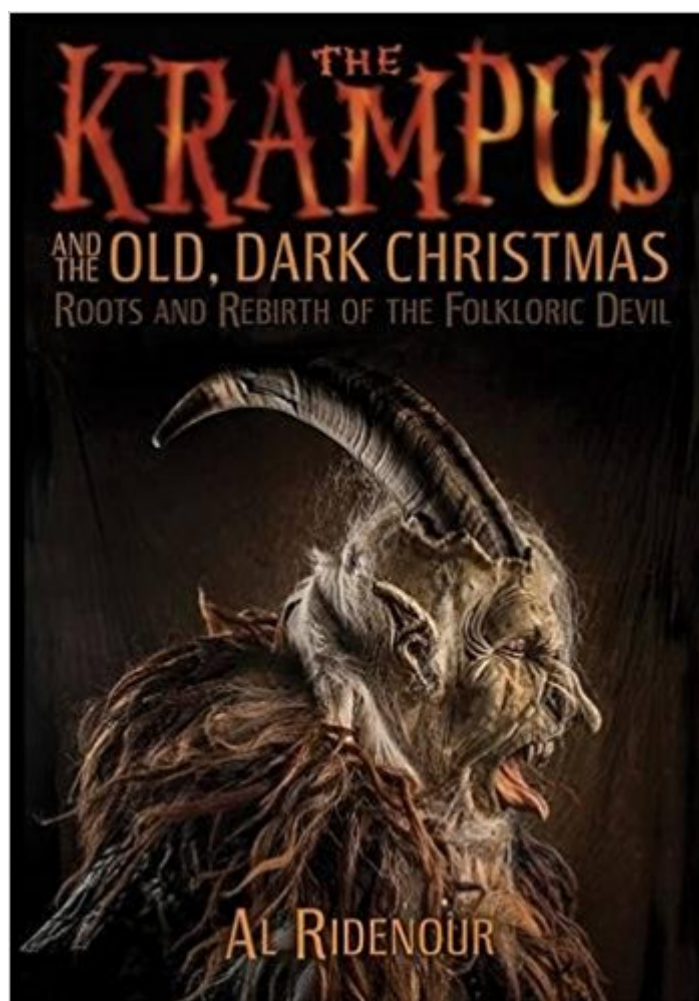


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# The Krampus And The Old, Dark Christmas: Roots And Rebirth Of The Folkloric Devil



## Synopsis

With the appearance of the demonic Christmas character Krampus in contemporary Hollywood movies, television shows, advertisements, and greeting cards, medieval folklore has now been revisited in American culture. Krampus-related events and parades occur both in North America and Europe, and they are an ever-growing phenomenon. Though the Krampus figure has once again become iconic, not much can be found about its history and meaning, thus calling for a book like Al Ridenour's *The Krampus: Roots and Rebirth of the Folkloric Devil*. With Krampus's wild, graphic history, Feral House has hired the awarded designer Sean Tejaratchi to take on Ridenour's book about this ever-so-curious figure. Al Ridenour has lectured on Krampus at the Goethe Institutes in Los Angeles. He became somewhat of an internet phenomenon himself due to the hilarious hijinks he coordinated with the controversial Cacophony Societies.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Feral House has just published the definitive work on Krampus and assorted other dark pagan Yuletide terrors.... I really can't recommend this highly enough. If you have any interest in the subject, this book is simply a must-have." - Dangerous Minds  
"Ridenour (Offbeat Food) serves up an immensely accessible, well-researched history mixed in with his own personal journey..." - Publishers Weekly  
"Gleefully erudite..." - "Well-researched and sumptuously illustrated... Ridenour's book deserves to become a classic in its own right." -- LA Times  
"A wonderful book documenting the larger world of the Krampus, the tradition's historical development, and

its religious and folkloric roots." -- Reading Religion, A Publication of the American Academy of Religion  
Ridenour (Offbeat Food) serves up an immensely accessible, well-researched history mixed in with his own personal journey tracing the Krampus, a Christmas devil with roots in Austrian and German folklore...Those interested in folklore, anthropology, history, counter-culture, and cosplay will enjoy this thorough assessment and its plethora of illustrations. #151; Publisher's Weekly, October 2016  
The Krampus and the Old, Dark Christmas: Roots and Rebirth of the Folkloric Devil is jam-packed with information on the history and meaning of the Krampus as well as scads of photos and art prints. The dozens of photos of celebrants of myriad regional-variant Yuletide festivals in bizarre and terrifying costumes is worth the price of admission alone. Award-winning designer Sean Tejaratchi has laid everything out gorgeously, augmenting Ridenour's thoughtful analysis. I really can't recommend this highly enough. If you have any interest in the subject, this book is simply a must-have. #151; Dangerous Minds

The Krampus, a folkloric devil associated with St. Nicholas in Alpine Austria and Germany is now becoming part of the American Christmas. But the old world from which he comes knew a very different holiday, one haunted by ghosts, witches, devilish horsemen, murderous incarnations of Catholic saints, the demonic Perchten, and witch-like Frau Perchta, known for disemboweling naughty children. Even the church once celebrated this holiday with plays depicting the Devil, Antichrist, and Herod's gory Massacre of the innocents. Together, these strange winter traditions gave birth to a monster now more popular than ever, the Krampus.

What an amazing book. So educational, informative and the pictures are beautiful. It's a must have for anyone with even the slightest interest in learning about the folklore of the Krampus.

Good history . Well written . Enjoyable read . Thank you

I used this book to write my final paper for a college mythology class. This book is beautifully written and is stuff full of wonderful information. Any fan of the Krampus or holiday folklore would thoroughly enjoy this book.

Entertaining and enlightening with contemporary and historical info, plus great pics. I loved it!  
Already planning my Krampus expedition to Bavaria and the Austrian Alps!

Interesting and very informative. I wish I knew about this when my kids were little.

Excellent book. Pictures really brought book to life!

Essential for your bookshelf!

The Krampus is a captivating image. Horned, menacing, hooved and hairy, the author describes Krampus as the Shadow of Saint Nicholas. Like many Shadow images, Krampus grabs us and triggers our curiosity to know more. Krampus is but one player in a host of dark and bewildering characters presented in *The Krampus and the Old, Dark Christmas: Roots and Rebirth of the Folkloric Devil*. In his book about the historic Christmas pageants of central Europe, Al Ridenour has investigated these symbolic figures in detail, searching for their origins, transformations over time, and exploring their permutations in various local traditions. He makes insightful points about the psychological function of these ancient traditions and their continuing importance for us today. "The figure of Krampus cannot be understood apart from that of St. Nicholas," writes Ridenour. He explains how the Krampuslauf (Krampus run) evolved from medieval Christmas and Passion plays which included the Devil. A great deal of historical information is provided about the integration of the Nikolausspiel (Nicholas Play) with the rural Alpine Perchtenlauf (raucous parade of mountain spirits). The author brings home the realization that Christmas cannot be fully understood without both the Christian foundations and the "indigenous pagan folklore" that melded to form the modern Nikolaus-Krampus traditions. Ridenour does not leave women out of the pageantry. Although not traditional participants in the Krampuslauf, which can be brutal, he reports a good deal of female participation in the action. The Christkind (Christ child) participant in the event is traditionally represented by a young girl. The author makes remarks on the androgynous symbolism of this. Frau Perchta (Frau Holle), the archetypal witch featured prominently in Grimm's Fairytales, is the matriarchal leader of an event called Perchtenlauf, a raucous parade of men and women dressed as witches and mountain spirits. The author writes about the folklore that surrounds Frau Perchta and her connections with the Germanic goddess Holde, her transition into the Frau Perchta, and the effect of a history of suppression and persecution by the Church. Several of the Perchtenlauf characters are individually examined in-depth, and they are very entertaining. The section on the Totenvolk, a throng of wandering ghosts, is noteworthy. These specters follow a habitual route, sometimes passing through homes to create din and occasional damage. I recalled that Carl Jung was visited by a throng of Anabaptist ghosts, an experience recounted in *Memories*,

Dreams, Reflections. It sounds as though Dr. Jung may have had a visit from the Totenvolk. In the final chapter, 'Why the Krampus Must Come', the author says, "We crave somehow to get inside these stories and images, to walk among the characters that fascinate us, even to become them." Krampus is "the real thing," he says, a living myth that is experienced and acted out in unpredictable, living interactions." The old, dark Christmas traditions continue, through centuries, to feed the unconscious needs of people facing the frozen times of winter. As a figure of ritual importance since the pre-Christian era, the Krampus is of archetypal significance. He lives in the cultural unconscious and bidden or not, he will come. In

Conclusion: There is a wealth of information in *The Krampus and the Old, Dark Christmas*. Ridenour succeeds in weaving together the strands of an enormous database of information to create a fascinating and enjoyable reading experience. I was impressed with his depth of research and his ability to organize it into a conversational flow. I enjoyed reading about his travels through Europe to experience the Krampuslaufen in various regions of Austria, Germany and Switzerland. This is not a book of "library research" but an all-in endeavor during which he consulted Krampuslauf participants and the regional folk to obtain first-hand knowledge and perspective on these traditions. The book is generously illustrated with beautiful professional photographs of costumes, masks and events. It includes historical reproductions of old prints and woodcuts, and the earliest photograph of a Krampus Pass. I was impressed with the quality of paper and vibrant color. Rich in visual imagery and cultural history, this book is sumptuous reading for anyone interested in depth psychology, mythology, history, shamanism and religion, and more. I recommend it whole-heartedly.

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