



The Jekylls & Hydes Pages

The Unfortunate Dr. Jekyll

The concept of unleashing one's baser instincts is curiously compelling. Cinema, in particular, has had a fascination with Robert Louis Stevenson's unfortunate doctor. Among the many film adaptations, there are a few, I think, that would do Stevenson proud. Then again, there's a couple that undoubtedly have him generating high grave torque.

This list is by no means complete, and is of course continually expanding as new filmmakers take their turn at indulging the baser instincts.



films in chronological order

Dr JEKYLL & Mr HYDE (1920)

(1920 - silent) dir: John S. Robertson; w/ John Barrymore, Martha Mansfield, Nita Naldi, Brandon Hurst.

This adaptation is a bit belabored, but is pleasantly creepy. The pace is slow and they rely too much on pre-Hays Code debauchery to maintain interest, but there are some good visuals and it gets emotionally very dark near the end. Barrymore carries the whole thing -- he's intense and moody as Jekyll, and transforms with minimal makeup into the twisted & maniacal Hyde. Not the best film version of the story, but worth a look.

**Dr JEKYLL & Mr HYDE (1932)**

(1932) dir: Rouben Mamoulian; w/ Fredric March, Miriam Hopkins, Rose Hobart.

Often hailed as one of the finest film versions of this story, it may also be the most genuinely scary. March's Hyde is not merely cruel, he's positively Cro-Magnon, and grows more subhuman with each transformation. And this Hyde is less about violence (as in many of the later films) than sex; the flick has surprisingly obvious sexual content for its era. The melodramatic dialogue is laid on a bit thick, but the performances are great and the photography is superb -- featuring progressive techniques (for 1932) like dissolves, split screens, POV shots, and extreme closeups. Probably the classiest treatment this story has ever received.

**Dr JEKYLL & Mr HYDE (1941)**

(1941) dir: Victor Fleming; w/ Spencer Tracy, Ingrid Bergman, Lana Turner.

Essentially a remake of the 1932 script, this one is superbly played, if unremittingly melodramatic. Spencer's Hyde is more credible than many -- the transformation accomplished with very subtle but effective makeup. However, the initial transformation scenes are accompanied by bizarre visual allegories



(Ingrid & Lana as whipped horses was one thing, but Ingrid's head as a champagne cork, I thought, overstepped the bounds a bit). Once we get that over with, Spencer Tracy surprises with one of the most frighteningly cruel interpretations of Hyde ever seen. Yet Bergman nearly steals the show from him with her performance as the carefree young tease who ends up as Hyde's terrified sex slave. Fleming tried to stir so much drama into this one that it's a bit curdled in spots, but the scenes between Tracy & Bergman make it well worth watching.



the SON OF DR JEKYLL

(1951) dir: Seymour Friedman; w/ Louis Hayward, Jody Lawrance, Alexander Knox.

When a young scientist discovers that he is the son of Dr. Jekyll (technically, he's really the son of Mr. Hyde), he digs into his father's old experiments. Well, if you're expecting the same old rehash from this micro-budget B-flick, you'll be surprised by an intelligent script & some original ideas. While trying to prove that his infamous father was not merely insane, the young Jekyll becomes the unwitting pawn of his father's old enemies & jealous rivals. The "Hyde transformation" is

trotted out once, only briefly, to satisfy the audience, and then it's back to an intriguing plot of revenge & double-crosses. We learn that any man can harbor a Mr. Hyde, and it takes only greed, not drugs, to bring him out. The flick is still just a quickly cranked-out "B", but the fresh, original story lends it a touch of class.

ABBOTT & COSTELLO MEET Dr JEKYLL & Mr HYDE

(1953) dir: Charles Lamont; w/ Bud Abbott, Lou Costello, Boris Karloff.

Karloff plays Jekyll as a jealous madman, while Hyde is a bestial murderer prowling the streets of London. Meanwhile, the boys are busted Yankee cops trying to get back in the good graces of the local police inspector. The script is a tad wandering & simple-minded -- in fact, it seems like a generic light comedy script with Bud & Lou just shoehorned in. They look rather like guest stars in their own movie. Still, the boys put on a good show and Karloff, as always, gives the audience his best. Adequately fun for a relaxing matinee.



Dr JEKYLL & Mr HYDE (1955)

(1955 - made for TV) dir: Allen Reisner; w/ Michael Rennie, Cedric Hardwicke.

Originally a live TV performance (a few flubs can still be spotted in the edited version), it is a finely staged and well performed adaptation. The script by Gore Vidal seems to borrow a lot from the Frederic March version, but takes a few liberties of its own and plays heavily on the addiction angle. Rennie is excellent in the dual role -- his brutish makeup is quite good, and he plays the callous Hyde with obvious relish. There's nothing here to particularly recommend it to film fans in general, but fans of Michael Rennie should get a big kick out of it.



DAUGHTER OF Dr. JEKYLL

(1957) dir: Edgar G. Ulmer; w/ John Agar, Gloria Talbott, Arthur Shields.

A young lady discovers that she is the heir to Dr. Jekyll, and perhaps to more than just his fortune, as people start getting their throats ripped out in the middle of the night. This is the



leftovers stew of horror flicks -- it mashes up the Hyde, werewolf, & vampire myths into one pot and tops it with misty moons, spooky music, and superstitious villagers bearing torches -- and the whole thing is stuffed with more corn than a pig on a binge. The script and characterizations are so trite and clumsy that if this were made just a few years later, it could only have been an attempt at high camp. Ulmer's filmography suggests that he must have known just how hackneyed he was being here; but then, he was never the most subtle of directors. Either way, although the flick certainly doesn't succeed as a spooky movie, it is rather fun to laugh at.

the STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE

(1968 - Canada/US TV movie) dir: Charles Jarrott; w/ Jack Palance, Denholm Elliott, Tessie O'Shea, Billie Whitelaw, (Oscar Homolka bit role).

The producer on this version is Dan Curtis, the maestro of *Dark Shadows*, so the atmosphere is never in question. And Palance turns in a terrific, layered performance -- his Hyde is smooth, suave and vile; while his Jekyll starts out as nervous, driven and pure of motive, but is quick to become addicted to the thrills of the illicit life. The script however, is unevenly paced and tends to wander; it only manages to echo scenes which were done better in previous movies. It is a fine Emmy-nominated production, but beyond Palance's performance, there's nothing really special to recommend it.



I, MONSTER

(1971 - UK) dir: Stephen Weeks; w/ Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, Mike Raven. No skin; no gore.

The progressive doctor has discovered a drug that seems to unleash his patient's innermost desires or fears... so like all good movie scientists, he injects himself with it. This is a curious adaptation of *Jekyll & Hyde* that is at times quite faithful and at others very loose indeed. The names of the principle characters have been changed to Dr. Marlowe and Mr. Blake (wink, wink), but everything else is out of the book.

Apparently, this was filmed in a new 3D process that depended on movement to create the effect, but the process was abandoned and the film was released in 2D. So we get a lot scenes of people waving things at the camera for no apparent reason and a whole damn lot of slowly panning shots that follow people just walking back and forth -- quite dull,



actually. Aside from that, it's a good looking adaptation, but the script is slow and plodding and leaves out any real depth except for the strange suggestion that Marlowe/Blake does what he does because he's the victim of child abuse. Lee's interpretation of Hyde (Blake) doesn't break any new ground, although it is a little unnerving to see Christopher Lee with a maniacal grin. It's an interesting production, but it falls well short of actually being a good one.

The ADULT VERSION OF JEKYLL & HYDE

(1972) dir: L. Ray Monde; w/ Jennifer Brooks, Rene Bond, Jane Tsentas, Linda York, Jack Buddliner, Harry Schwartz. Gobs of nudity, no gore.

A softcore porno flick does a take on Robert Louis Stevenson. In the 1970's, an oversexed, two-timing doctor discovers the lost lab notes of Dr Jekyll. Amid some confusing flashbacks to the original doctor's naughty murders, the new doctor discovers that the formula turns him into a blonde *Miss Hyde*! So he uses this as the perfect disguise to escape a murder rap. There is a brief glimmer of real plot just then, but what follows is a bunch of random things (mostly sex) and the doctor gets an abrupt comeuppance. Mildly amusing, with some nice sim-sex scenes; but what makes the flick worthwhile are the technical gaffes & plot lurches that make it such good MST3K material.



Dr JEKYLL & SISTER HYDE

(1972 - Hammer) dir: Roy Ward Baker; w/ Ralph Bates, Martine Beswick. A wee bit o' skin.

A cheeky little twist wherein the doctor is after an elixir of youth, but uses too many female hormones. They play this perilously close to a spoof at times -- it starts by revealing that Jack the Ripper is actually Dr. Jekyll harvesting material for his experiments. Then they mix in Burke & Hare and even a passing mention of Sweeney Todd. And the careful listener is rewarded with some wicked puns and double entendres. It also succeeds in getting tense when it wants to -- Martine Beswick is wonderful as the



steely-eyed sister Hyde. Not a classic, but definitely a success. A fun Saturday night flick.



DR. JEKYLL & MR. HYDE (1973)

(1973 - for TV) prod & dir: David Winters; w/ Kirk Douglas, Susan George, Donald Pleasence.

This Jekyll is thrice-doomed, seeing as how he not only turns into Hyde, but he's Canadian (a plot point for the sole purpose of excusing Douglas from faking an accent), and on top of that, he has to sing for his supper. So they made it a musical; okay, I'm up for that. The problem, however, is that the music is a soul-numbing parade of mediocre drivel that contributes absolutely nothing to the flick. The songs are from the writer of *Oliver!*, who used up all his musical ideas on that film and was just squeezed for a few imitative leftovers for this project. Aside from that, this version of the story is well done but merely adequate. The real tragedy is that Kirk Douglas put in such a superb performance in both roles -- if it had been wrapped in a more meaty (and less melodic) adaptation, it would have made a classic.



Dr BLACK, Mr HYDE

(1975 - aka *Dr Black & Mr Whyte, The Watts Monster*) dir: William Crain; w/ Bernie Casey, Rosalind Cash, Marie O'Henry. A little skin.

A driven black doctor develops a serum for cirrhosis of the liver -- it drives lab rats insane and kills patients, so he injects himself with it. Woo. This turns him into a pasty-faced giant who kicks unholy ass and lets somebody else worry about taking names. Worse still, the serum seems to have deranged both of his minds, and it doesn't bother him much that he turns into a serial killer at night. Casey's intense performance is outstanding, but seems out of place in an otherwise trashy low-budget melodrama. It's sort of fun to watch, but it lacks substance; it's pure drive-in fare. It does get the award for best line by a black cop: "This situation is rapidly becoming insalubrious. Meaning we're about to stomp a mudhole in yo' ass."



Dr JEKYLL LIKES THEM HOT

(1979 - Italy - aka *Jekyll Junior*) dir: Steno; w/ Paolo Villaggio, Edwige Fenech. Teeny flash o' boobie; no gore.

The modern Dr. Jekyll (actually being the descendant of Hyde) is a rude, brutish corporate fixer intent on toppling governments and exploiting the masses. But when he starts to have attacks of conscience, he chugs down his grandpa's formula in hopes of becoming pure evil. Of course, this backfires and he becomes a kind & caring (and rather fruity) Mr. Hyde, and he must now try to stop his own fiendish plan to blackmail the queen into promoting toxic chewing gum. It's a slapstick farce packed with dumb gags and low humor. Although the comedy here is more than a bit erratic, I confess I got a kick out of it. Helping immensely is a well crafted script that moves swiftly and has a silly twist ending. And there's also Villaggio, who really has too much fun both as the sadistic Jekyll and the foppish Hyde. It's a guilty pleasure, I suppose, but I thought it was a cute twist on the old tale.



Dr HECKYL & Mr HYPE

(1980) writ & dir: Charles B. Griffith; w/ Oliver Reed, Sunny Johnson, Maia Danziger, Virgil Frye, (cameos by Jackie Coogan & Dick Miller). No skin; a little blood.

Kindly Dr. Heckyl is a ludicrously deformed podiatrist who discovers that his colleague's super-diet medicine turns him handsome -- of course, it also turns him into a narcissistic murderer. Played with all the seriousness of an SNL skit, this thing wanders between dark humor and broad slapstick, with frequent side trips to bad taste -- all brought to us by the writer of *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Deathrace 2000*. Sometimes, it actually works, and Oliver Reed has an illegal amount of fun with the role. The script, however, just careens randomly around, never sticking with one idea long enough to do anything constructive, and the humor will at one moment be moody & psychological and then switch to Mad-magazine absurdism the next. It's a schizophrenic but well-played black farce -- and, what the heck, it was fun.



BLOODBATH OF Dr JEKYLL

(1981 - France/W. Germany - aka *Dr. Jekyll & His Women*; *Blood of Dr. Jekyll*; *Bloodlust*) dir: Walerian Borowczyk; w/ Udo Kier, Marina Pierro, Patrick Magee. A little skin; no gore.

Udo plays a Henry Jekyll who is not at all squeamish about his dark side -- in fact, he seems to prefer it. On the night of his engagement party, Jekyll pops in & out of the Hyde persona so rapidly, his houseguests have a hard time keeping up with all the rapings and killings. And since Hyde's penis is extra-long and extra-pointy, raping them and stabbing them to death amounts to pretty much the same thing. Meanwhile, the priest is barely concealing his worldliness, the retired general is shooting at every suspicious shadow, and there's a young lady who finds Hyde's abuse of her own father to be quite erotic. With all the sick-o loonies in his life, Hyde may be the least of Jekyll's problems. Whether this is saw-toothed black comedy or just tasteless cinematic insanity is for the viewer to judge, but it certainly doesn't leave one without an impression of some sort. This is far from Borowczyk's most artistic work, but it may be his most iconoclastic.

The title here refers to this Jekyll's method of transformation: bathing in a blood-red potion.



Dr. JEKYLL'S DUNGEON OF DEATH

(1982 -- aka *The Dungeon*; *The Jekyll Experiment*) prod & dir: James Wood; w/ James Mathers, John Kearney, Dawn Carver Kelly. No skin; no gore; no IQ.

A thoroughly demented descendant is experimenting with the old formula on captives... who karate chop each other to death (gee whiz -- it's a Jekyll Fu flick); meanwhile, he's forcing help from brain-damaged enemies & relatives and keeping an old teacher's daughter as his doped-up sex toy. Okay, it scores well in the Wucking Feird department, but it barely qualifies as a movie. It's built on a crude script (assuming there actually was one), and filmed with minimal lighting and less budget. Still, it stays entertaining throughout; partly because of the deformed filmmaking, but mostly because of Mathers' increasingly hammy hysterics as a Jekyll who is rapidly going further past sanity than any Hyde ever ventured.



EDGE OF SANITY

(1989 - UK/France) dir: Gerard Kikoïne; w/ Anthony Perkins, Glynis Barber, Sarah Maur-Thorpe, David Lodge. Some skin; mild gore.

What with the childhood trauma and the life of constrained propriety, our Dr. Jekyll has developed a cocaine habit. But then he discovers a new mix of the dope that unleashes the raving sex maniac within; his new hobby of carving up prostitutes becomes the talk of London, who only know Hyde by his first name, “Jack”. A bizarre take on the tale, this one mixes bloated artsy photography with moments of incredibly tacky soft porn and the occasional brief fling into homoeroticism. Not only is it shamelessly perverse, but it goes one up on the other adaptations by portraying Hyde as a mere shallow mask for the real Jekyll. The film is cheesy, tasteless, over-acted, and is just a bit more obnoxious than a drunken frat boy. Yet somehow the unwashed moral bankruptcy of the whole thing is refreshingly charming. And in a career of playing madmen, Perkins has never done it better than in this flick. I know I’m supposed to be ashamed of myself for actually liking this one, but darn it, I *do* like it. So there.



JEKYLL & HYDE

(1990 - UK, for TV) writ & dir: David Wickes; w/ Michael Caine, Cheryl Ladd, Joss Ackland.

This is a free & loose adaptation that is mostly soap opera dealing with



Jekyll's scandalous love life involving his married sister-in-law. Hyde is almost incidental as the unwanted fourth side of their love triangle. He's already running around at the start of the flick, and his character is never really explored. And this Hyde looks rather like a cheap Frankenstein monster with makeup so heavy Caine can barely move his lips (at least I think it was Caine under there, but it could just as easily have been Bette Midler under all that latex). It is, however, a very fine production with good performances and some great moments -- even if it does end with a dreadfully cheesy gimmick that you can see coming from five minutes into the film. Still, it's a very good flick and an interesting extension to the Jekyll mythos.

Dr JEKYLL & Ms HYDE

(1995) dir: David Price; w/ Sean Young, Tim Daly, Lysette Anthony, Stephen Tobolowsky. Very brief flash of boobs.

A modern descendant of Dr. Jekyll tries to improve on his ancestor's formula. The result is a ball-busting babe who moves in to take over the company he works for. It's a battle of wills as his two halves try to outwit each other amidst every possible gender-swapping gag you can think of. It's actually a slow-moving comedy that varies from mildly amusing to mildly irritating. Good music, 'though.

Dr JEKYLL & Mr HYDE (1999)

(1999 - Canada/Australia) dir: Colin Budds; w/ Adam Baldwin, Steve Bastoni, Anthony Wong, Jason Chong. One little bit o' skin; no gore.

Well, it's time to re-envision Mr. Hyde as a Kung Fu Superhero. A vain young doctor travels to Hong Kong with his new wife, where they are promptly blown up by the local mob. A mysterious Kung Fu guy saves Jekyll, and trains him into an herbal-potion-powered avenger -- so he fulfills an ancient prophecy and becomes the defender of Hong Kong and the butt-kicker of the Triads. So, he kicks a little butt and then the movie stops as if they expected the TV series to immediately follow. It's an adequate enough little flick, if your standards aren't too high, and if you don't mind being subjected to the same old idiotic Kung Fu training clichés.



Bad Cinema Diary

JEKYLL & HYDE: THE MUSICAL

(2001) dir: Don Roy King, Robin Phillips; w/ David Hasselhoff, Coleen Sexton, Andrea Rivette.

Lotsa hollerin' going on in this one. It is not a film adaptation, but the stage play filmed for TV. Using multiple cameras helps do a very good job of capturing the play visually, it's too bad the sound recording wasn't up to par. The music is poorly balanced and the choruses muddy. The music itself is serviceable but completely typical Broadway hollering. As for the story adaptation, it is ordinary and shallow, depicting the Jekyll/Hyde conflict as a simplistic duel between good and evil. The operatic script is full of anachronistic ideals and melodrama so thick it's rock hard. And for the much-maligned Hasselhoff, he certainly scores points on sheer effort, although his performance may be a bit *too* energetic and emotional. His hammy histrionics are occasionally entertaining, but really only serve to add to the pretentious stuffiness of the whole thing. Despite a good cast over all and a good stage production, there's not any real reason to sit through this one... unless you like getting hollered at.



Dr JEKYLL & Mr HYDE (2002)

(2002) dir: Mark Redfield; w/ Mark Redfield, Elena Torrez, Kosha Engler, Carl Randolph. No skin; no gore.

We get a most enthusiastically wicked rendition of Hyde, but the rest of the production is sparse & bare bones, betraying both its minimal budget and its origins as a stage play. The sets & sound quality are sometimes crude, but the cast is generally solid. Where the flick fails is in its script. It's a loose adaptation that attempts a moralizing angle that just



doesn't work. For instance, it goes to great lengths to show that anyone actually killed by Hyde was a really horrible person and certainly deserved what they got. That, and other nonsense, adds a great deal of additional (and entirely unnecessary) stuffing that makes for the duller version of the tale I've ever seen. There's certainly a lot of talent visible here, but it's wasted on a naïve and rather sleepy script.

JEKYLL + HYDE

(2006 - Canada) writ & dir: Nick Stillwell; w/ Bryan Fisher, Bree Turner, Jeff Roop, Zachary Bennett. Teensy bit o' skin; tidbit o' gore.

A young med student brews up a new party drug that makes him very horny and even more homicidal -- even as his friends are dropping like flies, he finds himself ever more addicted to his new lifestyle as much as to the drug. This one tries to be a serious psychodrama, but although it is quite well made and does generate some tension, it can't quite fly. The script and the characters just don't have much depth, and their oft-repeated philosophical platitudes have even less. I'll grant that they put in some good work and it is at least as worthy an adaptation as most recent attempts, but it's not near as good as it tries to be and in the end is quite skippable.



the STRANGE CASE OF Dr JEKYLL & Mr HYDE (2006)

(2006) writ & dir: John Carl Buechler; w/ Tony Todd, Tracy Scoggins, Vernon Wells, (Tim Thomerson bit). No skin; a little gore.

Here's yet another attempt to update the old tale by adding some gore and saying "nanotechnology" a lot. Although it is well filmed in general, the movie's only redeeming feature is Tony Todd, who gives an outstanding performance... that is wasted on a simplistic script. Hyde is once again reduced to a mere serial killer with a bad sense of humor, and the film attempts a dramatic, effects-packed climax so dreadfully overwrought that it falls face first into unintentional humor. And even Todd's excellence looks out of place here, since the rest of the cast just phoned in their performances. Tony's fans will want to see it, but even for them it's a bit of a waste.



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Icon Glossary:



Good Stinker -- These are the films where a good deal of the entertainment comes from filmmaking incompetence; fun to watch in spite of themselves.



Goopy Gore -- These films exhibit distinctly above-normal quantities of unpleasantly abused body parts.



Naughty Nudie -- Films with this flag feature frequent and/or explicit nudity (almost always female) beyond that normally found in your average T&A flick.



Butt Stompin' -- These films feature at least one superior violent fight or shootout scene that will get the testosterone pumping.



Gold Star -- These are the flicks that I felt reached above their expectations or at least pleasantly surprised me; they may not always be actually good flicks, but I did find something in them worthwhile.



Blue Max Medal of Really Goodness -- These are flicks that I not only enjoyed, but I think are actually quite good films (not always the same thing).



Lethal Cinema -- These wretched viewing experiences go beyond being merely bad to become genuine sources of pain and regret; they should be avoided by all but the most masochistic trash cinema veterans. Don't say I didn't warn you.