

Sex, blood and gore in store for Halloween

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It all started with Janet Leigh taking a shower. There she was, scrubbing herself down and the next thing you know Norman's stabbing her through the curtain, dressed up in one of his mother's old frocks. Back then it had a bit of class though. Granted, it wasn't a very pleasant thing to do to such a nice young girl, even if she did walk off with that fat Texan's money. But it was scary for the right reasons.

Nowadays it's all blood. Buckets of it. If the grossness doesn't make you want to throw up, then the continual regurgitation of the new stuff might. "Halloween 4," "Friday the 13th Part VII," "A Nightmare On Elm Street 4," "Poltergeist III," and "The Return Of The Living Dead II" (which purists would say is actually the fourth in the series since it follows "Night Of The Living Dead" and "Dawn Of The Dead"). The trouble with the "kitsch-and-ketchup" genre is that after a while it is all, if you'll pardon the expression, bleeding obvious.

I mean, you just know that the intelligent blonde will be the first to go. She'll go down into the deep, dark, dank cellar for that extra bottle of Gallo, trying not to be too concerned about the conversation she had with her absolute best high school friend about the sacred plot of land on which the house was built; fumble for the light switch which doesn't turn on the light on, ignoring the 60-piece orchestra that must be down there somewhere; tell herself that the noise she heard was nothing and anyway she's over halfway down now, too far to turn back; step off the last stair and grope blindly across the deep, dark, dank cellar that is really quite light now though she hasn't noticed; find the wine rack and grab what she thinks is that fine bottle of Gallo, but wait! No! Is it? Could it be? Yes, a clammy disease-ridden hand. Which repulsive, vile, filthy mutant is it? Michael Myers with the kitchen knife, or Jason with an electronic corkscrew? Or is she really asleep and the hand she takes belongs to Freddy Krueger and his digital daggers. Finger flicking good.

And these guys just refuse to

die. They're making far too much money for "The Final Chapter" to really be the final chapter. We can't get enough of them. Even though we know what's coming next; even though the characters are just underdeveloped enough for us not to care if one of them gets a stray syringe through the eye, even though the gore is the real star; we keep going back.

And why not? After all, who can forget the terrifying moment in "Return Of The Living Dead" when the split dog comes to life and attacks the mortuary workers only to be battered senseless by a crutch. Or when the brother's body is torn apart by self-possessed hooks in "Hellraiser." Or, one of the best, the tender mother/daughter bonding scene in "A Nightmare On Elm Street" when Ronee Blakely says, quite assuredly, of Freddy: "He's dead because Mommy killed him."

So, folks, what should we be seeing this Halloween to completely scare our collective butts off? We recommend the following to give you the best fright this weekend:

Rosemary's Baby (1968)

Roman Polanski's classic chiller about the sort of problems you can run into when you're pregnant and you buy an apartment next to a couple of friendly, but fairly serious, devil worshippers. John Cassavetes and Mia Farrow are the unsuspecting newly-weds, while their neighbors are played by Sidney Blackmer and Ruth ("Harold and Maude") Gordon, who is completely brilliant and deservedly won an Oscar for her part. Like all the great horror films, nothing really happens for ages, but it is still totally creepy throughout.

The Exorcist (1973)

Extremely intense and renowned adaptation of William Peter Blatty's landmark novel about a 12-year-old actress' daughter who gets possessed by the devil. Linda Blair has never been able to forget it, even though Mercedes McCambridge says the naughty words to protect Linda's unabashed innocence. Max Von Sydow is the exorcist, who is called in to confront the foul-mouthed demon. William ("The French Connection") Friedkin's meticulous and completely terrifying masterpiece is one of



You know this guy must be a sharp kisser! Maybe that's why we keep going back for more gore, such as in this fine, frightening film, "Hellraiser."

the very best horror flicks and not for those who still cry during "Bambi."

Psycho (1960)

More of a comedy than a horror film really, but there's still something about that shower scene that sends a chill down the hardest of us. In case you don't know, Anthony Perkins plays the young owner of the Bates Motel, who still lets his mother bully him around, even though she hasn't left their house for years. Janet Leigh is the avaricious secretary who steals some money she was asked to deposit in the bank and makes the unfortunate decision of staying over at the suspiciously empty Bates motel for the night. Rumors that Hitchcock plays Norman's mother are completely unfounded.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (1974)

Tobe Hooper's notorious, influential slasher looks like it was made for about 20 bucks. And that's really why it scares the hell out of anyone who dares to see it. The thin story is about a group of friends traveling in Texas who come across a disturbed family

who have fairly primitive ideas about what makes a good meal. Based on an actual occurrence, "Chainsaw" is about the purest, most visceral expression of horror ever committed to celluloid. You do get over it after a few days.

An American Werewolf in London (1981)

Two American friends are hitching their way across the north England moors when one of them is killed by a wolf and the other gets away with just being bitten. It's a false escape since, by the light of the silvery moon, he turns into a werewolf. John Landis, who later used similar talents for Michael Jackson's "Thriller" video, directs this fully-fledged horror movie with a terrifying sense of humor. Perhaps the best scene, in which the young American transforms into the werewolf (an amazing sequence which quite rightly won an Academy Award for makeup effects), is accompanied by a plodding, all-stops-pulled-out version of "Blue Moon." This is an absolute winner.

Curse Of The Demon (1958)

In the same suit that he wears for all his films, Dana Andrews plays a stuffy psychologist who refuses to believe that an ancient

curse is responsible for a series of gruesome deaths. Despite its low budget and shaky dialogue, this shocker is surprisingly enticing and gripping. Well worth checking out if you've seen all the famous horror flicks.

And if you're short of cash or can't get to a video store, the free flicks shown on Halloween at the Union this year are:

The Omen 7 p.m. only.

Though a little dated, this rather sensational chiller about the coming of the anti-Christ still holds up fairly well today. Gregory Peck plays an American ambassador who is forced to adopt a child when his wife (Lee Remick) supposedly loses their child at birth. Terrific special effects, especially the famed decapitation scene, and fine performances by Billie Whitelaw as Damien's self-appointed maid and Patrick Troughton as the fanatical Irish priest.

Ghost Story 9:30 p.m. only.

Absorbing adaptation of Peter Straub's best seller about a 50-year-old secret that returns to wreak murderous revenge on four elderly New Englanders and their offspring. The remarkable cast includes Fred Astaire, Douglas Fairbanks Jr., John Houseman and Melvyn Douglas.

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