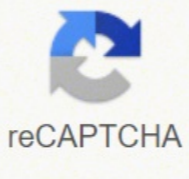




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The shining miniseries vs movie

AN ESSAY WITH VIDEO HEAD-TO-HEADS [This is an adapted and expanded version of a talk I gave on September 21, 2017 at Kevin Geeks Out About Stephen King at Nitehawk Cinema in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. Kevin Geeks Out is a monthly series of talks on geeky topics hosted by Kevin Maher.] Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film The Shining is considered a horror masterpiece, and even one of the greatest films ever made. Stephen King, famously, hated it. He called it "a great big beautiful Cadillac with no motor inside," and has said, "The real problem is that Kubrick set out to make a horror picture with no apparent understanding of the genre." In fact, King publicly disparaged the movie so often that when he decided to do the 1997 miniseries and needed Kubrick's approval, since Kubrick owned the rights, King had to sign a contract promising he would quit trashing the movie in public. King admitted that his motivation for doing the miniseries was to correct the errors he saw Kubrick as having made. As King had repeatedly stated in interviews: "I would do everything different." And so he did. I've met many people who like the miniseries. And I've noticed that most of the people who hate the Kubrick movie seem to be pissed off that it strays from the book. But we're talking about a visual experience, whether in a theater or on a TV screen. Therefore the works of art should be judged on their merits as motion pictures. So what we'll do here is have the Kubrick movie and the King miniseries go head-to-head, scene-to-scene. It's important to note that King wrote the screenplay for the miniseries and was executive producer. This was his baby as much as the original book was. My thesis is that the King miniseries is problematic. And by "problematic" I mean "a great big ugly Sno-Cat with its central organs disemboweled by a psychotic hotel caretaker." PROBLEM #1: THE CASTING King hated Jack Nicholson as Jack Torrance, because he was perceived as crazy from the get-go, instead of a slow build from nice guy to brains-basher. So King rebelled by casting the vanilla-est vanilla of all sitcom-star vanillas, Steven Weber, who was in your mom's favorite program, Wings. In the essential role of Danny, he did another 180 by casting a kid who was not a thoughtful, quiet, inner-storm-of-a-five-year-old, as was Danny Lloyd, but a bowl-cut cutie-pie who, for some reason, does not have the physical ability to close his mouth all the way. Ever. [NB: No sound in video.] And by the way, that kid, Courtland Mead, was nine years old. He was actively dumbing himself down to play a kindergartener. Kubrick's Danny Lloyd was five-and-a-half. But this was clearly King's own vision of Danny. In fact, I did some digging and found the casting director's sheet of final selects from the months leading up to filming, which give us a lot of information about what he was going for. (P.S. Courtland Mead turned out to be a perfectly handsome fellow who could close his mouth! And it wasn't his fault he was cast! And he did the best he could under the circumstances of acting for director Mick Garris and with this particular script! Warm shout-out to Mr. Mead!) PROBLEM #2: THE SCARES It's a horror story. So the scares are kinda important. Let's just go ahead and take a look at how each Master Storyteller handled the scary parts. [NB: Explicit! Nudity! Violence! Rated R!] They definitely blew their wad on the bathtub lady. That's where all the money went, and she's actually pretty good, I think. PROBLEM #3: THE SCRIPT Kubrick wrote his own script, assisted by Diane Johnston, and King wrote his screenplay himself. Most of you know the famous lines from Kubrick's version, so here's a quick run-through of King's bon mots. PROBLEM #4: JUST EVERYTHING The setting, the cinematography, the lighting, the acting, the costumes, the make-up, the special effects, the music, the situational choices. One of the best examples of "just everything" is how the scary hedges are handled from the original novel. In the book, animal-shaped topiary come to life. Kubrick felt this would not come off well on film, so he reinterpreted that in the form of the giant hedge maze. Let's see how all of that worked out. And I've got to show the party scene, because to me the centerpiece of Kubrick's film is Jack talking to Grady in the red bathroom. I honestly think it is one of the greatest scenes in film history. In King's miniseries version, we have no Lloyd (as was in his own book). Grady is the bartender, and Grady hasn't even killed his family (again: King leaving out his own idea). And it comes out like this: PROBLEM #5: THE END Kubrick changed the ending, from the hotel exploding, as happened in the novel, to Jack freezing to death. In the miniseries, of course, King retains his inferno finale. But he also tacks on an epilogue not found in the novel. An epilogue so what-the-fuck?, so why-god-why?, that I'm just going to go ahead and rest my case. I'm interested to hear yalls take on how the miniseries compares to the movie. For me, I like the miniseries but I find it extremely slow and boring for large parts of it. The only aspect of it I really enjoyed was Steven Webers portrayal as Jack Torrance, especially when he starts acting deranged and running around with the rogue mallet. I think he nailed it (for the most part) and when I read the book, I picture Weber in my mind instead of Nicholson. The miniseries also includes Jack's redemption arc in the narrative which was completely excluded in the Kubrick version which makes Kubrick's take on the story much more bleak. Ultimately, I definitely like Kubrick's version much more, except for Nicholson vs. Weber as Jack Torrance, it makes me wish that Weber was cast in the Kubrick version. CCO/inactive account ♦ ID 12019/Pixabay If you're interested in the latest blockbuster from Disney, Marvel, Lucasfilm or anyone else making great popcorn flicks, you can go to your local theater and find a screening coming up very soon. That's not the same if you're interested in arthouse movies, independent films or foreign pictures. Those sorts of movies don't get wide releases so they're not so easy to catch at movie theaters. Don't wait for the movie to turn up on a streaming service like Netflix if you'd like to see it on release as there are lots of places across the country where low budget or marginalized movies are shown on a regular basis. New York! It's definitely true to say that movie lovers in major cities like New York have more choice than those living in other areas of the country. Places like the Angelika Film Center, that opened in 1989, Landmark Sunshine Cinema in Manhattan, Film Forum, a non-profit indie cinema that's been operating since 1970, and the Angelika Film Center are just four examples of great places you can visit in New York if you'd like to see independent, foreign language or limited release movies. California! Where else would you expect to be able to catch the best independent movies than California? Cinopolis is one of the obvious choices. Why not purchase a ticket through Fandango and then head to Whittier Boulevard to catch the showing? Laemmle's Royal Theatre on Santa Monica Boulevard is another great place to catch a movie. You'll only be able to see foreign language movies there but they have one of the best selections of new movies in the country. You should also check out New Beverly Cinema. This place is definitely for the enthusiasts as its run by one. Quentin Tarantino's the owner so no wonder it shows a lot of double features in 35mm. Chicago! Logan Theatre in Logan Square is one of the best places to go in Chicago for a mixture of second run studio pictures and indie movies. They run midnight showings each weekend in a theater that was recently upgraded with a new sound system, better screens, and projectors. You should also check out Landmark's Century Centre Cinema if you're in the area. You'll get studio financed small movies, indie flicks and other obscure movies there, many of which can be watched during a midnight showing. Landmark! If you don't live in California or New York or Chicago, you can still catch great independent movies through the Landmark chain of theaters. They have 56 theaters in 27 markets that have a combined 268 screens. As well as a great selection of movies you won't find in other major chains, you'll also find that Landmark tends to run movies that have finished their runs in other theaters. The occasional well published major movie will be showing but don't expect to see the sort of mass appeal movies that are shown in other theaters. What to Watch! If you like the idea of seeing something different but you're not sure what to see, head to Fandango or Rotten Tomatoes to get an idea of what's out there at the moment. There's nothing better than a personal recommendation so talk to people who know and love movies too. The foreign language Oscar nominees list for 2019 that contains Capernaum, Cold War, Never Look Away, Roma and Shoplifters look interesting. Perhaps you could start with one of those movies. MORE FROM LIFE123.COM

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