

Unman, Wittering and Zigo

UK : 1971 : dir. John MacKenzie : Media Arts / Paramount : 102 min
 prod: Gareth Wigan : scr: Simon Raven : dir.ph.: Geoffrey Unsworth

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 David Hemmings; Carolyn Seymour; Douglas Wilmer; Hamilton Dyce; Anthony Haygarth;
 Donald Gee

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Kbytes	Ω	□	€	Z	⚡	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Leonard Maltin's Movie and Video Guide
 1996 review:

"Nifty little sleeper with Hemmings as a new boys' school teacher who is promptly informed by his class that they murdered his predecessor, and that he'd better stay in line... or else. Creepy, chilling mystery, loaded with twists and stylishly photographed by Geoffrey Unsworth. The actual killer's identity is not revealed until after the closing credits! The title refers to the last three names on the roll... but Zigo is always absent. *** "

Speelfilm Encyclopedie review:

"Hemmings as a public school teacher who is tormented to distraction. His predecessor took a bad spill down the stairs and everything indicates the little darlings had something to do with it. Even the teacher's wife is nearly raped, but they find each other when panic breaks out at the end of the film. That ending ruins everything. **1/2 "

Halliwell's Film Guide review:

"A nervous schoolmaster discovers that his predecessor was murdered by the boys. Macabre school story which over-reaches itself and peters out. Scr: Simon Raven, from a TV play by Giles Cooper."

Movies on TV and Videocassette 1988-89
 review:

"Hemmings plays a schoolteacher at a boys' school who takes over at mid-term after his predecessor has taken a suspicious tumble on the stairs. **1/2 "

The Sunday Times Guide to Movies on Television review:

"Unpleasant, rather inept version of Giles Cooper's radio play that became a TV play. A class of murderous public schoolboys terrorise their teacher (David Hemmings), set out to rape his wife (Carolyn Seymour), and behave generally nastily. 7 "

[no listing in "The Critics' Film Guide", "The Good Film and Video Guide", "A Pictorial History of the Talkies", "Rating the Movies (1990)", "The Time Out Film Guide", "TV Times Film & Video Guide 1995", "Variety Movie Guide 1993", "Video Movie Guide 1993" or "The Virgin Film Guide"]

Radio Times notes:

"Horror. A new teacher is informed by his pupils that they murdered his predecessor."

"Horror. A teacher discovers that his pupils murdered his predecessor."

"Eerie thriller about a teacher menaced by his own pupils. Stars David Hemmings."

What's On TV note:

"Thriller. Stylised creepie about a teacher terrorised by his pupils."

No further information currently available. One look at the lumbering behemoths which prowl schoolyards today and a teacher being menaced by his own pupils will scarcely seem "eerie". Although *finding* a male teacher at all in some modern schools would itself be eerie. Whereas "if..." equated contempt of authority and the vested order with anarchist revolution, making it a militant response to middle class hypocrisies, here that contempt is shown as simple malevolence for its own sake. But again, violence towards teaching staff and schoolyard murders regularly make the national headlines, so the central posit of "**UNMAN, WITTERING AND ZIGO**" has lost its shock value (inasmuch as it had any to begin with).

One expects better things of a film scripted by Simon Raven and shot by Geoffrey Unsworth, but this instantly forgettable piece is no more than a fusion of "if..." with "**STRAW DOGS**" (which was released the same year), and much the same psychological territory was covered the following year in "**CHILD'S PLAY**", where James Mason is the new master drawn into a war of nerves, although the ringleader in that case proves to be gym master Robert Preston.

See subject index under BOARDING SCHOOL / PUBLIC SCHOOL and THE CHILD AS EVIL IN OUR MIDST.

See also "**BADKONAK-E SEFID**" and "**BASHU**" - both recent Iranian films, and subject index under **ARAB WORLD / MIDDLE EAST**.