

Damien – Omen II

US : 1978 : dir. DonTaylor : 20th Century Fox : 109 min
 prod: Harvey Bernhard : scr: Stanley Mann & Michael Hodges : dir.ph.: Bill Butler
[Jonathan Scott-Taylor; Lucas Donat](#)
 William Holden; Lee Grant; Lew Ayres; Sylvia Sidney; Robert Foxworth; Leo McKern;
 Meshach Taylor; Elizabeth Shepherd; Ian Hendry

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ♀ Z ♀	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
3857	4½	12	2	2,280	3 7 7 7 7	Yes	25/3/99

“The first time was only a warning!”



Source: Amazon.com

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide 2001 review:

“Sequel to huge hit of 1976 is less effective, still has shock value from grisly murders, plus

good work by Holden. Best scene is Ayres' death under an icy lake. Scott-Taylor is the demon child; Holden and Grant his stupidly unsuspecting kin. Taylor took over directing from Michael Hodges, who worked on screenplay. Followed by **"THE FINAL CONFLICT"**. Shot in Panavision. **½ ”

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review

“The antichrist who got rid of the entire cast of **"THE OMEN"** now, as a teenager, starts in on his foster parents. Once was enough.”

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89 review:

“The devil is still embodied in Damien, now a 13-year old boarding school student¹. Fans of **"THE OMEN"** will note that Damien's victims are killed or nearly killed in typically grisly fashion every ten minutes or so. ** ”

Rating the Movies (1990) review:

“Damien, that little demon from **"THE OMEN"**, is now 13 and living with his rich uncle in Chicago. About a dozen victims are murdered this time around in the most grisly fashion. The movie has a slick look and a good

¹ Or “pupil”, as we say in English...



Somebody down there likes me – Damien gets into training for evil at a swanky US military school. Like many a president before him.

Source: indeterminate

cast, led by Holden and Grant, but it is burdened with tedious dialogue. Director Don Taylor took over for Michael Hodges, who helped with the screenplay. Another sequel, "**THE FINAL CONFLICT**", was released three years later. Also with Lew Ayres, Sylvia Sidney, and Robert Foxworth. ** ”

The Time Out Film Guide review:

“This sequel lacks the bravura pacing of the original, and though it tries to maintain the biblical tone in following the adolescence of its antichrist anti-hero, immense problems emerge. Murderous adolescents are much more routine movie material than murderous five-year olds, and making Damien vaguely unhappy about his identity only serves to make him more irritating. The number of surrogate demons is also vastly inflated, thereby stacking the decks against the angels from the beginning and undermining any real tension.”

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

“The only drawback to the splendidly made **OMEN** films is that the good guys so seldom even look like winning. Thus the results of their encounters with Damien are such a foregone conclusion that the chief excitement lies in seeing what new and spectacular deaths can be dreamt up by the special effects wizards. The most dazzling effect here involves slicing a man in two. Meanwhile Jonathan Scott-Taylor does very nicely as the teenage Damien (son of the Devil, you’ll remember) and seems to dispatch some new victim every few seconds of the film. It’s all frighteningly entertaining. ** ”

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

“Alas, little orphan Damien, lucky enough to be taken in by a rich uncle after bumping off his first pair of foster parents², can’t resist killing the second set, too, along with assorted friends of the family. Damien is obviously wearing out his welcome.

Damien is 13 and has a double personality problem, being both an anti-christ and a rather obnoxious teenager. Stoically played by Jonathan Scott-Taylor, Damien has apparently been behaving himself for the past seven years, since his uncle (William Holden) and aunt (Lee Grant) suspect nothing³ and love him very much as does his cousin (Lucas Donat).

Only cranky old aunt Marion (Sylvia Sidney) knows something is wrong with the boy, but a raven gets rid of her. Then a pesky reporter (Elizabeth Shepherd) shows up. So the raven pecks her eyes out and she stumbles in front of a truck.

One day, Damien’s platoon sergeant at the military school suggests he read the Book of Revelations and find out why he’s special. He soon gets the knack of killing people himself, with spectacular touches that top the decapitation of his tender years. (Screen story by Harvey Bernhard, bases on characters created by David Seltzer.)”

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

² he didn’t kill either one of them, in fact

³ also inaccurate, since his aunt is a minion of Satan.

“In this first sequel to **"THE OMEN"**, William Holden plays the world's richest man, Richard Thorn. In the previous picture, Richard's brother is shot by police while attempting to kill his son, who he believed to be the Antichrist, son of Satan. **"DAMIEN: OMEN II"** picks up seven years later. Rated "R". ***½ ”

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Blackhawk film catalogue note:

“This sequel to the story of the young Antichrist surpasses the first suspense filled shocker. Rated "R".”

Radio Times review:

“The little boy with 666 on his scalp is now happily ensconced with uncle William Holden and auntie Lee Grant in Washington. As Damien, Jonathan Scott-Taylor is briskly planning ghastly immolations and putting the Devil into the Oval Office. Fine fireworks, but lacking the pace of the original film. ** ”

“Chiller. The anti-Christ brat who malevolently worked his way through the cast of the original shocker has grown to teenage, and is now ready to start on his adoptive uncle and aunt⁴ as a prelude to putting the Devil in the White House. Well, it certainly makes Patti Davis's revelations on tonight's **"Wogan"** seem tame!”

“The Antichrist becomes an adolescent evil-doer in the second part of the Satanic saga, which relies too openly on the same shock suspense tricks that made **"THE OMEN"** such a huge success. William Holden and Lee Grant handle their roles as Damien's foster parents with considerable skill, and their performances in the disturbing apocalyptic finale are the high points of this otherwise missed opportunity. May be edited [*sic*] for language and violence. *** ”

“The second film in the horror trilogy. Damien is now an obnoxious teenager, but his

aunt believes something even more sinister lurks in his personality. *** ”

Sunday Times note:

“The Devil's spawn is now a sulky adolescent, farmed out to unfortunate relatives in the American Midwest. Unpleasant, unconvincing sequel. ** ”

“Unpleasant, unconvincing sequel to a similarly straight-faced horror. With William Holden and Lee Grant. ** ”

Source unknown:

“Horror sequel with William Holden. *** ”

Films & Filming reader's letter:

“Q: What happened to the young actor Jonathan Scott-Taylor who played the title role in **"DAMIEN OMEN II"**?

A: He was born Jonathan Taylor in London in 1962. While a schoolboy at Haberdashers' Aske's Boys School he began appearing in amateur plays at the Mountview Theatre. His professional debut was in "Treasure Island" at the Mermaid Theatre in 1973. After a lot of television work.. he returned to the theatre, appearing in "The White Devil" at The Old Vic in 1976. He made four films. His last appearance was in the BBC soap opera **"Triangle"** in 1982. After working as a farmhand in Diss, Norfolk, he took off around the world, lumberjacking in Canada and labouring in Australia. He's now returned to Britain, determined to relaunch his acting career. He makes a comeback in a small role in the TV movie **"TROUBLES"**.”

⁴ Cribbed almost word for word from Halliwell.

"DAMIEN" opens with a jeep careening through the bustling streets of a middle eastern port. In it is the wild-haired exorcist-cum-archaeologist Bugenhagen (Leo McKern). As the title music ends he leaps from the jeep brandishing a London newspaper at friend Ian Hendry, declaring that Damien Thorn is the son of Satan and he can prove it, because he's found a portrait of the *True Likeness of the Antichrist* on Yigail's wall at the site he's currently excavating. Well. Full marks for expedition, but no marks for subtlety. Bugenhagen hurries his friend to the ruins to view the wall and both are promptly buried alive when the chamber fills with sand. The old mystic dies babbling biblical prophecy, in what is to become a tedious precedent. So exit probably the two best actors in the film, hastily grabbing their cheques and making for the studio doors. Yigail's wall shows us the faces of the Antichrist at six (Harvey Stephens) and 13, but we are not vouchsafed a look at the adult face. The producers didn't want to commit themselves, casting wise, to the lead in the final part of their trilogy.

The first glimpse we have of the imp in person he is seen through the flames of a gardener burning dried leaves. Subtlety on subtlety. He is dark and intense looking, and just on his way to start at a military school with his cousin Mark (Lucas Donat). Various people detect a whiff of sulphur about Damien, and are dispatched in their turn by freak accidents, a malevolent raven, or the apostates of hell ranged about for his protection. Damien seems genuinely fond of Mark, and his is the one death (when Mark identifies and rejects him) which causes him authentic grief. Even an Antichrist needs a chum. There is a subplot about Thorn industries creating a new high-yield grain that will enslave Third World farmers, but the main impetus comes from the arrival of Yigail's wall for exhibition in the States, and attempts to convince Thorn billionaire Holden to see the evidence with his own eyes before it's too late.

Very much like **"JAWS 2"**, which was also released in 1978, **"DAMIEN – OMEN II"** is a lazy and talentless cash-in exercise, riding on the shirt-tails of its predecessor. The script lacks not only pace, but also mood, character and conviction in the tale it is telling. The Antichrist would be the single most powerful human being who ever lived, with all the resources of hell at his disposal, but this film (much less **"THE FINAL CONFLICT"**, which was truly dire) does not even hint at the gravity of his presence. All its biblical rantings carry no persuasion, and even the set-piece executions on which it wholly relies are shabbily done and telegraphed far in advance (the bisection in the lift being the only exception). A single croaking raven just does not instil the same unease as a pack of feral dogs. William Holden just does not have the gravitas of Gregory Peck. Lee Grant is no Billie Whitelaw. And finally, the writers did not anticipate the drawback of leaving Damien himself such a passive agent in the story.

Most of the grisly deaths which occur about him do so without his knowledge or intervention. Indeed, he is oblivious even of who he is (an absurd proposition) until a guardian angel nudges him to read Revelations. Only two small incidents in the film give any inkling of the direction that might have been followed, and both are thrown away. In the first, Damien is rebuked by a history teacher for being such a know-all. Summoned in front of the class, he is grilled on obscure dates in European history. He knows them all, precisely, effortlessly, and as the teacher falters in amazement, the boy begins to answer even before the questions are off his lips. Damien's knowledge of human history is complete and absolute. It's a far more chilling moment than a pesky reporter falling under the wheels of some public-spirited truck. In the second incident, Damien is being goaded by a school thug in the corridor. He does not raise a finger or utter any threat. The thug merely looks into his eyes and recoils in gibbering horror. Damien does not need to threaten anyone with his dad. His pedigree shines through. The equivalent, and far more effective, scene in the first film had Damien at a safari park, stampeding the giraffes and baboons with an offhand frown, or smile.

In these secular times, supernatural stories cannot rely on the religious beliefs of their audience, but must construct their plausibility cautiously, from the outer edges in, as William Friedkin did with **"THE EXORCIST"**, or Roman Polanski with **"ROSEMARY'S BABY"**. In **"THE OMEN"**, the audience associated with the shrewd, level-headed ambassador Thorn, whose disbelief is gradually but surely chipped away. Holden is meant to embody that point of normalcy in the sequel, but the audience is ahead of him now, and it doesn't work.

Jonathan Scott-Taylor is Damien. Resolutely British of accent, though both his parents were American, and he was raised in the States. Evil must have a European accent – it's an unwritten axiom in Hollywood. Aged 16, he passes barely for 13, has the requisite saturnine looks and cold eyes, but is hampered by attempts to make him "sympathetic" – a "victim" of his parentage. The odd knowing leer from him does not send a chill down our spines. He is "introduced" on the credits as making his film debut, but Jonathan had a small part in Alan Parker's **"BUGSY MALONE"** two years before, and made the Children's Film Foundation production **"THE 'COPTER KIDS"**. In 1978 he also appeared in **"THE FOUR FEATHERS"**. His TV appearances included **"THE WINSLOW BOY"**, **"THE £50 NOTE"**, **"THE CEDAR TREE"** and **"1990"**. Nothing else is known of the blond Lucas Donat.

See also **"THE OMEN"** and **"THE FINAL CONFLICT"** (which truly was diabolical), and subject index under **BOARDING SCHOOL / PUBLIC SCHOOL, THE CHILD AS EVIL IN OUR MIDST, HORROR, ORPHANS / ADOPTION** and **RELIGION**.