

Blu-Ray Review: Roman Polanski's 'Repulsion' More Riveting Than Ever

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on July 31, 2009 - 2:58pm

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CHICAGO – I unabashedly adore “Repulsion”. A lot of Roman Polanski’s work in the ’60s and ’70s - “Repulsion,” “The Tenant,” “Rosemary’s Baby,” “Chinatown” - stand as influential films in why I became a film critic and lover of movies in general. So, a Criterion edition of “Repulsion” is kind of a wish-list dream made reality. It lives up to my high expectations.

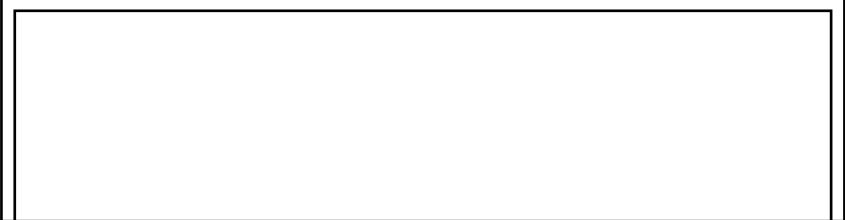


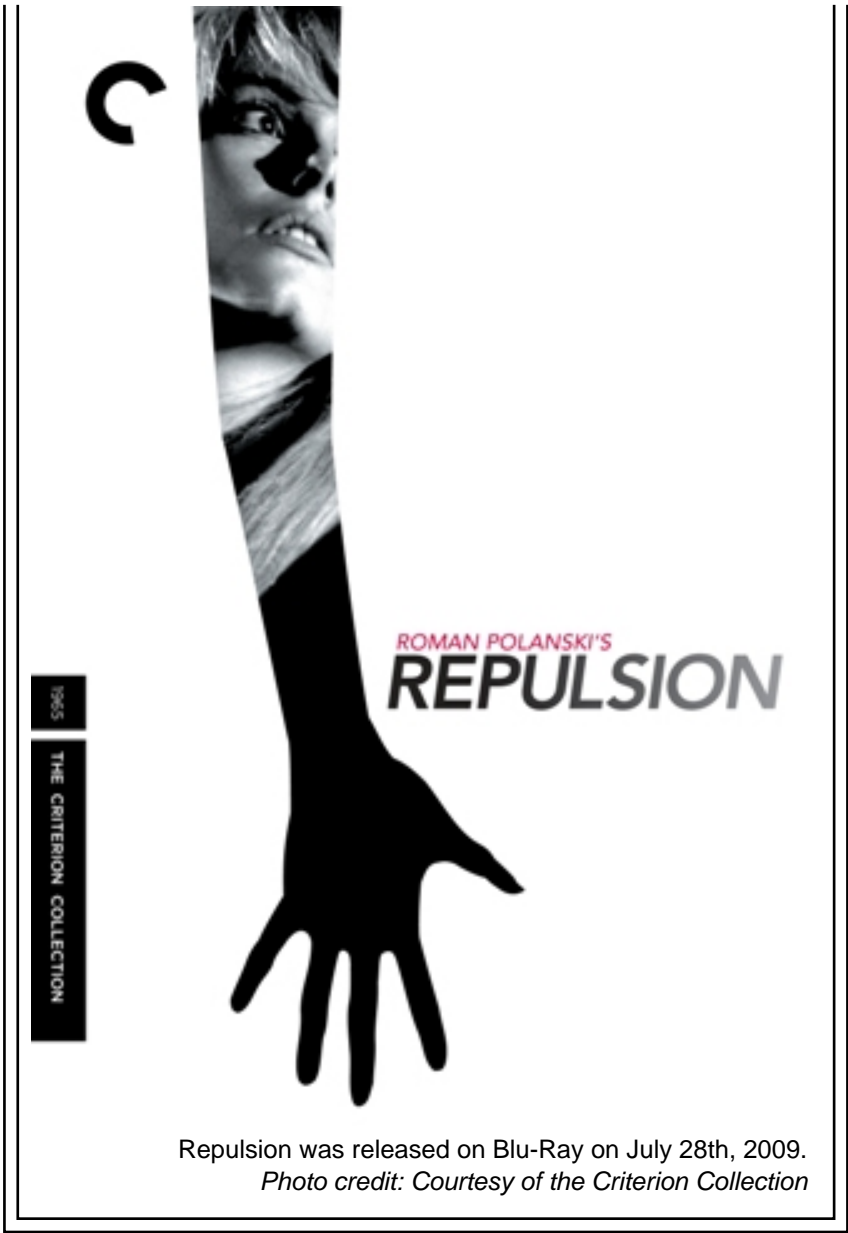
1965’s “Repulsion” was years ahead of its time in its transcendence of the modern horror film - It’s not what’s out there that should scare you, it’s what’s in your own mind. “Repulsion” is about urban alienation, paranoia, and the nightmare that could be going on in the apartment next door. It’s a revolutionary, riveting piece of cinema that should be as required viewing as the best of Alfred Hitchcock, if it’s not already.



Repulsion was released on Blu-Ray on July 28th, 2009.
Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection

Polanski’s first English-language film stars the stunning Catherine Deneuve (still knocking it out of the park today but arguably the most beautiful woman in the world when “Repulsion” was shot) as the lonely Carol. The sweet girl works at a salon but has few friends and is growing increasingly distrustful of the come-ons from the men in London. Like a lot of people, she’s become more introverted despite moving to a bigger city, unable to concentrate on anything but a crack in the pavement.



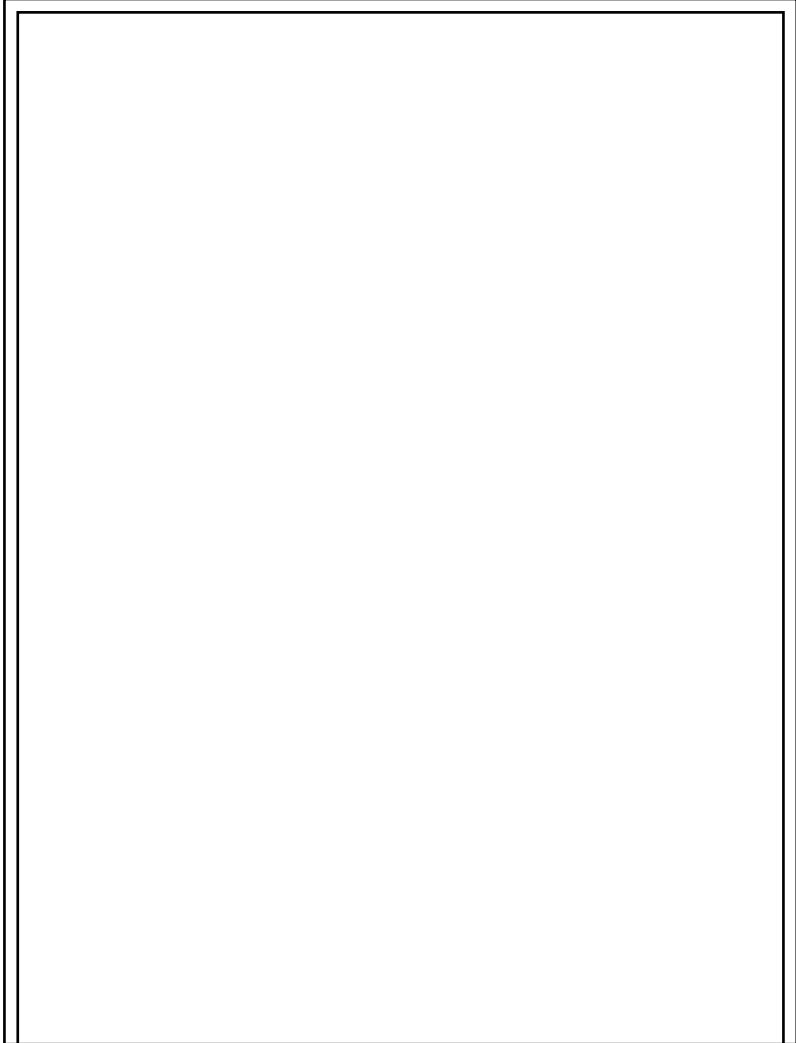


Carol lives in London with her sister Helen and appears close to breaking her fragile shell before her sibling makes a tragic decision - going to Italy on holiday. The 20-year-old foreigner left alone in the big city goes slowly insane. She becomes paranoid of everything and everyone around her and begins to hallucinate. Carol's fear of the world coming through her own front door eventually leads to violence.

"Repulsion" is a masterfully executed mood piece. Watched late at night with all the lights off, it will make you start to wonder about the shadows on the ceiling and the odd noises coming from the other side of your apartment door. It is one of the most effective pieces of cinema ever made about paranoia because it's so masterfully done that it transfers Carol's paranoia to the viewer.

Expertly shot to perfectly convey a mind-altering amount of claustrophobia, "Repulsion" is a great fit for Blu-Ray. The transfer is a new, restored one that was approved by Polanski himself and it's flawless with just the right amount of film grain - not overly polished but not dated in any way.

The "Repulsion" Criterion transfer is so good that the film feels fresh to this viewer who hasn't seen it in years. Maybe I forgot or maybe it's never been presented this pristinely, but "Repulsion" is a masterfully shot film with just the right amount of natural light to see Carol start to crack but not too much to not make it feel like a dark, dangerous world she lives in.





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Photo credit: Courtesy of the Criterion Collection

The remastered monaural track fits the film extremely well. I hate it when mono tracks are “expanded” into surround ones. They sound hollow. “Repulsion” sounds like it should. None of the dialogue is muffled and the well-timed and perfectly executed sound cues seem to be at just the right level.

As with most Criterion discs, the special features on “Repulsion” don’t just add to the disc in a cluttered, filler way, but they actually enhance your understanding of the film.

Start by reading the essay in the booklet by film scholar and curator Bill Horrigan. After you watch the film, listen to the commentary track by Polanski and Deneuve.

Move on to two documentaries, one from the '60s and one from the '00s. The older one is a French television doc filmed on the set with rare footage of Polanski and Deneuve at work. The newer one is a fascinating film called “A British Horror Film” about the making of “Repulsion,” told through the memories of Polanski, producer Gene Gutowski, and cinematographer Gilbert Taylor, among others.

Finally, the film’s original trailers are included. 1960s trailers are fascinating to me. Maybe they are to you too.

Thrillers don't get much better than “Repulsion,” a perfect fit for Criterion, a company with a stated goal to create “a continuing series of important classic and contemporary films.” To this viewer, movies don’t get much more important than “Repulsion”.

‘Repulsion’ is released by The Criterion Collection and stars Catherine Deneuve. It was written by Roman Polanski & Gerard Brach and directed by Polanski. The Blu-Ray and DVD were released on July 28th, 2009. It is not rated.



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