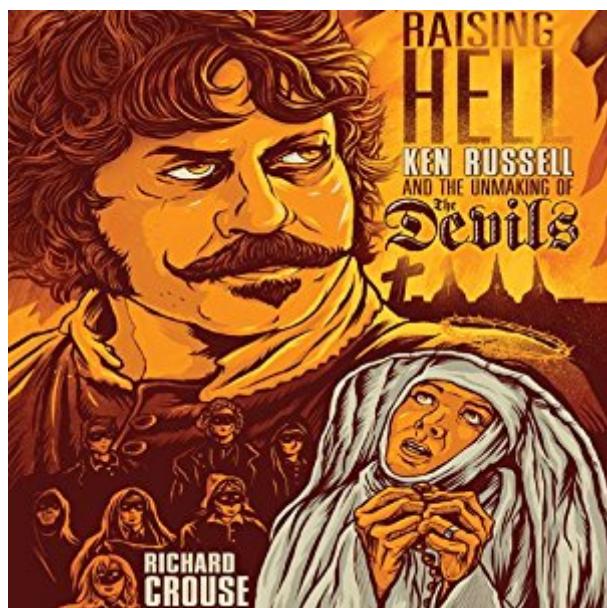


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Raising Hell: Ken Russell And The Unmaking Of The Devils



Synopsis

From exclusive interviews with director Ken Russell and new interviews with cast, crew, and historians, comes this examination of the beautifully blasphemous film *The Devils*. Based on historical fact, this controversial 1971 film is about an oversexed priest and a group of sexually repressed nuns in 17th-century France and the ensuing trials and exorcisms that followed. Detailing the production and the personalities of two of cinema's great eccentrics, director Ken Russell and star Oliver Reed, Crouse delves deeper to explore the aftermath of the film. Chiefly, the question asked is: How can a movie by one of the most famous filmmakers in the world end up banned, edited, and ignored by the company that owns it?

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Customer Reviews

In some ways I'm really late to *The Devils* party, but then, so are most people who missed it's original run in the 1970s, and of those, even fewer saw Russell's incredible work in anything like its complete form. Film critic Richard Crouse, after Mark Kermode, probably ranks as one of the film's staunchest defenders among the critical echelons, not always an easy thing to be, given the hysterical bile and howls of outrage sometimes levelled at the film. He has delved into the three plus decades of controversy, censorship, rediscovery and reappraisals that surround this most powerful of cinematic statements on the abuses of faith, the corruption of Church and State, the psychology of demonic possession, and the brutality of scapegoating and crafted an excellent document on a hounded classic. Extensive interviews with both surviving and since-deceased cast and crew, along

with contemporary filmmakers who are fans of the flick, illuminate almost the entire complex story behind the strange events at Loudon in 17th century France. Oliver Reed, Ken Russell, Gemma Jones, Mike Bradsell, Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and Derek Jarman all chip in with funny, disarming and spirited anecdotes that any aficionado will love reading about. If there are any small caveats, they would be a brief dismay at the lack of photographs, posters or set designs to illustrate the incredible story of the film, and a little more about a couple of details on the cuts imposed by Russell himself, as well as the censors. There's no description of a couple of scenes rediscovered in the Director's cut(2004) or the Hell on Earth documentary. Also, the gorgeous BFI DVD released this year mentions a scene Ken decided himself to scrap and reshoot starring comic genius Spike Milligan, which I'd liked to have seen mentioned, but no matter. There's a couple of tantalising hints of the original, much longer screenplay here that might have been slightly expanded upon, but again, this isn't essential. This is a worthy examination of this powerful and unforgettable British masterpiece.

This is a fun and engrossing tale of how everything that can go wrong making and selling a movie can go wrong. It's unbelievable that people still cling to notions that anything should be above satire, especially Roman Catholicism! Russell one of the great film iconoclasts should be lauded for his unique style and tenacity. Reading this book makes me anxious to see the film and Russell's entire oeuvres.

I've been a fan of this film for years but was really curious about its history. Nice quick history of Russell and then on filming and controversy of this amazing film. Very glad I bought it. Made me want to see the movie again and read the book (by Aldous Huxley). And ECW Press has a nice program on getting an ebook version too, making it a real bargain. If you're into Russell or this film, it's a must read.

I was one of the blessed - or damned - few who had the great fate to see THE DEVILS in toto when it first came out in 1971. It was stunning then and is still stunning today. A work of brutal brilliance - arguably director Ken Russell's masterpiece. As a matter of fact THE DEVILS was the immediate reply from Russell when I asked him what his own best movie might be. As of this writing, the best viewable version of the many versions out there, is the Angel Digital DVD. What it lacks in image and sound quality is made up for as it is the completest version extant. The controversial Rape of Christ sequence was found after a grueling search and is reinstated into this widescreen version.

Plus there are extremely good extras included on the disc. Alas, someday Warner Brothers might have the smarts to release this - and not as so many films are released by Warners, as part of their archives. Glad as I am to have the archive films on DVD, to not include even chapter stops with the final product is absurd. Anyway, THE DEVILS is a great movie, despite its having a bit too fingerprints on its celluloid revealing the touch of its time. I had been waiting for the release of the book RAISING HELL for quite some time now, having pre-ordered it many moons ago. Alas, the wait was not really worth it. Crouse's book is a slim volume, too much so for such a weighty subject. Even though a handsomely produced little book, it cries out for photographs, even if only a few. But the main disappointment comes from the text itself. There are errors of fact that I caught that completely undermine the rest of the book and make me uncomfortable wondering what else is wrong in the book that I did not catch. Richard Crouse, the author, is a film critic, a radio host, author of six other books and news columnist for a major newspaper. Well, bully for him - but perhaps he should slow down some. Why do I say this? For one thing, the intro to RAISING HELL goes into the lead up to his interview with Ken Russell at a screening of THE DEVILS quite late in the director's life - and we learn that the interview was some 55 minutes. A transcript of the full interview would have been nice to have in the book. But here are my gripes: on page 14 Malcolm McDowell is listed along with Dirk Bogarde, Tom Courtney, Albert Finney and Alan Bates as being one of the initial Angry Young Men in British cinema. But McDowell was, more precisely, one of the second or third wave of this new breed of realistic actor. The first wave ran from 1953 - 1960 and McDowell's first time on camera was in 1964. And while on the subject of Malcolm McDowell, on page 121 of Crouse's book he claims that Malcolm as Alex in A CLOCKWORK ORANGE "tap dances his way through an attack on a helpless victim while 'Singin' the Rain' bops along on the soundtrack." Well, Alex is not tap-dancing and it is he who is singing the famous song as he enacts his villainy. To say that the song is on the soundtrack - and not coming directly and only from the character in this instance - is inaccurate and misleading. On page 59 we learn that THE DEVILS star Oliver Reed "died of a heart attack...in Malta, on May 2, 1999, after a night of heavy drinking and arm wrestling with off-duty sailors." Although Crouse refers back to Cliff Goodwin's biography of the actor (EVIL SPIRITS) quite often, apparently he didn't read this part of the account carefully enough. As related in Crouse's book, one would think Reed died the morning after a hellacious night. But the truth is he had the heart attack in the bar and in the early afternoon. Now, I might have let the above errors pass. But when I came to page 61 and read the following, the book nearly dropped from my hands: in discussing Vanessa Redgrave's career, Crouse tells us that the actress was nominated for Best Actress for an Academy Award for "the lead in ISADORA, a Ken

Russell-directed biopic about dancer Isadora Duncan."Apart from the author's startling ignorance in this matter (mind you that Crouse interviewed Russell for 55 minutes in 2010 and is an alleged film critic who wrote a book called THE 100 BEST MOVIES YOU'VE NEVER SEEN), well, apart from Crouse's foggy-brained moment, what of those who wrote the glowing blurbs on the back of the book itself? Is it possible that Terry Gilliam, David Cronenberg, John Landis, Joe Dante and even Mrs. Ken Russell didn't catch - and urge to correct - this totally ridiculous claim? Anyone and everyone who knows anything or everything about the work of Ken Russell KNOWS that he did NOT direct the Vanessa Redgrave film, but did direct for the BBC TV a film about Isadora starring Vivian Pickles as the dancer. So the troubling thing is this: how could this happen? In recent years I have come across way too many errors of fact in way too many books. It doesn't matter if the publisher is a small press such as the publishers of this book or a giant one: errors are becoming all too frequent. What happened? Did spell-check obliterate the need for astute proof-readers? Are people getting paid big bucks to proof-read poorly? And what of the authors themselves - and their family and friends and fans - how could no one catch this boner of a claim about Ken Russell and Isadora??? The book is only 192 un-indexed, padded pages long. How difficult is it to fine-comb the galleys before going to irrevocable press? How lazy can some people get? The bottom line is this: the error about ISADORA is immense. One is left wondering not only what else in the book is erroneous, but more urgently, how much does the author truly know about his subject if he could offer up before the reading public such a devastating error of easily-checked fact. Think about it: the author did a draft - and did not catch it. He most likely did a rewrite and did not catch it. He presumably had many folks from the publishing house and friends of his read the manuscript - and no one pointed it out to him. And then came the galleys - and there was still no one to catch the major error. This is why I say Richard Crouse should slow down and not wear so many hats. Afterall, not every hat fits!

As little as there is out there regarding this film I was pretty excited when I saw that this book was coming out! Love the film. Love the cover. Loved the book.

I ordered this book to be shipped once it became available, and I got it last Friday, substantially ahead of the promised date. Haven't had time to read it, I just got the video of the film itself last week and wanted to watch that first. But the book is nicely printed (paperback) and I'm looking forward to a good read.

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