



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on February 22, 2010

Shutter Island Movie Review

Paramount's decision to delay the release of Martin Scorsese's *Shutter Island* only increased the anticipation for the film's February 12th debut. Evidently, it was well worth the wait. Never before has Martin Scorsese nor Leonardo DiCaprio, star of *Shutter Island*, had an opening as big as that of this film. In the first weekend of its release, *Shutter Island* has sold approximately \$40 million in ticket sales. After viewing *Shutter Island*, it is not difficult to comprehend the film's success.



U.S. Marshall Teddy Daniels (Leonardo DiCaprio) is a decorated WWII veteran. When a murderess disappears from *Shutter Island*'s hospital for the criminally insane, Daniels is called upon to solve the case. Unfortunately, as Teddy becomes entranced in a vortex of mystery and apparent secrecy, he becomes increasingly haunted by his own personal demons, from his violent encounters in the war to his own guilt-ridden personal life.

Laeta Kalogridis stayed true to the plot of Dennis Lehane's novel when writing the screenplay for *Shutter Island*, and wisely so. Lehane does an exquisite job in his exploration of the mind in his captivating novel. Set in 1954, a mere decade after the end of WWII, *Shutter Island* provides a glimpse into an experimental psychology that mingled behaviorism with humanistic psychology, a psychology that first appeared in the 1950s.

Lehane masterfully depicts a world of fear and paranoia following the end of the Second World War and the start of the Cold War, as seen through the characterization of Teddy Daniels. Daniels mistrusts all Germans after his first-hand encounters with those who masterminded and carried out the final solution, including the German doctors employed at *Shutter Island*. Likewise, Daniels finds himself questioning the work of the psychologists at the hospital, fearing that they have adapted the mind-control experiments of the Communists.

Haunted by nightmares both occurring in his sleep and throughout his daily routine, Teddy Daniels struggles to move forward from his darkened past. While the dreams are intrusive in nature and violate Daniels' ability to conduct business, Scorsese successfully achieves fluency between the chilling and often times disturbing dream sequences and Teddy's "reality". In fact, the fantastical dreams are some of the strongest moments in the film.

Once again, DiCaprio proves himself to be one of the greatest young actors of our time. DiCaprio encapsulates a man who is burdened by inner demons but struggles to maintain an outward appearance of the man he once was. His ability to depict a man overwhelmed by the spectrum of human emotions is what makes him a constant in some of the greatest films to appear in the last decade or so. DiCaprio's lineup of highly acclaimed films includes *Gangs of New York*, *Catch Me if You Can*, *The Departed*, *Romeo and Juliet*, and *Titanic*. His last two films, *Revolutionary Road* and *Shutter Island*, have explored the human psyche and focused on the necessity of self-actualization, capturing the attention of the most



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intellectual moviegoers.

Keeping in sync with the standard set by DiCaprio's quality performance are the many other actors that made the film both convincing and successful. Michelle Williams artfully plays the role of Teddy's deceased wife Dolores, a woman struggling with manic depression. The actors who play the psychologists at Shutter Island do a wonderful job of supplementing the already disturbing and eerie nature of the film, particularly Ben Kingsley and Max von Sydow, playing the roles of Dr. Crawley and Dr. Naehring respectively. Even the quick scenes involving interviews with the patients of Shutter Island are characterized by powerfully chilling performances.

Shutter Island epitomizes the essence of a true thriller, from its fascinating mystery to its plot twists. The determination to discover the true good guy and bad guy will keep moviegoers involved from the very beginning to the final scene.

Overall, the film both asks and answers the question, "Would you rather die a good man or live like a monster?" Despite the simplicity of the question, *Shutter Island* is comprised of all the complexities necessary for a dramatic and compelling plot.

Shutter Island is for mature audiences only, as it depicts highly disturbing material.

Photo of Leonardo DiCaprio: AP Images



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