

Mr. Hyde



Black Heart Enterprises

Mr. Hyde sculpture by Joe Simon; molding and casting by Earthbound Studios; Black Heart Enterprises™ logo by Steve Parke; profile layout by David Fisher; Medusa build-up by George Stephenson; photography by Russell Canterbury.

Mr. Hyde Profile

Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde is a novella written by the Scottish author Robert Louis Stevenson and first published in 1886. An immediate success and one of Stevenson's best-selling works, the story is about a London lawyer who investigates strange occurrences between his old friend, Dr. Henry Jekyll, and Mr. Edward Hyde. It is best known for its vivid portrayal of a split personality. So impactful was Stevenson's story that it has become a part of our culture and language. Today the phrase "Jekyll and Hyde" refers to a person who is unpredictable or vastly different in personality from one situation to the next.

One night in late 1885, Stevenson had a dream, and on waking had the inspiration for two or three scenes that would appear in the story. "In the small hours of one morning," his wife said, "I was awakened by cries of horror from Louis. Thinking he had a nightmare, I woke him. He said angrily, 'Why did you wake me? I was dreaming a fine bogey tale.' I had awakened him at the first transformation scene..."

Stevenson's stepson, Lloyd Osbourne, remembered, "I don't believe that there was ever such a literary feat before as the writing of *Dr. Jekyll*. I remember the first reading as if it were yesterday. Louis came downstairs in a fever; read nearly half the book aloud; and then, while we were still gasping, he was away again, and busy writing. I doubt if the first draft took so long as three days". Stevenson has been sickly his entire life but he re-wrote the story again in three to six days and, according to Osbourne, "The mere physical feat was tremendous; and instead of harming him, it roused and cheered him inexpressibly". It should be mentioned that this literary and physical "feat" is said to have been assisted by the ingestion of enough cocaine to keep the ailing author awake and productive for three to six days straight.

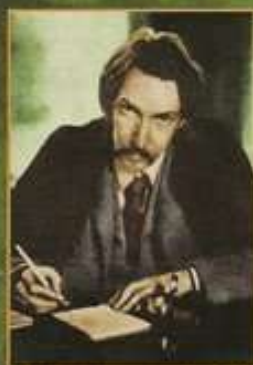
Several film adaptations of Stevenson's story are noteworthy. John Barrymore portrayed the title characters in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in the American-made 1920 silent film.

That same year, Conrad Veidt played the "Jekyll and Hyde" roles in an unauthorized German silent film version of Stevenson's story. This film was directed by F.W. Murnau, who was no stranger to directing unauthorized films based on popular horror literature, e.g., *Nosferatu* in 1922. The characters names were changed and Murnau called his film *Der Januskopf* (German for "The Janus Head"). Mythology lovers know Janus was a Roman God depicted having two faces. Unfortunately, the film is lost and few images of Veidt as "Hyde" exist.

Perhaps the most recognizable and most acclaimed version of Stevenson's story is the 1932 film, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, starring Fredric March. March's performance as the title characters earned him an Academy Award for best actor that year.

In 1941, Spencer Tracy played the title character(s) in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, a remake of the 1932 film. Notable co-stars were Ingrid Bergman and Lana Turner. The film is startling (by 1941 standards) in its sexual imagery.

Even Jerry Lewis's *The Nutty Professor* was loosely (and hilariously) based on Stevenson's story. In that film, Professor Julius Kelp (Lewis) is a nerdy, unkempt, buck-toothed, socially inept university professor who always incurs the wrath of the university administration by continually destroying his classroom laboratory. When a football-playing bully humiliates him, Kelp invents a serum that turns him into the extremely smooth, cool, and somewhat obnoxious girl-chasing hipster, Buddy Love.



R. Louis Stevenson circa 1885



J. Barrymore as Mr. Hyde (1920)



Der Januskopf movie poster
Conrad Veidt's "Mr. Hyde" (1920)



F. March in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932)



S. Tracy as Mr. Hyde (1941)



Jerry Lewis in *The Nutty Professor* (1963)

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