

Howl-oween Series – Part III: What To Watch

by Glen Ryan Tadych

How many scary movies can you watch in a day? Depending on how easy you scare, it may not be the brightest challenge to take. Halloween, however, is the day where it just feels wrong to ignore the horror movie trend.

Everyone, of course, has their taste when it comes to horror films, and this is mine. No matter how bad some of these movies have scared me over the years, I can't deny their superior quality. So as October comes to a close, I conclude this series with a countdown of my Top 10 favorite horror films.



Glen Ryan Tadych

Happy Halloween.

(Note: Some of the following clips contain major spoilers for the films listed below, and some feature explicit content)

10. *The Shining* (1980)

Based on Stephen King's terrifying novel, the Torrance family spends the winter in the mountains while husband and father Jack Torrance works as caretaker for the Overlook Hotel. However, Jack and Wendy's son Danny, a telepath, begins seeing haunting images from the hotel's dark past, making this winter anything but pleasant. Eventually, these wandering spirits and isolation drive Jack insane, causing him to go after his wife and son, following in the footsteps of the Overlook's former

caretaker. Can Wendy and Danny escape? Or will they become part of the hotel's history like the previous family?

I'm not a particular fan of Stanley Kubrick's work, but this is one of his I can watch because his unique style fits horror perfectly. Oddly enough, I was first introduced to this film through the drive-in scene in *Twister* (1996). The excerpt *Twister* showed scared me then, and even now there are scenes I can't look at while watching this film, particularly the twins in the hall and room 237 scenes. Forget both of those if you want to sleep.

9. *The Strangers* (2008)

All James and Kristen wanted was a quiet night to themselves. Instead, they get a night of torment as three masked strangers terrorize their remote vacation home.

Home invasion scares just about everyone. The horrifying thing about this film is its events are disturbingly realistic. Incidents like those in *The Strangers* have occurred many times in decades past and still do today. As far as the film's concerned, I don't know what's scarier: what the strangers do, or the masks they wear.

Piece of advice though, if someone unexpectedly comes knocking around 4 a.m., don't answer the damn door.

8. *The Omen* (1976)

Robert and Katherine Thorn go about their lives unaware their adopted son, Damien, is the Antichrist. When Robert learns Damien's true identity,

he refuses to believe his 5-year-old son could be something so evil, especially considering Damien appears to be an innocent, happy child as he himself is unaware. Can Robert accept the truth and prevent Armageddon? Of course, to do that there's only thing he can do: Kill Damien.

This film is one example of how '70s horror got it right. Next to #4 on this list, *The Omen* is without a doubt the scariest movie I have ever seen. Every element from the story to Jerry Goldsmith's chilling, Latin-chanting score makes *The Omen* a movie you don't watch at night.

7. *Halloween* (1978)

The citizens of Haddonfield, Illinois are horrified when 6-year-old Michael Myers murders his older sister on Halloween night. After escaping from a psychiatric institution 15 years later, Myers returns home where he stalks Laurie Strode and her friends. Dr. Sam Loomis, Myers' psychiatrist, follows him back to Haddonfield, desperately hoping to stop Myers from killing again.

Halloween is one of the most iconic horror films of all time. I don't recall this film ever actually scaring me, as I first saw it at an older age. It's simply a classic seasonal film to me. What I love most about it though is how it's become so iconic in the horror genre today, yet uses little to no gore. This goes to show that gore does not equal quality horror.

6. *The Fly* (1986)

A remake of the 1958 film of the same name, Seth

Brundle's self-teleportation experiment first appears successful, but he soon discovers his invention spliced his DNA with that of a lone housefly that wandered into the telepod. As time progresses, Brundle begins to transform, his humanity disappearing piece by piece. Eventually, he becomes something else entirely.

I first saw this film around the age of 6, and strangely enough, I don't recall it terrifying me at all. I remember it being disgusting and intense, but not scary. It was movies like this which fascinated me with science-fiction as a child. Now, as an adult, I'm able to recognize other aspects of this film and understand just how terrifying *The Fly* is.

5. *Scream* (1996)

In the town of Woodsboro, one year after the brutal murder of wife and mother Maureen Prescott, a masked killer begins calling, terrorizing and murdering various Woodsboro teens. The townspeople become paranoid as no one knows the identity of the killer, and the anniversary of Prescott's death sends the media in a frenzy as her daughter Sidney is one of the killer's targets. The film ends with a startling climax when the killer is revealed to be someone viewers in 1996 never suspected.

Next to *Halloween*, this is one of the best slasher films ever made, and for two reasons. One is the originality of the story, which provided relief after a decade of terrible, repetitive horror and slasher films. The other is the play on horror pop culture and the characters' awareness of classic horror films and their associated trends.

In my opinion, slasher films since *Scream* have

never been of this quality or originality.

4. The Blair Witch Project (1999)

As I said in the previous issue, this film’s opening title card says it all. “In October of 1994, three student filmmakers disappeared in the woods near Burkittsville, Maryland while shooting a documentary. A year later their footage was found.”

Since I discussed this film in greater detail in Part II of this series, I won’t spend too much time on this one.

I hold *Blair Witch* high on this list because it really is a well-made and unique film. The frustration Heather, Josh and Mike improvise at their inability to escape the woods is just so convincing, one can actually believe these people are genuinely scared for their lives, despite it being fiction. No found-footage film has impacted pop culture in the way this film did. A lot of found-footage horror fans may consider the Paranormal Activity franchise scarier than *Blair Witch*. I strongly disagree not only because *Blair Witch* is just a better movie, but it’s the film’s emphasis on the greatest fear of all: the fear of the unknown.

3. Jaws (1975)

Set in the beach resort community of Amity Island, a great white shark puts a damper on summer festivities when a young girl’s remains wash ashore. Fearing for the safety of the island’s citizens, Police Chief Martin Brody fights the town’s mayor to close the beaches, but the mayor’s stubbornness prevails, resulting in several more deaths. Teamed with marine biologist Matt Hooper and shark hunter Quint, the three venture out to sea to take on the predator and put an end to the summer terror, but little do they know this shark will give them more than they bargained for.

Another perfect product of ‘70s horror, *Jaws* set a new standard for cinematic tension while heavily impacting American society. When a film scares generations of people into avoiding the ocean for fear of being eaten, that film becomes the most effective horror film of all time.

I’m not a fan of swimming in natural bodies of water, particularly the ocean, because of the unknowns that come with such a foreign environment, and it’s this fear that *Jaws* illustrates perfectly.

2. Carrie (1976)

Invited to the senior prom by the most popular

boy in school, 17-year-old Carrie White reluctantly accepts under the assurance no one’s out to hurt her. It was the best night of her life until a joke went too far. Drenched in pig’s blood, she hears the discouraging words of her mother in her head as she senses the false laughter of everyone around her. Tired of the anguish, and through her recently discovered telekinesis, her emotions come to life and transform a night of fun into one of horror and death.

This is one of only three films where I have to actually look away at certain moments. Despite these creepy elements, there’s no question in my mind the tragic story of Carrie White is one of my favorites in the horror genre. This is all because of the titular character, and Sissy Spacek’s performance.

My emotional connection to Spacek as Carrie is one of the strongest I’ve ever had with any fictional character. Because I, too, was a skinny, red-headed, socially awkward kid in my pre- and early-teen years, I definitely saw a bit of myself in Spacek’s Carrie, which made the film resonate on a much deeper level than what one usually expects from horror films.

1. The Thing (1982)

A John Carpenter remake of *The Thing* from *Another World* (1951), *The Thing* tells the story of 12 scientists stationed at an American Antarctic research outpost who come into contact with a parasitic, extraterrestrial organism that multiplies by imitating whoever it absorbs. Eventually, paranoia ensues the group as they try to figure out who’s human.

As a science-fiction fan, I shamefully have to admit I didn’t see this film until only October 2013. It made a hell of an impression, as it is #1 on this list. Prior to my seeing this film, *Alien* (1979) would appear somewhere in my top 10, but despite the similarity in the films’ plots, *The Thing* features a far creepier element to its story. Unlike *Alien*, the viewer can’t readily identify *The Thing*. It could be anyone and everyone without the viewer knowing. I have to say I love everything about this film from start to finish. It’s now my favorite horror film, and certainly in my top three science-fiction films. Everything from Ennio Morricone’s suspenseful score to Rob Bottin’s amazing special effects makes this film a thrill to watch this time of year. I’ve probably watched *The Thing* six times in the last month because I frankly can’t get enough of it, and I’ll certainly be watching it again this Halloween.

FRESH FILM PICKS THIS WEEK & NEXT WEEK



Burnt
R 101 min Comedy | Drama
Adam Jones (Bradley Cooper) was once a top chef in Paris until drugs and alcohol led to a meltdown that put his career on hold. After moving from New Orleans to London, Adam gets a shot at redemption when his former maitre d’ (Daniel Brühl) reluctantly hires him as the head chef of his fine-dining restaurant. Demanding perfection from his newly formed staff (Sienna Miller, Omar Sy), the acerbic and temperamental Jones gets a second chance to fulfill his dream of earning a third Michelin star.
Director: John Wells
Stars: Bradley Cooper, Sienna Miller, Daniel Brühl, Riccardo Scamarcio



Spectre
PG-13 148 min Action | Adventure | Thriller
A cryptic message from the past leads James Bond (Daniel Craig) to Mexico City and Rome, where he meets the beautiful widow (Monica Bellucci) of an infamous criminal. After infiltrating a secret meeting, 007 uncovers the existence of the sinister organization SPECTRE. Needing the help of the daughter of an old nemesis, he embarks on a mission to find her. As Bond ventures toward the heart of SPECTRE, he discovers a chilling connection between himself and the enemy (Christoph Waltz) he seeks.
Director: Sam Mendes
Stars: Daniel Craig, Christoph Waltz, Ralph Fiennes, Léa Seydoux

FILMS COMING SOON TO THEATERS

NEW FILMS: OCTOBER 30, 2015

Our Brand Is Crisis
R 107 min Comedy | Drama
An American woman, well-versed in political campaigns, is sent to the war-torn lands of South America to help install a new leader but is threatened to be thwarted by a long-term rival.
Director: David Gordon Green
Stars: Sandra Bullock, Billy Bob Thornton, Anthony Mackie, Joaquim de Almeida

Scouts Guide to the Zombie Apocalypse
R 93 min Comedy | Horror
Three scouts, on the eve of their last camp-out, discover the true meaning of friendship when they attempt to save their town from a zombie outbreak.
Director: Christopher Landon
Stars: Tye Sheridan, Logan Miller, Joey Morgan, Sarah Dumont

Freaks of Nature [Limited]
R Comedy | Horror

In the town of Dillford, humans, vampires and zombies were all living in peace - until the alien apocalypse arrived. Now three teenagers-one human, one vampire, and one zombie-have to team up to figure out how to get rid of the visitors.
Director: Robbie Pickering
Stars: Nicholas Braun, Mackenzie Davis, Josh Fadem, Denis Leary

Love [Limited]
135 min Drama | Romance
Murphy is an American living in Paris who enters a highly sexually and emotionally charged relationship with the unstable Electra. Unaware of the effect it will have on their relationship, they invite their pretty neighbor into their bed.
Director: Gaspar Noé
Stars: Aomi Muyock, Karl Glusman, Klara Kristin, Juan Saavedra

The Wonders [Limited]
110 min Drama
A family of beekeepers living in the Tuscan countryside finds their household disrupted by the simultaneous arrival of a



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