



I LOVE Halloween. I love scaring others and being scared. I think fear, next to love, is the strongest emotion in the world and is just as important to be in touch with. To know what scares you is to have the power to confront it and overcome it.

My love for Halloween is complimented by my love of film. I didn't really start getting into horror movies until I was in college, where I began taking film classes and seeing the genre just as much of an art form as, say, a Stanley Kubrick picture. I'll admit it takes a lot to scare me as far as movies go, so if one can manage to pull it off, it definitely gets my recommendation.

For your consideration, I submit to you a list of horror films, in no particular order, that have managed to do just that. This is by no means a complete list, but should you feel the need to get in touch with your own fears, this is a terrifying place to start.

- Cabin Fever (2002) written and directed by Eli Roth, starring Rider Strong

This is probably my favorite horror movie. A group of college students go to the atypical cabin in the woods for a fun-filled vacation and manage to contract a flesh-eating virus. Eli Roth, who once contracted a similar virus himself, uses every horror cliché in the book with hilarious (and horrifying) results. There are nods to all the greats in here, including Sam Raimi and Alfred Hitchcock. Not for the squeamish.

- The Entity (1981) directed by Sidney J. Furie, starring Barbara Hershey and Ron Silver

There's nothing hilarious in this supposedly true story about a woman who is repeatedly raped by an unseen assailant. The rape scenes themselves are shown in graphic detail and you almost feel dirty (and just as helpless) as you watch Hershey's plight unfold.

- Event Horizon (1997) directed by Paul W.S. Anderson, starring Laurence Fishburne, Sam Neill, Kathleen Quinlan and Joley Richardson

I'm not a huge fan of the sci-fi/horror genre, though *Alien* (1979) and its superior sequel, *Aliens* (1986), definitely deliver the goods. If it's gonna scare me, I gotta believe it can really happen. The plot in this particular film is nothing new: a spaceship goes missing and when it finally reappears, a group of explorers are sent in to investigate. I won't give away the rest, except to say that the footage they find on the ship's archives will cement itself in your mind for years to come.

- The Exorcist (1973) directed by William Friedkin, starring Linda Blair, Ellen Burstyn and Max von Sydow

Dubbed by many to be the scariest movie ever made, and with good reason, this supposedly true tale about a young girl who's possessed by a demon made people physically ill when it was first released in theaters. While I find it more engrossing than gross, it's the emotional emptiness that you feel when you're done watching it that'll leave you eerily numb. *Note: Pick up the re-release, rather than the original, for extra goosebumps.

- Rosemary's Baby (1968) written and directed by Roman Polanski, starring Mia Farrow, John Cassavetes, Ruth Gordon and Charles Grodin

Aside from the fact that it's directed by an accused child molester, this film is chilling in its own right. Playing on the fears of a first-time mother, you know throughout the entire movie that our heroine is about to give birth to the Devil's offspring. The scary part is that you can't tell her. And in its finale, it's what you DON'T see that chills your soul.



- The Evil Dead (1981) written and directed by Sam Raimi, starring Bruce Campbell

Now I know those of you who have seen Evil Dead II: Dead by Dawn (1987) will tell me that it's a better movie, and I wouldn't argue that point with you, but I'm going by scare factor here. Evil Dead II isn't so much a sequel as it is a remake of Evil Dead I with a bigger budget. The director of the original Spider-Man trilogy cut his teeth on this grueling, no holds barred tale of teens in a cabin who unwittingly unleash evil spirits that possess them, some in fairly unique and unsettling ways.

- The Birds (1963) directed by Alfred Hitchcock, starring Tippi Hedren and Rod Taylor

The first thing you'll notice in The Birds is that there is absolutely no musical score, relying solely on natural sound to scare the bejeezus out of you. The second thing you'll notice is just how many birds there are in the real world once you leave your house after watching this movie.

- The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1973) written and directed by Tobe Hooper, starring Marilyn Burns and Gunnar Hansen

Very loosely based on the life of Wisconsin serial killer Ed Gein, this film doesn't allow the camera to cut away when it should, or rather, when you want it to. It almost made me a vegetarian as well.

- Poltergeist (1982) directed by Tobe Hooper, starring Craig T. Nelson, JoBeth Williams, Heather O'Rourke and Zelda Rubinstein

If you think that Steven Spielberg only does big-budget blockbusters, World War II epics and cutesy alien kid fare, you need to see this. Definitely planted the seed for my lifetime fear of clowns.

- Seven (1995) directed by David Fincher, starring Brad Pitt, Morgan Freeman, Gwyneth Paltrow, R. Lee Ermey and Kevin Spacey

Is this a true horror movie? I think so. It horrified me. When you put Fincher (one of my favorite directors) with Freeman (my all-time favorite actor) and start killing people using biblical and religious principals, you get horror gold.

- An American Werewolf in London (1981) written and directed by John Landis, starring David Naughton and Frank Oz

As hilarious as it is scary, Landis gives us some of the most incredible, non-CG special effects ever to be seen on film. And the cinematography is outstanding.

- From Dusk till Dawn (1996) directed by Robert Rodriguez, starring George Clooney, Harvey Keitel, Juliette Lewis, Quentin Tarantino and Salma Hayek

I don't want to say too much about this one, just in case you haven't seen it, but needless to say you'll spend a lot of time wondering what you got yourself into.

- Halloween III: Season of the Witch (1982) written and directed by Tommy Lee Wallace, starring Tom Atkins, Stacey Nelkin and Michael Currie

The only Halloween movie that doesn't have killer Michael Myers in it, this film's ever-present jingle will get stuck in your head and drive you insane. Is it good? Eh. Is it scary? Absolutely.

- Dawn of the Dead (1978) written and directed by George A. Romero, starring David Emge

Roger Ebert called it one of the greatest horror movies of all time. It was released unrated in the U.S. for fear of being slapped with an X rating. What more can I say? While Romero's first film, Night of the Living Dead (1968), was amazing in its own right, Dawn ups the scares ten-fold. By entrapping a group of people in a mall that's full of flesh-eating zombies, he not only slaps you across the face with social commentary, he makes you wonder what YOU would do in that



situation, forcing you to panic. The remake, released in 2004, is also impressive, but check out the original first.

- Psycho (1960) directed by Alfred Hitchcock, starring Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh

Ever feel like somebody is watching you when you're taking a shower? This movie won't help with that. Another example of Hitchcock perfection that never fails to shock, even after multiple viewings. And another film loosely based on real-life serial killer Ed Gein. Skip the 1998 shot-for-shot remake by Gus Van Sant.

- Hostel: Part II (2007) written and directed by Eli Roth, starring Bijou Phillips and Heather Matarazzo

Roth is one of the greatest writers and directors of the genre since Hitchcock himself. He's also one of the most controversial, helping his critics coin the term "gore porn," due to the graphic nature of his films. However, if you're a connoisseur like I am, you'll find the gore serves its purpose: usually as either parody or plot device. There's no denying that his films are disturbing, fun, and over-the-top, and this sequel to his original Hostel (2005) is an overlooked gem.

- Teeth (2007) written and directed by Michael Lichtenstein, starring Jess Weixler

This film might be the most fun you'll ever have at a horror movie while squirming in your seat. You see, Weixler plays a high school girl who discovers that she has a sharp set of teeth in her...intimate area. Need I say more?

- Planet Terror (2007) written and directed by Robert Rodriguez, starring Rose McGowan, Josh Brolin, Bruce Willis and Quentin Tarantino

The first half to Rodriguez and Tarantino's double-feature drive-in homage, Grindhouse, this flick is the better of the two and will make you long for the days when you didn't have to take out a second mortgage on your home for a movie ticket. Rodriguez included jump cuts, missing sex scenes and added film scratches and audio pops to give the movie a more worn down, authentic feel. Try to find a complete cut of the film for some fun trailers of fake coming attraction directed by people such as the aforementioned Eli Roth and musician Rob Zombie, some of which became full-length features.

- Scream (1996) directed by Wes Craven, starring Neve Campbell, David Arquette, Courtney Cox, Matthew Lillard, Rose McGowan, Skeet Ulrich and Drew Barrymore

The film that made it cool to love the slasher film again, because it's smart, sexy AND scary. It almost plays as a parody of the genre, but sucks you in with it's hometown charm and it's sense of dread at what could be lurking in any one of our very own neighborhoods.

I know there's more horror films than this that I could recommend but, to be honest, I don't have the time I used to devote to watching all the movies I want to see. But I hope this gives you a good starting point on your journey into fear.

Happy Halloween...and pleasant dreams.

Dave A. Limbaugh

Special thanks to IMDB and Wikipedia.com for movie info.

