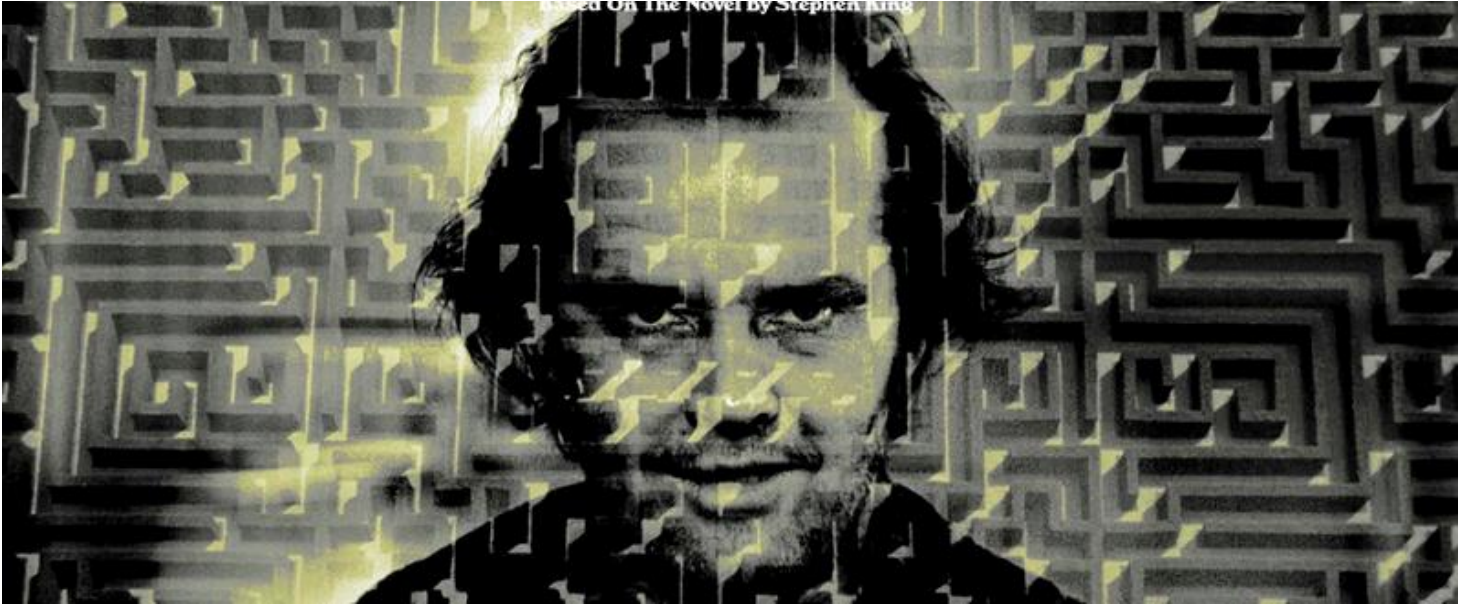


When Stanley Kubrick directed his film adaptation of *The Shining*, author Stephen King hated it. King felt that Kubrick had twisted his story, ignoring the inherent evil of the hotel, and generally messing around with the core point of the thriller: That the Overlook itself was the source of evil, not Jack Torrance. Pretty much everybody else thought the Kubrick version was great.

Book vs. Movie: *The Shining* by [Alexander Davis](#)

*Alexander Davis is the latest member to join the Popcorn Horror team. In his series 'Book vs. Movie', he'll be taking a critical look at movie adaptations of horror novels. Check out his first column below, exploring *The Shining*.*



Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* was released in 1980, and since has been hailed as one of the greatest horror movies ever made; critics and audiences alike have praised the movie. But what of fans of the novel? Did they get to see an adaptation of the novel? No. What they saw is a bare bones adaptation that has little to no resemblance to the novel. Now I may not be the greatest of minds, I have no real achievements, I have a basic education, but I do know one thing; if you're going to adapt a novel, then please for the love of god, you should at least attempt to keep the overall story and respect it. After all it's not your story, it is someone else's. So gather around and I shall tell ye a tale. A tale of missing characters, details, themes, Creedence Clearwater Revival, and a terrible adaptation.

So let's begin. Why is Kubrick's movie a terrible adaptation? There are many contributing factors as to why, most of which stem from that character of Jack Torrance being turned into a boogiemán. "But Jack Nicholson was great!" I hear people cry. This is true, Nicholson is great in the movie; he's frightening and gave us one of the greatest pop culture references of all time. And that is the problem with the character in the movie.



In the novel, Jack is a struggling alcoholic and is responsible for breaking his son's arm. Despite this, we like Jack. He knows that he's not a good person, but he does try to better himself. Because of this we are both sympathetic and cautious towards him. Then the Overlook Hotel happens. It starts to change Jack, not into a monster, but into what he could have become anyway, if he had let himself. And that is why Jack Torrance is a great character in the novel, he's not a demon, he's just a guy who is slowly being deconstructed by the forces in the hotel.

Back to the movie; Jack is clearly not very sane from the beginning. The movie does address the fact that he had accidentally broken his son's arm, and that he has a drinking problem, but the former is pretty much never addressed again. Now as for Jack Nicholson's performance, it is good, make no mistake about that. The problem is that he seems to play the role in a demented way from the very start. Just little things, like the way he'll look at Wendy and Danny, or the way he talks to them. This just keeps slowly building for the whole movie, and it works great. However in doing so, Jack (The Character) has little humanity in him from the start.

Now without going into excess detail, here are some things that were left out of the movie.

1. Jack Torrance has a backstory. There are three important parts to his backstory that flesh out his character. This includes being beaten by his father, he had lost his previous job due to his alcoholism, and he was involved in a possible hit and run while drunk. This last point is left unclear as to whether he did actually hit anyone or not. These three points play a large part in fleshing out his character and add more depth to him. The absence of these points from the movie tends to leave Jack feeling like more of a monster than a sympathetic, tortured character.
2. His relationship with Wendy and Danny. He actually does interact and care about them. At one point in the novel, he does actually have a long talk with Wendy about whether they should leave the Overlook. His relationship with Danny is also expanded upon more. The movie seems to have Jack isolate himself from them very quickly, and there are few scenes where we can see Jack be a caring, loving husband and father. Again, this seems to end up with Jack seeming a lot crazier than he should be.
3. Jack's death. In the novel he dies heroically by sacrificing himself to allow Wendy and Danny time to escape, before the Overlook explodes. In the movie, he gets lost in the maze, chasing Wendy and Danny, and freezes to death.



And that last point shall be my final point, in concerns to Jack Torrance. The novel, for the most part, is Jack's story of redemption. The movie however is more about Jack being crazy, going crazier, and then dies. No redemption or anything. Now let me make this clear, it works for the movie, because of the way the movie has already been altered from the source material. However in doing so, it loses one of its best and most

developed characters. As to why Kubrick chose to go down the route of turning Jack from a broken man to a typical crazy person, could be for many reasons, I do not pretend to know why Kubrick chose to do it, but only in doing so he failed to properly portray the character of Jack Torrance, but in doing so he still managed to create a truly terrifying monster. Hell maybe that's why he did it.

So what else went wrong with the transition from novel to screen? Much like the character of Jack Torrance, The Overlook itself is stripped down of its character. The Overlook, in the novel, is as much of a character as Jack, Wendy or Danny. It has a history, motive and is alive with something, not just ghosts. The following points are what was stripped down or completely removed for the movie.

1. The Overlook's backstory. One of the main reasons Jack is heading down into madness is because he finds a scrapbook that contains clippings, which causes him to become obsessed with writing a book about the hotel. The clippings and articles reveal a lot, but not all, of the hotel's history. We are treated to gruesome murders, gangsters, sex scandals, and all the fun stuff in life. Now I am aware that some of the hotel's history is included in the movie –even the scrapbook can be seen in a couple of shots while Jack is writing- but it's mostly glanced



over. I can see why Kubrick had to trim and cut down some material of the book, but in doing so he's reduced The Overlook from something that is truly evil. This brings me to my next point.

2. The Overlook is alive. Now I know that may seem obvious, but when I mean alive, I mean in a sort of pseudo sense, not in the fact that it's haunted. For example, there are ghosts in both novel and book, however in the novel; the hotel is also alive with a more evil presence than just a few ghosts. Now it's not explained what exactly the force in the overlook is, but it does do things. It is the hotel that wants Danny, and influences Jack. At one point both Danny and Jack are stalked by hedge animals. Silly, I know, but it is an important distinction between the ghosts in the hotel, and the hotel itself taking direct action. Now the movie seems to drop the hotel being alive point, and instead focuses more on the ghosts. However the ghosts in the movie are also stripped of most of their backstory and possible motives. Yes I am aware of the use of ambiguity, and it is used well in the movie, but in doing so the movie loses one of its biggest players.



The characters of Wendy and Danny are also slightly different from their novel counterparts.

Wendy in the novel is a lot stronger; she challenges Jack on numerous occasions. She isn't as meek and quiet as her movie version seems to be. The movie keeps most of her character, but just tends to play up her more meek side. And to the movie's credit, Shelley Duvall isn't actually terrible in the role, she just needed a little more to work with.

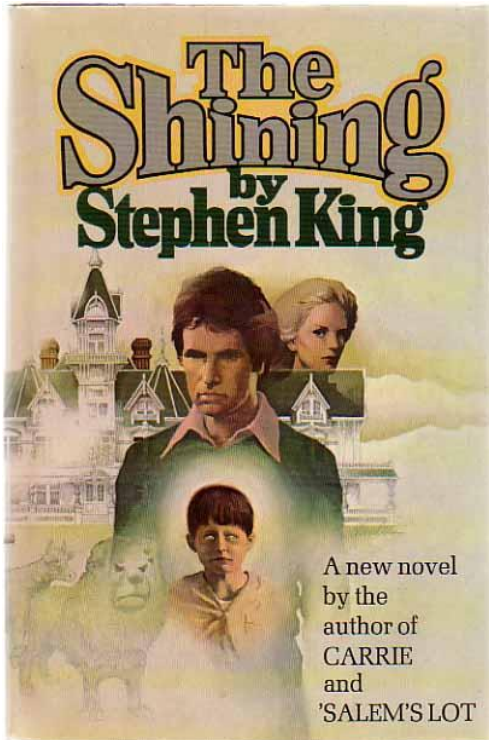
Danny, on the other hand, is changed in a few important ways. He is very intelligent, he cares about his parents, and Tony is a completely separate entity. Now the movie does do a good job at portraying the character of Danny; however the choice to make Danny's abilities more ambiguous is a slight change. In the novel Danny has the ability to see things and communicate with Tony, in the movie he has the ability to see things but it is unclear whether they are actually real or just in his mind – a point some people make is that there



is no supernatural elements anywhere in the movie. This, of course, is bullshit- and Tony is actually inside Danny, or possibly Danny's way off dealing with his abilities. I don't really mind these changes, it's just that I'd prefer it if his abilities weren't as ambiguous. There is such a thing as being too ambiguous.

Well we have talked about the characters, so now let us talk about the story. The movie does follow the novels basic plot; Alcoholic and family go to hotel, spooky shit happens, dad goes crazy. But it is how the story plays out that makes it a different sort of beast all together.

The movie is great at giving a sense of isolation; to both the characters and the audience. This is all well and good, but the novels approach is slightly different. It actually has the Torrance family leave the hotel on occasion; scenes which expand upon the characters. But it also allows a much more slow build up. We know that something is wrong, they know that something is wrong, yet they decide to stay. Now the movie also does this, but by removing the scenes of them leaving the town, and instead focusing more on the isolation from the start, it loses the foreboding atmosphere at the beginning of the novel. Of course the movie does do its atmosphere extremely well, but it would have worked slightly better with some sort of slower build up.



Now I'm going to go in to some points that piss me off, so I warn you in advance, there will be swearing, attacks on Kubrick, and probably some insanity for good measure.

1. Jack Nicholson. Holy Fuck was that some bad casting. Now to Jack's credit, he is good in the movie, but as I've mentioned before that difference between the novel Jack and the movie's is pretty big. Jack is good at playing crazy, but Jack playing a guy who's supposed to descend into madness? Well he could have pulled it off, if he was given a better script to work with. Instead we get Jack playing crazy from the start. Bad Kubrick, that's a very bad Kubrick!

2. The music. Not that the score is terrible, it's just that there is a few references to Creedence Clearwater Revival in the novel, the movie leaves this out. A wasted opportunity to use one of the greatest bands of all time.

3. Conspiracy theorists. Ok, not a problem with the movie as much as fans of the movie. Why do people feel the need to over analyse everything in the

movie, and come up with crazy theories? To all of those who fall into this pitfall, please stop, you're not intelligent, you're not clever, you have little to no understanding of how the real world works. Seriously, I could go into a rant of epic proportions about that "Documentary." Jesus Christ, you guys need to understand that a theory needs some basis and facts; looking into this movie for proof that the moon landing was faked, for instance, is not a compelling or well thought out argument.

4. The helicopters shadow. Kubrick, one of the greatest film makers and a perfectionist, did not notice the very obvious helicopter shadow during the opening credits. Again, bad Kubrick!

Ok, so here are some good points I have to say about the movie.

1. ???
2. ???
3. Uhhhhh
4. Well it looks nice?

Stanley Kubrick's *The Shining* will always be remembered as a classic in the horror genre, but it is far from a perfect adaptation of the novel. It lost its humanity, and for that, it could never achieve true perfection.

