

# VVITCH...

*Hollywood's idea of witches—the Wicked Witch of the West, Samantha Stephens, Grandmama Addams—bears little resemblance to real witches. These two films shed some light.*

*The Witch* (2015) is a moody horror yarn about a 17th-century Puritan family terrorized by dark forces. Cobbled together from old folk tales and directed by Robert Eggers, his goal was to “take a Puritan’s nightmare..and upload it into the audience’s mind’s eye.” Result: what may be the most realistic portrayal of 1630s New England that’s ever been on screen. The actors were all English (to get the accents right), the clothes were all handmade, and the film was lit by candles. Even the spelling of THE VVITCH (with two V’s in place of the W) comes from a 400-year-old Scottish pamphlet.

All this attention to detail paid off. *The Witch* scored 91% on Rotten Tomatoes (very high for a genre film). Stephen King said that it “scared the hell out of me.” But *The Witch* really impressed the folks at the Satanic Temple, based in Salem, Massachusetts. Jex Blackmore, a spokesperson for the organization, told ReelViews that the movie “exceeded our expectations,” adding, “It’s an impressive presentation of Satanic insight that will inform contemporary discussion of religious experience.”

## ...CRAFT

*The Craft* (1996) is a moody horror yarn about four teenage girls who dabble in witchcraft and make all hell break loose. To get the witch stuff right, director Andrew Fleming searched around Hollywood for a witch consultant. After passing over Babetta (aka the “Sexiest Witch in L.A.”), he chose Pat Devin (aka “First Officer of the Southern California Local Council of Covenant of the Goddess.”) “I’d been explaining my almost 30-year history as a Witch,” Devin told an interviewer in 1998, “talking about...the importance of the Goddess, the reasons for Inquisitorial propaganda, and, oh yes, what color candle I would use for a love spell.”

Devin witnessed some strange things on set. When actress Fairuza Balk (also a real-life Witch, who played Nancy) was chanting incantations on a beach, the generator lost power. Later, a colony of bats invaded the beach and “lingered.”

Released during a summer that also saw *Independence Day*, *Twister*, *Mission: Impossible*, and *Trainspotting*, *The Craft* more than tripled its \$15 million budget and is considered a cult classic today. It also launched the career of scream queen Neve Campbell, who would go on star in *Scream* (and *Scream 2*, and *Scream 3*, and *Scream 4*). As for Devin, *The Craft* was her final film.