

# GlenViewings Presents . . . . .

## Shutter Island

"Pull yourself together, Teddy. Pull yourself together." - Teddy Charles



**Director:**

Martin Scorsese

**Producers:**

Martin Scorsese  
Bradley J. Fischer  
Mike Medavoy  
Arnold W. Messer

**Writers:**

Laeta Kalogridis  
Dennis Lehane (novel)

**Starring:**

Leonardo DiCaprio  
Ben Kingsley  
Mark Ruffalo  
Michele Williams  
Max Von Sydow  
Emily Mortimer

**Cinematography:**

Robert Richardson

**Editing:**

Thelma Schoonmaker

**Distributor:**

Paramount Pictures

**Release date:**

19 February, 2010

**Running time:**

137 minutes

**Budget**

\$80,000,000

**Box Office gross**

\$294,803,000 (Worldwide)

Set in 1954 during the height of Cold War paranoia, *Shutter Island* has an eerie atmosphere and unusual gothic tone that is most reminiscent of an Edgar Allen Poe mystery. Mixing suspense and psychological terror, the film's chief concerns are the thin lines between madness and insanity, the real and the mystical, at the core of the human psyche. These rich themes are mined within the confines of an investigation into the strange disappearance of a murderer on a high-security island for the criminally insane. Throw in a raging hurricane and some wildly unreliable cinematic narration courtesy of master director Martin Scorsese and a twist-filled script by Dennis Lehane, and you have one of the most tense, disturbing and brilliant thrillers of recent cinema.

As well the investigation, the film deals with high stakes existential questions over the nature of reality, identity and memory. Weaving flashbacks, hallucinations and fantasies into this heady mix, Scorsese pays gleeful homage not only to classic mystery novels, but also to the spooky 1940's *film noir* chillers that he admired as a child. The editing and acting are deliberately as slippery and elusive as the plot, creating a disjointed, disorientating effect that echoes the suspicious, fragmented mind of Leonardo DiCaprio's Teddy Daniels. DiCaprio is excellent here in evoking his character's constantly changing psychological state and growing perception of the dark history of the asylum's effect on his own motives for proceeding with the case.

The haunting past looms over all the events in the present of the film, and becomes ever more disturbing as the mystery unravels and trauma rises to the surface. The audience is also forced to face up to real horrors from history such as the events of World War II and the brutal conditions and invasive treatments endured by asylum inmates. The overall experience is exhilarating, provocative and shattering, and yet so expertly made that you may just find yourself wanting to watch it again as soon as it has finished.

**Did you know?**

- The island was created through CGI composites of scenery from Peddocks Island, Acadia National Park in Maine, Medfield State Hospital in Medfield, MA, and the Rice Estate at Turner Hill Country Club in Ipswich.
- *Shutter Island* novelist Dennis Lehane's other books *Mystic River* and *Gone Baby Gone* have also been made into acclaimed films.
- The film has the highest grossing open weekend and overall box office of director Martin Scorsese's four-decade-long career.

## *Shutter Island*

"You're smarter than you look, Marshall. That's probably not a good thing." - Rachel

### Things to Explore

- What is Teddy Daniels' motivation when he first comes to Shutter Island? How does it change as he learns more about the people on the island?
- How does the film use symbolism, metaphor and fantasy to express what is going on inside the mind of its characters?
- How do the filmmakers' manipulate our sense of what is real and make us question the reliability of the narrative as the story progresses?
- How do the paranoid atmosphere and conspiracies in the film echo the reality of what was happening during the 1950's?
- What function does Teddy's partner, Chuck Aule, play in the story?
- What motivates Dr. Cawley?
- Some critics questioned the taste levels of the filmmakers for including scenes based on horrific real events such as the Holocaust and the post-war treatment of mental patients. Does the film go too far? Why do you think the filmmakers decided to include these scenes?
- What does the film as a whole say about the power of science and reason to control the human psyche?
- What do you make of the film's ending? Did you see it coming? Do you feel you might want to watch the film again to see if you judge it differently?

### Themes

- Psychology and psychiatry
- Identity
- Fear and paranoia
- Memory
- (In)sanity
- The supernatural
- Trauma
- Conspiracy

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"Don't you get it? You're a rat in a maze." - George Noyce

### Library Resources

#### 1) Shutter Island, Dennis Lehane

Lehane's 2003 bestseller was acclaimed by some critics as his finest work yet, with comparisons to Agatha Christie. His own references were stated as being gothic, pulp fiction and b movies, or what he called a hybrid between "the Bronte sisters and *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*."

Copy	Material	Location
PBK FICTION LEHANE,D.	Book	Fiction

#### 2) Scorsese by Ebert, Roger Ebert

Chicago's greatest film critic takes on New York's most famous filmmaker. Their two careers have been in parallel since the late 1960's, and here Ebert presents each one of his reviews of Scorsese's remarkable oeuvre. Also includes 11 interviews and a consideration of Scorsese's entire career in the introduction.

Copy	Material	Location
791.430233 SCORSESE	Book	Nonfiction

#### 3) Shutter Island [videorecording (DVD)]

Just in case you want to see it again! The DVD sadly comes without extras, though there are two special featurettes and a commentary available on the Blu-Ray.

Copy	Material	Location
NEW DVD SHU	DVD, Fiction	Audiovisual Room

### Online Resources

<http://www.shutterisland.com>

The official website for the film features additional video and photos, but is most useful for a downloadable 50-page PDF of Production Notes that provide essential background to the choices behind directing the film, and is particularly interesting in describing the authenticity of the film's recreation of a 1950's mental asylum.

<http://www.scorsesefilms.com/index.htm>

An exhaustive and extremely up-to-date fan website of the great American master. Contains a vault of history and trivia as well as the latest news of Scorsese's upcoming projects.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lmHpXaFjugk>

A video interview with *Shutter Island* director Martin Scorsese in which he talks about what first attracted him to Dennis Lehane's story, and the techniques he used to bring it to life on screen.

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"Which would be worse, to live as a monster or to die as a good man?" - Teddy Charles

### IF YOU LIKED SHUTTER ISLAND...

#### ***Shock Corridor* (Samuel Fuller/101 mins/1963)**

--Journalist Johnny Barrett (Peter Breck) fakes insanity to have himself committed to a mental institution so he can get access to a story about a murdered patient and vie for a Pulitzer Prize. Barrett gets much more than he bargains for as he gets entangled on the behaviors of his fellow inmates.

#### ***The Haunting* (Robert Wise/113 min/1963)**

--Highly regarded haunted house film based on the short story by Shirley Jackson (*The Haunting of Hill House, The Lottery*). The questionably sane Eleanor Vance (Julie Harris) agrees to spend a few nights in a sinister house and is joined by an anthropologist and an ESP expert to attempt to dispel rumors that it is haunted.

#### ***The Shining* (Stanley Kubrick/144 min/PG/1974)**

--Adaptation of the Stephen King novel that features Jack Nicholson as writer Jack Torrance who takes a job as the winter caretaker of the ominous Overlook Hotel, joined by his wife Wendy (Shelly Duval) and son Danny (Danny Lloyd), strange occurrences and odd premonitions begin to haunt the family after they learn the previous caretaker had murdered his family.

#### ***Don't Look Now* (Nicolas Roeg/110 mins/R/1973)**

--Based on the story by Daphne Du Maurier, Donald Sutherland and Julie Christie star as Laura and John Baxter, Americans relocated to Venice to oversee an architectural restoration project. Unfortunately, the change of scenery does not allow them to escape the eerie memory of the recent and tragic death of their young daughter.

#### ***Inception* (Christopher Nolan/148 min/PG-13/2010)**

-- 2010 blockbuster directed by Christopher Nolan (Mememto, The Dark Knight) that features Leonardo DiCaprio. Dom Cobb (DeCaprio) is a thief who doesn't steal things, he steals ideas. Cobb is on a desperate mission for redemption and entangled in a web of corporate espionage.

#### **Also directed by Martin Scorsese:**

***Cape Fear* (120 min/R/1991) • *Goodfellas* (146 min/R/1990) • *Last Temptation of Christ* (164 min/R/1988)**

#### **DiCaprio and Scorsese collaborations:**

***The Departed, Gangs of New York, The Aviator***