



Les Diaboliques (French Film Guides)

Susan Hayward

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"Les Diaboliques" (The Fiends) was a top grossing film in 1955. Clouzot shrouded his film in mystery, beseeching his audience not to give away the ending. He also radically changed the original story of Boileau and Narcejeac's novel ("Celle qui n'etait plus"), heterosexualising the original lesbian plot. His film demonstrates how to imply, rather than show, horror, keeping the spectator in a state of continued suspense, only releasing us in the few final frames. Fifty years later, "Les Diaboliques" still intrigues perhaps due to its excessive ambiguities and numerous plot twists that make it a film noir to end all films noirs, and not least the great performance of Simone Signoret. In this enjoyable and challenging Cine-File, Susan Hayward, leading writer on French cinema, sets "Les Diaboliques" against the political culture of its time and demonstrates the importance of Clouzot as a master of the thriller genre. She gives an illuminating in-depth textual analysis of the film and presents a comparison with its US remake which, juxtaposed with the original film book, highlights the great staying power of Clouzot's version, still a popular film with international audiences half a century after its premiere.



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