

Rosemary's Baby Encyclopedia Article

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Director Roman Polanski's 1968 film adaptation of Ira Levin's occult novel remains as unsettling at the end of the twentieth century as when it was first released. Mia Farrow and John Cassavetes play the young couple that becomes part of a Manhattan devil cult's plan to impregnate Farrow with Satan's child. Ruth Gordon won an Oscar for her performance as a sinister neighbor whose husband makes Cassavetes a bargain he can't resist. Instead of using graphic violence for shock value as many horror films do, Polanski employs a hallucinatory tone that vacillates between eerie and banal. Set in a creepy, old apartment building, the film questions neighborly friendliness as suspect and posits that home might be the most menacing place of all—ideas that continue to fascinate. Few films since have had the skill to use mood and character, rather than blood and violence, to convey horror.

Further Reading:

Levin, Ira. *Rosemary's Baby*. New York, Random House, 1967.

Ursini, James. *More Things Than Are Dreamt of: Masterpieces of Supernatural Horror—From Mary Shelley to Stephen King in Literature and Film*. New York, Limelight Editions, 1994.