

8/10/08 MON

# Evil portal? Hell, yes

In movies, evil can reach our world by many doorways — through ancient amulets, mighty spells and, as in “The Exorcist,” even an innocent girl. But sometimes, the spawn of hell get a little lazy and take any old pathway into our reality.

In the new horror film “Mirrors,” opening Friday, those reflective objects aren’t just seven years of bad luck when you crack them. As Keifer Sutherland realizes, the mirrors are a portal for supernatural forces.

“What if the mirrors can actually make us do things that we don’t want to do?” Sutherland breathlessly asks. And what if the baddies take some decidedly lame shortcuts to unleashing evil? Here are some movies where horror slides in on a portal that’s banal, odd or just plain goofy.

## THE SENTINEL (1977)

**The portal:** The gateway to Hell is a really nice furnished apartment in Brooklyn Heights with an incredibly low monthly rent — the new home of a lapsed Catholic/hot model (Cristina Raines) and her lawyer-boyfriend (Chris Sarandon).

**The problem:** To most New Yorkers, a great apartment at a steal of a price is a vision of heaven, not Hell. If it’s rent-controlled, we’ll move in even if the place does come with demons.

## POLTERGEIST (1982)

**The portal:** “They’re heeere!” was the spooky catch phrase of the summer

when Heather O’Rourke started communicating with ghosts embedded in the fuzzy signal of a TV set.

**The problem:** Thanks to cable and 24-hour programming, there is no end-of-the-day static on TV anymore — which means those ancient Indian spirits will have to get their revenge some other way.

## CANDYMAN (1992)

**The portal:** If you say “Candyman” five times while looking into a mirror, it calls into existence the vengeful son of a murdered slave in this cult favorite based on a Clive Barker story.

**The problem:** Umm, don’t say “Candyman” five times while looking in a mirror and you’re good to go. One online jokester insists if you say it 10 times while looking in a mirror, “Sesame Street’s” Count von Count appears and congratulates you on your counting skills.

## THE GUARDIAN (1990)

**The portal:** Director William Friedkin came a long way down from “The Exorcist” when he directed this story of a pagan nanny who sacrifices babies to the hungry tree lurking menacingly in the backyard.

**The problem:** Stating the movie is “from the director of ‘The Exorcist’” in ads doesn’t make a movie scary. And worshipping a tree is just silly.



# ZOOM



## THE GATE (1987)

**The portal:** A young Stephen Dorff plays Glen, a kid who finds out that removing a rotting tree stump reveals a mysterious hole ... to Hell!

**The problem:** It’s hard to be scared of demons threatening to take over the world when they couldn’t even get past the stump of an old tree until humans removed it.

## ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES! (1978)

**The portal:** We don’t know why, we don’t know how, but tomatoes have become imbued with evil and are out to destroy humanity — especially anyone who asks you to “pass the ketchup.”

**The problem:** What problem? This prescient film clearly saw to the present, when people would be seized with panic over killer tomatoes, and restaurants and delis around the country refused to stock them.

Michael Giltz

