

Welcome to Klipsun Out Loud, podcasts from Western Washington University's award-winning student magazine Klipsun. This edition's theme is "joy." I'm your host, Emily Bishop. Today's topic is a film that by Hollywood's standards is the most prestigious horror movie of all time.

\*TRANSITION MUSIC\*

There have been 93 Academy Award ceremonies honoring the best and brightest of Hollywood. It is the most prestigious and significant award ceremony in the entertainment industry. And in all 93 years of its existence, only six horror movies have been nominated for the award of Best Picture: "The Exorcist," "Jaws," "The Silence of the Lambs," "The Sixth Sense," "Black Swan" and "Get Out."

And only one of those films won the award for Best Picture.

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Little is known about the personal life of author Thomas Harris; he avoids publicity and is considered a reclusive man. Born in Tennessee but raised in Mississippi, he was described as an introverted and bookish child. In 1964 he graduated from Baylor University in Waco, Texas with a degree in English. Harris worked as a reporter for a local paper in Waco while attending college. In 1968, he moved to New York to work for the Associated Press but quit after six years to focus on his writing.

"Black Sunday" was Harris's first novel, a thriller about an FBI agent trying to stop a planned terrorist attack during the Superbowl. The book achieved moderate success and was eventually adapted into a film in 1977. But the plotline of an FBI agent racing against time to piece together the whereabouts of a dangerous individual before they can kill. Well, that sounds a bit like another work by Thomas Harris.

\*HANNIBAL LECTER: You still wake up sometimes don't you? Wake up in the dark and hear the screaming of the lamb.\*

"The Silence of the Lambs" is a sequel to 1981's "Red Dragon," the novel that introduced the world to Harris's most iconic character,

\*JACK CRAWFORD: The psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter.

CLARICE STARLING: Hannibal the cannibal...\*

“The Silence of the Lambs” was a success upon publication, garnering praise from critics and audiences alike. A film adaptation was already in the works before the book was even published.

Screenwriter Ted Tally expressed an interest in adapting “The Silence of the Lambs” after receiving an advanced copy of the book from Harris. Jonathan Demme signed on to direct the film after reading the novel since the screenplay had not been finished by Tally at the time Orion Pictures was seeking directors to helm the project.

Jodie Foster expressed interest in playing FBI agent Clarice Starling after reading the novel, but Demme was not convinced she was right for the role. Demme's first choice was Michelle Pfeiffer, who turned down the role due to the graphic subject matter. Meg Ryan was then approached and turned down the offer for the same reason. Demme's third choice for Starling was Laura Dern. But Orion Pictures was skeptical on her being a good choice. So, in the end, Jodie Foster was awarded the role of Clarice Starling in part because of her passion towards the character.

Demme's first choice for Hannibal Lecter was Sean Connery, who turned down the offer. Anthony Hopkins was then offered the role based on his performance in 1987's “The Elephant Man.” Reportedly when Hopkins' agent told him the film was titled “The Silence of the Lambs,” Hopkins asked if it was a children's story. After reading the first 10 pages of the screenplay, he called his agent saying, “This is the best part I've ever read.” He met with Demme over dinner and Hopkins accepted the role as Dr. Hannibal Lecter.

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At the 1991 Academy Awards, “The Silence of the Lambs” was nominated in seven categories. It lost in Best Sound to “Terminator 2: Judgment Day” and Best Film Editing to “JFK.” But it won the other five awards it was nominated for.

\*VARIOUS ANNOUNCERS: The Oscar goes to Ted Talley for “The Silence of the Lambs.” To Jonathan Demme for “Silence of the Lambs.” Anthony Hopkins for “The Silence of the Lambs.” Jodie Foster “The Silence of the Lambs.” And the Oscar goes to “The Silence of the Lambs.”\*

“The Silence of the Lambs” swept at the Academy Awards, winning in the big five categories of Best Adapted Screenplay, Director, Actor, Actress and Best Film. In 93 years of Academy Awards, only two other films have done the same. The first was 1934’s “It Happened One Night.” The second It was 1975’s “One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest.”

“The Silence of the Lambs” is the most recent film to sweep the five major awards at the Oscars and the only horror movie to win Best Picture.

“The Silence of the Lambs” is often cited by critics, directors and audiences alike as one of the greatest and most influential films of all time. In 2011, the film was selected for preservation in the National Film Registry in the Library of Congress, a rite reserved for films considered culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.

A rite to well-earned by “The Silence of the Lambs,” a film that still 30 years after its release, captivates and terrorizes audiences with each viewing.

\*HANNIBAL LECTER: I do wish we could chat longer but I'm having an old friend for dinner. Bye.

CLARICE STARLING: Dr. Lecter? Dr. Lecter?\*

\*TRANSITION MUSIC\*

That's it for this edition of Klipsun Out Loud, podcasts from Western Washington University’s student magazine Klipsun. I'm your host Emily Bishop. Thanks for listening.