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# THE BEDLAM FILES

*With Adam Groves*

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"Once, every village had an idiot. It took the Internet to bring them all together."

—Robert Bateman

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## Streaming Now



### 1. **A CLOCKWORK ORANGE**

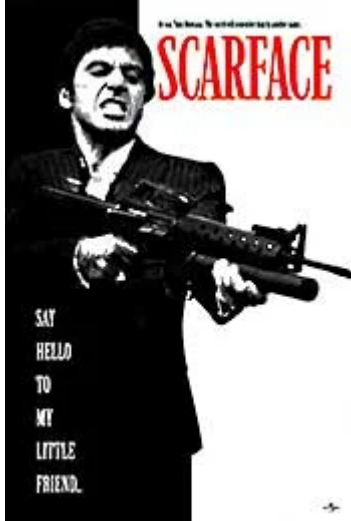
The late Stanley Kubrick's most controversial film, and also his most financially successful. After 51 years A CLOCKWORK ORANGE stands as a curiously fascinating, nasty yet socially relevant commutation that's never quite been equaled, much less bettered, despite several concerted attempts (with **NATURAL BORN KILLERS**, **FREEWAY** and **AMERICAN HISTORY X** all bearing its unmistakable influence).  
NETFLIX

## Adam's Picks



### 1. **HAXAN**

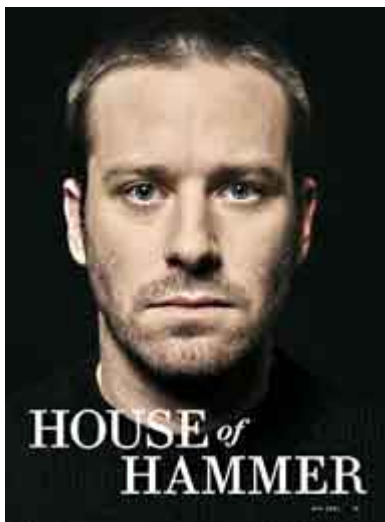
Here's an important movie milestone that shockingly few people noticed: on September 18 this Danish classic turned 100. The world's first true "cult" film, Benjamin Christian's HAXAN is a quasi-documentary whose subject matter is indicated by its English language title WITCHCRAFT THROUGH THE AGES. You'll certainly never see another film in or out of the silent era that depicts witches lining up to ecstatically kiss Satan's butt, or one containing the audacity and



## 2. SCARFACE

I've been around long enough to see this 1983 film interpreted several different ways. During its initial release SCARFACE was touted as a serious drama akin to THE GODFATHER, only to be subsequently proclaimed a hip-hop touchstone. In its current status SCARFACE stands as a pinnacle of quintessentially eighties excess (as any film whose hero plunges his face into a mound of cocaine inevitably is). However you choose to view it, it's an essential watch.

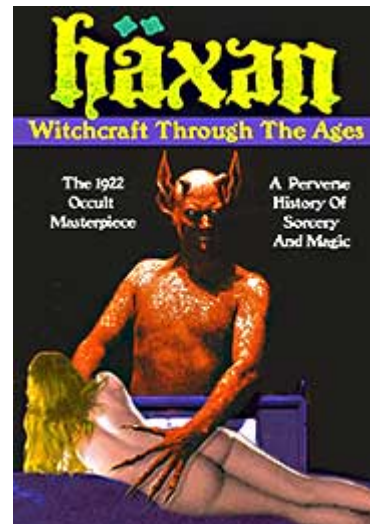
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## 3. HOUSE OF HAMMER

Essentially a glorified E! TRUE HOLLYWOOD STORY episode, the three part HOUSE OF HAMMER offers a sensationalized portrait of the disgraced sadist-cannibal-pervert Armie Hammer and his scandal-plagued family tree, with a somber

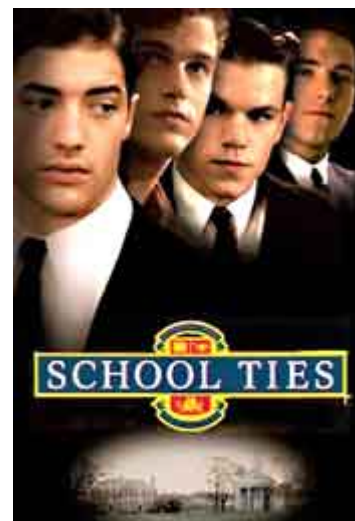
imagination bequeathed by Mr. Christian.  
FILM



## 2. WITCHCRAFT THROUGH THE AGES

While on the subject of HAXAN, here's the first English language book devoted entirely to it. Author Jack Stevenson eagerly details the furor the film caused, including the eight thousand Catholic women who protested HAXAN in Paris and the commentators in the film's native Denmark who denounced it as exploitative and immoral, although the text is quite vague about the film's inception. If this book proves anything it's that very little is known about HAXAN, with its many enigmas destined to remain mysterious.

BOOK



## 3. SCHOOL TIES

tone that feels forced and #me-too shout-outs meant to legitimize the lurid content. Hammer accuser “Effie” **has called out** HOUSE OF HAMMER, stating that its makers “remind me of Armie,” and she’s not wrong. But speaking as one who’s eagerly consumed many an E! TRUE HOLLYWOOD STORY, I can’t say this series isn’t compelling, or that it doesn’t handily accomplish its major goal: of making Armie Hammer out to be an all-purpose Hollywood scumbag whose cultural cancellation was (for once) entirely justified.  
DISCOVERY+



#### 4. **EVERYONE KNEW: BRYAN SINGER**

Here’s another queasy portrayal of a true Hollywood perv: Bryan Singer, a gifted director with a most unfortunate taste for illegal drugs, underage boys and wretched excess. This hour long video leaves much to be desired in terms of filmmaking prowess, being essentially a spoken word essay accompanied by soundless news clips that rarely match what’s being said. Still, this is the most concise distillation I’ve encountered of the case against Singer (which tends to be downplayed, if not ignored altogether, by mainstream media outlets), for which reason EVERYONE KNEW demands a watch.  
YOUTUBE

This film, which just turned 30, is often described as the OUTSIDERS (1983) of the nineties. That’s because SCHOOL TIES, like the former film, introduced a wealth of acting talent that included Brendan Fraser, Matt Damon, Chris O’Donnell and Ben Affleck. The story, about a Jewish student (the non-Jewish Fraser) undergoing anti-Semitic persecution at a New England boarding school in the late 1950s, isn’t much, but after three decades it holds up fairly well. I of course have a personal history with SCHOOL DAYS, detailed in my **review**; that history admittedly doesn’t seem as interesting as I once believed, but it lends the film an extra dimension. SCHOOL DAYS, in short, is a product whose Hollywood studio backers, in a *very* rare instance, actually cared about it.  
FILM



#### 4. **THE NAIL**

Rob Zombie has been in the news lately for his much-derided **MUNSTERS** pastiche. It may not seem possible, but Mr. Zombie *is* capable of turning out quality work, as proven by the 2004 graphic novel THE NAIL. Scripted by Zombie and illustrated by the legendary Steve Niles, it offers a narrative that’s heavily informed by seventies-era horror movies like **THE HILLS HAVE EYES**, **DUEL** and **THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE**, centering on an aging wrestler known as the Nail running into a zombie



## 5. KHOON KHOON

Trashy third world remakes, or more accurately rip-offs, of Hollywood hits are always fascinating. KHOON KHOON, from 1973, was Bollywood's attempt at aping **DIRTY HARRY**, complete with music numbers and a vastly inflated 2 hour-plus runtime. That's despite a stripped-down narrative that jettisons many of **DIRTY HARRY'S** most striking elements (such as the "Do You Feel Lucky?" speech), with the focus on the sniper played in the original film by Andrew Robinson, and here, quite histrionically, by the veteran Bollywood mainstay Danny DeZongpa. Standing in for Clint Eastwood is Mahendra Sandhu, who in direct contrast to Dirty Harry is a contented family man in good standing with his superiors. Also present are over-the-top touches of a type you won't find in too many Hollywood productions, such as a little kid getting sniped and a music number that occurs, incongruously enough, on the school bus DeZongpa hijacks (as did Mr. Robinson in **DIRTY HARRY**) in the final scenes.

NETFLIX

biker gang on a cross-country farewell tour. It's a fast read that offers plenty of colorful carnage and an excess of trash talk, although if you're looking for something beyond those things you should probably look elsewhere.

BOOK



## 5. POLTERGEIST

I don't much like this now 40-year-old movie, but it was an important part of my childhood, as I'm sure it was for many Gen-Xers. **POLTERGEIST** was PG rated (meaning us kids were able to get in to see it), featured special effects that were quite groundbreaking for their day, and contained enough flashes of the unruly genius of its late director **Tobe Hooper** (the film's producer and primary screenwriter Steven Spielberg is widely alleged to have helmed most of the pic himself) to make for a movie that was a definite standout in **the summer of '82**. Now, though...

FILM

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- **Blonde** (Film)



- **Valerian and the City of A Thousand Planets** (Film)
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- **Marilyn Monroe Biopics** (Commentary)
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## Insider Info

*“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”*

So claimed the Spanish philosopher **George Santayana** back in 1611, but he could have been referring to modern-day Hollywood. Take the current pop culture bugaboo, “Toxic Fandom,” a relatively new term for an old problem.



Think back to 2016, and the release of the all-female **GHOSTBUSTERS** reboot. Sony had great faith in this hellaciously expensive project, and attempted to stifle internet dissent by calling out the **racist and sexist attacks** allegedly lobbed by online fans. Precisely how widespread those attacks were remains an open question, with the more important issue in my view being how the publicity affected the box office. That also remains an open question, but one thing is for sure: the insults lobbed by Sony and its media minions didn't help matters, as the 2016 **GHOSTBUSTERS** was a box office disappointment that has since been **completely decanonized**.

Amazon, in publicizing its billion dollar **RINGS OF POWER** series and fighting off those **much-derided toxic fans**—would have done well to study this historical tidbit, and another saga that occurred even farther back—the late 1980s, to be exact, when it was announced that Michael Keaton had been cast as Batman. The **ensuing furor** far outstripped any of today's controversies (the din being overpowering even without the existence of social media), showing just how bitchy comic book fandom can be. Yet

Warner Bros. stood its ground without insult or complaint, and wound up with a \$400-plus million (close to a billion dollars in today's currency) hit, despite the fact that the finished film, sorry to say, wasn't very good.

My point? That yes, comic book fans can indeed be "toxic," but they can also be quite forgiving, provided they're treated with respect.

I'll conclude this piece with a final tidbit, one that's not historical but, rather, a scene from the 1984 Steve Martin comedy **THE LONELY GUY**. The scene in question sees Martin, in the title role, attempting to chat up a woman in a singles' bar by lamenting how so many men are "only after one thing," but that he has far more meaningful motives. Her response: "That's great, but I just came here to get laid."

Hollywood in this scenario would be Steve Martin, and the rest of us the woman he tries to woo. Truly, Hollywood deserves credit for its new politically-minded bent, which has resulted in the industry becoming more selective in the audiences it targets and attempting to create meaningful, reality-based entertainment. Yet regarding the possibility of actually sitting through recent politicized opuses like **LIGHTYEAR**, **SHE-HULK** and **RINGS OF POWER**, thanks but no thanks. I'd much rather view **TOP GUN: MAVERICK** again.

Adam's recommendations organized by year/month in the **NEWSLETTER ARCHIVE**.



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