

The Final Conflict

(aka: "Omen III: The Final Conflict")

US : 1981 : dir. Graham Baker : 20th Century Fox / Mace Neufeld : 108 min

prod: Harvey Bernhard : scr: Andrew Birkin : dir.ph.: Robert Paynter & Phil Meheux

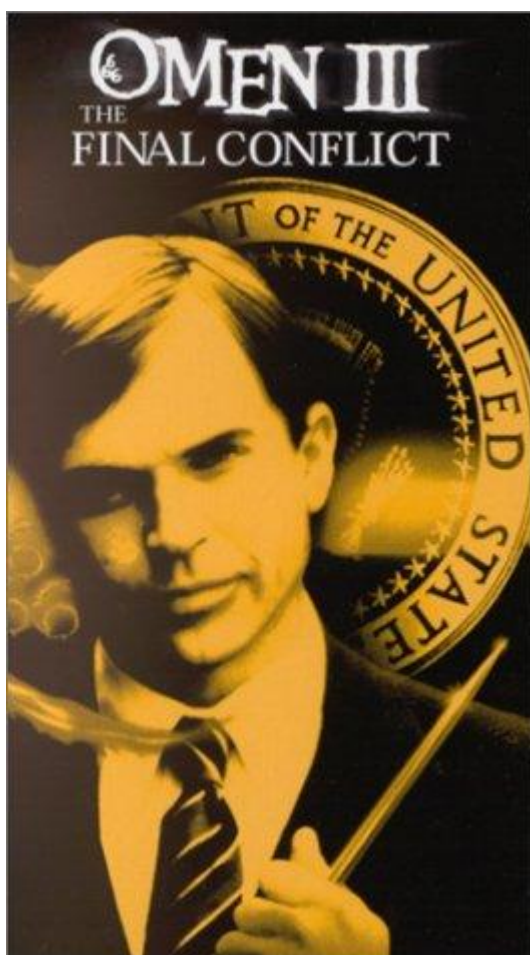
[Barnaby Holm](#)

Sam Neill; Rossano Brazzi; Don Gordon; Lisa Harrow; Mason Adams; Robert Arden;

Leueen Willoughby; Marc Boyle

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω □ ∅ Z ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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"The power of evil is no longer in the hands of a child!"



Source: Amazon.com

Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
1996 review:

"The third **OMEN** movie has the anti-christ Damien Thorn (Neill) thirtyish and the U.S. ambassador to England. For genre addicts

only. Followed by a TV movie: "**OMEN IV: THE AWAKENING**". Shot in Panavision. *½ "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review – identical to above

Halliwell's Film Guide review

"The Antichrist, now head of Thorn Industries, arranges to become U.S. ambass-ador in London. The devil as an adult proves somehow less chilling than the devil as a child, and all the elaborate mayhem seems decidedly old hat in this sequel to "**THE OMEN**" and "**DAMIEN: OMEN II**"."

"If Armageddon is as boring as this movie, we'll need a program to tell the players"

– **Roger Ebert**

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
review:

"In the third part of the **OMEN** trilogy, the Antichrist, Damien (Neill) has matured into a corrupt politician who – along with his vicious dog - plans to take over the world. The seven daggers (remember them?) are now in the hands of an Italian priest (Brazzi), whose mission is to destroy Damien before the Second Coming. Pales in comparison to "**THE OMEN**", yet interesting at times and – like the first two – very bloody and gruesome. ** "

Rating the Movies (1990) review:

“Neill plays Damien, the Antichrist, in this third instalment of the **OMEN** series. This time, Damien is head of an international conglomerate; he attempts to track down Jesus Christ, who he believes has been reborn. There are the standard violent gore sequences and more of the preposterous plot that’s rather shopworn by now¹. This film concludes the trilogy; Hollywood has decided to give the Devil a rest and the rest of us a break from such nonsense.”

The Time Out Film Guide review:

“The third part of "**THE OMEN**" trilogy is contrived as a series of set pieces whose point is the grisliest possible end for the Antichrist’s victims. Damien is now head of the world’s largest multi-national corporation, a powerful and charismatic man in his early thirties, and the eventual corpses are a band of seven Italian monks armed with sacred daggers, out to stop Damien from preventing the Second Coming (by slaughtering all first-born males²). If these elements make it a suitable entrant in the cinema’s long blood sports lists, it must be said that the non-delivery of Satan’s promised reign is something of a let-down. Still, it does make a return of sorts to the stylishness of "**THE OMEN**" after the tackiness of "**DAMIEN – OMEN II**".”

TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995 review:

“The final part of "**THE OMEN**" trilogy runs a bit like a Macnee-Rigg episode of "**The Avengers**", but in predictability is redeemed in part by the charismatic performance of Sam Neill, the New Zealand-born actor, as Damien the Antichrist. Poor old Damien is getting like Dracula, with his stake, and the werewolf, with his silver bullets, as he can now only be killed by one of seven ornate daggers, the significance of which escaped us.³”

Variety Movie Guide 1993 review:

¹ A rather cutting verdict on two thousand years of Christianity, surely? Or perhaps not...

² Getting our biblical wires crossed. The “slaughter of the firstborn” was one of the curses Moses invoked on Pharaoh. Herod just ordered a culling of **all** male infants under his jurisdiction.

³ The same daggers appeared in parts 1 and 2, so they’re scarcely a spurious late addition are they? And the significance? They’re sharp of course.

“ "**THE FINAL CONFLICT**" is the last chapter in the **OMEN** trilogy, which is too bad because this is the funniest one yet. This time Sam Neill plays Damien Thorn, all grown up now after killing off two nice families in the previous chapters. Fear of orphanage never worries Damien because his real father is the Devil, who only wanted him to go to the best schools, get a job and take over the world for evil.

And now he has, or almost. He’s running Thorn Industries and will soon be US ambassador to England when the fellow who has the job sees a bad dog and goes back to the office and blows his head off, the single startling episode in the whole film. Having memorised the Book of Hebron from The Apocrypha, plus several dopey soliloquies in Andrew Birkin’s script, Neill knows the only obstacle to his plan is the baby born when three stars conjoin overhead.

There’s also the matter of the daggers. If you remember the first two episodes, somebody or other, sometimes mom, sometimes dad, sometimes a stranger, was always trying to stab little Damien to death with the daggers.

This is the first feature for director Graham Baker, a veteran of British TV commercials, and it seems like he doesn’t quite know what to do when the daggers don’t have a brand name to hold toward the camera or the dialogue stretches beyond two sentences.”

Video Movie Guide 1993 review:

“The third and last in the **OMEN** trilogy, this disturbing but passionless film concerns the rise to power of the son of Satan, Damien Thorn (Sam Neill), and the second coming of the Saviour. It is a crassly commercialised version of the ultimate clash between good and evil that depends more on shocking spectacle than gripping tension for its impact. Rated "R". **”

Amazon.com review:

“The **OMEN** series concludes with this second sequel, starring Sam Neill as the adult Damien - aka. the son of Satan - in a battle with the heavens for control of mankind. The film ends up depending more heavily on effects and spectacle than on the kind of basic horrors that made the first movie in the series so unsettling,

but at least this one gives some closure to the seemingly endless saga.” -Tom Keogh

“Synopsis: Little Damien, the son of Satan featured in **"OMEN"** and **"DAMIEN: OMEN 2"** continues on his bloody and violent path to global conquest. This time out, his plans are threatened by the birth of a child who may be Christ.”

“Video Description: The third film in the **"OMEN"** series. The anti-Christ, now a powerful economic and political figure, finally does battle with his divine nemesis. Also known as: **"THE FINAL CONFLICT: OMEN III"**. The debut feature for director Graham Baker, who formerly worked on British commercials.”

Amazon Customer Reviews:

“In comparison to **"THE OMEN"** and **"DAMIEN – OMEN II"**, **"THE FINAL CONFLICT"** is rather weak. It doesn't bring the mounting tension of the earlier films to the satisfactory conclusion one would expect, and Sam Neill's portrayal sometimes lacks a certain intensity. As a horror/thriller film, it's not particularly successful either. The horrific elements are restricted to a handful of scenes and the characters (Dean, Kate, the priests who assist Father De Carlo in his hunt for Damien) aren't always fleshed out the way they should be.

But there are some nice touches, like Damien's monologue in his dark "chapel" and the grand foxhunt sequence. Jerry Goldsmith's score is an interesting mixture of bombast and subtlety. And Rossano Brazzi is always enjoyable to watch. I found the ending awkward and somewhat muddled, and contradictory to key plot points made in the previous films (notably, the importance of having all 7 daggers when trying to destroy Damien) but the film is worth at least a viewing.” - Shadow from America

“ **"OMEN 3: THE FINAL CONFLICT"** is a good ending to the series and is a pretty good sequel. The only problem is that unlike the other two, Damien is too mean, you really don't want to follow him, and the other character we'd normally turn to for someone to root for are paperthin and it's impossible to care about them. I really got turned off when Damien demanded that all the babies be killed. But the ending is good and a surprise cameo.”

- Nate Anderson from United States

“If this film is to be believed, the final battle between good and evil, the antichrist vs. the son of god, will entail people sitting in offices, yakking away, or occasionally making vague and ambiguous taunts to crucifixes. Oh, and there'll be a fox hunt and some angry beagles, and poor TV set safety standards. Does this send chills up your spine? Of course not.

This final chapter (aside from a TV movie, which is really spin-off) in a horror series that started so auspiciously and so atmospherically, is cheap and incredibly dull. The plot is a meandering series of mind-numbingly boring scenes, none of which generate any suspense or even seem to fit together. There is no sense of eternal conflict or the fate of the world possibly hanging in the balance. There aren't even any creative, fun death scenes like in the first two.

Neill is remarkably bland as the antichrist, but the script never makes him any more than a somewhat unethical businessman (even ordering his hypnotized but dull-as-dishwater followers to murder infants doesn't come across as particularly evil). Goldsmith's score is spectacular, but it only reminds you how little is actually occurring on screen. Ultimately, **"THE FINAL CONFLICT"** is just a fish out of water, weakly struggling until it runs out of air and dies entirely. A complete waste of time and money on a subject that deserved a true epic treatment. Only bother with this if you liked the first two **OMEN** films. The DVD provides one extra: commentary from director Baker (**"ALIEN NATION"**). He's about as exciting as the movie.”

- Ryan Harvey from Los Angeles, CA USA

“This third (and final, before the abysmal **"OMEN IV"**) entry in the **"OMEN"** series is not nearly as scary as its two predecessors. The conflict of the title comes across as rather flat and uninteresting. What should have been a titanic battle between the forces of evil and the powers of good is instead an entertaining and mildly creepy time-waster. Sam Neill is excellent as the adult Damien. He oozes an icy charm while still projecting an aura of dark foreboding. He is thoroughly convincing as the Antichrist. The other actors turn in good performances, especially Rossano Brazzi as Father DeCarlo, the leader of a group of monks whose aim it is to destroy the son of Satan. Once again, Jerry Goldsmith turns in a soundtrack that will send shivers up your

spine. Though a comedown from previous entries, this is still a good horror flick.”

- kaijukung54 from Odenville, USA

[**no listing** in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "International Film Guide 1982" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times review:

“Sam Neill stars as the grown-up Damien in the third film of the **OMEN** horror series. Now a successful businessman, Damien is intent on taking over the world, but his evil plans come to the attention of intrepid monk Father De Carlo. ** ”

“When **"THE OMEN"** was released in 1976 it was a real rival to **"THE EXORCIST"**, but the film series that it inspired soon degenerated into a soppy formula. This second sequel follows predictable lines and the climax is mind-bogglingly silly, but not final enough because there was yet another movie, **"OMEN IV: THE AWAKENING"**, in 1991. Contains violence and nudity⁴. ** ”

“Horror sequel. * ”

What's On TV note:

“The final part of the horror trilogy, starring Sam Neill as an adult Damien, now intent on preventing the Second Coming.”

⁴ *My god! A horror film containing violence? Whatever shall we do?*

Does anyone else feel obliged to inform us that the third part of a trilogy is the last one? Well then, as a side note let me point out that four instalments were initially planned for the series, but, as *The Virgin Film Guide* puts it, "*patron interest slacked off considerably after the second film, forcing the producers to cut the saga short at three*". This title post-dates publication of "*The Films of 20th Century Fox*".

The power of evil may no longer be in the hands of a child, but it fares no better in the hands of dolts, thanks to a screenplay strewn with howlers and plot holes you could drive a motorway through. Almost inevitably, the first two **OMENS** set this one up to be a crushing anticlimax, because we're talking here about the *literal* Armageddon, yes? Not some figurative meteor collision. We're talking about *the* Apocalypse, not some drug-ravaged trip through the Vietnam War, but the ultimate rematch between god's team and satan's, both of them physically present here on earth in the shape of their sons. "Rumble in the Jungle" just isn't in the same league. This is the Big One, right?

Wrong. Andrew Birkin's weedy, pallid little script is shot by director Baker on total autopilot, with Sam Neill looking less the embodiment of omnipotent evil and more of a shyster corporate lawyer or Wall Street shark. Indeed, Michael Douglas as Gordon Gekko in "**WALL STREET**" gave a performance of slick satanic chic compared to which Neill looks a very tame kitten. One could easily point to a dozen film incarnations of Lucifer who made a better fist of it, but here he is the central character, a catastrophic piece of miscasting.

But the real bogey is not Neill, whose career was rescued eleven years later by a very personable performance in "**JURASSIC PARK**". It is Andrew Birkin's astonishingly inept screenplay, an impoverished conception which cheats its audience even by the paltry criteria the series set itself. As a clumsy parade of set-piece violent deaths (which is all that "**DAMIEN: OMEN II**" offered us) it sells us short, finding nothing to top the decapitation of David Warner in part one, or the bisection of the lab technician in the lift from part two. Where in the earlier films Damien was guarded by sundry "apostates of Hell" (most memorably Billy Whitelaw), here, at the peak of his powers, the best he can muster is one snarling mutt, a motley coven of rectors, nurses and boy scouts, and a henchman called Dean (Don Gordon) who utters such lines as "Hi honey, I'm home!" and "Damien, for the love of god no!"

In a clumsy bit of early exposition, we learn that Damien Thorn has now been head of his stepfather's global corporation for seven years, the world is in depression, and there's a crisis heating up in the Middle East over the demolition of the Aswan Dam. So, that takes care of the Antichrist's foretold reign on Earth!! A little sleight of hand with the bible, and Damien concludes that the second coming is scheduled to take place in England (well, at least it wasn't Chicago, we must be thankful for small mercies), so he arranges to have himself installed as ambassador to the court of St James, just like Robert Thorn before him. He also insists on being appointed director of the U.N.'s Youth Council. Now **that's** what I call Evil!

Once established in the UK he is accosted by BBC journalist Kate Reynolds (Lisa Harrow), who just happens to have a pretty 12-year old son, Peter (Barnaby Holm) – "He's only 12 but your ideas have certainly made a big impression on him". Damien gets to expostulate to her on metaphysics: "True evil is as pure as innocence", teaches her a new variant on colonic irrigation, and suborns her son to be his devoted mignon. (You can see how this is shaping up already, can't you!). Meanwhile he casts his net wide in a comic parody of the slaughter of the innocents, extinguishing every male infant born in the UK around the hour of Christ's return (all we get to see of **that** is an astronomical convergence of three stars). The film at this point teeters wilfully on the brink of black farce – a vicar performing a baptism happily drowns the infant in his font, two boy scouts arrive at a door chirping "Mornin' missus! We've come to do our good deed for the day!" Mass infanticide as a series of throwaway gags.

Then there are those Italian monks, led by a barely intelligible Rossano Brazzi. Since we don't become acquainted with any of them, we can scarcely get involved when they rush like lemmings to messy destruction in their bid to assassinate Thorn.

And therein lies the widest plot hole of all. Damien invests his energies urgently attempting to eradicate the newborn Christ, while Brazzi and his SWAT team of holy men struggle desperately to prevent him – yet the Bible explicitly states (as we're told later) that the second coming will be not as an infant, but a fully fledged saviour. What, did they all just skip that bit?

In a lacklustre fashion Birkin, who was also Associate Producer on the film, throws the obligatory violent scenes our way – notably a protracted fox-hunting sequence (it's a devil's sport, you see) – when his own interests are expressed more clearly in Damien's long soliloquies to Satan, his tirades against the “cursed Nazarene” and women (the devil is a misogynist, you see), and some cod observations on the role of youth in our society. Having made Damien say to Kate that “most people think of evil in terms of their own petty perversions”, but that true evil is a thing far more pure and ethereal, Birkin then proceeds to caricature the Antichrist as a closet sadomasochist and sodomite.

Damien has a statue of the crucified Jesus in a private chapel at home, but *his* Jesus is crucified facing the cross, so that Damien may approach him from the rear. When addressing a rally of his followers, Damien waxes rapturous about the “pleasures of pain”, and again when he beds Peter's mother, he quickly tires of the missionary position and flips her over, hissing of the exquisite pleasures of pain. Aren't these those “petty perversions” you were talking about, Birkin? Ah, but there's one more, is there not? Bring on Barnaby Holm, with his languorous come-hither eyes and his artful prep school smile. Evil is about to go ballistic.

There is no mistaking the subtext in Damien's relationship with 12-year old Peter. It is made quite explicit in glances between the two – Peter's “blooding” at the foxhunt, for example, is quite intentionally symbolic. Peter does not of course succumb to a vigorous bugging by Damien (as his mother does), but must content with being ritually sodomised by the priest Brazzi, who accidentally stabs him in Damien's place (in the back, needless to say). However, we've just seen the boy swear his love and devotion, body and soul, to Damien at the altar in Damien's home, so his stabbing does come as a consummation of sorts.

From the man who wrote and directed the superb, perceptive character study of J.M.Barrie in his TV trilogy “**The Lost Boys**”, Andrew Birkin has been an exasperating disappointment in his subsequent work, and his ambivalent fascination with paederastic themes is once again clearly on display here, however much the producers may have tempered it down. In the gospel according to Birkin, the Antichrist is not defeated at the last by the returning “Lion of Judah”, but is knifed instead by a vengeful mother for his seduction of her 12-year old son.

Considering “**The Lost Boys**”, and “**BURNING SECRET**”, and “**THE NAME OF THE ROSE**” (not to mention “**THE CEMENT GARDEN**”, which came later) Birkin would seem to be just as torn with contradictory feelings toward child eroticism as J.M.Barrie was himself, reaching for it with the one hand, disowning it with the other. His state of confusion may be intriguing to observe, as Barrie's unquestionably was, but in the context of a film like this it amounts to the crassest kind of opportunism. Innocence avenged, the mother triumphant, the sodomite done to death? Some really subtle analysis there, Birkin. Or perhaps he is being as devious as Cecil B De Mille, who would pull out all the stops to stage a lavish and voyeuristic orgy scene, only to evade condemnation by crushing the sinners in the final reel.

Barnaby Holm (son of Ian) was one of Birkin's boys in the J.M.Barrie trilogy. He played the young George Llewellyn Davies, the first of the family with whom the author strikes up a nettly relationship. He had earlier been seen (with his father) in “**JUGGERNAUT**” (74) but has done no further acting work that I'm aware of. Pity.

See “**THE OMEN**”, “**DAMIEN: OMEN II**” and “**OMEN IV: THE AWAKENING**”, and subject index under **HORROR**, **RELIGION** and **SPECIAL FRIENDSHIPS**.