

‘The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It’ is Haunted By Its Past

Submitted by [JonHC](#) [1] on June 4, 2021 - 5:28am

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Rating: **2.5/5.0**

CHICAGO – *The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It* is our third official, not-counting-the-spinoffs foray into the “based on true events” shenanigans of Ed and Lorraine Warren, and it’s starting to show. If you’re a tea drinker and equally as frugal as I am, you have reused a tea bag to make a second (sometimes even a third) cup of tea. The first cup will always be the strongest with the second cup still having a potent flavor, you just have to let it steep longer than the first cup. Everyone knows that by the time you get to making a third cup out of the same tea bag, the flavor infused in the water is a pale ghost of what it once was, tasting like a flat La Croix. The name of this watered-down flavor is called *The Conjuring 3*, but once you taste it you’ll immediately think of how much better it used to be.

As we rejoin the lives of the Warren family, we find them doing another exorcism, per usual. As always, something goes horribly wrong and we find our heroes fighting an entity they don’t completely understand, and give us a story too convoluted to care about. At this point, we know that the cases portrayed in these films are loosely based on real events and people. Think of it like a game of 2 Truths and a Lie, except switch the proportions of truths to lies, and even then the “truths” that are left are more fiction than fact. The entire setup, and even namesake, of *The Conjuring 3* comes from the case that arguably put the Warrens in the mainstream, and that’s the trial of Arne Johnson. Will the help of the Warrens, Arne plead not guilty to a murder he committed, citing that he was not in control. He went as far as to tell the courts that the devil made him do it. I’m not going to argue the legal validity of using a claim like that, but even if it was marginally successful, it couldn’t be used by anyone ever again; you know, much like the story of the virgin Mary.



Photo credit: Warner Bros

The most infuriating part of this sequel is that it isn't technically bad; it subsists in a sort-of cinematic purgatory full of the spirits of its squandered potential. Director Michael Chaves leads this film with the same solid, but cheap scare tactics that made *La Llorona* a tepid affair. There are probably a total of 2 truly engaging scenes throughout the entire runtime, the first happening within the first 10 minutes. The toughest part about being a fan of the previous films is that you can see James Wan's influences struggling to shine through this third installment, but Chaves never quite reaches the visual peaks Wan would have been able to deliver. It's like when you let a friend cheat on their test, but tell them to change the answers a little. Sure you'll end up with a passing score, but the teacher (that would be us as the audience) can always tell what really happened.

The tone and approach to *The Conjuring 3* comes off as too familiar this time around. You can only keep repeating the technique so many times until it loses all appeal, but this film in particular already came with the perfect change-up already built into the story. Unfortunately, it was only used as a brief sequence near the end. We already know this one revolves around an important case, so the incorporation of the court element would have been a no-brainer, but rather than taking a chance on creating the first investigative horror film that focuses on the judicial process, Chaves and writer David Leslie Johnson-McGoldrick go for the low-hanging fruit. If you've seen as many horror films as I have, you begin to notice that they end right before any police officers or federal agents arrive on the scene. The reason is usually because we already know how crazy the survivor is going to sound trying to explain the series of events. This film could not only have explored that, but also could have had the Warrens concurrently investigate and gather evidence for the defense, and showed just how much scrutiny is put on these types of cases.



Photo credit: Warner Bros

The only thing that didn't feel like a missed opportunity is the performances delivered by the cast, namely Vera Farmiga and Patrick Wilson, who plays Lorraine and Ed Warren respectively. Farmiga and Wilson are the emotional anchors that ground these sometimes deranged devil tales. The amount of humanity the actors carve into the characters is the real reason we continue watching, even as things become schmaltzy and predictable in these Hallmark-esque horror films. Julian Hilliard needs to be given extra consideration for his role as the young, possessed David Glatzel. Hilliard is quickly becoming a horror icon in his own right, and at such a young age he has earned every acknowledgment. One of the two best scenes I mentioned earlier was almost solely led by Hilliard's performance, and the film was all the better for it. Unlike Julian's career, *The Conjuring's* future doesn't look anywhere near as promising. Luckily, there was a sense of finality at the end of this installment so hopefully, they lay to rest what is clearly already dead.

"The Conjuring: The Devil Made Me Do It" in theaters and HBO Max June 4th. Featuring Vera Farmiga, Patrick Wilson, Julian Hilliard, Ruairi O'Connor, Sarah Catherine Hook, Eugenie Bondurant, and John Noble. Directed by Michael Chaves. Written by David Leslie Johnson-McGoldrick. Rated "R"



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