

Joker: The New Face of Millennial Anarchy



Joker

It is difficult to discern from a distance if someone is crying or laughing until we see their own face. For their whole life, people could be turned away from us and they could weep in silence. The sound of their interrupted breath may sound to us like constrained chuckling. According to his mother's advice, Arthur Fleck (Joaquin Phoenix) is always wearing a smile on his face, and he is always laughing so loud that it's impossible for one to hear comfortless words from negative thoughts that are troubling him. His smile is also hiding the fact that he is going through life as if he did not exist. Like a cloth soaked with chloroform, the pills that are rattling in a vial, the humorous late night TV host, the refined mayor, and chaos at every turn, are all mitigating the howl of the lowest social class that is destroyed by poverty.

In an economically imbalanced society, rigidly divided into the extremely rich and the extremely poor, the invisible man of Gotham

City is becoming the face of "the brand" of tragic, as well as cynical lives of its citizens. Constantly smiling psycho Joker.

Arthur Fleck represents the tip of the iceberg of Gotham City. Mentally torn, abused, a socially unadjusted smiling clown by his profession, is stuck by barb wire in the lowest class of society together with his sick mother, Penny. They are living in an existential shell, and the only thing keeping them from unraveling is to fight mental eclipses with a constant laugh. The darkness in their minds is a routine that is repeated daily. Both of them have seen the misery of mental institutions, and the negative perception and thoughts are not leaving Arthur's mind.

He laughs out loud when it is not socially acceptable. He laughs at his own defeat, he laughs at injustice, abuse, and he also laughs out loud in moments when he floats far away and sees himself as a comedian surrounded by

an audience that is applauding him. They are clapping hard and long at him because he is taking care of the only woman in his life and he still finds a reason to make jokes.



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The angry and cynical nature of the film *Joker* is set in the ruins of a society that has long ago stopped caring for the collective well-being and has started caring for individual needs instead. When the bone marrow of the story is removed, there remains a noticeable parallel of sorrow, helplessness, and injustice on one side and the sad face on the other, as being an unallowable product of civilization. Similarity to the modern corporate spirit that ignores human feelings and existence, but leans exclusively on order, work, discipline, and cold-blooded distance, *Joker* demonstrates his anger on quieting primal feelings, followed by inevitable violent and cathartic behavior borne out of frustration.

This film has faced some criticism regarding the violence that it can possibly cause. Namely, after watching this film, some people experienced certain negative emotions. There are also people who are worried that this may ignite a whole spiral of violence and that it may even be an inspiration for many mentally disturbed individuals to do the same as the main protagonist of the film, who at one point starts killing randomly. Families whose loved ones were killed in mass shootings during the past several years across the USA have raised their voice against this film, believing that it will definitely cause certain tragic scenes. In fear of this, some cinemas have forbidden clown costumes and even police surveillance

was on a much higher level during the night of the premiere of this film. All this precaution may be reasonable, having in mind that we live in a society where it is easier to get a weapon than medication.

Maybe the main worry of the pundits, about the potential violence this film could inspire, is related to the event which happened in 2012, in Aurora, Colorado. The mass shooting took place in a cinema, during a showing of "The Dark Knight Rises." Rumors suggested the shooter's inspiration was the Joker. However, these rumors turned out not to be true. Still, many people remember this terrible incident, and even some of the victims asked Warner Bros. to take certain measures related to gun control so that they would be stricter than usual. So, the fear that could be seen in the critics of this film is not unjustified.

On the other hand, there are other opinions, like the one expressed by Michael Moore, who believes that Gotham City is actually New York City itself. It represents all the evil that surrounds all of its citizens, i.e. there are the rich who rule the poor, there are corporations and banks people work for, the media, which controls the dissemination of daily news that people should consume. According to Moore, there is a certain connection between the character of the Joker and Donald Trump. However, this film is not about him, but it is more about an America that does not feel a need to help the destitute and the outcast. Moore rejects the idea that the character of the Joker can provoke the violence since most of the violence is actually carried out on Joker himself. He is a person that needs help, someone who is trying to survive on the edge of today's greedy society. His only crime is that he cannot possibly get help and that he is being mocked by the rich and famous.

Some people believe that this film glorifies weapons and mental disorders. There are

even certain criticisms that *Joker* represents a mockery of people with mental disorders. However, the producers of this film explained that Joker is not perceived as a hero, nor it is a point of the film. There is a possibility that many people will recognize themselves in this character, i.e. he is a lonely man, rejected by society, someone who is abused at every step, resentful, and unhappy. He makes a decision to take revenge on everyone. If we consider it in this way, all people who suffer from a certain mental disorder are dangerous and they are real “ticking time bombs”. But, they are not! This film actually emphasizes that those people must not be marginalized and rejected.

Evil is not innate, and in this manner the film had to choose the best way to explain the traumas of the character played by Joaquin Phoenix. If he is linked to his childhood, it



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is better to involve another figure known in this universe: not Batman, but his father, Thomas Wayne, here totally reinterpreted as a populist politician, in the manner of Trump, as a candidate for mayor of Gotham, who despises the underprivileged social classes while making his own grow.

The story connects Fleck with the Wayne family to open a chasm between the upper class and the impoverished people who survive every day like the majority in Gotham City. And so the Joker becomes, in spite of himself, a symbol of revolt. A recent example is the

French people. It is impossible not to think of the yellow vests, a clear representation of these people who are often neglected by the political class, including an American president full of contempt, who struggles to hide in front of the television cameras. Mirror effect assured.

If he is a pamphlet that punishes the alienating forms of power on which American society is built, Joker returns the famous concept of the American dream to better affirm the deadly appeal it represents. The idea that everyone has the opportunity to succeed and grow, makes it an individualistic nation, director Todd Phillips twists and proposes the negative, following his teacher and final reference, Martin Scorsese, who obviously lends him the ideas and atmosphere of *Taxi Driver* and *The King of Comedy*. But, as for the comic from which his film is extracted, he reinterprets; he uses the material as a tool to tell his story, his character.

In this way, the film also shows that the United States is a permanent acting society designed to marginalize and mock people who don't fit the mold. Until they explode.

Finally, we can see a similar angle to the film *American Sniper*. In Clint Eastwood's film, at the beginning of the end credits, he shows archival footage of Chris Kyle's funeral, erected as a hero for “simply killing” people in Iraq, corroborating the filmmaker's vision, and that is where many recent actions make sense. It's American culture, using an eye for an eye, cinema has told us, life proves it, the Joker is no exception, his almost disillusioned look at what was left of America is palpable.

Without achieving all the power, of course, but being terribly exciting, *Joker* certainly shares a similar idea. To see an assassin celebrated by a crowd is, in this result, where all of the film's darkness and political discourse reside.

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Director: Todd Phillips

Starring: Joaquin Phoenix, Robert De Niro.

Zazie Beetz, Frances Conroy

Music: Hildur Guðnadóttir

Cinematography: Lawrence Sher

Editor: Jeff Groth

Production: Warner Bros. Pictures

Release date: August 31, 2019 (Venice)

Running time: 122 minutes

Country: United States

Language: English

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