded to the arts, profanity, the mistreatment of the elderly and other ugly truths pepper the film’s narrative. The ancient and pure evil which infiltrates contemporary Georgetown, Washington (a city noted for academia, politics and social privilege) becomes an extension of these more prosaic, non-occult horrors.

By the end of the original cut of the film – in the coda that follows the lengthy exorcism of Regan – Chris returns a pendant of Saint Joseph to Father Dyer (Reverend William O’Malley, S.J.). The pendant (a tribute to the patron saint of “children”, “family” as well as “doubt” and “the dying”) was worn by Father Damian Karras (Jason Miller), a troubled, guilt-riddled young priest doubting his own faith, who assisted with the exorcism. When faced with the possibility that young Regan may die during the ordeal, Karras’s resolve and beliefs are strengthened and he literally beats the devil out of her, before throwing himself from her bedroom window as the demonic entity enters his body. In the “Version You’ve Never Seen” director’s cut released theatrically in 2000, Dyer insists that Chris keep the pendant, clasping his hand over hers as she accepts his gift – both a visual reinforcement of her newfound faith and a dedication to the sanctity of the gospel and everything that comes with it. In this sequence, an atheist actress who has gone through hell accepts a token of Christian sovereignty. The suggestion is made that she is now a believer who acknowledges the existence of both God and the devil. After the repeated failures of doctors and science, Chris MacNeil had to resort to religion and priests in order to help her disturbed daughter. The coda implies she now understands that demonic energy and forces beyond reason may exist alongside the ‘real life’ evils of the world.

Fast forward to 1990, where William Peter Blatty directs and pens the screenplay to *The Exorcist III*, which is based on his own novel *Legion* (1983). With this book and film, the juxtaposition between real world malevolence and otherworldly fire and brimstone continues. The non-believer protagonist, Lt. William F. Kinderman (George C. Scott), explicitly accepts the existence of supernatural evil after confronting the horrors of the story. This is communicated with an inspired monologue in the film's closing moments where he screams:

I believe in death. I believe in disease. I believe in injustice and inhumanity, torture and anger and hate... I believe in murder. I believe in pain. I believe in cruelty and infidelity. I believe in slime and stink and every crawling, putrid thing... every possible ugliness and corruption, you son of a bitch. I believe... in you!

Unlike Chris MacNeil, who doesn't acknowledge a belief in God or the devil in either cut of *The Exorcist*, in *The Exorcist III*, Kinderman acknowledges demonic power in a devastating display of defeat. Here is a man who desperately tries to remain on top of things, clasping at examples of goodness in life, but is ultimately fatally wounded by the cruelty of the world. Kinderman's monologue evokes the words of the elderly exorcist Father Lancaster Merrin (Max Von Sydow), spoken to young Father Karras some years earlier, during Regan MacNeil's exorcism (a line that would be cut from the 1973 film but then reinstated for the 2000 re-release). The demon targets the innocent because he wants us "to see ourselves as animal, and ugly – to reject our own humanity – to reject the possibility that God could ever love us."

In *The Exorcist*, Kinderman (played by Lee J. Cobb) meets Karras solely because he is investigating the death of Chris MacNeil's director and friend Burke Dennings (Jack MacGowan). However, in *The Exorcist III* it is explained that the two men shared a friendship which developed before Karras made that final sacrifice and took his own life. As it transpires (much to the shock of Kinderman: "I think the man in cell 11 is Damien Karras..."), Karras has somehow been reanimated via possession by what may be the demon Pazuzu, here referred to as The Master. Kinderman comes face to face with the possessed Karras in a dark, dingy cell of a psychiatric ward, but there is an ambiguous twist that distorts expectations and delivers something deliciously jarring and thought provoking: Patient X appears as both Karras and the serial murderer James Venamun AKA the Gemini Killer (Brad Dourif).

The image of Karras alternates with that of the wild-eyed Gemini Killer, as the film continues Blatty's exploration of the interplay between real and supernatural horrors. When the stoic, earthy Kinderman faces the possessed Damien Karras yet is also in conversation with the

sadistic Gemini Killer, there is a profound blurring of human evil and otherworldly evil. At the film's climax, Kinderman is pinned to the cell wall in a crucifixion posture as he cries out, crushed in defeat at the profound malevolence that confronts him: "I believe in slime and stink and every crawling, putrid thing... every possible ugliness and corruption, you son of a bitch. I believe... in you!":

Kinderman has come to acknowledge demonic forces and supernatural evil, alongside the evil that infests the real world, as represented by the Gemini Killer – a convincing character arc played out over two brilliantly conceived but vastly different films.

A love of cinema permeates *The Exorcist III*. Early in the film, Kinderman and Father Dyer (here played by Ed Flanders) discuss the question of religious faith in a world full of so much evil and suffering. The two men are good friends – a friendship that stems from Kinderman's previous relationship with Karras – and their exchange is meaningful, but playful and amicable, with Dyer teasing the non-religious Kinderman ("there he goes again... blaming God"). Their mutual love for movies and enjoyment of retrospective screenings at a local cinema keeps their spirits uplifted. It's a good way to find solace in a world so morally bankrupt – to take in a midday session of Frank Capra's immortal classic *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) can distract them from a spiritually ailing world. The sheer escapism of cinema is a means of survival for these two men, however, upon Dyer's murder this enjoyable tradition of moviegoing is mocked and turned into something perverse. Dyer's blood has been drained from his body and decanted into small cups, with the remainder used to scrawl the words "IT'S A WONDERFULL LIFE" above the bed... It is a mocking riposte to the friends' escapism through cinema: the devil, the Gemini Killer and every other manifestation of evil is cynically imploring Kinderman to face the horrors of reality and accept the existence of all-encompassing evil.

Kinderman's love of movies places him in the tradition of fictional cinephiles and movie star worshippers. One could imagine him lining up at repertory film festivals with the likes of Mona (Sandy Dennis) from *Come Back to the Five and Dime Jimmy Dean, Jimmy Dean* (1982) or Douglas Breen (Michael Biehn) from *The Fan* (1981) – two characters who are misshaped by idol worship, leading to their personal downfall. However, unlike these fictional film fans, Kinderman is a sympathetic character – an able policeman damaged by the harsh realities of his job. He wears his experiences on his weather-worn face and, like a hardened cop from one of his favourite film noir classics of the 1940s, he is a man who knows true horror all too well, but has no time for superstition or supernatural menace – until the very end.

Some of the finest moments in *The Exorcist III* come from Kinderman's frustrations at dealing with ineptitude and flippancy. He loses his temper with people in professional roles who neglect their duties, both his fellow policemen and the hospital staff. Nurse Allerton (Nancy Fish), the stern, uncooperative nurse is a notable example. Going head to head with her provides some of the film's most intriguing insights into the finely drawn character of Lt. Kinderman. He is a man exasperated and exhausted by the horrors he has witnessed, always on the brink of a rage and despair which can be triggered by incompetency and small irritations. Fish's nurse is an obstacle to Kinderman's investigation and also a signifier for a banal reality that depresses and confuses Kinderman.

When Kinderman hears "I am no one" from the possessed Patient X (a composite of the demon, Karras and the Gemini Killer) it is a continuation of Regan's anguished cry from the 1973 film. Regan is possessed by an ancient evil corrupting her innocence while taunting those closest to her. When Kinderman shoots and kills Karras in order to 'set him free', he is ultimately confronting the real and supernatural evils that have made him feel an all-consuming despair, and which can only be remedied through a final act of violent annihilation.

Lee Gambin is a writer and film historian. He has contributed to Fangoria, Delirium and Scream and has written several books on genre cinema including Massacred by Mother Nature: Exploring the Natural Horror Film and Hell Hath No Fury Like Her: The Making of Christine.





THE EXORCIST III: LEGION

WILLIAM PETER BLATTY ON MAKING HIS LONG-AWAITED FOLLOW-UP

by Steve Biodrowski

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"Jesus asked the man his name, and he answered, 'Legion, for we are many.'"
— Mark 5:9

In the 1980s, there was a general trend in horror toward juvenile self-parody and gratuitous special effects which, despite some notable exceptions, limited the genre's appeal more than ever. The first year of the new decade, however, kicks off with two serious horror films from the men responsible for *The Exorcist* (1973), the most effective mainstream shocker of all time: director William Friedkin delivered *The Guardian* for Universal in April, and producer-writer William Peter Blatty takes up the directorial reins himself for *The Exorcist III: Legion*, to be released July 13 by 20th Century Fox.

Produced by Carter HeHaven, *The Exorcist III* stars George C. Scott, replacing the late Lee J. Cobb as Lt. William Kinderman. Jason Miller returns as Father Damian Karras, who died at the conclusion of the first film. Nicol Williamson and Brad Dourif appear as new characters: the former, an exorcist; the latter a serial killer whose *modus operandi* is being mysteriously recreated after his death. Principal photography commenced on location in Georgetown in May 1989 and wrapped with studio interiors two months later at the DEG Studios in Wilmington, North Carolina. Postproduction in Hollywood included four weeks on the Fox lot earlier this year in March to film an effects-laden exorcism not contained in the Blatty book on which the film is based.

Given the tremendous success of the original Warner Bros film, a sequel was perhaps a commercial inevitability; however, at the time Warner Bros intended to proceed, Blatty was more interested in grappling a philosophical question raised by *The Exorcist*: how can man believe in a benevolent God when He allows such horrible evil to exist in the world? Blatty explored the theme in *The Ninth Configuration*, re-written from an earlier Blatty novel entitled *Twinkle, Twinkle, Killer Kane* [1966], which he adapted into the excellent though little-seen film in 1980, starring Stacey Keach, Scott Wilson, and Jason Miller.

Warner Bros. meanwhile, released *The Exorcist II: The Heretic* [1977], a baffling disaster from the otherwise talented John Boorman. “An amazing film,” said Blatty, with subtle sarcasm. “I saw it with a paying audience in Washington DC, where I was living at the time. I must say, I was the first to giggle, breaking the respectful silence, and that broke the dam for everyone else in the audience. We roared from that point on – you’d think we were watching *The Producers* [1967].”

When Blatty finally came up with a credible idea for a sequel worthy of the original, he offered it to Friedkin, and the two joined with producer Jerry Weintraub to raise financing, until Friedkin backed out. After several other attempts to launch the project, first with Friedkin as director, then himself, Blatty adapted his screenplay into the novel *Legion*, which became a bestseller in 1983. Finally, Blatty managed to interest Morgan Creek Productions in financing the film, which he re-adapted from the book. Various revisions and adjustments have occurred throughout the many versions, but according to Blatty, it’s still “the same story.”

Legion is actually a sort of apologia, in the classical sense, for *The Exorcist*. The two volumes, when combined with *The Ninth Configuration*, form a trilogy. In the first, the question of why evil exists is raised. *The Ninth Configuration* sidesteps the question by posing an alternative one: why allow the existence of evil to cause despair when there is so much evidence of the existence of good? *Legion*, on the other hand, takes the bull by the horns: “in *The Exorcist*, questions were raised regarding God’s providence and goodness,” said Blatty. “there weren’t a lot of answers, you’ll notice. In *Legion*, the novel, there is a presentation of a possible solution to the problem of evil, with which I can certainly find – if you grant my premises – no fault. It preserves the goodness of God while not denying evil.”

Unfortunately, the complexity of the theory, which was presented mostly through Lt. Kinderman’s interior monologues in the novel, proved difficult to translate to the screen. “Kinderman remains a character obsessed with the problem of evil,” said Blatty, “but I simplified his problem, to ‘Is there an afterlife, a spiritual world?’ That he comes to believe by the time the film is over. Beyond that, I couldn’t take it, because the film is an entertainment, a thriller.”

Kinderman’s search for a grisly serial killer, who carves the astrological sign for Gemini into his victims’ hands, leads to a mental hospital, where he faces a peculiar dilemma: is someone, either doctor or patient, imitating the Gemini Killer, who died in a hail of police bullets 15 years ago at the precise moment Father Karras was taking his fateful plunge from Regan MacNeil’s window [sic]; or has the soul of the Gemini Killer returned to Earth and actually taken possession of a living body?

Blatty said directing *The Exorcist III* was no great challenge after previously helming *The Ninth Configuration*. “Casting a film well is 70% of it,” he said of directing, then added, “What I’ve done both times is spend my first six weeks blocking, before I stepped on set. That gives me a great feeling of security – because if my inspiration doesn’t come, I’ve got my plan to fall back on.”

Blatty called working with George C. Scott “a great experience” and said of the Kinderman role, “I think many people will be surprised. They’re going to see a different aspect of George Scott – extremely vulnerable. It’s quite a spiritual performance. I expect he’ll be nominated – this time I hope he accepts if he wins!”

Morgan Creek’s decision to expand the movie’s title to *The Exorcist III: Legion* may lead the audience to expect a more direct sequel (previous titles included *The Exorcist: 1990* and *The Exorcist: The Next Chapter*). “That they will not get,” said Blatty. “What they will get is a link, a very strong one, to the first film, and there will be an exorcism. It’s not the full blown third act, but it’s part of the resolution.”

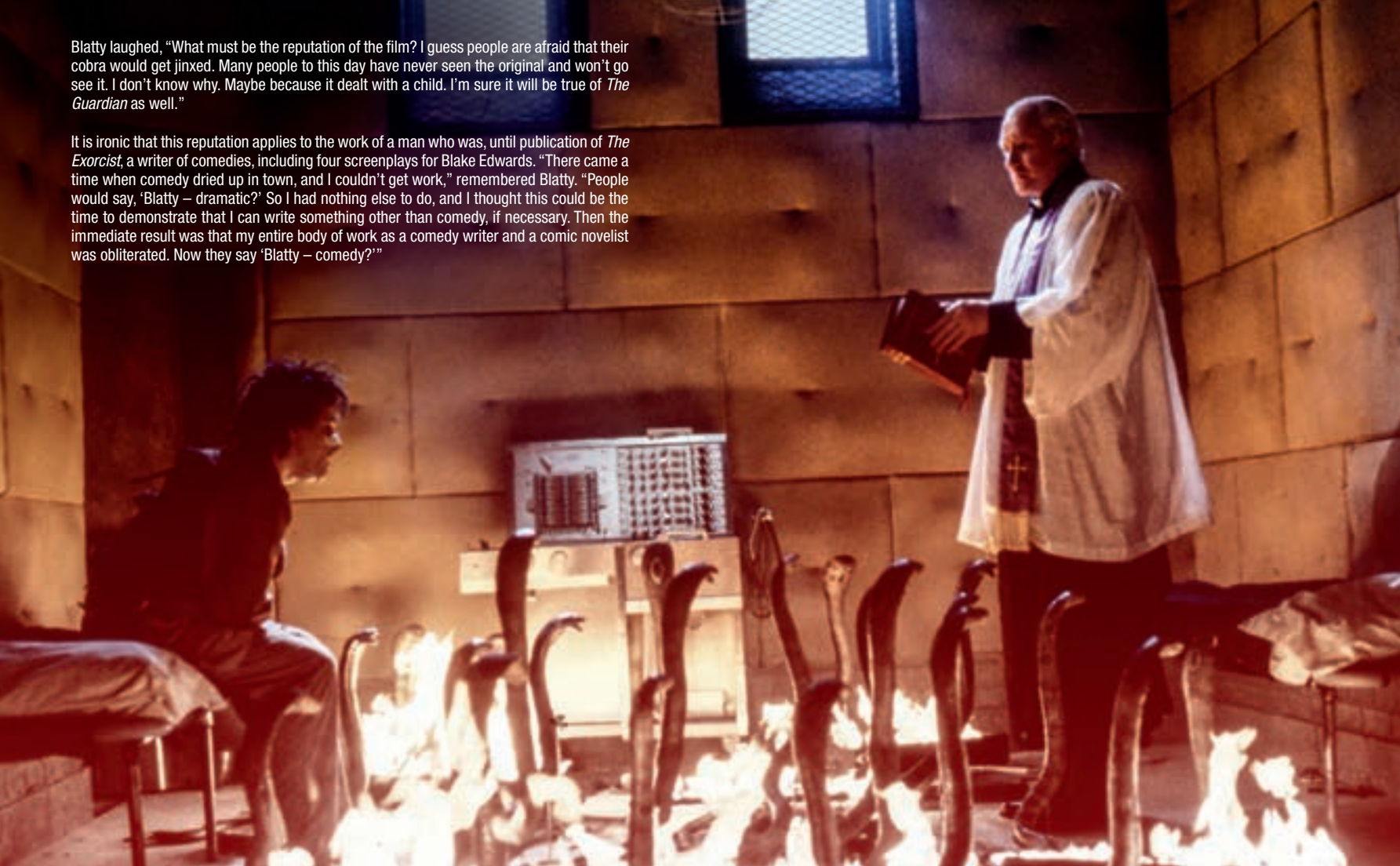
Because Blatty wanted to film the new exorcism without recreating special effects from the original film, he saved the sequence for postproduction in Hollywood, even though it involves one of his principal actors, Nicol Williamson, as the priest. “This was not something I was going to shoot in Wilmington, North Carolina, as fine as those craftsmen are,” he explained. “Quite frankly, at the time we were shooting there, I hadn’t dreamed up the scene yet or the effects. So I said, ‘Until I think of the right thing, it’s not in the picture.’”

Returning to Hollywood, Blatty scripted the new scene “in meticulous detail, angle for angle, shot for shot,” then turned it over to a storyboard artist for visual translation. “It’s rather elaborate,” said Blatty on the new scene. “We’re spending a lot of money on it. A lot. Over \$4 million. We’re going to repeat nothing that was in *The Exorcist*. It will be shorter, compacted into a very brief period of time so the effects come at you like dum-dum bullets.”

Although reluctant to reveal details about the new effects, filmed live on the set, Blatty recalled an amusing story about a shot in which the room is filled with a low sea of flame and is teeming with cobras. “Last Wednesday morning, our effects coordinator received a call from the owner and handler of a cobra named Joe, who said, ‘Look, I’m sorry about this. The money is good and it’s a swell opportunity in every other way; but my wife and I talked this through, looking at all sides of it, and we both felt we really don’t want Joe to be in an *Exorcist* film.’”

Blatty laughed, "What must be the reputation of the film? I guess people are afraid that their cobra would get jinxed. Many people to this day have never seen the original and won't go see it. I don't know why. Maybe because it dealt with a child. I'm sure it will be true of *The Guardian* as well."

It is ironic that this reputation applies to the work of a man who was, until publication of *The Exorcist*, a writer of comedies, including four screenplays for Blake Edwards. "There came a time when comedy dried up in town, and I couldn't get work," remembered Blatty. "People would say, 'Blatty – dramatic?' So I had nothing else to do, and I thought this could be the time to demonstrate that I can write something other than comedy, if necessary. Then the immediate result was that my entire body of work as a comedy writer and a comic novelist was obliterated. Now they say 'Blatty – comedy?'"





DEVIL'S ADVOCATE

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM PETER BLATTY

by Mark Kermode

This article was originally published in Time Out, October 24-31, 1990.

The *Exorcist III* is the first true sequel to the most successful horror film ever made. William Peter Blatty is responsible for both, and while revolving heads and masturbation don't feature this time, the results are just as terrifying.

"When *The Exorcist* [1973] was first released, Billy Graham the evangelist claimed that the film had an evil power embodied in the very celluloid itself. I don't understand that, to tell you God's truth. I never did, and I still don't today..."

Sitting on the porch of his Santa Barbara home overlooking the Pacific Ocean, writer, director and sometimes producer William Peter Blatty is genuinely bemused by the extraordinary reaction to his most notorious creation, *The Exorcist*. A bestselling novel in 1971, this forceful tale of demonic possession was adapted for the screen by Blatty – formerly a successful scriptwriter of screen comedies – and director William Friedkin. With initial box office takings in excess of £66.3 million, and no less than 10 Academy Award nominations to its credit, *The Exorcist* fast became the most successful horror movie ever.

"At the height of the publicity surrounding *The Exorcist*," remembers Blatty, "people were wont to remark that I wore a full dark beard, and that I looked sinister and demonic. And I would say 'Just a moment, I'm on the side of the *good* guys! The *good* guys win in my story! I'm not aligned with the demonic forces! What the hell are you talking about?' But of course people believe whatever is entertaining or amusing to them at the time, and it was titillating to imagine that somehow I was a dark, mysterious, sinister person. When I used to live in Aspen, the stories were 'Oh, you don't want to buy his house, he's got a crypt down there and he used to hold black mass.' Really! When I left Beverly Hills for Washington DC, the story went 'Bill and his wife had a child who was born without eyes, and it was the Devil...'"

Despite this instant (and extremely dubious) elevation to the title of 'master of darkness', Blatty confounded critics and studios alike in the years following the release of *The Exorcist*

by refusing to cash in on his horror-genre cachet, devoting his time instead to writing and directing *The Ninth Configuration* [1980], a low-key psychological thriller. The film earned Blatty a Golden Globe Award for Best Screenplay, which currently resides on his mantelpiece beside the Oscar awarded him for *The Exorcist*. Now, 17 years after putting the fear of God into a generation of cinema-goers, Blatty has finally returned to his most notorious haunting ground to write and direct *The Exorcist III*, a superior chiller starring George C. Scott and Brad Dourif, and adapted from Blatty's bestselling novel *Legion* [1983]. Blatty's newest offering attempts to do far more than simply scare its audience to death...

MULTIPLE POSSESSION

"You can only agonise about the savage and obscene destruction of a young girl so many times," says Blatty, explaining the absence of any devilishly possessed kiddie-winkies in his latest movie. "We did that in *The Exorcist*, and it's not to be done again." Instead, the author has devised an entirely new scenario, dealing with multiple possession, and the ghastly activities of a (supernatural?) serial killer. "A few years after the release of *The Exorcist*, Father John Nicola told me of a psychiatrist friend who was in the disturbed ward in St. Elizabeth's Hospital, when into the room came a man in a business suit. And pandemonium broke out: screaming, patients shouting obscenities, banging on the bedsteads... all of which stopped when the man left the room. It transpired that the man was a priest in civvies, carrying communion in his top pocket. So I thought: 'What about dealing with a demon in a hospital who moves from the empty shell of one shattered psyche to another? How terrifying would that be?'"

Conceived as a basis for a sequel to *The Exorcist* back in the mid-70s, Blatty's idea went into cold storage when Warners refused to do a deal with him which would also facilitate the making of *The Ninth Configuration*. Blatty pursued other projects, eventually coming to write *Legion*, wherein the idea of a hospitalised malevolence resurfaced, albeit in a very different form. Warners, meanwhile, created their own disastrous sequel, with which Blatty had no involvement, John Boorman's hideous *The Exorcist II: The Heretic* [1977]. It comes second only to *Plan 9 from Outer Space* [1959] in the Golden Turkey Worst Movies of All Time Awards.

Passing swiftly over the subject of *The Heretic* ("When I saw it I was the first to laugh out loud...") Blatty talks enthusiastically of his hopes for what has been dubbed 'the true sequel' to *The Exorcist*: "My aspirations for *The Exorcist III* are that the audience be kept on the edge of their seats in intrigue and fascination as this deepening mystery unfolds. With most run-of-the-mill horror films, audiences have come to expect that every few minutes the filmmakers will try to jolt you or gross you out. But we've seen it all too many times

before – can anyone be afraid of anything in a horror film anymore? With *The Exorcist III*, I am asking the audience to let their imaginations work freely, and thus achieve the most horrifying, terrifying effects of all. I am looking for an audience that is willing to listen. And if the mind does engage, the film also offers the audience not one but two six-foot-in-the-air jumps."

Whether or not gore-hungry horror audiences will accept such an unholy offering, however, remains to be seen. "I read one review of *The Exorcist III* by a sympathetic reviewer, who had overheard comments made during the film by people who were outraged that I was not showing blood and gore," says Blatty. "Their attitude was 'Show it! Show it!' They didn't want the imagination to supply the details – they had come for slashings, for blood and guts. Obviously I never wanted the film to be characterised in that way, and that is one of the reasons why I personally resisted using the title *The Exorcist III*. I wanted the movie to be called *Legion* but the producers disagreed."

Blatty also maintains that had *he* (and not Friedkin) had final cut on *The Exorcist* itself, the classic movie would have been very different. Barred from post-production by Warner Bros, the author not only strongly objected to Friedkin's neat excision of any explicit theological messages, but also to the sensationalist handling of the film's two most notorious sequences: "I personally had always thought that the crucifix masturbation scene would be done more by suggestion," admits Blatty. "I wanted us to see nothing below the girl's chest, but for the crucifix to go down off screen and come again with blood on it, and let the mind tell us where it's been. On the other hand I also argued strenuously against the shot which suggested that Regan's head had swivelled around 360 degrees... But the audience absolutely loved it. Billy Friedkin always said they would come to see the little girl masturbate with the crucifix, and at the time I didn't believe him... I thought he was destroying the film... But when I realised he was right, it was terribly depressing."

BESET BY HELL FIRE

Despite Blatty's claims regarding the 'discretion' of *The Exorcist III*, however, the movie does, in its final stages, resort to a spectacular display of special effects, providing a sucker-punch series of crowd-pleasing visuals as Nicol Williamson performs an exorcism in a padded cell, beset by hell fire, lightning, and a plague of cobras. Blatty concedes that such a climax was not his original intention, and admits that the dark forces of studio management played a significant role in causing him to reconsider his decision. "I fought that ending because I felt it referred back to the original, which I don't think you can top."



Blatty remains convinced of the reality of demonic possession, basing his conclusion in part upon a particular case in 1949, in which a young boy in Mount Rainier endured a lengthy exorcism. "My original intention had been not to write a novel but a case history of an authenticated case of demonic possession. I was in touch with the exorcist involved in this case, but he couldn't get the necessary permission from the Bishop of St Louis, who was very concerned to protect the family involved."

Blatty's beliefs in such supernatural phenomena are clearly sincere, but he dismisses as superstition the sensationalist stories that surrounded the production of *The Exorcist*. Described by the press as 'jinxed' from the outset, the film trailed in its wake gaudy rumours of deaths, madness and misdemeanour, all of which doubtless aided the box-office returns, but shrouded the movie forever in a veil of hokum. To this day, many adults refuse to view *The Exorcist*, and Blatty reports that at least one person declined to work on *The Exorcist III* because they were afraid. "Those rumours were complete nonsense," says Blatty. "They began when Billy Friedkin had fallen vastly behind schedule with the filming, and he gave an interview with *Newsweek* blaming it all on devils. The next week, rumours of all these troubling things started circulating. But for God's sake, if you shoot something for a year, people are going to get hurt, people are going to die... these things happen."

Blatty's next putative project, a comedy intended in part as a parody of *The Exorcist*, should, if it sees the light of day, dispel the mystique built up by such supernatural hype. Blatty also hopes it will rekindle his reputation as an accomplished humourist.

"It's an idea which I noodled away at about a year ago, thinking I could perhaps get someone interested after *The Exorcist III*. My story has as a protagonist a movie director who finds himself directing something called *The Satanist*. The studio head wants *The Satanist* to be a disaster in order to wreak revenge on the director over an affair of the heart. The script is the worst; there are no Jesuit priests, but two rabbis who were formerly plastic surgeons in Beverly Hills! The movie's called, by the way, *Demons: Five – Exorcists: Nothing...*"



THE EXORCIST III

THE POSTPRODUCTION EXORCISM EFFECTS

by Steve Biodrowski

This article was originally published in Cinefantastique, v. 21, no. 2, September 1990.

*THEY FORGOT JUST ONE THING – THE EXORCISM!
Cost, \$4 million added to postproduction.*

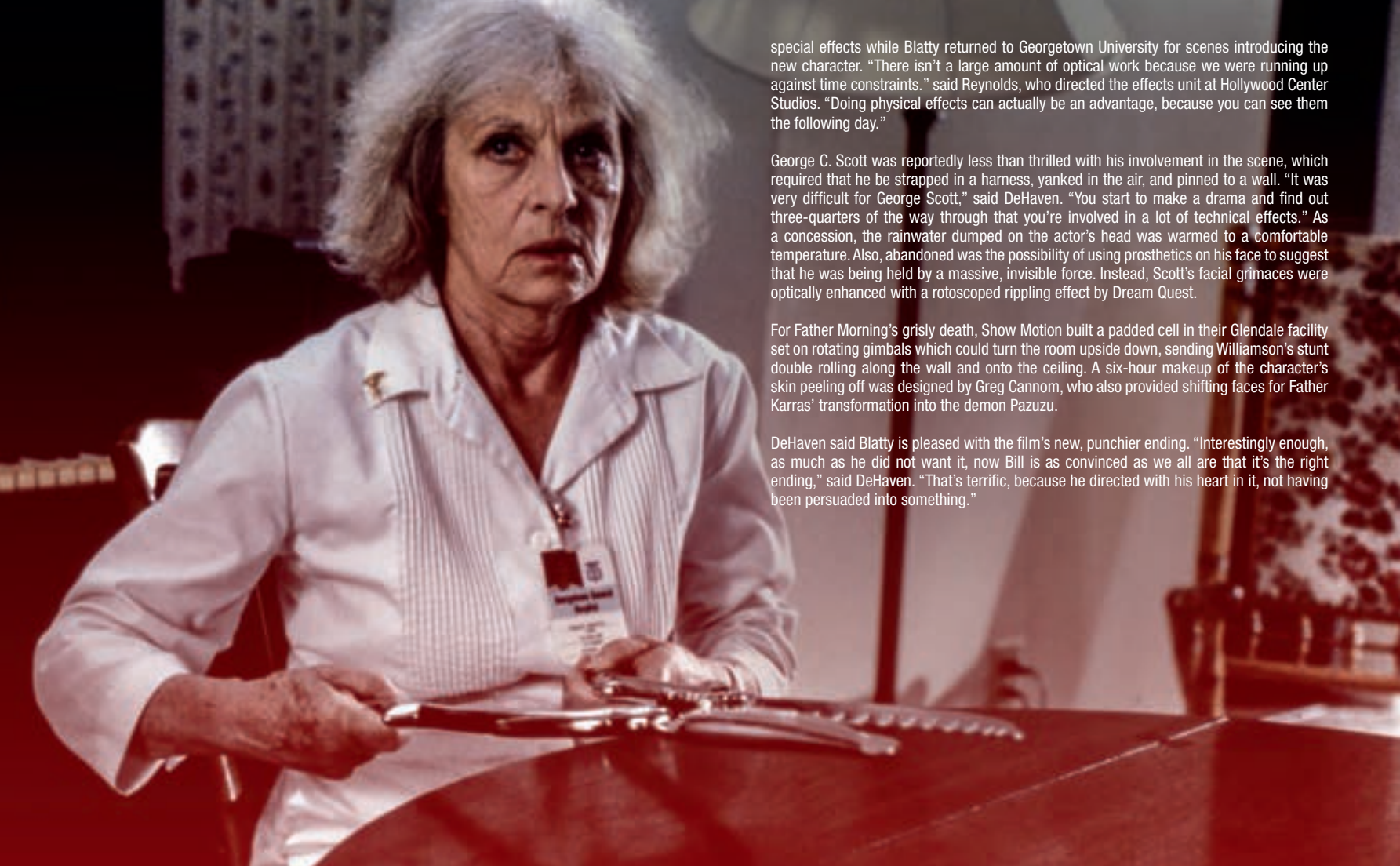
Though it finished principle photography five days under schedule on a relatively modest \$16 million budget, *The Exorcist III: Legion* jumped into the \$20 million range in postproduction with the addition of an elaborate special effects finale. Writer-director William Peter Blatty, wary of imitating his own Academy Award-winning screenplay for the original William Friedkin blockbuster, has been reluctant initially to include an exorcism in the new film, but he changed his mind at the suggestion of Morgan Creek Productions, which financed the film. Twentieth Century Fox opens it nationwide August 10.

According to producer Carter DeHaven (*Hoosiers* [1986], *Best Seller* [1987]), who had brought the project to Morgan Creek executives Joe Roth and Jim Robinson, "It was felt from the very beginning that, although the original script did not contain an exorcism, it should have one of some kind, no matter how small – at least to keep the audience from being disappointed." Though DeHaven admired Blatty's script for its "cerebral approach – it's very literate," he thought it needed "some kind of bang at the end."

When Roth left Morgan Creek to head Fox, Robinson took a more active role in shaping the picture. "It was his insistence that we have a really slam-dunk ending," said DeHaven. "[Blatty] felt the story was strong enough as it was. He always said 'Forget trying to imitate the first film. How are you going to top one of the best sequences ever made?' That was always a fear of his, so we had to be as original as we could."

After Blatty supervised scoring and editing the film late last year, the additional scenes were scripted and budgeted, at a cost of over \$4 million. More like a mini production than traditional postproduction effects work, the additional scenes involved principal actors Jason Miller and George C. Scott. Nicol Williamson was added to the cast as Father Morning, and former production designer Norman Reynolds was hired to shoot second unit





special effects while Blatty returned to Georgetown University for scenes introducing the new character. "There isn't a large amount of optical work because we were running up against time constraints," said Reynolds, who directed the effects unit at Hollywood Center Studios. "Doing physical effects can actually be an advantage, because you can see them the following day."

George C. Scott was reportedly less than thrilled with his involvement in the scene, which required that he be strapped in a harness, yanked in the air, and pinned to a wall. "It was very difficult for George Scott," said DeHaven. "You start to make a drama and find out three-quarters of the way through that you're involved in a lot of technical effects." As a concession, the rainwater dumped on the actor's head was warmed to a comfortable temperature. Also, abandoned was the possibility of using prosthetics on his face to suggest that he was being held by a massive, invisible force. Instead, Scott's facial grimaces were optically enhanced with a rotoscoped rippling effect by Dream Quest.

For Father Morning's grisly death, Show Motion built a padded cell in their Glendale facility set on rotating gimbals which could turn the room upside down, sending Williamson's stunt double rolling along the wall and onto the ceiling. A six-hour makeup of the character's skin peeling off was designed by Greg Cannom, who also provided shifting faces for Father Karras' transformation into the demon Pazuzu.

DeHaven said Blatty is pleased with the film's new, punchier ending. "Interestingly enough, as much as he did not want it, now Bill is as convinced as we all are that it's the right ending," said DeHaven. "That's terrific, because he directed with his heart in it, not having been persuaded into something."

A LEGION OF INTERFERENCE

by Mark Kermode

This article was originally published in Fangoria, no. 122, May 1993.

The travails of The Exorcist III prove that a truly ambitious sequel can have a devil of a time making it to the screen.

In 1990, writer/director William Peter Blatty's impressive chiller *The Exorcist III* arrived on our screens, the first true sequel to what is perhaps the most infamous shocker of all time. Coming a full 17 years after William Friedkin's original masterpiece, *The Exorcist III* drew applause from many horror fans (but few critics) with its bizarre blend of quirky humor, weighty philosophy and slam-bang, jump-out-of-your-seat scares. Yet many viewers were baffled by the film's incongruous finale, a special FX bonanza in which Father Morning (Nicol Williamson) performs an exorcism upon the reanimated body of Father Damian Karras (Jason Miller). Bursting onto the screen at the end of an otherwise understated movie, this garish climax seemed out of place, inappropriate and (worst still) faintly ridiculous.

It came as no surprise to learn that the offending finale had in fact been tacked onto the film at the last minute by producers at Morgan Creek and 20th Century Fox. Frightened that Blatty's weirdly uncategorizable movie would alienate mainstream audiences, the money men ordered the director to go back and shoot an additional exorcism scene, armed with \$4 million worth of visuals. But it was far more than just the closing moments of *The Exorcist III* which endured such radical alterations. In fact, the core of Blatty's movie was stripped out and reworked during the final, hectic months of production, giving rise to two utterly different versions of this accomplished fright show.

The genesis of *The Exorcist III* can be traced back to an eerie incident which Blatty learned of a few years after writing the novel of *The Exorcist* [1971]. "Father John Nicola told me of a psychiatrist friend who had become interested in possession because of this episode," the author/director recalls. "This man was in the disturbed ward at St. Elizabeth's Hospital, when into the room came a man in a business suit. And pandemonium broke out: screaming, patients shouting obscenities, banging on the bedsteads... all of which stopped when the man left the room. It later transpired that the man was a priest in civvies,



carrying the communion in his top pocket. So I thought, what about dealing with a demon in a hospital who moves from the empty shell of one shattered psyche to another? How terrifying would that be.”

This idea eventually blossomed into *Legion*, an extraordinary tale of multiple possession which Blatty planned as a sequel to William Friedkin’s hit film *The Exorcist* [1973]. But the concept went into cold storage when Warner Bros refused to work out an agreement which would also facilitate the making of Blatty’s pet project, *The Ninth Configuration* [1980]. Having started out as a script, *Legion* subsequently mutated into a 1983 best-selling novel, the success of which encouraged Blatty to once again pursue plans to get his sequel onto the screen. In the interim period, Warners put out their own disastrous follow-up, John Boorman’s *The Exorcist II: The Heretic* [1977]. According to *The Exorcist* star Jason Miller, this film was a major stumbling block for Blatty’s plans. “The awful reception of *The Heretic* made things very difficult for Blatty,” says Miller, who talked with the author about playing the role of Patient X in the proposed film version of *Legion*. “If that film had not been made, and *Legion* had just come along, Bill would have had an infinitely easier time getting it done. *The Heretic* really turned people off, and it was too bad that they called it *The Exorcist II*, because it’s *not!*”

Blatty himself believes that the difficulties he had in getting financing for his film (besides director William Friedkin’s unpredictable on-off relationship with the project) lay in the understated climax which he first penned for *Legion*. In the novel, the mysterious asylum inmate, who may or may not be the Gemini Killer in the body of Father Karras, simply dies spontaneously in his lonely cell. Unfortunately, no film financiers would tolerate such a quietly ambiguous finale, so Blatty came up with a more dramatic climax in which Lieutenant Kinderman executes (or perhaps saves?) the deranged Patient X. “After three or four years of not being able to persuade anyone to make the film, I was sitting in a kitchen in Greenwich, Connecticut,” Blatty recalls. “I suddenly came upon a vision of what was going to happen... all of it. The whole tie-in with Father Karras, everything leading to the execution with Kinderman at the end.”

With this new shotgun showdown on paper, Blatty finally secured a deal with independent producers Morgan Creek to film *Legion*. With Jason Miller tied up on a writing assignment for MGM, Blatty auditioned and cast Brad Dourif to play Patient X. To establish this new face as that of Father Karras (a crucial plot point in Blatty’s story), early scenes were shot with Dourif restaging Karras’ final moments from *The Exorcist*. These scenes depicted Karras’ corpse (played by Dourif) being examined in a morgue by a pathologist and Detective Kinderman (George C. Scott). The body seems lifeless, but two eerie beeps from an EEG machine hint horribly at some form of afterlife activity...

With this scene in the can, Dourif spent two more weeks filming in Wilmington, North Carolina, where all the cell-bound conversations between Patient X and Kinderman were shot for the first time. Filming went smoothly, but according to Dourif, there was still some concern regarding the film’s climax. “In the ending we shot, George simply comes into the cell, puts the gun to my head, says ‘Pray for me, Damian,’ and shoots me,” he explains. “The whole film was about a rational, practical detective who does not believe in supernatural phenomena, but who is forced to question his whole life because of the events in the film. When he finally shoots the patient, you’re pretty darn sure that the guy will go to jail for murder. But he’s just had too much proof at this point; his daughter was almost killed. So he goes in there and shoots him.”

“However, all the time we were filming,” the actor continues, “the producer was worried that the film didn’t have an exorcism in it. Blatty didn’t want to shoot an exorcism, so finally they decided to let him cut the film and then see what they had. Then, if they felt they needed to, they’d go back and shoot an exorcism. That was the plan as of the time that I finished the shoot.” Blatty duly assembled a version of his film (which contained no FX except for one scene in which a patient crawls spiderlike across a ceiling), which was subsequently screened for Fox. Then the problems began.

“Blatty called me when he had just finished editing the scenes with me,” Dourif recalls. “He told me that he liked them a lot, which is pretty rare. Then, about a month later, I called him up for lunch. But when I went to meet him, the producer [Carter DeHaven] was already there. And at that time, they told me that they might be cutting me out of the film! Twentieth Century Fox had done a demographic study which apparently showed that test audiences needed to have somebody who was in the original *Exorcist* in the sequel. So they were going to hire Jason Miller to redo the role of Patient X. I felt really bad about it – I was to be cut out of a film which had already been finished, and for which there had already been advertisements out which had my name on them.”

But ultimately, the recasting was not as drastic as Dourif had first feared. With masterful ingenuity, Blatty hit upon the idea of using *both* actors to portray the schizophrenic nature of Patient X, cutting randomly between the two and evoking a psychological battle between Damien Karras and the Gemini Killer. “Having got Brad to do it as one character, Blatty called me up and asked me if I’d like to join the film,” confirms Miller. “We talked through the script, and suddenly the character became two people. Blatty brought me in to give a kind of duality to the character of Patient X. I wasn’t sure about the concept until I actually got there and talked to Bill, though.”

Miller contends that it wasn't difficult for Dourif to accept relinquishing half of a starring role for which he had already given a sterling performance. "He believed in the concept as well," Miller states firmly. "Brad felt that it enhanced the film. It gave it another dimension that it didn't have before, a kind of weird schizophrenia that an audience could be amazed by."

Dourif has somewhat more troubling memories of this period, during which he was called upon to redo all his key scenes in a new set specially built for all the reshoots. "Blatty never liked the original set much, and that's another reason we redid the scenes," he explains. "The first set, the one in Wilmington, was of brown and reddish brick, and it looked like a medieval cell. In the second set, the one you see in the film now, the walls are very different. That set was built on a lot in LA. My reshoot was only two days long, and what was missing was something I couldn't achieve in that short time: that feeling of having been there for 15 years. That's something that I had when we first shot it, and spent two weeks on it, in that one room in Wilmington.

Still more problematic was the producers' insistence that Blatty shoot an explosive exorcism sequence for the film's climax. Despite Fox's financially generous offer of an extra \$4 million, Blatty retained severe doubts about the new ending's validity. "The problems really come back to one man, the sole owner of Morgan Creek, who said that there *had* to be an exorcism," the director sighs. "From the first rough cut he saw, he jumped up and said, 'That settles it, there *has* to be an exorcism.' But I don't do battle scenes and I don't do exorcisms. I also hated the idea of adding it because I knew it would immediately be compared to the original, and you can't top that. There have been a thousand exorcisms since *The Exorcist* – what is in there that is fresh and new? However, to give the devil his due, there is probably a certain roundness of the action that is achieved by resorting to the exorcism that might have been lacking in the purity of my original. A sense that something was missing, that we had somehow been cheated..."

Despite Blatty's tactful disavowal, Dourif well remembers the writer/director's distress at having to add the sequence to his formerly pure and understated movie. "He wrote the scene, but he never liked it. It was very obvious because Blatty is not very subtle. He tried to do his best under the circumstances, but he really could not figure out a way to make it work. And no one else could either. Personally, I thought that exorcism was a piece of garbage. But everybody thought that. Blatty thought it was garbage, and George C. Scott said he felt folks would be disappointed if Madonna didn't come out and sing a song. And it cost \$4 million! It obviously had no place in the film. It is not the way the film was written, and it really is unnecessary and gratuitous."

However, the exorcism as it now stands is actually less gratuitous than an early cut which Morgan Creek assembled and presented to Blatty. In this version, Father Morning's supernatural flights around Patient X's cell were accompanied by the sound of Mercedes McCambridge uttering such classic obscenities as "Let Jesus f**k you!" and "Your mother sucks c**ks in hell!" Blatty complained that the result was ridiculous, and the voiceover was dropped.

Also excised from the exorcism, with Blatty's full consent, was a failed optical effect created by makeup artist Greg Cannom, which depicted Jason Miller's onscreen mutation into the demon Pazuzu. "They did a prosthesis of my head, but it wasn't used in the film," Miller confirms. "I think the optical failed, or it became cost-prohibitive." Cannom's creation (which can be glimpsed briefly in *The Exorcist III* trailer) consisted of a go-motion head to which 20 different latex faces were applied. The last of these was Pazuzu's demonic head, which, according to Cannom, had to be rebuilt because the first model was "a joke." Blatty, however, remained unimpressed by the effect, drawing particular amusement from the fact that one of the 20 flashing faces appeared to be that of Adolf Hitler, complete with slicked back hair and trademark mustache!

Although Blatty did ultimately concede to his producers' demands for a graphically gory final exorcism, he steadfastly refused to give an inch when it came to portraying *Legion's* devilish murders on screen. "There was actually a brief shot of the decapitated priest holding his head in his lap which I filmed," confesses Blatty candidly. "He was holding it like a football player from the 1880s would hold his helmet. The purpose of that shot was to give you almost subliminally a flashing insight into the real horror of this killer's mind. That was meant to set you on edge even more later. The honest truth of why I didn't use that shot was that, at the time, I was asked if I was going to do a zoom. I said, 'Yes, of course,' and then I deliberately didn't. Because if I *had* done the zoom, there is no question that it would have been used in the film, and we would have had a close-up of his decapitated head, and it was against my religion to do that. Later on, as evidence of my own fallibility, I had moments of yearning for a zoom shot at that point. It was to have been inserted just after you see the stream of blood flowing along the floor of the church. Then, *boom!* You see what Kierman sees! And with some prodding from the studio, I commissioned opticals and all sorts of things to push it in closer, but it was grainy and awful and unusable, and in the end I felt relieved. I never wanted that shot in there in the first place. That may or may not have been the correct judgement. I don't know. But it did preserve any glimpse of horror for that penultimate moment with the nurse in the corridor, and it might have vitiated that."

Indeed, the now legendary hospital hallway sequence (which was partially inspired by a scene from *Psycho* [1960]) was another area in which Blatty's artistic integrity did win out. "I kept the camera absolutely still for that scene, despite a lot of prodding to move it and do tracking shots and all the rest," he says with pride. "But we've seen all those shots 100 000 times. You can find them in the latest Mel Brooks spoof. But just to let the camera sit, that's the trick.

"You know, one of the most frightening things I ever saw was on a television series called *Lights Out* [1946-1952]," Blatty continues. "The story *The Waxwork* concerned a journalist who agreed to spend one night alone locked in a wax museum of famous murderers. One of these killers, whose effigy is in the museum, is not yet known to have been definitely captured. He was a slasher, and he used a straight razor: the mad barber of Fleet Street. He held the razor limply in his hand at his side, and the director cut to a close shot of that hand holding the razor I suppose 30 times. The 31st time that he cut to it, the hand and the razor moved and I jumped six feet straight into the air! That is the equivalent of keeping your camera still and letting life, action and your expectations pass in front of it."

As far as Blatty's own original expectations for *Legion* are concerned, it is clear that they were only partially met in the generally released version of *The Exorcist III*, the very title of which Blatty had always opposed. But would Blatty's original, low-key cut (which this journalist has been privileged to watch) have enchanted or disappointed audiences hungry for *Exorcist*-type thrills? "I don't know," confesses Dourif. "I think people would have respected the film a lot more, because it was different, and because it was really suspenseful, and had very little violence in it. That original version was a hell of a lot purer, and I liked it much more. As it stands now, it's a mediocre film. There are parts that have no right to be there."

Dourif also feels that Blatty never really had a chance of getting his "pure" version past the producers. "Never," says the actor. "All the way along, Carter [DeHaven] really wanted to have an exorcism. But I don't think Carter was completely responsible. He just had a bad idea. For the most part, he really did his job when things were difficult. And I think he achieved something through the decision not to include an exorcism until Blatty had been allowed to cut his own movie. That was fair."

Miller, though, is more sceptical. "The producers leaned on Blatty too heavily," he says. "They at once gave him free rein, but didn't. I think that, once things got going, they should have backed off a bit and allowed him to explore and trusted him more. Because he's a very good filmmaker, and he was doing a movie which was problematic from the beginning."

The actor agrees, however, that Blatty's intelligent script always ran the risk of alienating mainstream audience. "It seems to me that in the first film, it was easier to suspend one's disbelief and have emotional identification with the characters," he reasons. "You have the mother, the little girl, the troubled priest, an old priest on his last hurrah... the stakes were very human. And that allowed the audience to have an emotional affirmation for these characters. With *The Exorcist III*, the audience were witnesses rather than participants. They were observers; they had a distance from the film. There is a kind of intellectual leap that they had to make, and that subliminal, emotional association was not there. *The Exorcist III* is more of a thinking man's film. In [Blatty's] *The Ninth Configuration*, you could identify with Kane or Cutshaw; even the supporting actors had a kind of weird charm that intrigued an audience. But with *The Exorcist III*, the audience could not bridge this ambiguous distance from the screen to their imaginations or their hearts."

In the end, Miller agrees that the film is a partial triumph and a partial defeat. "It's impossible to reconcile," he allows. "It's kind of in a purgatory of its own; you're not in heaven, you're not in hell... you're in Hollywood."



THE EXORCIST III REVIEWED

Fifteen years after the execution of the father obsessed Gemini Killer, Georgetown falls prey to a spate of grisly serial slayings bearing the Gemini's trademark mutilations. Meanwhile, deep in the bowels of the town's psychiatric institution, a patient emerges from catatonia, claiming to be the Gemini and demanding recognition. Investigating the case is Lt. Kinderman (George C. Scott), whose world-weary scepticism is challenged not only by the patient's exact knowledge of the crimes, but by his uncanny resemblance to Father Damien Karras, who fell to his death 15 years earlier while performing an exorcism.

Directed with the same quirky ponderousness that characterised *The Ninth Configuration* [1980], William Peter Blatty's long-awaited sequel to *The Exorcist* [1973] eschews the visceral shocks of its predecessor (the mutilations are kept off screen) to rely instead on the chilling power of suggestion. The excessively wordy dialogue is interrupted by intervals of brooding malevolence (the loud silences of the sparse soundtrack used to beautiful effect), and by a couple of contrived but startlingly effective shocks. The real terror, however, comes from Brad Dourif's straight-to-camera, serial-killer monologues, which breathe the ghostly life into Blatty's eerie script. With the exception of an unnecessary (and clearly tacked-on) spectacular climax, which hideously underestimates the film's earlier achievements, this is a restrained, haunting chiller which stimulates the adrenaline and intellect alike.

Mark Kermode, Time Out, no. 1057, November 21, 1990, pp. 47.

With William Friedkin occupied on his killer tree fiasco *The Guardian* [1990], *The Exorcist III* finds William Peter Blatty, original author of the novel, stepping up to write and direct this sequel, adapting his own follow-up book, *Legion* [1983]. Blatty began as a screenwriter for Blake Edwards, devising pratfalls for Inspector Clouseau, and made his directorial debut with the interesting philosophical oddity *The Ninth Configuration*, and this is a very peculiar amalgamation of enervating wisecrack dialogue and religious editorialising, with only a few token traces of horror thrown in.

Too much of the movie takes place in dark rooms where people talk and talk and talk – describing horrors that might more profitably have been on the screen – and the plot is a house of cards that constantly collapses, as Blatty the screenwriter poses Blatty the director challenges that he can't meet. The film only comes to life in a few brief, illogical flashes – a possessed old woman crawling ignored on the ceiling, a white-robed figure with an impressive decapitation implement drifting after a doomed nurse.

Looking at Blatty's cut, the producers decided that an *Exorcist* sequel really ought to have an exorcism in it somewhere, and so Nicol Williamson was called in for some extra Bible-thumping scenes which look exactly like tacked-on additions that pad out an already-ludicrous climax to insane proportions. Although dressed up with a lot of talk about faith and the nature of Evil, *The Exorcist III* is still essentially yet another variation on the cycle of movies – *The Hidden* [1987], *Child's Play* [1988], *Shocker* [1989], *The First Power* [1990] – in which a cop pursues a body-hopping serial murderer, even going so far as to recall Dourif from *Child's Play* to recreate his role.

Kim Newman, *Empire*, no. 18, December 1990, pp. 40.

Ignoring completely John Boorman's imaginative *The Heretic* [1977], *The Exorcist III* casts itself as the 'real' sequel to William Friedkin's original, which is acknowledged in a number of replays of the Georgetown steps scene, and references aplenty to Father Karras and his fate. William Peter Blatty directs from his own novel *Legion* (the film's thesis seems to be that the occasions for possession are indeed legion), holding off the full horror of events until the latter part of the film, making do with creaking doors, long shadows and subliminal glimpses of various nasties. This exemplifies the problem of how to bring to the screen the quite meticulous and detailed description of sadistic physical practices in contemporary American horror writing. Or how to link visceral horror with a sense of pervasive spiritual evil, which perhaps only David Cronenberg has been able to do with genuine conviction. What conviction accrues to *The Exorcist III* in this respect stems from George C. Scott's portrayal of Lieutenant Kinderman as someone who has 'supped too much on horrors', and experiences by a rising tide of disgust.

But as Scott portrays him, Kinderman's disgust is both rational and humanistic, and the scene in which he fails to notice, on a visit to the psychiatric ward, an old lady in the throes of possession curled up on the ceiling like a giant fly, is emblematic of the man's character and the film's failings. Scott's Kinderman is not, like Peter Cushing's Van Helsing, a rationalist able to encompass a sense of immanent spiritual evil, and all the fireworks which the special effects can unleash seem to register with him as a tedious diversion on the way to nailing the villain. The film is also let down by dialogue which opens with some witty and literate exchanges and then settles into a standard mode, and by Blatty's failure to pare away his tangled narrative more rigorously.

Verina Glaessner, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, v. 57, no. 683, December 1990, pp. 352-353.

ABOUT THE TRANSFER

The *Exorcist III* theatrical cut is presented in its original theatrical aspect ratio of 1.85:1 with original 2.0 stereo audio and 5.1 surround sound. The film was restored in 2K resolution by Shout Factory.


The *Legion* director's cut has been assembled from the best available film and video elements by Shout Factory. The material sourced from the new 2K restoration of the theatrical version is presented in 1.85:1 whilst the material sourced from the standard definition video materials is presented in 1.37:1 aspect ratio. Both feature masters were made available to Arrow Films by Shout Factory.

PRODUCTION CREDITS

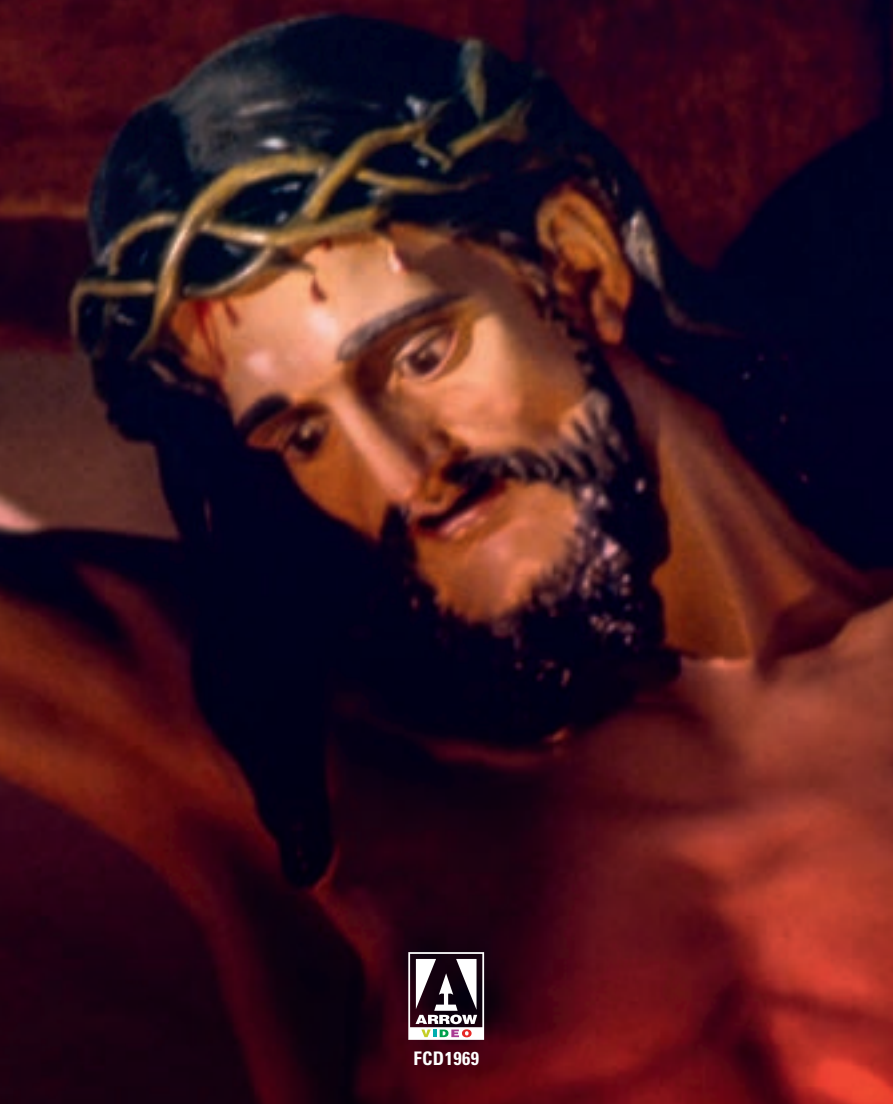
Disc and Booklet Produced by **James Blackford**
Executive Producer **Kevin Lambert, Francesco Simeoni**
Technical Producer **James White**
QC **Nora Mehenni, Alan Simmons**
Production Assistant **Samuel Thiery**
Subtitling **The Engine House Media Services**
Blu-ray Authoring **Fidelity in Motion (David Mackenzie)**
Artwork **Richard Wells**
Design **Obviously Creative**

SPECIAL THANKS

**Alex Agran, Julie Blatty, Dave Calhoun, James Chandler, Jordan Fields,
James Flower, Jonathan Froes, Lee Gambin, Christopher Griffiths,
Alexandra Heller Nicholas, Mark Kermode, Michael Mackenzie, Cliff MacMillan,
Josh Nelson, Kim Newman, Ian O'Sullivan, Jon Robertson, Dallas Sonnier**



IHS
FR. DAMIEN KARRAS, S.J.
Born 12 Apr. 1935
Entered 30 July 1957
Died 9 Oct. 1975
R.I.P.



FCD1969