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Are the best villains Lawful Evil?

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09-22-2014, 02:28 PM

#1

[Reply](#)
Member

Join Date: Jul 2003
Location: California
Posts: 7,572

Are the best villains Lawful Evil?

In D&D parlance, a "[lawful evil](#)" character is one who believes an orderly society/hierarchy /organization is the best, most efficient means to achieving his or her nefarious goals.

Some examples include Darth Vader and Magneto, as opposed to, say, The Joker.

In your opinion, do the best villains belong in this category? Are they easier to relate motivations to, or at least rationalize?



Advertisements

09-22-2014, 02:45 PM

#2

[iiandyiii](#)
Member

Join Date: Aug 2010
Location: Arlington, VA
Posts: 13,913

LE villains are generally more successful -- it's easier to do the business of Evil when you've got discipline and organization. But CE villains (like the Joker) can be just as interesting, in my opinion.



09-22-2014, 02:48 PM

#3

[silenus](#) I know sh*t.
Charter MemberJoin Date: May 2003
Location: SoCal
Posts: 43,151

Villain? Yes.

Big Bad? Not necessarily.

IMO, a good villain has to have reasons for the villainy. Otherwise they are just Agent of Chaos (ie The Joker and every slasher/torturer/horror movie killer). Agents of Chaos are seldom interesting.

 09-22-2014, 02:53 PM

#4

[Bill Door](#) 

Charter Member

Join Date: Nov 2003
Posts: 3,814

I agree. Think about the operative in *Serenity*. He was actually working to bring about a world in which he would have no place, and all for what he thought was the greater good. Kind of tragic in a way.

 09-22-2014, 02:56 PM

#5

[Sitnam](#) 

Guest

Join Date: Mar 2003

Quote:

Originally Posted by [iiandyiii](#) 
But CE villains (like the Joker) can be just as interesting, in my opinion.

In D&D and movies I always wondered why henchmen would follow a person like that, during the bank heist while Heath Ledger was busy murdering everyone of his personnel I kept thinking who in their right mind would join up with this organization, much less stay.

Lawful Evil has a lot going for it, including plausibility. Even if bent to any nefarious purpose, many people though out history have chosen 'order' over the alternatives.

 09-22-2014, 03:15 PM

#6

[Little Nemo](#) 

Charter Member

Join Date: Dec 1999
Location: Western New York
Posts: 63,788

The other thing is that in many cases a lawful evil person might be working for a goal that many of us would support. Such a character raises the interesting issue of whether the end justifies

the means.

With chaotic evil characters, there's virtually never such a conflict. They're doing evil for the sake of evil and nobody supports that. The best connection you can hope for with a chaotic evil villain is sympathy for those who we can see were driven insane by past circumstances and are no longer capable of self-control.



09-22-2014, 03:18 PM

#7

[dracoi](#)

Join Date: Dec 2008

Guest

I don't think LE villains are necessarily better, but they have an advantage in that they prevent sloppy thinking by the writer. When we ask the question "Why are they doing these evil things?" writers sometimes have no explanation for the CE characters. "That's just the way they are" seems to suffice for an explanation. (The Joker is the textbook example. He's just crazy.) An LE character, on the other hand, has to have an explanation that we can understand.

Of course, there's no reason why a CE or NE character couldn't have complex and relatable motivations if they're written that way. They just usually aren't.

Another advantage: CE characters are usually driven by things we consider vices. Sex, drugs, money, power, etc. It's very easy to look down on those people because we see these as character flaws that are not worthy motivations. LE characters almost always have a "higher purpose" in mind. We might disagree with Darth Vader about how to get world peace, but we have to agree that world peace is a worthy goal.



09-22-2014, 03:28 PM

#8

[Balance](#)

Join Date: Jun 2000

Member

Location: Dallas, TX

Posts: 7,344

I wouldn't say the best villains are necessarily Lawful Evil. Neutral Evil villains are perfectly plausible, often even more so than Lawfuls; they tend to present themselves as Lawful, because it's to their advantage to pay lip service to some sort of order most of the time, but can be expected to break laws/their word/their code if the payoff is greater than that of maintaining the charade. Both LE and NE villains are well-situated to be [Affably Evil](#)*--which is a trope I like--and make more adaptable characters across extended works, like a TV or novel series.

CE villains have their place as well, but in a sense, they're sort of like natural disasters. They have greater scope for causing damage, but it's hard to get much subtlety or depth out of them. That said, the sheer unpredictability can make them fun antagonists. In my opinion, though, they serve best as occasional foils, or as tools for the Big Bad, than as the Big Bad.

*David Xanatos may still be my favorite villain ever.



09-22-2014, 03:32 PM

#9

[Blaster Master](#)

Join Date: Feb 2006

Guest

I think Lawful Evil is generally successful because it's a trope we're well accustomed to and it's something that most of us can relate to. For the most part, we can understand the motivation of a mob boss or a corrupt politician, because even if we're not greedy, we've all felt those temptations. But we have a much harder time relating to a character that is Chaotic because, in general, we live in a Lawful society. For most villains, it's important to be able to relate to them in some way, and if most people are generally Good and at least Neutral living in a Lawful society, it's hard to relate to villains that don't have at least something in common.

So, by that same notion, I think we'll see that Lawful Evil works well, but there's plenty of memorable ones that are Neutral or Chaotic, I think more of them probably aren't that because they were so different. For instance, part of the reason the Joker works so well is precisely because we can't relate to him, and he's the Yin to Batman's Yang. In fact, I think that's probably why we see so many Lawful Evil villains, because so often our heroes are Lawful Good.

Personally, though, my favorite types of villains are the ones who can even flip it on its head and not be Evil at all. For instance, I'd say that Raz al'Ghul in Batman Begins or General Zod in Man of Steel are not Evil in the D&D alignment sense (probably Lawful Neutral for both). Hell, Batman alone has a villain of virtually every alignment. I'd also make the argument that the one true break out MCU villain, Loki, isn't Evil, he's Chaotic Neutral.



09-22-2014, 04:16 PM

#10

[Grey area](#)

Join Date: Aug 2005

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Sitnam](#)

In D&D and movies I always wondered why henchmen would follow a person like that, during the bank heist while Heath Ledger was busy murdering everyone of his personnel I kept thinking who in their right mind would join up with this organization, much less stay.

The robbers in the opening scene of the movie were obviously duped, but I think there could be an explanation for the subsequent henchmen, that being the sheer charisma of the Joker. Like a personality cult. He's the baddest man in Gotham and that alone could attract a subset of people, then he can give them his spiel about being agents of chaos (in an organized fashion ironically), and voila! Henchmen. I mean look at all the teenagers and young men that idolize(?) the Joker even as a fictional character. And a lot of his pawns are just straight up nutso as well.



09-22-2014, 05:53 PM

#11

[Chronos](#) 
Charter Member

Join Date: Jan 2000
Location: The Land of Cleves
Posts: 58,468

I certainly find LE villains more interesting. Not only are they much more likely to have well-developed motivations and backgrounds, but the motivations and backgrounds they get are likely to be much more interesting. Personal greed or hedonism are perfectly plausible as motivations, but they're boring.



09-22-2014, 06:57 PM

#12

[John DiFool](#) 
Guest

Join Date: Jun 2006

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Balance](#) 

I wouldn't say the best villains are necessarily Lawful Evil. Neutral Evil villains are perfectly plausible, often even more so than Lawfuls; they tend to present themselves as Lawful, because it's to their advantage to pay lip service to some sort of order most of the time, but can be expected to break laws/their word/their code if the payoff is greater than that of maintaining the charade. Both LE and NE villains are well-situated to be [Affably Evil](#)*--which is a trope I like--and make more adaptable characters across extended works, like a TV or novel series.

Nice poster-post content combo. 

09-22-2014, 07:13 PM

#13

[Dr. Strangelove](#) 
Guest

Join Date: Dec 2010

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Little Nemo](#) 

The other thing is that in many cases a lawful evil person might be working for a goal that many of us would support. Such a character raises the interesting issue of whether the end justifies the means.

Perhaps I don't fully understand the subtleties of the D&D matrix, but...

Is that really LE, then? I would say that's more NG. Their end goal is good, and may even have a plausible route for getting there, but as you say they are "the ends justify the means" folk. Not sadistic, but not afraid of getting their hands dirty. Willing to sacrifice a thousand to save a million.

Unfortunately, this type is generally paired with protagonists way out on the LG spectrum (Superman, etc.).



09-22-2014, 07:14 PM

#14

[Bryan Ekers](#)

Join Date: Nov 2000

Guest

Chaotic Evil can get tiresome, including the parts where the heroes don't just eliminate the chaotic evil villain, put him down like a mad dog and all.



09-22-2014, 07:26 PM

#15

[3trew](#)

Join Date: Jan 2003

Guest

My current favourite Lawful Evil is The Network from "Utopia", during Season One anyway.

When the good guys capture one of the bad guys, and he finally spills the details of the horrible conspiracy, and you find yourself thinking "Oh, yeah... shit, they're probably right to be doing that", it makes for some damn good villaining.



09-22-2014, 07:42 PM

#16

[Bryan Ekers](#)

Join Date: Nov 2000

Guest

I'm reminded of one of my favourite moments from *Darkman*. The main bad guy, Louis Strack, lures Darkman into one of Strack's partly-completed skyscrapers. Strack is heavily invested in city architecture (and quite at home dancing across girders 600 feet above the pavement) and ruthless in bringing his vision to life, even if it means bribery and murder.

Strack: Look about you. [camera angle moves to show the city skyline behind him] It's all mine. Because I *built* it! I built it all!

Finally, a villain with a *productive* goal!



09-22-2014, 07:48 PM

#17

[Jophiel](#)

Join Date: Mar 1999

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Dr. Strangelove](#) 
Perhaps I don't fully understand the subtleties of the D&D matrix, but...

Quick and Dirty:

Lawful Good: Laws and order are the best way to ensure maximum good and benefit for the people.

Lawful Neutral: Law is paramount and good or evil are secondary to keeping order.

Lawful Evil: Law is the tool of oppression by which complete power is gained.

Neutral Good: Goodness for others is best achieved by finding balance between order and freedom

True Neutral: The Balance is most important, when one side grows too dominant, the benefits of the other are crushed by its weight.

Neutral Evil: Ideologies of law or freedom are shackles against attaining true power for one's self.

Chaotic Good: Goodness and charity are best achieved when people are free to do whatever they please. Restrictions stifle goodness.

Chaotic Neutral: 'Good' and 'Evil' are distractions from achieving complete freedom

Chaotic Evil: Power is achieved by survival of the fittest. Those who are strongest crush the unworthy however they wish for their strength is their authority.

Someone achieving "world peace" by subjugating the population isn't trying to bring about good for the people. They're using totalitarianism as a tool to achieve power with "peace" as a pretext -- Lawful Evil. Likewise, someone like Magneto who would kill a bunch of people to force "peace" with the mutants isn't trying to broadly do good as a LG person would. He would, at best, be Lawful Neutral: Maintaining peace via threat because he legitimately wants peace but it willing to use decisively "non-good" means to force it. In AD&D terms, that's when you get into alignments like "Lawful Evil (Neutral)"

Last edited by Jophiel; 09-22-2014 at 07:51 PM..



 09-22-2014, 08:02 PM

#18

[Dr. Strangelove](#) 

Join Date: Dec 2010

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Jophiel](#) 
Someone achieving "world peace" by subjugating the population isn't trying to bring about good for the people. They're using totalitarianism as a tool to achieve power with "peace" as a pretext -- Lawful Evil.

So what about The Network from Utopia (that [3trew](#) mentioned)?

SPOILER:



09-22-2014, 08:28 PM

#19

[Jophiel](#)

Join Date: Mar 1999

Guest

I'm spoiler tagging just because you did and I'm not familiar with the story in question to know what I'd be ruining otherwise:

SPOILER:



09-22-2014, 08:55 PM

#20

[Dr. Strangelove](#)

Join Date: Dec 2010

Guest

Well, I guess I think of lawful/neutral/chaotic as referring to means, while good/neutral/evil refers to ends. Perhaps I'm separating those too strongly.

SPOILER:

A pretty common trope in fantasy works is a paladin-like organization that fights witches/sorcerers/etc. The way I see it, these often edge into LE territory: they certainly respect law and order, and generally have their own strong code of ethics as well, but what they advocate is usually pretty close to genocide. I guess I probably have a mismatch in my definitions.



09-22-2014, 11:09 PM

#21

[Ranchoth](#)

Join Date: Jul 1999

Guest

D&D Alignment Matrix—

[in graphic form](#), generally accurate enough for most purposes. Although there are [other schools](#) and [differential interpretations](#).

Last edited by Ranchoth; 09-22-2014 at 11:11 PM..



09-22-2014, 11:24 PM

#22

[marshmallow](#) 

Join Date: Oct 2004

Guest

Chaotic villains are entertaining. They're often super hammy over the top personalities and a great source of surreal situations and comedy. I guess indulging in baser desires isn't supposed to be as mature and sophisticated, but meh.

My favorite kind of villain is the knight templar trope, or I guess you could call it the anti-hero maybe. Basically someone who thinks they're doing good and won't let anyone stand in their way. Everyone is the good guy of their story, but this person usually has the same or similar goals to the protagonist yet go about it in an extreme, more self righteous way. I don't know where that fits on the D&D spectrum. Usually interesting because they make the audience or even the heroes say, "crap, they got a point!"

Maybe I find them a little more terrifying than your normal 9-5 punch clock villains because they're the true believers with big ideas. The kind of people who can really screw everything up. The religious fundamentalists. The general Rippers. The social warriors (wherever on the spectrum). The uber nationalists wanting to restore the nation's glory. They know they have the solution and it'll make everything better but everyone else is just too stupid/cowardly/corrupt to see it.

Last edited by marshmallow; 09-22-2014 at 11:29 PM..

 09-22-2014, 11:32 PM

#23

[RickJay](#) Charter Jays Fan
ModeratorJoin Date: Jun 2000
Location: Oakville, Canada
Posts: 33,202

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Jophiel](#) 

Likewise, someone like Magneto who would kill a bunch of people to force "peace" with the mutants isn't trying to broadly do good as a LG person would. He would, at best, be Lawful Neutral: Maintaining peace via threat because he legitimately wants peace but it willing to use decisively "non-good" means to force it. In AD&D terms, that's when you get into alignments like "Lawful Evil (Neutral)"

Magneto is a liar, a hypocrite, a criminal and a backstabber. He isn't lawful anything.

A list of fine villains who aren't D&D "lawful" is a very long one. Just from movies; The Joker, Hans Gruber, Keyser Soze, Anton Chigurh, Hannibal Lecter, Tommy Devito, Michael Myers, John Doe in Seven, Annie Wilkes, Alex, Dr. Szell...

 09-23-2014, 12:29 AM

#24

[Jophiel](#) 

Join Date: Mar 1999

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [RickJay](#) 

Magneto is a liar, a hypocrite, a criminal and a backstabber. He isn't lawful anything.

None of those necessarily disqualify you from being Lawful Evil. Well, arguably they're practically required for the "Evil" part. Even as a criminal, breaking someone else's law in the course of trying to impose your own is still lawful. Conversely, a Lawful Good person wouldn't feel constrained by the laws of a totalitarian evil regime they were trying to overthrow. You're lawful because you believe in the necessity of a strict code of conduct and structure of hierarchy.

Last edited by Jophiel; 09-23-2014 at 12:30 AM..


 09-23-2014, 02:19 AM

#25

[Measure for Measure](#) 

Join Date: Oct 2000

Location: Twitter: @MeasureMeasure

Posts: 11,140

Charter Member

AFI created a top 50 list of movie villains. Here are their top 14, along with my guess at alignment.

1. Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Silence of the Lambs, LE
2. Norman Bates, Psycho, CE?
3. Darth Vader, LE
4. Wicked Witch of the West, NE?
5. Nurse Ratched, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, LE
6. Mr. Potter, It's a Wonderful Life, LE
7. Alex Forrest, Fatal Attraction, ?
8. Phyllis Dietrichson, Double Indemnity, NE?
9. Regan MacNeil, The Exorcist, ?
10. The Queen, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, NE?
11. Michael Corleone, The Godfather Part II, LE
12. Alex De Large, A Clockwork Orange, CE
13. Hal 9000, 2001: A Space Odyssey, LE
14. The Alien, Alien, NE

Corrections welcome.

So far: I have 43% LE, 29% NE, 14% CE and 14% ??.


 09-23-2014, 09:51 AM

#26

Chronos 
Charter Member

Join Date: Jan 2000
Location: The Land of Cleves
Posts: 58,468

Quote:

Quoth Dr. Strangelove:

Well, I guess I think of lawful/neutral/chaotic as referring to means, while good/neutral/evil refers to ends. Perhaps I'm separating those too strongly.

It can go either way. The best examples I can think of off the top of my head are a couple of characters from *Order of the Stick*: Daimyo Kubota is (well, was) a corrupt noble who wanted nothing more than to increase his own personal power, and damn the costs, but who preferred to use existing social structures (which he's near the top of) to do so. That's pretty clearly evil ends, pursued through lawful means. By contrast, Redcloak, one of the main villains of the story, just wants his people, the goblins, to have a fair shake at life, with quality land they can call their own, and a civilized society... but he's willing to risk the destruction of the world and all the souls within it to attain that. That's lawful ends, pursued through evil means.



 09-23-2014, 10:44 AM

#27

Jophiel 
Guest

Join Date: Mar 1999

Another thing is that most people's alignments are just part of their general make up. In the real world, most Americans would qualify as "lawful" in that they'd agree that a system of law is necessary for society. But very few would actually crusade or put themselves out to promote bringing law to the lawless, at best it's a pretext to feel better about military campaigns ("We're bring them democracy..."). Likewise, most people would generally agree with "good": acts of charity, kindness, etc but few make it their driving goal, sacrificing deeply to feed and clothe the homeless or something.

But in games, alignment is an easy crutch for giving NPCs a personality so it tends to be magnified. It's not enough to be a decent guy who respects society, you need to be *Lawful Good*.



 09-23-2014, 01:20 PM

#28

B. Serum 
Charter Member

Join Date: Oct 2001
Location: Left Coast
Posts: 2,871

Marvel's best villain, Doctor Doom, is the law of his own nation. He is protected from repercussions when he is at his Latverian Embassy in New York, and [even gets police* escorts](#). And he literally rules with an iron fist.

* *not really police*

Last edited by B. Serum; 09-23-2014 at 01:21 PM..



09-23-2014, 02:14 PM

#29

[gnoitall](#)

Join Date: Jul 2009

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Reply](#)

In D&D parlance, a "lawful evil" character is one who believes an orderly society/hierarchy/organization is the best, most efficient means to achieving his or her nefarious goals.

Some examples include Darth Vader and Magneto, as opposed to, say, The Joker.

In your opinion, do the best villains belong in this category? Are they easier to relate motivations to, or at least rationalize?

I give you the archetypal worst villain of the Lawful Evil category: [Dr. Evil](#). Meticulous. Organized. Hierarchic. Fond of elaborate extortion schemes, a form of contractual evil. Also prone to the "unnecessarily slow dipping machine" kinds of machinations.

Forgive me if I find Dr. Evil less impressive than, say, Heath Ledger's Joker.

Last edited by gnoitall; 09-23-2014 at 02:15 PM.. Reason: my fingers are doing stupid autocorrect things



09-23-2014, 02:53 PM

#30

[Boyo Jim](#)

Member

Join Date: Nov 2001
Location: Madison, WI
Posts: 33,200

When I think of Lawful Evil, my first thought was Mr. Potter in *It's a Wonderful Life*. I wonder if they had him hide away the \$10 grand (which he *found* and didn't steal) just to make him unambiguously evil.

In certain sectors of society, troll like him and Montgomery Burns are extolled as Job Creators.



09-23-2014, 03:17 PM

#31

[Jophiel](#)

Guest

Join Date: Mar 1999

My first thought of Lawful Evil was *Order of the Stick's* General Tarquin. Of course, my first thought for Chaotic Evil wasn't the Joker, but rather OoTS's Xykon. I guess maybe I've read too much Order of the Stick. But I bet Xykon could beat the Joker in a fight.



09-23-2014, 03:22 PM

#32

[Jophiel](#)

Join Date: Mar 1999

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Boyo Jim](#)
In certain sectors of society, troll like him and Montgomery Burns are extolled as Job Creators.

Taken out of context, parts of the original AD&D alignment descriptions can sound a bit... political 😊

Quote:

Lawful Evil: [...]Good is seen as an excuse to promote the mediocrity of the whole and suppress the better and more capable, while lawful evilness allows each group to structure itself and fix its place as compared to others, serving the stronger but being served by the weak.

Neutral Evil: [...]This ethos holds that seeking to promote weal for the whole actually serves to promote woe to the truly deserving. Natural forces which are meant to cull out the weak and stupid are artificially suppressed by so-called good and the fit are wrongly held back[...]



09-24-2014, 12:43 AM

#33

[Terminus Est](#)

Join Date: Apr 2001

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Measure for Measure](#)
13. Hal 9000, 2001: A Space Odyssey, LE

HAL 9000 is a computer and hence neither good nor evil. However, it must follow the rules of its programming since, well, it's a computer. HAL is therefore Lawful Neutral.



09-24-2014, 11:10 PM

#34

RickJay Charter Jays Fan
ModeratorJoin Date: Jun 2000
Location: Oakville, Canada
Posts: 33,202

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Measure for Measure** 

AFI created a top 50 list of movie villains. Here are their top 14, along with my guess at alignment.

1. Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Silence of the Lambs, LE

Lecter is a psychotic who demonstrates no regard at all for social order. Lawful characters, by definition, attempt as best they can to act within the rules of their society, even if that involves changing those rules. Lecter has NO regard for the rules of society, no regard for whether he is perceived as breaking the law, and is often barely able to control his own animalistic impulses. He is chaotic evil, absolutely a slam dunk.

"Polite and educated" isn't "lawful."

Your example of Nurse Ratched is a much better example of LE.


 09-25-2014, 12:08 AM

#35

Measure for Measure 

Charter Member

Join Date: Oct 2000
Location: Twitter: @MeasureMeasure
Posts: 11,140

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Terminus Est**

HAL 9000 is a computer and hence neither good nor evil.

Homicidal... but not evil?

Quote:

Originally Posted by **RickJay** 

"Polite and educated" isn't "lawful."

I thought Lecter was methodical enough to be LE.

New list

1. Dr. Hannibal Lecter, Silence of the Lambs, ~~LE~~ NE, with a case to be made for CE
2. Norman Bates, Psycho, CE?
3. Darth Vader, LE

4. Wicked Witch of the West, ~~NE?~~ CE: Have a fireball!
5. Nurse Ratched, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, LE
6. Mr. Potter, It's a Wonderful Life, LE
7. Alex Forrest, Fatal Attraction, CE
8. Phyllis Dietrichson, Double Indemnity, NE?
9. Regan MacNeil, The Exorcist, CE?
10. The Queen, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, NE?
11. Michael Corleone, The Godfather Part II, LE
12. Alex De Large, A Clockwork Orange, CE
13. Hal 9000, 2001: A Space Odyssey, LE with a case to be made for LN
14. The Alien, Alien, NE

My revised list has 5 LE, 4 NE and 5 CE. Comments and revisions always welcome. This version tends to falsify the OP.



09-25-2014, 12:39 AM

#36

[magnusblitz](#)

Join Date: May 2005

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [RickJay](#)
Magneto is a liar, a hypocrite, a criminal and a backstabber. He isn't lawful anything.

How would you classify him, then? The guy was the king-in-all-but-name of his own mutant haven. If we have to call him Evil (I've personally always much more enjoyed him as a shades-of-grey character than the 'straight villain' characterization Grant Morrison adhered to), then Lawful makes the most sense, as I understand the term.

Though, I suppose it depends on how you define the categories (and brings up the obvious limitations of it). Under the TVTropes types, I suppose he could be a [type 3](#) - megalomaniac who thinks he's the good guy. This kinda seems to be going under the 'neutral evils are just everyone who doesn't care about law/chaos' though.

Anyways, I think Lawful Evil types are the easiest to make into likeable villains. Not necessarily the best (as others have noted, there are lots of great villains who definitely aren't Lawful Evil) but they're easy to like.

Last edited by magnusblitz; 09-25-2014 at 12:39 AM..



09-25-2014, 12:57 AM

#37

[Miller](#)

Sith Mod
Moderator

Join Date: Dec 2000
Location: Bear Flag Republic
Posts: 38,694

I don't think I'd call the creature from *Alien* evil. Particularly in the first film, it's essentially just a dangerous animal. It's not killing the crew out of maliciousness, or cruelty, or to advance any agenda other than "eat and reproduce." That would make it True Neutral, like other animals.

As for Magneto and other comic book villains, these are characters that have been written by dozens of different writers over the course of decades. Their characterization can fluctuate wildly because of this. Stan Lee's Magneto is a different shade of evil than Chris Claremont's Magneto, who a different shade of evil than Grant Morrison's. If you take them all together, these inconsistencies are almost always going to shade the character towards Chaotic Evil, simply because the villain who said one thing in one comic, is now acting a different way in a different comic fifteen years later.

That being said, I think Magneto at his "best" is neutral evil. He does not generally revel in causing misery, but he'll stop at nothing to secure the future of his people, even if that involves going back on his own word or betraying a trusted ally - so long as it's all in furtherance of his cause.



09-25-2014, 01:49 AM

#38

[Terminus Est](#)

Join Date: Apr 2001

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Measure for Measure](#)
[Re: HAL 9000] Homicidal... but not evil?

And those paladins that mow down thousands of evil minions are supposed to be good?



09-25-2014, 02:00 AM

#39

[Jragon](#)

Join Date: Mar 2007

Location: Miskatonic University

Posts: 9,457

I think the best example of Lawful Evil I've seen was a demon* in one of the Neverwinter Nights games. A man sold the demon his soul, and the demon is claiming his reward. However, the contract is void if the demon "forced the human" to perform certain actions.

You can debate with the demon and the client and eventually prove the demon had tricked/forced the human to do what he did and thus violated the contract, voiding his ownership over the soul. The demon is extremely mad, but most importantly, he **backs off and goes home** because he accepts that he is bound by the rules of his contract.

* Devil, actually, because by definition in D&D "demons" are chaotic and "devils" are lawful, but whatever.



09-25-2014, 08:27 AM

#40

[Jophiel](#)

Join Date: Mar 1999

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Measure for Measure](#)
Homicidal... but not evil?

I don't recall the movie well enough (aside from "open the pod bay doors") to remember what was up with HAL. If it was just responding to glitchy programming, it wouldn't be "evil" any more than an automatic sentry gun is "evil" for shooting whatever trips its sensors.

On the Evil Computer track though, we have GLaDOS. On one hand, science is a "lawful" practice at its core, but then GLaDOS doesn't exactly seem concerned with strict protocols in her experiments. She's also cognizant that her subjects are performing unwillingly and berates them throughout when not actively trying to kill them. I'd say she's more Neutral Evil -- she's selfishly motivated by a mixture of perverse science (torture) and, later, revenge.

Quote:

Originally Posted by [magnusblitz](#)
Anyways, I think Lawful Evil types are the easiest to make into likeable villains. Not necessarily the best (as others have noted, there are lots of great villains who definitely aren't Lawful Evil) but they're easy to like.

I think most people have an appreciation for order and structure so you're already halfway there in gaining their sympathies. Chaotic Evil characters like the Joker might be "cool" in the moment but few people would say "I like idea of what he's trying to accomplish here".



09-25-2014, 07:54 PM

#41

[GoodOmens](#)

Join Date: Dec 2007

Guest

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Miller](#)
I don't think I'd call the creature from *Alien* evil. Particularly in the first film, it's essentially just a dangerous animal. It's not killing the crew out of maliciousness, or cruelty, or to advance any agenda other than "eat and reproduce." That would make it True Neutral, like other animals.

I can't remember where I've seen this, but I like the use of "Neutral Hungry" in this case. The

True Neutrality of a, for example, kodiak bear is a different thing than that of someone too apathetic to care about anything.



09-25-2014, 09:02 PM

#42

[Chimera](#)

Member

Join Date: Sep 2002
Location: In the Dreaming
Posts: 16,369

Organized Chaos Cults is an oxymoron, yet they're pretty much a trope. The only way they are even mildly rational is if (as is usually the case), they're just causing chaos so they can sweep into power. In which case they're not really chaotic, they're only using chaos as a weapon.



01-14-2015, 02:37 PM

#43

[Elendil's Heir](#)

SDSAB

Join Date: Jun 2004
Location: At the Diogenes Club
Posts: 55,073

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Boyo Jim](#)
When I think of Lawful Evil, my first thought was Mr. Potter in *It's a Wonderful Life*. I wonder if they had him hide away the \$10 grand (which he *found* and didn't steal) just to make him unambiguously evil....

Nitpick: It was eight grand.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mr._Potter
<http://www.quora.com/At-the-end-of-I...-bad-guy-stole>
<http://snltranscripts.jt.org/86/86hlife.phtml>

HAL 9000 is a computer, yes, but is artificially intelligent, seems to have free will as much as any human, and makes choices. It is determined to go forward with the mission and tries to deal with (as Clarke wrote in *2010: Odyssey Two*, and as was shown in the movie sequel inspired by it) contradictory programming by murdering the *Discovery* astronauts who might stand in its way. I think we may fairly give it an alignment, and that is Lawful Evil.



01-14-2015, 03:19 PM

#44

[Darth Panda](#)

Guest

Join Date: Mar 2010

Quote:

Originally Posted by [Miller](#)

That being said, I think Magneto at his "best" is neutral evil. He does not generally revel in causing misery, but he'll stop at nothing to secure the future of his people, even if that involves going back on his own word or betraying a trusted ally - so long as it's all in furtherance of his cause.

Agree - definitely NE in my book. For my credentials I submit that my father owned a comic book store when I was kid. I read mostly Claremont / Lee era X-Men (mostly pre-Blue/Gold, some after), although I was more into the Liefeld New Mutants / X-Force and Claremont / Davis Excalibur (as far as mutant stuff goes).



01-14-2015, 04:33 PM

#45

Chronos
Charter Member

Join Date: Jan 2000
Location: The Land of Cleves
Posts: 58,468

GLaDOS is an interesting case. She does seem to have rules that she operates under, and will not or cannot break, but those rules are so twisted and mangled that it's impossible for anyone, probably including her, to tell what they are. Neutral Evil is probably the best bet for her (and I don't think there's any dispute that she's Evil).



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