

RECYCLED FEAR:
THE CONTEMPORARY HORROR REMAKE
AS AMERICAN CINEMA INDUSTRY STANDARD

A Dissertation

by

JAMES FRANCIS, JR.

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Middle Tennessee State University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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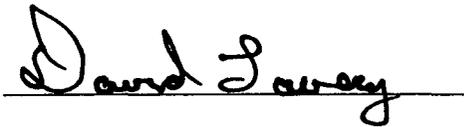
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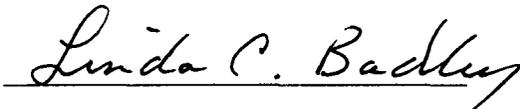
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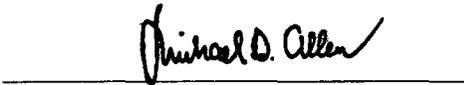
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DEDICATION

Completing this journey would not be possible without the love and support of my family and friends. Thank you all for believing in me.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I met David Lavery at a *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* conference in 2004. It was my first conference, and he asked if I had given any thought to doing my PhD at MTSU. In 2005, I started my doctoral studies at MTSU and within a year, David accepted a position that required him to move to England. I am happy to say that he returned and we joined forces to complete my dissertation. Thank you, David, for not pulling out all your hair while reading my words, and I hope I lived up to your expectations as a doctoral student.

Before David and I teamed up, however, I worked with Martha Hixon in the early stages of my dissertation development. I cannot thank you enough for being a mentor in my children's literature studies, allowing me to vent in your office over the years, and being a friend, as well.

I am also grateful to Drs. Linda Badley, Robert Bray, Jill Hague, Elyce Helford, and Allen Hibbard for their teachings and support of my education at MTSU.

Thank you to my MTSU peer family, especially Becky Bobbitt for sharing the other half of my brain.

This dissertation is a work of study I was destined to write since I started watching horror films as a child. I want to extend the biggest thank you to my mom, dad, and sister in Texas who helped form my love of horror films and, of course, for standing by my side all these years of my academic education.

ABSTRACT

Contemporary American horror has become a genre of remakes, and the originality and creativity of horror films from the 70s, 80s, and early 90s seems lost. The impressive number of horror remakes has developed into a film movement whose influence is filtering into other genres. Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) is one of horror's most revered films, but Gus Van Sant's remake removes some of its historical importance. *Halloween* (1978), *Friday the 13th* (1980), and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984) owe their successes to *Psycho*, but their remakes have diluted the genre's relevance in cinema. Original horror films are important because they often reflect social and cultural atmospheres, but remakes offer little but box-office revenue and star power. Horror films also represent cinematic works of art that are worthy of academic study and historic preservation. Filmmakers must return to making original films before remakes completely invalidate the genre.

The research and material contained in this dissertation will examine contemporary American horror films in the construction of remakes. A critical introduction will take into account the growth and development of the remake industry as a direct result of Van Sant's 1998 *Psycho* recreation. John Carpenter, Sean S. Cunningham, and Wes Craven are responsible for creating three of the most memorable horror films in the genre's history, and those films will be examined in connection to their remake counterparts. This dissertation represents an investigative look into the contemporary horror film as it transforms into a genre of remakes. Included chapters will

highlight cause and effect relationships the “remake machine” has introduced into filmmaking as it relates to director/actor recognition, artistic value, money and marketing, storytelling, and viewer pathos in terms of fear. Through the critical introduction and subsequent chapters, the completed dissertation will argue that the contemporary American horror remake and its continued production demonstrates this movement in film as a genre of its own and a major phase in filmmaking deserved of critical attention.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Unable to sleep, she decides a dip in the hot tub will soothe anxieties about starting the new job tomorrow. She slinks out of bed, boyfriend still sawing logs, and heads downstairs in tank and panties. The summer house is full of windows, but there isn't a neighbor around for miles to peer inside; she loves the moonlight falling in hazy rays and beams over the furniture, off the walls, and onto her skin. The side door opens with ease, and within a few minutes the water simmers about her form. She hears the crack of a branch behind her; it's probably just a raccoon but better safe than sorry. She was only going to stay in the tub for another minute, but before the time is up a forceful hand grabs her by the head and holds her underwater.

She can't breathe, she can't see, she gasps for air, her legs and feet and arms flail like a turtle on its back. Her right hand manages to grip a drinking glass left on the tub's outer rim and she crashes it into the assailant's head. Her body flies from the tub, water exploding in all directions, but when she looks around she sees . . . no one. In a flash she's back into the house, door locked behind her, and up the stairs crying out for the boyfriend; he doesn't respond. When she gets to the bedroom her feet, dry from the carpeted staircase, are suddenly wet again. The bed is soaked around her boyfriend's limp body, his eyes wide open to the ceiling. She muffles a scream; her choked silence is offset by a huge figure bursting in from the second-story bedroom window. And the chase is on—down the stairs, past the carport, into the woods with no discernable path to aid in direction. She breaks through the trees into a clearing by the water and stops. A

quick head turn to glance back at the woods reveals the menacing figure charging at her like a bull gone mad. He crashes into her with the force of a monster truck.

Once the killer tackles her, the fight is a blur—choking, scratching, punching, kicking, face grimacing. She reaches up, digs her thumbs into his eyes, and watches him fall away, but she’s not done yet. In seconds, the drill is in her hands as she straddles his moaning form. “This is for Ethan, you bastard!” she grunts violently, watching the bit crack bone and spiral into his heart. The man ceases movement. She removes her hands from the drill and stares at the blood dripping off her fingertips.

The girl, white tank-top drenched in blacks and reds, hair shellacked, body bruised and nipped by cuts from tree branches, face in anguish, throws her head back and cries out; the scream pierces the blackboard sky, breath escaping her mouth like steam from a hot spring in winter. She rolls from the killer’s limp and mangled body, collapses to the ground, and begins to laugh hysterically. Her laughter is the only thing heard from across the lake. An expansive shot from the other side of the water shows her body rocking back and forth. She is safe . . . until the camera zooms back to the killer’s hand to show a finger twitch. The screen goes black. The credits roll.

But this is nothing new. The audience sees this scenario time and again. This is classic FGS (final girl syndrome: the innocent female protagonist as sole survivor who overcomes the powerful villain). And beyond this simple scene, the narrative becomes formula—redundant, repetitive, regressive . . . remade.

The horror film industry, once a pariah of filmmaking (and still considered not worthy of much respect according to mainstream critics), is now nothing more than a

giant remake of its genre film past. There have been minor adjustments such as turning a final girl into a final boy, battling the happy ending by allowing the bad guy to win, showcasing African-American characters who do escape slaughter, and even adding heady psychological and philosophical speculation in storylines. But the overall presentation of contemporary American horror films is one of regurgitation. Classic film creations and modern-day B-movie exploits alike are being remade and cranked out so quickly that it has become a challenge to discover an original story. Although it is certain almost every film (no genre barrier) borrows from another (from camera angles to lighting to settings and a bit of storytelling), current American horror film production is simply snatching movies, domestic and foreign films from the 1930s to the 2000s, and remaking the titles.

Horror scholar Linda Badley partly attributes the current wave of American remakes to Japanese and Korean horror film successes near the turn of the 21st century:

As the American horror industry devolved into sequels and remakes, a number of innovative foreign horror films achieved international success, and this (together with 1970s nostalgia) helped fuel the current American horror film remake cycle. Specifically, this took off with the remake of *The Ring* (2002) and other Asian horror titles in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Other remakes such as *The Haunting* (1999) were made earlier, of course, but had only a so-so level of impact, and the *Godzilla* (1998) remake, while it made a lot of money, was more of a silly summer movie.

Although horror films of the 80s satiated the genre with sequels and prequels, those enterprises were still valid as new movies extended from an origin story; they gave filmmakers a chance to explore the villains in depth, develop the mystery, intrigue, and fear from the first films, and experiment with the genre's artistic capabilities. Sequels and prequels definitely helped solidify horror formula stereotypes, but they offered more than updated retreads of feature films previously released.

The remake movement establishes careers for new directors and actors, makes money franchises out of castaway celluloid, and waters down the element of fear in a field whose base subject is that primal emotion, but it does nothing to further the genre. The art of horror is drawing its last breath. Upon exhale, the film industry will either continue to release remakes and hammer the last nail into the genre's coffin, or rare, novel productions (more than the two or three obscure gems at film festivals) will start to proliferate in the field and resuscitate its decaying body.

Contemporary horror offers little value to audiences. They are making a ton of money. Each new release is a cash cow for the film industry, at least for the production houses that are assembly-line shoveling them out. Too many current audiences do not seem to possess the film knowledge to realize these movies are remakes, which enables studios to trick viewers into thinking they are seeing something new; the trailers certainly do not advertise the films as remakes, nor do the opening credits or title sequences indicate such (audiences never see a title like *Hellraiser: A Remake* because remade films represent odd, open secrets that are never directly named as remakes by the new filmmaking teams). These are the audience members who flock to see the new film

Friday the 13th or *When A Stranger Calls* or *The Hills Have Eyes*. They have no idea that each of these films date back to the 1970s. The companies manufacture remakes at a mere \$10 million a film on average, and the box-office return of ticket sales typically doubles, triples, or quadruples that, thereby allowing the film to be considered a success and guaranteeing a sequel, prequel, trilogy, and merchandise to market. In this respect the fault does not completely lie with the studios making the films; audiences partner in this phenomenon by giving away their money to keep the cycle spinning its products.

New horror movie remakes are also giving unknown names career starters. No one really knew who Marcus Nispel was, outside of his music video creations, until he made *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* remake in 2003. The same can be said about Alexandre Aja, creator of *The Hills Have Eyes* retread in 2006. Aja had previously directed the French film *Haute Tension*; thus, his name was not established in the United States. (With the way the remake craze is heading, a redo of *Tension* by Aja as an American film would not be out of the question.) Rob Zombie is able to take a seat next to Nispel and Aja, as well. He made his directorial debut in 2003 with the innovative (but pastiche) *House of 1000 Corpses*. The follow-up, *Devil's Rejects* (2005), proved a welcome addition to horror, and then his descent began. In 2007 Zombie played his hand with a remake of the John Carpenter classic *Halloween*. He was later quoted saying he would not do a sequel; however, *Halloween II* found its way to screens in 2009 (Nix). Now in talks to do a remake of the 1958 classic sci-fi horror film *The Blob*, Zombie may not have started with remakes but is clearly on the path. Samuel Bayer, another music

video aficionado, helms the 2010 *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. The list goes on and on for such directors.

The actors in the films, too many to name, also have common ties. Almost all of the supposedly fresh faces meeting the monster's machete, chainsaw, or finger-knives are not truly new. The men and women of remake stardom, portraying boys and girls typically of high school age, are an ensemble cast from *Gossip Girl's Supernatural Trip to 7th Heaven*. If that faux television series does not explain it all, the title alludes to the many faces from the former WB and UPN networks (now the CW) who continue to appear in these "new" movies. Teenage boys and girls dedicate time to watch contemporary installments of *90210*, *Melrose Place*, and scripted-reality productions such as *Laguna Beach* or *The Hills*. They know the actors on these shows inside and out from watching the episodes, reading interviews with the cast, following their tweets, and stalking their celebrity profiles on MySpace and Facebook. But the actors want to be bigger household names, and a great way to fulfill such an enterprise is to take lead roles in horror remakes where the same CW audiences are sure to be found. Remakes are giving star power to both new directors and rising actors while film content is neglected.

Audiences are excited to see Paris Hilton, Jared Padalecki, and Michelle Trachtenberg in horror remakes, but fear, not excitement, is horror's key emotion. Yet another result of the remake machine is the dissolution of the element of fear within the movies. Fear inspires instinctual fight or flight; it activates anxiety and adrenaline and provides a space for childhood terrors to be relived. When viewers are cowering in their

theatre seats, biting nails, shielding the eyes behind hand palms, and feeling the unmistakable prick of hairs rising on the back of the neck, fear has found a home.

Contemporary American horror, however, conjures fear among its audiences mostly via loud noises, red herrings (the cat jumps from out of a dark corner), and visceral attacks on the human bodies of characters. It is not moody and atmospheric like Japanese/Korean horror, quirky like Australian horror, or even maniacal and disturbed like French horror. American horror has seemingly always borrowed from the stories and technical presentation of international filmmakers, and now it is plagiarizing itself, as well. The remake industry continues to grow and as it does, by recreating international cinema and movies here “at home,” the intensity of fear weakens. Fear diminishes as viewers watch horror movies more than once, and the same can typically be said for multiple viewings of comedies, thrillers, and so forth: emotions are not as strong upon first contact. The horror remake attempts to present fear anew, but the story has already been told. Audiences may not have seen the original or know the story, but the fear created and delivered in the first production cannot be reproduced. Whether the issue is fertility drugs and their after-effects (*It's Alive*, 1974), the HIV/AIDS epidemic (*Aliens*, 1986), or the dangers of consumerism (*Night of the Living Dead*, 1968), the statements in fear that original productions make are not as applicable in a remake. Fertility drugs, HIV/AIDS, and consumerism exist in contemporary society, but remakes lessen the importance of these issues and the fear they generate by not taking into account current cultural and social concerns, and by only making surface-level connections. Laughter seems to be the remakes' prime emotion; audiences laugh at bad production value,

clichéd acting, overdone special effects, and storylines that have no significance to fears relevant to the current social climate. The horror remake is not conducive to the genre's environmental health, stability, or future growth.

What horror remakes are not doing is making a contribution to the genre in terms of artistic expression, story value, or critical thinking. Director/actor stardom and the financial aspects are both interesting topics to examine but neither offers much insight into the films being created. Fear, in comparison, takes top priority in horror but remakes do nothing to highlight its value. As for art direction, horror remakes are becoming more like action films. When people hear the name Michael Bay, they are frightened by what he has made because his style alters the genre's effectiveness; however, horror films should offer scares, not members of production teams. In the past six years, he has produced *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003), *The Amityville Horror* (2005), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (2006), *The Hitcher* (2007), *Friday the 13th* (2009), *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (2010), and is in talks to make *Friday the 13th: Part 2* in 2011. Each film plays out like his *Bad Boys* movies (1995, 2003): a kaleidoscope of colors flashes across the screen when characters are in pursuit, sparks fly from weaponry as the killer stalks his prey, low-level camera angles achieve the "hero shot" of a character muddied and drenched in sweat with a blue sky backdrop, and the audience is presented with expansive establishing shots and tight-knit close-ups to show that no matter how far someone runs or how deep they hide, there is no escape. The formula for horror films becomes more embedded and trite with every remake. What is interesting

about someone like Bay is that he is not directing the films; producers are stamping their personal styles on films while the new directors seem to just be along for the ride.

Screenplays, like production style, do not offer much original content. Although it has been said that any good story is worth telling again, such is not the case with remakes. When these tales are retold, they are presented exactly as before, or they are altered to create a new vision. The new versions, however, typically do more than alter a storyline; they misrepresent and obliterate the original film's message. Fans of the original *Friday the 13th* series were shocked to find Nispel's production as a mashup of the first three films; message boards were filled with threads discussing the topic. Mrs. Voorhees is the killer in the first film, but her storyline is decapitated into a five-minute opening sequence. Jason becomes the killer in the sequel, walking and stalking victims wearing a potato sack over his head, but the team behind the remake wanted him running through the woods wearing his famous hockey mask that wasn't acquired until the third film in the original series. The masked killer also takes a hostage in the remake and dies at the hands of a brother-sister team instead of a final girl. These changes chop the story and characters into pieces that do not represent the original film's directive. It would be easier to make a completely different movie, but studios see dollar signs, not genre progression. This is only one example; to catalogue all the changes that have and are occurring in horror remakes would exhaust even the most avid fan of the genre. These same fans who enjoy a good story also like to exit the theatre with lingering thoughts of the film they just viewed. Remakes, however, have little staying power.

Horror films are designed to inject fear into viewers, but they are able to inspire thought-provoking discussions, as well. Remakes lose this combined cinematic effect. The substantive research on or about horror films and elements of horror conducted by vital contemporary and formative critics like Julia Kristeva, Carol Clover, Sigmund Freud, Barbara Creed, and others seems almost too valuable to apply to this current trend in the genre. Mainstays in the field, such figures offer rich evaluations of horror that guide discussions on abjection, final girls, the uncanny, feminist theory, and other revelations. All of these elements are relevant to remakes in some shape or form: *Zombie's Halloween* is worthy of critical analysis in horror, but the 1978 Carpenter version initiated the slasher subgenre and gave rise to a substantial body of critical theory first; the remake came along with no new cultural or social messages of fear to contribute. Contemporary horror remakes have yet to demonstrate any significance other than financial gain to studio houses and celebrity status acquired by directors, actors, and producers. Each of the original films have already been received by audiences, celebrated or demonized by reviewers, and dissected by critics. It would seem feasible that a remake theory could be constructed here, but the films present little other than superficial creations, seemingly blocking any theoretical considerations. In the words of teenage audiences frequenting these movies, remakes fail.

Fans of horror bemoan remakes, although they watch them diligently to see what changes have been made. They evaluate the cast, directing, production style, kill methods, and story alterations from original productions. These viewers consider remakes to be inferior compared to earlier films but the continuing support (going to the theatre,

renting/purchasing DVDs, streaming movies online, etc.) demonstrates the movement is capable of being an effective phase in horror and worthy of study. Message boards from *IMDB* (*Internet Movie Database*), *Esplatter*, *Fangoria*, *Dread Central*, and a host of other horror networks light up with comments, discussions, and arguments every time a remake is announced, leaked, or rumored. Remakes do not have to be liked to create discussion. Although horror remakes are labeled hollow shells in comparison to original productions, they cannot be completely dismissed as unimportant to academic research. In order to evaluate their place in horror it is vital to take a look at the films that precede their productions. One film in particular is the focal point of horror's popularity and its spiral into the remake movement.

The dissertation will discuss Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) as the watershed moment in remake history; a time when the gates were officially opened allowing any film—classic or contemporary—to face the remake machine and become a copy of lesser value. *Psycho*, as “a film that both resonated with and violated American cultural norms,” is at the center of discussion because its remake constitutes the beginning of the end for originality in horror (Phillips 61). “The film has been the subject of numerous books, hundreds of essays, and indeed, the critical and academic attention to Hitchcock and *Psycho* played an integral part in the development of film studies” (Phillips 61). This type of reverence for a horror film is now extremely rare; studios are hardly ever up in arms about the subject matter of a film and the impact it may have upon its viewers. The chapter will focus on the film's altered storytelling (choppy plagiarism of the original film and a misrepresentation of contemporary sociocultural

fears), cinematography/art (the loss of critical filmmaking technique), acting, and fear (reduced pathos). Consideration of the remakes of the three classic slasher franchises Hitchcock's film gave birth to—*Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street*—will follow: discussion of origin stories, fear, star power, and the poignant effects the films have had on the horror genre in comparison to their remakes. These three film franchises are the heart of horror, especially in its heyday of the 1980s. A critical analysis of each and the role it plays in the remake arena showcases the current state and future trends of contemporary American horror in the genre's decline. Research will also show what effects the remake has had upon horror genre directors, actors, and producers (style and star power), and money & marketing (cheap production value, MPAA ratings strategies, and theatrical/DVD releases). Discussion of these films is followed by personal interviews with industry professionals offering candid reflections on the current state of American horror cinema and the role remakes play in the genre.

Chapter Seven offers information about a dim light at the end of the tunnel of horror cinema that exists outside American borders; these films are critical to any discussion of the current state of the horror genre. Although there are a quite a few international horror films making waves, French cinema is currently at the height of respectable, or at least original, horror; a few notable films are considered to demonstrate the higher levels of cinema that horror is still able to achieve in its current struggles to remain viable in the movie industry.

The dissertation closes with a number of end remarks about the genre and its remake trend; it details a personal evaluation of the genre's future and demonstrates how

rapidly the films are being produced. An exhaustive compilation of original horror films and their remake counterparts (in terms of ratings and box office revenue) is provided in an appendix. Although a great number of film critics, reviewers, and fans bemoan *and* celebrate remake endeavors, no one has given this genre movement critical, academic attention. “Recycled Fear: The Contemporary Horror Remake as American Cinema Industry Standard” is a dedicated effort to begin formal discussion.

CHAPTER II: THE VALUE OF HORROR

No one has written an academic treatise on the topic of horror remakes; there are no theoretical perspectives to reference. It is, however, important to understand why horror movies are relevant and what values they exhibit. Badley writes about horror's connection to the body in *Film, Horror, and the Body Fantastic*: "Horror is . . . the most physiological of genres—with the possible exception of pornography" (11). The genre articulates fear because it represents real-time terrors of the mind and body. Horror films may change directors, actors, producers, screenplays, cinematography, music, and locations, but they unify audiences in collective social fears.

Dramas and thrillers have scary moments, but horror films are different. Prince details why the horror genre is unique:

Like other genre movies, any given horror film will convey synchronic associations, ideological and social messages that are part of a certain period or historical moment. One can analyze horror films in terms of these periods or moments, just as one can do with Westerns or gangster movies. But, unlike those genres, horror also goes deeper, to explore more fundamental questions about the nature of human existence, questions that, in some profound ways, go beyond culture and society as these are organized in any given period or form. Here lies the special significance of horror, the factors that truly differentiate it from the other genres and that make it conform most deeply with our contemporary sense of the world.

(2)

Horror films highlight human fears, but remakes lessen the value of fear. Viewers may jump at a loud noise or turn their heads waiting for a loud noise to announce action on the screen, but there is no meaningful fear in a horror remake. The films offer no social or cultural commentary for viewers to experience and take home with them.

The original *Psycho*, however, was a film that gave audiences authentic fears to think about beyond the frame of the movie. Caroline Picart and David Frank, co-authors of *Horror and the Holocaust: Genre Elements in Schindler's List and Psycho*, remind viewers: "It is important to note that like *Schindler's List* (1993), Hitchcock's *Psycho* was based on fact: the real-life murder-mutilations committed by a Wisconsin man, Ed Gein, filtered through the novelistic lens of Robert Bloch" (208). Fifty years later, horror films are still utilizing the Gein story which proves the staying power of social and cultural fears, and simultaneously the lack of originality in remakes.

When Prince says horror goes beyond sociocultural boundaries, he wants readers to understand the manner in which horror frightens people more than reality. People are not afraid of Ed Gein in real life because he is a dark moment in history no one thinks about; however, they are frightened by films showcasing his brutal life exploits. Gein cannot touch a viewer in a theatre, but the fear generated by the production of a film based on his existence stays in the mind forever. Horror's unique ability allows fear to transcend the screen into the lives of its audience members.

Jonathan Crane's *Terror and Everyday Life: Singular Moments in the History of the Horror Film* explains this distinction further. Crane says, "Watching a horror film is a reality check; it is the entertainment equivalent of checking CNN's *Headline News* for

the latest tragedy or scanning monotonously bleak headlines over black coffee and an apple danish” (8). A slasher film depicting five deaths cannot measure up to the suffering experienced by people in natural disasters, wartime offenses, infection, or disease, but the everyday tragedies people experience are reflected in the perils faced in horror cinema. Critics and viewers become beside themselves at the thought that a new *Saw* movie is being released, but no one seems to care when news reports inform the public that hundreds of villagers were slaughtered by a warring tribe or that thousands were killed in a landslide. A movie screen often has a more profound effect on the psyche than real tragedy. The horror genre exploits fear unlike any emotion that other genres try to obtain from viewers.

Horror’s human factor should place the field in high regard across the spectrum of academic criticism and genre studies, but too often horror criticism becomes generalized and statements made are accepted at face value because people would rather discuss more high-brow academic films like Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* (1927) or the comedic genius of Chaplin. The ostracism of horror dismisses a field rife with bodies of work worthy of discussion.

Crane demonstrates that horror is susceptible to antiquated critical analysis when he discusses the roles of killer and victim. He stereotypes the roles by saying, “either you identify with the slasher—you’d like to have a razor-sharp, foot-long machete in hand as well—or you identify with the worthless victim whose spectacular dismemberment becomes the death you too merit” (3). This statement held more value in the 1980s and early 1990s when horror films followed binary formulas; viewers had to identify with the

killer or victim in order to consummate the film-audience relationship. Crane's text was written in 1994, a time of reflection for horror critics because the genre was in limbo while the independent film found its niche in entertainment. Since that period of stasis, international horror films from France, Australia, Japan, and Korea have contributed to eroding the binary construction of killer and victim, but the remake has done nothing to help the genre progress. Crane also states that "older forms of horrific imagery and storytelling have vanished. . . . In their place, we have films that reject the stories and stylistic devices of older horror tales in preference for inordinately simple narratives that seem to exist solely to showcase the latest leap forward in stomach-churning special effects" (2). Arguments such as this one demonstrate how dated horror research can become when the genre shifts into a new phase. Only in the nineties could Crane say, "Unquestionably, contemporary horror films are infinitely more violent than their predecessors in the genre" (4). The films of the 1970s and 1980s have more violence in their opening scenes than many 21st century films contain by the time end credits roll. Horror, as a genre and visual cinematic presentation, has transgressed many of its older contributions to the field; however, it seems to be the remake's goal to bring horror back to a simpler, more aggressive time of visual presentation but without the same visceral depictions of far too many PG-13 horror films recently produced or currently in development. This ratings game—releasing horror films in PG-13 format in theatres and later as R-rated or unrated on DVD—tried to reap financial gain by opening the movies up to a broader audience by lowering age restrictions.

Box-office revenue, not the biggest concern during classic horror, is now the driving force behind remakes, and it is necessary to look at who is buying tickets to these movies. Horror audiences are a mixed crowd. Most of the films have age restrictions that do not allow children under the age of thirteen into theatres to view them; some horror films restrict the appropriate viewing age to seventeen or older; and, in general, horror films typically do not appeal to the masses. Most critics argue that horror films attract a teenage/young-adult audience. James Twitchell, author of *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror*, contends that young viewers make it to the theatres out of a desire to become more knowledgeable: “Assuming an adolescent audience is the largest for horror art, how does this help us to understand the psychology of horror? Simply this: while we may not be able to locate what exactly it is within the horror myth that attracts its different audiences, we do know what is within this specific audience that keeps it interested. It needs information” (68). This is a reasonable point for original horror films, but it does not apply to remakes that offer no new information.

Young and old audience members remain interested in horror because of animal instinct. People have a fight or flight response within, and this response to stimuli makes the blood boil, adrenaline rush, and also prompts a call to action. When viewing a horror film, audience members fight with the protagonist or the killer and stick with the film to see how it all ends. Sometimes, they shut their eyes, plug their ears, and threaten to (or actually do) walk out of the theatre. Horror holds interest because no other genre provides such a kinetic viewing experience. Comedy makes people laugh, drama makes people cry, and action pumps people up, but horror takes all of these qualities, rolls them into an

unstable ball, and shoves it into its viewers' faces so they turn away or beg for more.

People have a favorite film of all time or a certain genre they stick with because that is a safe viewing condition. No one continually learns more "information" from watching the same kind of film all the time, not even a horror film. People are held captive by horror films that disturb complacency: their bodies and minds are stimulated, they talk to the screen to ridicule character dialogue, and they leave the theatre in a different mood than before seeing the movie.

When adolescent viewers from these audiences grow into adults, many of them remain avid viewers of the genre's films, but Twitchell disagrees:

Like the fairy tale, the horror saga is remarkably rigid in prescribing behavior for its archetypes, but, unlike the fairy tale, the audience pays attention to them for only a few years and then seems to forget all about them. Once we stop listening to fairy tales we have to start telling them to our children and grandchildren, but when was the last time you thought about the vampire, Frankenstein monster, or werewolf? Are you still interested in stories about them? Do you want to read about them or tell your children about them? I would guess not. Like me you may be interested in learning about them, but not *in* them. (66)

Twitchell over generalizes; there are many viewers still interested in these archetypes; one only has to witness how many vampire and werewolf films/television series are currently in production (*True Blood* [2008], *The Vampire Diaries* [2009], *The Wolfman* [2010], and the *Underworld* and *Twilight* films). Twitchell's reasoning and

opinionated stance shows a bias against the horror genre. Many adults are just as interested in horror as their kids, but too many seem to think that when the content of the movies features teens and young adults that only like-audiences will want to see the productions. Unlike Twitchell's assertion, fairy tales and horror films (slasher films in particular) are linked in storytelling and they both capture audience interest throughout development from child to adult. The stories children read become life lessons to follow when they become adults or tales to transmit to their own children. Fairy tales and horror films have cyclical natures that allow their stories—villains, heroes, terrors, dreams—to link together through shared themes, motifs, and types, and the connection cannot be broken as demonstrated by French and German oral tales that have mutated over centuries into written stories, theatrical performances, and film presentations. To answer Twitchell's questions: People think about Frankenstein's monster, vampires, and werewolves all the time; read stories about them, and watch depictions of them in movies. Audience interest has not waned over time and the interested parties are both young and adult.

Mature audiences matter, but are considered irrelevant because they do not represent a room full of fearful children; however, some adults may be more frightened than children during a horror film because they know more of the world's evils than the "innocent" minds of the young. It is entirely too easy to forget that adults who watch horror films may not have been exposed to the genre when they were younger; they may have spent their entire lives watching romantic comedies, sports documentaries, or no

feature films at all. These adults come to view horror films as novices and are able to experience fear with a similar level of shock as child viewers.

Critics continue to argue that children and young adults are more connected to horror films because they represent bodies going through scary changes; however, body development does not occur only in youth. Adults have similar fears because they are approaching closer to stages of decay, rot, loss of mental faculties, aging, and death. Childhood is not completely innocent and adulthood is not wholly learned or corrupted. Each viewer comes to a horror film with the chance to experience it (fear) and reflect upon it differently.

Twitchell says, “Essentially, horror has little to do with fright; it has more to do with laying down the rules of socialization and extrapolating a hidden code of sexual behavior. Once we learn these rules, as we do in adolescence, horror dissipates” (66). It is easy to talk about socialization and sex in relation to adolescents because the word “adolescent” represents growth, development, and societal assimilation. In post-pubescent stages of life, however, people do not stop growing, learning, acclimating to different environments, experiencing sexual encounter, and/or discovering new things about the body. In a dark theatre, everyone is afraid of something, even if a laugh is sometimes heard with the screams.

Horror brings different audiences to the theatre, and their reactions often blend terror and amusement. This leads into an interesting discussion about the genre. According to Crane,

Contemporary horror films have broken . . . dramatically with their predecessors. . . . in the altered connections today's films, as contrasted with earlier films, make between violence and humor. Earlier films made obvious which moments on screen were to be laughed at and which were to be frightening. Today's films do not draw clear distinctions between moments of levity and horror. (37)

But it is not most important to recognize the demarcation between comedy and fear that separates earlier films from contemporary ones. The distinction is the result of viewer response. When a contemporary or classic horror film points to the audience to say, "Look, this is scary!" the element of laughter or fright depends on the response of the individual. Many people who find *Shaun of the Dead* (2004) to be unfunny may consider scenes in *The Exorcist* (1973) to be humorous. It is all a matter of viewer sensibility—different for each audience member—to what seems real or fictionalized and how each of those presentations can stimulate or nullify a response. Verisimilitude tells a reader that it is less important that an event really happened, than that it is told in a believable manner, and the same is true of all film. Audiences will typically be frightened by what is believable and laugh at what they consider ridiculous. Filmmakers often rely more on audience response to declare a movie successful than they care about delivering a message within the film. As long as the response is a positive experience (comedic or terrifying), a horror film resonates with audiences. Laughter and fear are both emotions of discomfort. In the theatre, people laugh at themselves, mortality, and fictionalized portrayals of life terrors. Because of the cyclical nature of emotions, horror sometimes

pushes people to a point that goes beyond fear and returns to humor. Simultaneously, people fear the terror depicted onscreen and laugh away any implications it has upon their own lives.

Fear is horror's most precious gem, and its value represents the genre's biggest export/commodity. It is sold in advertisements, trailers, books, television shows, haunted houses, and of course film. It is the foundation and formative element that all horror films are based upon, but it is also the one thing slowly eroding from the genre because of the remake craze. Besides the relevancy of fear, horror films have pedagogical and artistic values that are often overlooked. Remakes damage these aspects of the genre, as well.

Horror teaches audience members special codes, narrative formulas, and film techniques that are specific to the field, and these elements are relevant to understanding other areas of cinema. People often go to movies for escapist entertainment, but horror films teach as well. Crane suggests that horror fans, separate from other movie crowds, see the films (especially repeated viewings or sequels) out of empty pleasure. He says, "Sequels are made not only because the audience for a horror film is preconstituted, the product presold; they are also made because that which returns again and again provides the audience with the greatest pleasure" (10). Crane mentions sequels, but his position can be extended to include the remake. A preconstituted audience, however, should not always be assumed. It is often argued that only horror fans see horror films, but at some point in life these viewers were virgins to the genre. People are exposed to their first horror film in different ways: they brave the cinema alone, tag along to a showing with someone else, or partake in a horror screening because another movie was sold-out.

When a person views a horror film, s/he comes to understand formula: the idea of a final girl, the cat that jumps out before the killer, or the scene where the killer is assumed dead but comes back for one last scare. Crane says, “What the audience knows, like that which the protagonist eventually acquires, has no value,” but he ignores audience intelligence (10). The horror genre provides viewers with film knowledge of the highest standard. What audience members know is one of the significant reasons they watch horror films; they know what is to come, and that provides viewing power and possible instruction to those less learned. Horror audiences may not be film scholars on paper, but they have a strong understanding of theme, plot, character analysis, terminology, shooting techniques (camera angles and processes), special effects, star power (casting), and more. One of horror’s most obvious attributes—audience knowledge—should not be labeled as worthless.

Crane does understand that horror functions as a teacher, but he links the instruction to human socialization and not to art. He writes, “For those older members of the audience who still enjoy horror films, and who also have some understanding of what it means to be sexually active, horror films work as a refresher course in the instinctual: ‘Yes, that is what we are all about, isn’t it?’ Returning to the horrible allows us to keep sight of the fundamental desires that rule the species” (28). Crane makes his statement as if there is something wrong with adults enjoying horror films (again, segregating audience members) or that the sensation of watching them ceases as viewers grow older. He assumes that human instincts dull and need to be sharpened by watching horror films. It seems unclear whether he is discussing the different stages of aging or horror films and

their influences/connections to viewership. Horror films have artistic merit, but Crane privileges instruction:

Horror is our vision/version of a primitive's dream. Never bemoan seeing the same thing on the screen time and time again, as what is important here is not artistic innovation but the revelation of our fundamental condition. Through the dark glass of the horror film we can learn who we are. Look elsewhere for cinematic innovation. A trip to the cinema is a valuable retreat to Plato's cave, and there many critics have enshrined the horror film. (28)

This is a somewhat generalized position to take, because he seemingly reduces horror films to just stimulus and response with no need for artistry. In truth, horror has long held a close connection to theatre arts with its display of makeup effects, setting, and attention to sound detail.

“In the 1980s,” Badley writes, “horror did not ‘degenerate’ into special effects; it returned to its wellsprings in the theatrical” (9). She connects horror films to productions in the *Le Théâtre du Grand Guignol* in Paris, which closed its doors in 1962, only two years after *Psycho* was released. Prince discusses horror's early international art appeal, as well:

[Casper] Tybjerg examines horror output in Germany, Denmark, Sweden, and Russia [during the classical Hollywood period between 1910 and 1960] and shows how prolific it was. He also shows that, in many national cinemas, an aesthetics of “the fantastic film” was equated with the unique

potential of cinema to be an art form. Horror and film art were relatively synonymous. This fact makes for a striking contrast to the present period, in which horror is a rather debased and disreputable genre, on in which no filmmakers of renown regularly work. (5)

Prince's words support Badley's remarks about horror's tie to art, minus his final statement about the current state of cinema which has changed in the six years since his book was published. Many people still consider the genre as "debased and disreputable" but remakes are attracting new and established filmmakers to cash in on the movement's popularity. In either case, horror (even contemporary American horror) has artistic value, and its predecessors in theatre and early films exhibit this notion.

Admittedly, a majority of horror movies follows formulas, but some of the films represent experimental art films, such as David Lynch's *Eraserhead* (1976), Dario Argento's *Suspria* (1977), and Ken Russell's *Altered States* (1980). Formula has just as much, if not more, appeal in action films, romantic comedies, and dramas than it does in the horror genre. The field is lauded (and despised) for its creation of villains like Jason, Freddy, Michael Myers, and Pinhead, but it has also given cinema the obscure: *Martin* (1977), *The Beast Within* (1982), *Rawhead Rex* (1986), and *Castle Freak* (1995). Crane demeans the genre when he says artistry does not matter, and that the films should *not* be chastised for their repetitive nature. Horror is a field full of artistic endeavor; however, it will forever be cast aside as an irrelevant cinematic enterprise, but this view of the genre could change if more scholars, academics, and critics took the time to investigate its many reaches into cultural relevancies.

One criticism recently published about remakes comes from Kendall Phillips in *Projected Fears: Horror Films and American Culture*, but the opinions offered are only a paragraph or two in length. What is written, however, leads, as do these pages, directly into the discussion of *Psycho*. Phillips lists a few popular titles such as *House on Haunted Hill* (1999), *The Haunting* (1999), and *Thir13en Ghosts* (2001) before making his argument:

Horror is, once again, a moribund and all too predictable genre. Perhaps adding to this sense, or coming from it, has been the latest trend in horror films, the remake . . . While these films were at the most adequate, their relatively low budgets made them profitable, and a bandwagon effect was created . . . *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* limped into theaters with much hype and nothing of the style or shock value of Hooper's original. A remake of Romero's *Dawn of the Dead* . . . gave up any sense of the political commentary in Romero's 1978 classic. (195)

Phillips is on target when he says remakes are made for little money in order to turn big profits, but he wrongfully identifies *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Dawn of the Dead* remakes as retreads that lack cultural value, style, or fear that the original films first created (see "Conclusion"). Although not original and made for financial profit, these are probably the only remakes to date that have fulfilled promises to improve a previous endeavor or celebrate the memory of the original. This investigation is not about bashing remakes; it is a formal inquiry, critique, and discovery of the happenings in this current

trend of contemporary American horror cinema. The trend first became a movement when *Psycho* was remade.

CHAPTER III: *PSYCHO*:

THE LAST BASTION OF FEAR AND STORYTELLING IN AMERICAN CINEMA

In 1960 Alfred Hitchcock unveiled a stark work of filmmaking to the horror genre with *Psycho*. The film featured Janet Leigh and Anthony Perkins in roles they are remembered for posthumously today. As with most Hitchcock productions, the film is a combination of technical skill and artistic endeavor. Hitchcock created a film that surprises viewers by killing one of its main characters (Leigh as Marion Crane) during the first act. Her death is also visually startling as the montage tricks the viewer to see nudity that is not there. The film was labeled a mistake and a misstep in Hitchcock's career when it was first released, but it now stands as one of the most popular creations in American cinema. People were afraid to go into the water when *Jaws* was released in 1975; *Psycho* prompted the same fear in the shower.

The film was a sociocultural awakening, surprising audiences and critics. There was implied nudity, it was the first time a toilet had been shown onscreen, and the separation of public and private spheres were broken (Block). Phillips says

If Hitchcock set out to shock his audience, he clearly succeeded, though not to everyone's approval. Numerous contemporary critics blasted *Psycho*. *Time* magazine called it "a spectacle of stomach-churning horror," *Esquire* called it "a reflection of a most unpleasant mind, a mean, sly sadistic little mind," and the *New York Times* dubbed the film, "a blot on an honorable career." The film reviewer for *The Nation* was "offended and disgusted." The film was censored in a number of countries, and calls to

boycott the film echoed from various religious leaders and psychiatrists.

(62)

Obviously *Psycho* was not an instant success with everyone, but the labels it garnered as being twisted or upsetting deserve unpacking. At the time of the film's release, the American public had already been exposed to monsters and oddities in horror and sci-fi, which are two genres typically linked by stories that exploit fear. There had been alien visitation in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951), radiation exposure in *Them!* (1954), and catastrophic destruction in Godzilla movies. The viewing public had already been touched by an alien, controlled and devoured by mutated ants, and squished by the feet of a giant reptile. There are definite elements of fear present in these films, but the human factor is missing.

Psycho presents the viewer with "normal" people; there is no chemical spill, radiation leak, or spaceship involved to explain the death of Crane or the actions of her killer (Norman Bates). Uncovering this dark side to human nature and showcasing it on film gave the American public something to really be afraid of offscreen: themselves. Many horror films display scary images that make audiences jump in fright or squirm uneasily in their seats, but few are able to have viewers leave the darkened theatre and take the fear home. *Psycho*'s aptly-named title puts fear into the minds of audiences; it disturbed contemporary viewers and critics not ready to see the type of monsters humans can become. And with the film's ties to real-life killer Ed Gein, the depictions were simply all-too real for some viewers at the time of its release.

Hitchcock understood the social climate and atmosphere in which he was producing the film. Phillips writes,

For the present purpose, what is most interesting about *Psycho* is the way that the film resonates with cultural anxieties and violates audience expectations. The end of the 1950s was a time of both optimism and narcissism. While the Cold War still simmered under the surface, America was finally free from military conflicts, the economy was booming, and Americans were increasingly able to pursue their own individual pleasures. This cultural comfort and security was bought, in part, by the cultural logic of containment exemplified by *The Thing*: cultural and, indeed, global anxieties were contained within an optimistic veil of ignorance. As the 1950s turned into the 1960s, Americans turned away from the cultural problems rife in their society: racial injustice and unrest, the continuing danger of the Cold War, and a growing teenage rock and roll culture that was challenging notions of family and morality. In *Psycho*, Hitchcock revealed this thin veil of optimistic normalcy and then violently tore it open. (65)

The director captured America's sense of prosperity to demonstrate that not everything in the country was perfect. *Psycho* showed audience members that they, too, could be victims because the most "normal" people they trusted could be the same people they needed to fear.

This is the private world of humankind revealed. Bates and Crane are everyday representations of the audience: middle class, working to make a living, tired of not getting ahead in life, and dealing with awkward, strained relationships. Crane and her lover share a secret affair and Bates and his mother struggle in a battle of dominance and subversion. Audiences are able to identify with these realistic characters unlike those in the fictitious storylines of *Village of the Damned* or *13 Ghosts* released the same year as *Psycho*. People regarded *Psycho* as a violation of the American public because films were supposed to be about escape, adventure, and thrills, not mirror reflections of the audiences viewing them. As if a secret had been uncovered, the film showed the American public the possibility for everyone to go “a little mad sometimes” like Norman Bates (*Psycho*).

Psycho crossed genres in its production. It is now labeled as a slasher, drama, thriller, heist, or romance, and its influence on remakes and inspired films ranges from the classic slashers (*The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* [1974], *Nightmare on Elm Street* [1984], and *Halloween* [1978]), to contemporary productions like *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), to current parodies (*Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* [2006], television [*Family Guy*], and even samples in music [Busta Rhymes’s “Gimme Some More”]). The film’s reach from 1960 into contemporary cinema—big and small screen—and pop culture demonstrates the power it has as a production. *Psycho*’s storytelling is its strongpoint, and its relevance is like the longevity an oral tale carries into print centuries later. This is an element that is rapidly fading in current horror productions.

Marion Crane is unhappy in her current state of affairs (no pun intended). She is in a relationship with a divorced man (Sam Loomis) who is struggling to pay alimony to his ex-wife. Crane's middling employment and her desire to have a better life with the man she loves pushes her toward stealing a client's \$40,000. She makes plans to drive to Loomis with the money; however, her one fatal mistake is stopping to rest at the Bates Motel. Bates (as his dead mother) murders Crane, which sparks an investigation into her disappearance involving a detective, her sister, her lover, the deputy sheriff and a host of other officials who soon uncover the madness within both the motel and Bates's mind.

In a word-association game, most viewers would remember "Bates Motel," "Norman Bates," or the catchy phrase "We all go a little mad sometimes," or would be able to imitate the screeching sounds made during the shower scene killing. But there is much more to the story than these surface elements. *Psycho* informs the viewer about the state of the middle-class worker, and intimate relationships, and even offers a detailed definition for the term "transvestite" as it was known in 1960. Almost all of these aspects can be attributed to a kind of perversion of normalcy—if such a state of being exists. Bates's mind is perverted into a "split personality"; Crane's relationship does not represent moral standards of the 1960s; and the idea of Bates as a transvestite has to be explained by a psychiatrist who understands abnormal behavior.

These situations spark fear in viewers because they occur in everyday life. Although Bates is the "bad guy" and viewers should identify with Crane as the protagonist, it must not be overlooked that he is not the only person hearing voices in his head. Crane imagines what events will occur as a result of her theft. She thinks about

what people would say at her office job, and what conversation she would later have with Loomis. Her onscreen face appears worried and frustrated but the more the scenarios play out in her mind the viewer is afforded a glimpse into her human perversion. She is happy with her decision, almost smirking like a deviant with the knowledge of the moral code she has broken. Before she is murdered, Crane decides she will go back to Phoenix and return the money, but it is the realization of her dark side that had the ability to scare audiences the most because they identified with her as the protagonist. We empathize with Crane wanting a new life and happiness in her relationship, but when she starts to smile thinking about the money she has stolen, something changes. Suddenly the viewer understands that Crane is just as capable as Bates of committing misdeeds and along those lines, so is the viewer; her smile foreshadows Bates's deviant smirk.

This is effective storytelling. The writing for *Psycho* has a purpose and is not just a means to an end—the death of Crane and the capture of Bates. It exemplifies that technical filmmaking skill has to be matched with a balance of screenwriting in order for a horror film to be successful, not in terms of box office rewards but in the manner of connecting with its audience. Storytelling and horror films are art forms that complement each other. The artistic vision of the genre's "heyday" has become nothing more than formula. When Gus Van Sant announced he would do a frame-by-frame remake of *Psycho* in 1998, debates abounded. Did he think he was better than Hitchcock? Why not re-envision the film in his own style? Would the film be a shot-by-shot recreation of the original? But the biggest question was the most basic one: Why? Fans and critics questioned his sanity for contemplating such a project. Van Sant's motives aside, the

production of the remake represents the watershed moment for the remake machine. Its creation let filmmakers everywhere know that any movie was up for grabs to remake. It also marked fear, as the horror genre's foundation, to be irrelevant.

Already deemed a classic by critics and fans, *Psycho* was a unique enterprise until Van Sant's remake removed its sociocultural relevance from cinema history. It could be argued that many remakes are forgettable and do not alter the status of the original; however, Van Sant announced he was making this film special by recreating it frame-by-frame in the original director's vision, thereby making a second "original" version. Van Sant should have had the original film re-released in theatres instead of attempting to make an exact copy of Hitchcock's production. It should have been a commemorative re-release with a special introduction by Van Sant where the director could have talked about the film's importance in cinema and American culture. Needless to say, *Psycho* was remade and the original was affected by the newer version's alterations and production consideration.

Van Sant's version scars the original film: the production team, technical changes in cinematography, acting, and casting must be held accountable. These are production elements for which the film may be critiqued, not a desire to bash the effort made by Van Sant. Constantine Santas, author of *Responding to Film*, weighs in on the issue; he declares there were people who supported the production amid strong opposition. "Patricia Hitchcock, who played a minor role in the original and was a consultant in this one, said her father would have been flattered by the remake of his movie forty years later; and Joseph Stefano, the screenwriter of the original *Psycho*, was more than eager to

accept the job of re-writing the second *Psycho* script” (Santas). So the past came to revisit and support the new enterprise, a display that could lend credibility to Van Sant’s vision; however, it cannot be overlooked that Patricia Hitchcock’s involvement in the original was minor and that Stefano, like any working writer, was happy to have a job and get paid. It is a definite trend to see cast, crew, and production members from original films work on remakes, but their support does not guarantee a quality product.

Van Sant, as the film’s director, holds the most responsibility for the remake’s effect upon cinema. Santas writes, “Van Sant claims that his remake of *Psycho* should be seen as a creative rather than commercial endeavor” and that “one has to be fair to Van Sant and to his honestly stated motives—to attract younger audiences, and to revive interest in Hitchcock’s classic work.” Van Sant clearly understood how much backlash he would receive by announcing his intentions; there was no way for the film to make box office gold. Baz Luhrmann could have faced a similar situation, but he understood how to attract younger audiences when he cast Leonardo DiCaprio and Claire Danes in his *Romeo + Juliet* (1996) instead of seasoned thespians such as *Psycho* 1998’s Julianne Moore, Vince Vaughn, and Anne Heche. Luhrmann updated his film with guns instead of swords to comment on violence in contemporary society, but Van Sant’s film only added well-known actors. Casting problems in the *Psycho* remake show there was no conscious decision made to attract younger audiences; it would have made more sense to hire actors from the television talent pool of 7th *Heaven*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, or *Clueless*.

What Van Sant filmed and removed from the original, and how scenes are acted in the remake, manipulates the original film’s intent and audience reception. Santas

mentions a few key points of difference between the original film and its remake, including the switch from black-and-white filmmaking to color, the depth of acting present, and the original film as art. It is easy to see that the original film is shot in black-and-white and the remake is in color. Both styles were chosen by the directors; they were not shot as such because of the time period or film stock availability. Santas says

It must be remembered that Hitchcock himself had already made several movies in color prior to 1960 (*Dial M for Murder*, *Rear Window*, *The Man Who Knew Too Much*, *North by Northwest*, *Vertigo*), and that his choice of black-and white was deliberate to mitigate the shock of blood swirling down the drain in the shower scene and to invest the film's gothic subject-matter with an aura of gloom. But in the Van Sant version, the color itself is not so much the problem as the choice *of* colors.

Van Sant's film explodes onto the screen with the opening title-bar credit sequence in neon green and continues its pop art sensibilities in costuming and décor throughout. Unlike the stark and tense mood created by Hitchcock's black-and-white, Van Sant's style offers the viewer an Easter Sunday palette of vibrancy and a quirky, upbeat tone. His vision is rainbow-inspired and off-center from the serious subject matter of the film's script. As Santas continues to say,

This veritable deluge of oranges, pinks and light browns forces the viewer to notice the lapse of mood from the seriousness of the original to the light-hearted and essentially frivolous tone of the remake. Color and color tone affect the viewer's psychological disposition and help determine the

emotions a film, and a violent film to boot, will evoke. And the lapse of mood, here from dark to rosy, is what counts against *Psycho* 1998.

A simple change in format presentation (black-and-white to color) accounts for a large modification in how the film is received by audiences. Van Sant could have shot the film in black-and-white as other contemporary directors have done with films such as Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), Jarmusch's *Dead Man* (1995), and the Coens' *The Man Who Wasn't There* (2001). The intensity of fear and suspense become lost in Van Sant's kaleidoscope of color.

Acting in the remake goes hand-in-hand with the color implementation; most of the scenes seem ill-matched to content and completely separate from the emotional delivery needed for the writing. When the viewer first encounters Marion Crane (Heche) and Sam Loomis (Viggo Mortensen) in the unnamed hotel room, their interactions in bed and the sexual sounds from a neighboring couple through the wall give the scene an air of illicit behavior, not an impassioned love affair. According to Santas, the dialogue, though copied almost verbatim from the original film, seems flippant, lacking the urgency of the original scene. These seem two casual lovers in a nonessential fling, and the scene elapses without establishing any real suspense, as Hitchcock's does. Their complaint of not being able to see each other except in her mother's house does not sound believable near the start of the 21st century, when this action takes place. They seem mature grown-ups not bound by the sexual inhibitions of their forbears 40 years ago.

Van Sant fails to take into account that the opening establishing shots for his version announce the date as Friday, December 11, 1998. When Crane is driving in a later sequence, the viewer is also able to see a street billboard for the 1998 movie *Six Days Seven Nights* (starring Heche). It is simultaneously deliberate and arbitrary to add the time period change and onscreen meta-commentary without updating moral sensibilities for Crane and Loomis as a couple of the 1990s. The added shot of Loomis's bare buttocks is in line with a freer moral code permitting nudity in the latter part of the 20th century, but shielding Crane's body from the camera puts the scene at odds with itself.

This opening scene sets the tone for how the actors communicate with each other throughout the film, reciting lines with emotional detachment and coming across as flat characters, unlike the well-rounded presentations from Hitchcock's creation. Even the highway patrol officer (played by James Remar) is an empty shell who does not deliver conviction of dialogue the original handled so well. Van Sant's time period update could have taken contemporary rhetoric into account when the officer talks to Crane on the side of the road; the dialogue used in 1960 would not have gone over so well coming from a cop in the 1990s. Santas comments on Van Sant's time adjustment between the two films in order to demonstrate how the director's attempt to remake the shower scene is unsuccessful. He writes

Times change, and so do people's outlooks. Most of the successful remakes have taken this factor into consideration, adjusting levels of violence and other aspects to meet contemporary audience sophistication. Hitchcock's audiences were relatively innocent and more susceptible to

shock when violence erupted on the screen. Today's audiences are gorged with violent spectacle. The shower scene, though still shocking and frightening, can no longer traumatize them to the degree that it did then. Van Sant could have brought violence to a significantly more intense level, or delivered it with more innovation.

Always associated with its famous shower sequence, *Psycho* gives viewers more than one memorable scene or depiction of violence. A more in-depth discussion of acting in the remake reveals other prominent disparities between the two films.

Perkins and Leigh will always be remembered for their roles in the original, so it is only fitting to focus a bit more on the portrayals by Heche and Vaughn as Crane and Bates. The biggest and most noticeable difference between the two films occurs in the most basic facial expression: a smile. Crane hits the road with the money she is stealing, \$40,000 in the original and \$400,000 in the remake. The remake amount turns the film into a heist movie and not a horror-thriller about a desperate woman. Crane's imaginary conversations while driving are the same in the both films, but in the remake her expression removes all depth of content and conflict from the story. When Leigh plays Crane, "the smirk on her face when in voice-over she mimics Cassidy's surprise when he discovers she stole his money Monday morning indicates her vindictive spite against the male dominated atmosphere of her office to which she had said good-bye. Heche smiles a bit too broadly, showing more delight than fear, less guilt and more satisfaction, as she drives through the storm" (Santas). Heche's smile comes across as an afterthought in the scene; just as her lips begin to part to form the broad expression the film cuts to a shot of

rain hitting the windshield and then back to Heche with a furrowed brow, the smile nowhere to be found. Her eyes also remain wide and unflinching in the scene (a complete twenty-nine seconds without blinking), removing any sense of emotional mutation from worry to sinister delight akin to that in Leigh's performance. Tyra Banks should have informed her how to smile with her eyes to create visual sentiment.

The appearance of Bates is important, as well. Perkins plays Bates in 1960 with a squirrely, wired, gangly look about him. Vaughn, on the other hand, looks like a linebacker making fun of the puny kids and the nerds in high school. The comparison evokes Jekyll and Hyde in physical appearance, demeanor, and action. Vaughn has a brutish physicality onscreen, from his prominent forehead to squared shoulders. Unlike Perkins's meek posturing in the parlor with Leigh, Vaughn seems more slovenly and dominant. His performance is certainly more "masculinized" than that of Perkins in three key scenes. In the original parlor scene, Bates displays two hand gestures that indicate frustration with his mother and submission to Crane's desire to end conversation and go to bed. In the remake these gestures do not exist; Bates simply talks without stereotypical feminized hand gesturing. When Loomis and Bates fight in the original office scene there's a close-body struggle of dominance and submission in what some deem slightly homoerotic, but in the remake Bates simply whacks an unsuspecting Loomis over the head with a weapon from the leisure man's sport: a golf club. And in the final confrontation scene when Bates appears as his mother, there is an eerie element of suspended disbelief in his face; it lets the viewer know that Bates has left the room. The remake offers Vaughn in scag drag, where he unsuccessfully masks his large frame. This

last fight scene alters a 1960s fear of sexual and mental difference in transvestitism and waters it down to a killer in drag with no rooted motives; even the psychiatrist's lines that explain transvestitism are removed. Vaughn and Heche have large shoes to fill in recreating Perkins's and Leigh's performances, but the result is nothing more than two actors playing dress-up.

Other members of the cast spark interest, especially in connection to the remake's declared "intent." Van Sant was not trying to capture young audiences; he was trying to capitalize on the success of ensemble films like Paul Thomas Anderson's *Boogie Nights* (1997), released a year before *Psycho*. He hired Moore, William H. Macy, and Philip Baker Hall—high-profile names from Anderson's *Boogie Nights* and *Magnolia* (1999), which was released a year after *Psycho*. Van Sant has never been a director of star-power ensembles. He once had a small collection of actors that he would work with (Keanu Reeves, the Affleck brothers, Matt Dillon, the Phoenix brothers), but never in such a high-profile status until *Milk* in 2008. Maybe Van Sant tried to emulate Anderson or was inspired by the work, but Anderson's ensembles are character-driven; his films take star power and fill it with substance, unlike Van Sant's *Psycho*, which simply gave big names and empty performances.

Van Sant's remake is not a complete copy of the original; it is not an exact shot-by-shot, frame-by-frame production, and the changes (additions and deletions) deviate sharply from the viewing and reception of Hitchcock's film, no matter how small the alteration. There are a few other changes that deserve mention because they modify meaning from the original:

- Leigh is frantic and nervous in the car lot; Heche strolls about with a parasol.
- The trade-in car costs \$700 in the original and \$4000 in the remake. Leigh flips through seven bills while in the bathroom which gives the film a mystic number (i.e., Seven Deadly Sins, Lucky Seven, and spiritual references).
- The first shot of Mother in the original is a shadow figure behind a drawn curtain; in the remake the viewer sees a bulky figure walk by a foggy window. Because it is clear the figure in the foggy window could not be an aging woman, the suspense is removed.
- The name Norman is a play on the term normal, but the last name Bates takes on a tongue-in-cheek silly meaning when Vaughn's version masturbates while watching Heche's Crane undress.
- Leigh appears frustrated trying to figure out where to hide the money in the motel room; Heche smiles and plays a solitary game of hide-n-seek with the money.
- The original Norman tells his mother to "shut up" twice, but the remake allows him to shout three times. The extended dialogue makes Vaughn's characterization more dominant and masculine over his mother's control.
- Leigh eats like a bird in the original, the dialogue matching the action; Heche has more of a birdlike appearance with the choppy, pixie haircut and pointed facial features.
- Leigh conveys happiness in the shower to show she is content with the decision made to return to Phoenix and give back the money; Heche is emotionless.

- The added masturbation scene and a few other additions queer the remake (detailed later).
- The shower curtain in the original is a dull plastic where no details can be seen through it. When Bates approaches the shower, the audience can only decipher the outline of a person. Fear of the unknown is heightened before the attack occurs. The curtain in the remake is see-through with patterns of sharp, geometric shapes. This adds to the idea that Bates is a fractured personality when his shadow figure appears in the bathroom.
- Perkins's Bates has birdlike eating habits. Vaughn's portrayal is more sexualized because he stuffs candy into his mouth, and with each piece, his finger touches his tongue.
- A phone operator/dispatcher was technologically relevant in 1960. There is no need for a phone operator to connect the sheriff's wife to the Bates Motel in 1998.
- In the original, the psychiatrist asks if there have been any other missing persons and he is told two women have gone missing. This information is removed from the end of the remake. Along with the extended/added shots of Crane's car being fully removed from the bog and all the police leaving the area, the remake wraps up the storyline and leaves nothing to be questioned unlike the lingering, open-ended, more uneasy ending of the original. Fear lingers in the original; the remake operates on a case-closed basis that implies "they lived happily ever after."

- The last image viewers see in the remake, superimposed over a running shot of the vacant bog, is “In Memory of Alfred Hitchcock.” The viewer is afforded no doubt that s/he is watching a remake of the original film.

A final note: Van Sant queers the remake. This is a significant departure from Hitchcock’s movie that Van Sant should have used throughout the remake to give it contemporary social relevance. As previously stated, Mortensen’s buttocks are shown during the opening but Heche’s form remains hidden from camera. In Vaughn’s masturbation scene, the viewer is privy to Heche undressing, but again she remains turned from the camera. Sexuality in the remake privileges the male form and its actions. In a queer sensibility, the idea of the male gaze turns upon itself with a male director as the voyeur and androgynous/male bodies filmed for exhibition. Gus Van Sant represents Vince Vaughn in that scene. It is a sequence of self-gratification that shows Bates directing actions that lead to Crane’s murder. The scene is simultaneously a product of Van Sant’s direction which typically emphasizes youthful male culture; however, this time it is a woman who looks boyish. (At this time, Heche was also known for her romantic relationship with Ellen Degeneres.) The scene, the added masturbation, is safe because it is a male figure voyeuristically eroticizing an unsuspecting female figure; the danger lies in Van Sant’s other films where young males are victimized by the camera, and the audience is not afforded a substitute/stand-in for the director as he pleasures himself. In the remake, Van Sant uses a character vehicle to stimulate and gratify his filmmaking ego and ejaculate upon any viewer who has doubted his directorial skill; he metaphorically masturbates in the face of Hitchcock. Also, with the dialogue about

transvestitism missing, there can be no question that Norman Bates is a man; he gets no physical or mental gratification dressing up as a woman. Van Sant offers the viewer a masculinized queer spectacle, but he also queers Heche, Mortensen, and Julianne Moore (Lila).

The only time audiences see Heche's nude form is when she falls from the shower. Her buttocks are exposed and two knife cuts with blood are shown upon her back. Heche's dying body position is queered submissively, the two knife cuts on her back are strategically placed to represent broken angel wings (tattoo representations and costume angel wings as popular GLBTQI stereotype archetypes), she has visions of a cloudy sky while being stabbed, and when the camera leaves the bathroom to focus on the newspaper hiding the money the word "Angeles" is prominent in the frame. Thus, Van Sant presents the viewer with a common theme in his films: the death of queer youth. Although Heche is a woman, the audience is not allowed to see body parts that "define" her physically as a female. Her pixie haircut and smallish frame align her with "twink" culture, a subculture in the GLBTQI community commonly associated with youthful male and androgynous appearances and partying (including raves or other settings where wearing angel wings and imbibing in drug culture gives the feeling of flying in the sky). It is also fitting to imagine such a filmic (and real) figure in Los Angeles, the city of lost "angels" (queer youth).

The costuming for Loomis and Lila also help queer the film. Loomis wears a stereotypical ten-gallon cowboy hat and makes awkward expressions while handling a Judy Garland album. His character in the remake is all-too stereotyped as "steer or

queer,” and his actions with Crane and sexual advances to Lila make him a perfect candidate for rough trade, another motif of some of Van Sant’s productions. Lila is, to coin a bad phrase, lesbianized to counter the queer Loomis portrayal. She is another stereotype: shirt, jeans, lug shoes, keys attached to her belt loop, and a sporty walkman she cannot seem to leave behind. Her only concern is her sister, as she constantly puts off Loomis’s advances. Moreover, it is Lila who subdues Bates in the final fight scene when she kicks him in the face; this allows Loomis to wrestle Bates into submission, something he seemingly could not do on his own (compare Vaughn’s massive body versus Perkins’s lean build in the original). If these changes to queer the original were more deliberate throughout the film, Van Sant could have made the remake with purpose or a personal style; however, these minor (but poignant) instances of queering confuse the viewing.

Hitchcock’s *Psycho* has had enormous influence on film history. The same cannot be said of its remake or other remade productions. Remakes reflect each other as trends; they do not inspire, mark progress, or demonstrate historical developments in cinema. Remakes show that originality is dying (or almost completely dead for the horror genre) and that American cinema is heading toward a period where only money matters. *Psycho* redone by Gus Van Sant is a violation of filmmaking for the American public; it betrays the principles of centrality of fear and storytelling in horror. The original “had a director who could penetrate audience’s inner fears, irrational desires, and mad urges, and actors who could simulate these feelings perfectly. Hitchcock, above all, wanted to communicate with his audiences; their pity and fear mattered to him” (Santas).

Van Sant mars a classical film text by reproduction. It is akin to a painter adding a scene or color correcting the Sistine Chapel. In other words, remaking *Psycho* is comparable to Whitney Houston redoing “I Will Always Love You” by Dolly Parton. The song cover was a massive undertaking by someone whose prominence in the field came years later and the result fueled interest; however, Houston’s endeavor fared far better than that of Van Sant. The idea of a remake is not new, and it is not allied with filmmaking only. Songs are covered by artists; television shows are revamped on different networks; and paintings are recreated by hobbyists. But when someone takes on the responsibility to redo a “classic” in a certain artistic field, the dam breaks and suddenly there are no rules or regulations of respect, innovation, or social relevance to keep the original production sacred or valued. This production will remain the breaking point in remake history because the implications it holds for other films being remade are groundbreaking and a bit daunting. In the horror tide, fear and storytelling (the art of the genre) are on the way out, but directors and money/marketing campaigns continue to rise.

CHAPTER IV: HALLOWEEN:

WHEN HOLIDAYS GAVE MEANING TO HORROR . . .

It was the boogeyman. – Laurie Strode

The sleepy town of Haddonfield, Illinois is about to receive a rude awakening from one of its former residents. He was only six years old when he murdered his sister and was subsequently sent away to a mental health facility for rehabilitation. But after fifteen years, he escapes during a transfer and emerges as an adult hell-bent on returning home to kill his other sister. This is the story of Michael Myers and Laurie Strode, two estranged siblings who engage in a horrific game of cat and mouse on Halloween night.

It was 1978, and John Carpenter's now legendary horror film, *Halloween*, made its debut. The attention to detail—a masked killer, a sharp kitchen knife, an eerie soundtrack, and the bloodcurdling scream of a heroine—pays homage to Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960) and historicizes real-life bad guy Ed Gein. The film spawned seven sequels through 2002 (including the debatable *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* [1982]). *Halloween* is typically credited as the original slasher film, although recognition is always given to *Psycho* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974) for exhibiting early elements that paved the way for the development of the subgenre. This was the start of a new era in horror involving multiple kills, bloody death scenes, gratuitous sex, drug and alcohol abuse, an unseen terror (until too late), and the final girl (an element *Psycho* brilliantly lacked, because it was ingenious and shocking to kill the protagonist early in the film). *Halloween* is the bridge to the 80s, home of the slasher decade. Moreover, it was an unveiling of American society's strengths and downfalls, its dreams and night terrors.

A recap of the original franchise demonstrates that Michael Myers was a terribly busy man. In the first film he returns to Haddonfield to stalk and kill his sister, but is thwarted by her and Dr. Loomis, his psychiatrist, who shoots him six times, causing him to fall over a balcony to certain death. The sequel continues events from Halloween night as Strode is taken to the hospital. The now not-dead Myers picks off victims one by one but again is stopped by Loomis and Strode when they work together to burn him alive.

Halloween III: Season of the Witch is unrelated to the franchise; it was meant to start a wave of films that focused on scary things happening on Halloween nights, but was quickly dismissed when *Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers* (1988) brought back the infamous killer. Myers returns to Haddonfield ten years later after terrorizing Strode; this time he aims to kill his niece Jamie, but Loomis does his best to avoid that situation from becoming a reality. Myers is gunned down by the police, falls into a mine shaft, and is presumed dead by everyone. But the final kill belongs to Jamie who dons a clown mask and stabs her adopted mother in imitation to Myers's first murder at age six. *Halloween 5: The Revenge of Michael Myers* (1989) takes place one year later. Myers awakens from a coma in the refuge he discovered after finding his way out of the mine shaft in the previous film and continues on his journey to locate and kill Jamie who is now mute and psychically connected to her murderous uncle. It is at this point that the original franchise takes a turn toward the supernatural, as most horror films seem to do when they run out of explanations as to why a killer comes back so often in sequels. This chapter in the franchise ends with Jamie and Loomis luring Myers back to his old house. Loomis tranquilizes Myers, and he is taken to a holding cell to await transfer, but some

unknown person creates an explosion which leaves the holding cell empty when inspected.

Halloween 6: The Curse of Michael Myers (1995) has most convoluted plot of any sequel in the franchise, and to describe what happens could fill the pages of a novella. In short, the story involves a pregnant Jamie six years later, Laurie Strode's adoptive parents, Tommy (the kid Strode is babysitting in the first film), a Druid curse, human sacrifice, genetic engineering, star constellations, and of course Loomis. Myers kills Jamie but her baby survives in hiding with Tommy, and in the end a host of characters find themselves fleeing from a sanitarium after Myers is tranquilized. Loomis goes back into the building only to discover the infamous mask on the floor before he lets out a final scream. (Donald Pleasance [Loomis] died three years later, the same year another installment in the franchise was released.)

Halloween H20: 20 Years Later (1998) is basically a showdown between the cowboy in white (Strode) and the cowboy in black (Myers). Twenty years into the storyline Myers tracks down Strode in California where she lives under an assumed name after faking her death in an auto accident. She is dating someone, has a teenage son, heads up a boarding school, and is happy. But Myers destroys that happiness and in the process kills close friends. Strode attempts to kill Myers by pushing him off a building and running him over; her success comes when she decapitates him in the end, thus ending the *Halloween* franchise—at least that is what audiences were made to believe.

In 2002 the final film in the original series, *Halloween: Resurrection*, hit theatre screens. The production marked the end of an extremely long, winding narrative as the

story is set three years after the previous film. Strode resides in a psychiatric ward, incarcerated for beheading a paramedic she mistook for Myers. She patiently waits for Myers to come after her again, and when he fails to disappoint she is ready for him; however, he tricks her and throws her off the roof to plummet to her death. After 24 years two members of the *Halloween* character trinity (Loomis and Strode) are dead, but Myers lives on. He heads back to his home only to find winners of a reality television contest sleeping over to prove who can survive the Myers household. Myers uses his usual modus operandi to claim his victims one by one until he is bested by two characters who electrocute him. In conventional horror fashion, the audience is taken to the morgue where Myers's remains are in a body bag. When the bag is unzipped, his eyes open and a piercing scream ends the original franchise.

Michael Myers walks a strange path throughout the original series of films; there are inconsistencies in the storytelling and/or characterization. He is mentally incapacitated, but can drive a car, steal Strode's personal file to find out where she lives, and switch clothes with a victim's body to escape capture. His improbable evolution from child to adult to demonically possessed shell of a human being does not diminish that he is a killing machine. The mystery surrounding Michael Myers remains throughout the films and solidifies his character as a horror icon. Laurie Strode labels him "the boogeyman," but Dr. Loomis, the one person who knows Myers inside and out, describes him in detail:

I met him, fifteen years ago. I was told there was nothing left. No reason, no conscience, no understanding; even the most rudimentary sense of life

or death, good or evil, right or wrong. I met this six-year-old child, with this blank, pale, emotionless face and, the blackest eyes—the devil’s eyes. I spent eight years trying to reach him, and then another seven trying to keep him locked up because I realized what was living behind that boy’s eyes was purely and simply—evil.

This personalized character analysis represents Myers from the original film through the last in the franchise. The number of sequels alone demonstrates his power and celebrity in the field of horror, but Myers shares his fame with Carpenter, Curtis, and Pleasance, who all helped give the films a place in horror history.

Although the franchise has a rich history because of its serialization, the original film stands as the most celebrated. It introduced the horror genre to one of its most recognized villains, founded the slasher subgenre, and created a new sense of fear in American cinema. What began in *Psycho* filtered into *Halloween*, and because of this connection the face of horror changed once again.

When *Halloween* appeared there was nothing else like it. *Psycho* frightened many audiences in the 1960s, but *Halloween* is more visceral: the killer is a shadow of a man with an unrecognizable face; the film is painted in colors people see everyday; the kills are explicit; the music is iconic and relative; and the mood/atmosphere is confrontational. Michael Myers (also credited as “The Shape” on the 25th Anniversary Edition of *Halloween*) is a masked killer; his visage is protected by the legendary William Shatner *Star Trek* costume cover. It is this mask, which sounds completely ridiculous, that heightens the fear and makes him the monster people cannot see. Fear of the unknown

turns thriller into horror when danger is not obvious. The viewer is told that Myers is the brother of Laurie Strode, a regular teen girl, but that does not change his monstrous presence in the film. Without the mask Myers would be an escaped mental hospital patient who needs to be gunned down or re-institutionalized. The mask helps Myers blend in with trick-or-treaters and walk among society as an individual who fits in. Kids dress up for Halloween by wearing scary costumes and/or makeup that covers their faces, but beneath it all they are kids trying to have fun and fill their sacks with the most candy possible. Behind Myers's mask lies the true terror. It is a role reversal for the celebration of Samhain, but the masks serve to demonstrate that a deadly stranger walks among "normal" members of society which can be the scariest thought of all. Tommy Lee Wallace, production designer and co-editor, credits the film's crafty use of unseen fear to Carpenter's own knowledge of the genre. He says,

From childhood, from earliest days, one of his [Carpenter] passions was scary movies, and when he got his turn he drew from the lessons he had learned watching these movies and one of the cardinal rules is don't, don't show too much of the monster. One of the oldest tricks in the book is to understand that it's not what you see it's what you don't see that gets you scared. It's about knowing something's in there and when your character for some compelling reason must go in there it's about anticipation.

Where's it gonna happen? (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*)

Carpenter's horror knowledge-base established the unseen terror rule as a guideline to atmospheric horror; however, most American films today seem to ignore what the director knew in the 1970s.

Throughout the original franchise film the idea, persona, and spirit of Michael Myers became one symbol: the mask. American society relates to symbols because symbols such as the cross, a rainbow flag, or a white hood are imbued with collective power. Such symbols instill fear or generate welcome familiarity when viewed, and the same is true for the mask of Myers. Movie posters simply have to show the Shatner mask for fans to identify the film or those who do not know the connection to recoil in fear. The unknown has this effect—to attract or repulse. *Halloween* started a trend for masked horror villains the same way that *Psycho* influenced horror movies to film scary shower sequences. Once the iconic symbol has reached mass appeal and/or fear, the monster behind the mask becomes legendary in cinema. The fear factor of Michael Myers will not diminish.

Like *Psycho*'s remake, *Halloween* is shot in color. People do not walk around in everyday life viewing the world in shades of black and white; sighted people see in color. Suspending disbelief thus comes a bit easier when the colors on the screen match what viewers see while sitting in the theatre or in front of a television. Of course, as exemplified in *Psycho* or *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), black-and-white films can be just as frightening as color, but color adds a realism that black-and-white cannot. Black-and-white continually reminds the viewer of artifice, and even if audiences get scared, they only have to look around to see the standard colors of reality. When night falls on

Haddonfield, viewers experience that time of day as if it were the same outside environment they would walk into from theatre or home. Although the rain and gloomy setting of *Psycho* resonates with audiences, the more natural/standard colors of *Halloween* succeed in providing viewers with tangible fear. In a slasher film, however, there is only one color that seems to matter most: red.

The *Psycho* shower scene is historical film art, and nothing can be taken away from its creation; however, the blood audiences see on the body of Marion Crane and running down the drain is a dark grey because of the black-and-white filming. The audience is somewhat distanced from the scene because the blood does not appear to be “real.” In color, *Halloween* is able to bridge the distance between viewer and visual. People bleed red, not black or grey (unless they are demons, zombies, or some vampires and werewolves). This simple color connection makes injuries and/or death more frightening, and creates more pathos in an audience. This comparison extends beyond these two films and the horror genre. There is massive destruction and high body counts in any of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy films (2001-2003), but most of that blood is greenish black from slaughtered orcs. The reaction is not as strong as it would be if the monsters were doing most of the slaughtering of humans, elves, hobbits, and others whose blood runs red. It is the color viewers know flows through their own veins and pumps rapidly while watching horror films; greenish black fluid does not get the same reaction.

Kill Bill: Vol 1 (2003) also illustrates this point with the fight scene between Beatrix Kiddo and The Crazy 88. When the fighting commences, Kiddo begins to slay

her attackers left and right; blood from sword wounds spills to the floor and spews about. Suddenly the film switches to black-and-white and fighting continues, but now the blood is less immediate because grey fluid fills the screen. Tarantino easily shows how viewers can be desensitized to blood when it is not filmed in color, and many people who saw the film complained about that section because they wanted to see the blood; they wanted to be more immersed in the fight. Although an homage to early Kung Fu/martial arts films, Tarantino achieves the indirect result of letting audiences see how they relate differently to onscreen blood in color versus black-and-white. Black-and-white filming also allows the MPAA not to pass judgment too harshly for explicit depictions of violence.

Halloween digs deep into its audience with displays of red blood; its original sequel, which has to be mentioned since the events that occur are on the same night, goes so far to show one of the characters (Jimmy) slipping on a pool of blood drained from a victim, landing on the floor, smashing his head into the tile, and blood splattering upon him. The film demonstrates the importance of red blood in many horror films; its onscreen depiction incorporates the viewer into the narrative. Blood also functions as a symbol. While it represents the bond between Myers and Strode and highlights the important and traditional theme of family in the horror genre, it is simultaneously vital and dangerous. *Halloween* is not the first horror film to use color, nor is it the only one to use color effectively, but with its connection to *Psycho* and the discussion of fear, it is important to understand its relevance. No film exploits color better than Dario Argento's *Suspiria* (1977), but American cinema is the focus of discussion here.

In addition to its masked killer and blood depiction, *Halloween*, like *Psycho*, makes use of visual space and setting to maintain a high level of fear. Marion Crane leaves the big city, stops at a roadside motel, gets a room, and dies in the confines of a shower; her body spills out of the space as life fades. Laurie Strode, in similar fashion, strolls the sidewalks of Haddonfield, babysits in a house, and finds herself fighting for her life from the enclosed space of a closet; however, Strode, unlike Crane, survives. Visual space in film controls viewer emotions; it can make audience members feel larger than life and embodied with power make them feel small, insecure, and vulnerable. The nighttime setting in *Halloween* strengthens fear of the unknown and makes perception of space difficult. (Carpenter does the same in *The Fog* [1980]).

Viewers never feel completely in control of their bodies or emotions during the film because they identify with the protagonist (Strode) and her struggle to survive. Audience members take the journey with Strode and find themselves metaphorically running around the dark streets of Haddonfield and hiding in a closet to avoid death by a deranged psycho killer. As the sequels grow in number, moviegoers often take sides with the killer because it becomes a cinematic game or even find it funny if the franchise has lost some of its fright appeal, but the original film puts those same patrons in a place where they can do nothing but identify with the lead (typically a final girl) whose only desire is to escape from harm. *Halloween* came about when the steadycam had only been in circulation for a couple of years, and the filmmakers used the new technology to their advantage. Viewers were afforded point of view shots from the perspective of Michael Myers as a child, an on-looking presence stalking the babysitters, and a fly-on-the-wall

listening to conversations. Some people (mostly critics) thought the idea of a POV shot from the killer represented a crude or immoral decision on the part of the filmmakers, but it should be understood that using the camera to show Myers's perspective as a child killing his sister simply unnerves audiences and generates more fear; viewers do not take any enjoyment from "being" the killer in such a scene. The varied use of the steadycam allows fear to generate from all sides within the film, and not just the perspective of the killer. It is merely another manner in which the film uses visual space presentations to inflict terror upon its audience.

The audience, however, always has the advantage over the protagonist, and not because viewers know the film is entertainment; they are always able to stay one step ahead because the nondiegetic theme music announces the killer's presence. The music from *Halloween* is known worldwide, akin to that of *Jaws* (1975) and *The Exorcist* (1973). Signature musical themes announce when Myers is getting back up after being attacked, when he is stalking his prey, when he is chasing victims, and more. All of these musical accompaniments relate to the action of the story and help fuel tension, surprise, anxiety, and fear in the audience. John Carpenter made sure the music for the film would benefit the story by composing the soundtrack himself. The title theme is now one of the most recognized musical creations not only in horror but in music in general. Daniel and Seth Nelson discuss *Halloween*'s appropriate use of music in "Killing His Contemporaries: Dissecting the Musical Worlds of John Carpenter." They say,

One of the most poignant variations of this main theme takes place in *Halloween II* . . . The Shape, better known as Michael Myers, follows

Laurie Strode (played by Jamie Lee Curtis) to a hospital, where Laurie is recuperating from wounds suffered in a previous encounter with Myers. While hiding in the hospital parking lot, Laurie realizes that he is in the lot with her, and as she frantically pounds on the hospital's front doors, the variation of the main theme smashes into the film. The simple repeating melody that delivers fast and immediate pulses of sound is created by a high pitched synthesizer. The unending theme matches what is taking place not only in this particular scene, but the overall storyline: Michael Myers cannot be stopped! This stripped-down version of the main theme does not have the low bass tones that the film's main theme starts out with in the beginning of the movie. Instead, Carpenter replaces this bass sound with the hypnotizing breathing from Michael Myers and the shrieked screams from Laurie.

The piano, synthesizer, and other instrumental sounds give weight to the onscreen action, but Carpenter also uses key sound effects such as heavy breathing, screaming, whimpering, gasping, potted plants breaking, and car tires screeching to achieve a film in which music and sounds are as important as story and equal in the creation of fear.

Fear is easy to recognize in horror films, because it always represents a binary of actions: to die or not to die, to kill or be killed, to run away and hide or confront.

Halloween, although formidable and contributory to developments in the genre, is not immune to this system of fight or flight / survival or death. In a slasher film, one of the

main concerns for a viewer is who dies and who lives, which is directly linked to the fascination of “the kills.”

The first death in *Halloween* occurs when young Michael Myers mortally wounds his sister with a kitchen knife. The action follows through the eyes of a clown mask shrouded in shadows around the oval-cut holes. Viewers see the sister turn to her brother before the knife is raised and then brought down to initiate the first stab; however, no blood and no contact between knife and flesh are depicted. If this sounds at all familiar, it is an homage to *Psycho*. Debra Hill, producer and co-writer, says Carpenter wanted the film to be scary, not gory (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*). His use of shadow, implied injury, screams, and a stalking camera sensibility demonstrate such skill.

The shock of the kill in *Psycho* comes at the expense of the film’s protagonist, and the only other character seen murdered is Milton Arbogast. Bates’s mother is long-dead, and any other crimes he has committed are not shown. What *Halloween* does to solidify itself and proceeding films into the subgenre of slasher is up the ante by killing more victims. Five people die in total, most notably two of the three babysitters and Myers’s sister in the beginning, but the kills are not splatterfests as the field of slasher films has come to present. *Halloween* eases its way into the subgenre with simple, clean kills by a common kitchen knife, minus the telephone cord strangulation of Lynda (P.J. Soles). The film acts as a precursor to other films in showing that the category of slasher does not simply rely on numbers (although *Halloween* sequels raised the number with at least thirteen dead in one film); slasher films can have well-developed stories, strong acting, relevant soundtracks, and atmospheric fear.

Another factor that *Halloween* indirectly helped formalize for the subgenre is the characterization of the victim. The two babysitters and one boyfriend are all teenagers killed in the film. These are young adults who engage in acts of sexual intercourse, nudity, marijuana smoking, and other social ills parents are supposed warn against; however, the slasher film is never about parents, and viewers rarely see any adults in typical adult positions of authority until the end of the film. *Halloween* did not promote the idea that promiscuous teenagers should be killed, but its depictions of teens having sex and smoking marijuana became a central motif in slasher films. This victim stereotype helped popularize the slasher subgenre and became one of the staple reasons people frequented the movies in the 1980s.

Tony Timpone, editor of *Fangoria* magazine, says academics have always read too much into the film and that Carpenter simply wanted to make a good horror film to scare audiences (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*). But *Halloween's* success turns a solid filmmaking effort into a reason for others to copy the production elements and weaken the horror genre.

It was the, you know, the new indie sensation that everyone had to see.

What set *Halloween* apart from other horror films of that time I think was just a skill that John Carpenter brought to the material. Subjective shots from the killer's point of view really hadn't been done that much before.

He came up with a very memorable score that had you on edge right from the beginning, he had good actors, and the victims were also sympathetic .

. . . so many of the slasher films that came out after *Halloween*, you know

these characters are just set up to die but you cared about the characters in *Halloween*. (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*)

There were stories behind the victims in *Halloween*; they were not shells of characters meant only as slasher fodder. Carpenter also defends his characters and their kills. He says the film holds no Christian moral testing or punishment for the teens who are having sex and/or engaging in other debauched activities. “The movie’s about the revenge of the repressed. And Jamie Lee has a connection with the killer because she’s repressed, too. To me, these kids are just engaged in normal teenage behavior. They get killed ‘cuz they’re not paying attention; they’re involved with their boyfriends and they don’t think anything’s going on” (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*). Despite Carpenter’s cautions, critics continue to dig deeper into the meaning behind teenage characters getting killed by horror villains. Drugs were popular in the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and into the 21st century, and rates of teen sexual activity have not diminished over the years. Sex sells, and audiences like to see onscreen depictions of things they can identify with in their own lives from the past, present, or future. It does not take a scholarly point of view or critical analysis to understand that audience members invest more in stories that resemble personal experiences and/or recognizable sociocultural climates. Intimate connection to a film is what makes the element of fear strongest for a viewer.

Carpenter acknowledges the centrality of audience fear in relation to watching a horror film. He says, “Fear is an interesting thing ‘cuz we all are afraid of the same things. That’s what makes these movies so universal, that makes them play in every country. We’re all afraid of death, loss of identity, loss of a loved one, disfigurement; all

the horrors of humanity we all have” (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*). Although Halloween is classified as one of the first slasher films, it contains a story with characters and situations viewers can all relate to through personal fears. Sometimes the scariest thing of all is the end of a horror film because there is typically an open ending that refuses to offer any sense of hope or alleviation of fear. As Carpenter says,

The ending means he’s not only gone, he’s everywhere. This guy is a human but he’s not, he’s more than that. He’s not exactly supernatural, but maybe he is. Who knows how he got that way. It makes the ending more surprising if you don’t say he’s been, you know, cursed by some . . . you don’t give much of an explanation so your imagination works much more; it’s much more terrifying. (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*)

Fear lingers on and so does Michael Myers in the franchise sequels; however, he is not the only person or thing that gains popularity or achieves a notable status from the film.

Halloween helped launch the career of directors, producers, and actors. Carpenter had worked on several monster movies prior to helming the 1978 film, and his recognition was limited to the overseas success of his 1976 film, *Assault on Precinct 13* (remade in 2005). After *Halloween*, he went on to make memorable films of the 1980s such as *The Fog* (1980), *The Thing* (1982), *Starman* (1984), *Big Trouble in Little China* (1986), and then a host of other films with high-profile actors like Christopher Reeve, Pam Grier, and Kurt Russell. In 2001, he took a four-year hiatus from directing only to return to horror in the Showtime series *Masters of Horror* (*Cigarette Burns* 2005), featured short films by some of the world’s most respected horror creators, and now

Carpenter has three feature-length horror films currently in production (*The Ward*, *L.A. Gothic*, and *The Prince*). *Halloween* established Carpenter as a master of horror, which can often be more of a curse than a celebration, but he focuses only on the benefits received from the film. He says, “*Halloween* got me branded as a horror director, and it set me down a career making fantasy, science fiction, and horror but hey, I got to become John Carpenter. How cool is that?” (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*).

Jamie Lee Curtis was a fresh face in 1978, but also Hollywood royalty as the daughter of Janet Leigh and Tony Curtis. Her role in *Halloween* evokes her mother’s pivotal scream queen role in *Psycho*; Hitchcock had his protagonist in Leigh and Carpenter had his in Curtis. Prior to her feature-film debut, Curtis was a television actor for almost two years, appearing in series such as *Columbo*, *Operation Petticoat*, and *Charlie’s Angels*. Post-*Halloween* she found herself in the same horror blessing/curse as Carpenter when she popped up in *The Fog* (1980), *Terror Train* (1980), *Prom Night* (1980), and of course *Halloween II* (1981) to reprise her role as Laurie Strode. Carpenter never returned to direct another segment in the *Halloween* franchise, but over the years Curtis kept Strode going strong in *Halloween H20: 20 Years Later* (1998) and *Halloween: Resurrection* (2002) where her character finally met death at the hands of Myers. Curtis’s debut film catapulted her into horror but she found time to avoid typecasting by doing movies such as *Trading Places* (1983), *True Lies* (1994), and *Freaky Friday* (2003). Laurie Strode, much like John Carpenter, Michael Myers, and Dr. Loomis (Donald Pleasance possessed a strong acting portfolio for almost twenty-five years before he accepted the role), lives on in the horror history annals.

Debra Hill and Nick Castle also benefited from the film, as both ventured off into successful careers in producing and directing, but the film itself holds another special mark in slasher history. Tony Timpone sheds light on how much *Halloween* influenced other movies by title alone. Studios that initially turned down *Halloween* as a film project began making their own imitations of the film. Timpone says,

It created a whole industry of slasher films from *Friday the 13th* [1980], and any holiday wasn't safe anymore. You had *New Year's Evil* [1980], *Silent Night, Deadly Night* [1984], *April Fool's Day* [1986]. It should also add that a lot of mainstream movies I think imitated the slasher tropes; films like *Fatal Attraction* [1987] and *Sleeping with the Enemy* [1991], you know films like that where they took, you know . . . sure they dressed it up with big stars and big production values but those are really slasher films under the surface and again they also owe a debt to *Halloween*.

(Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest)

Other holiday and/or celebration films—*My Bloody Valentine* (1981), *Mother's Day* (1980), *Happy Birthday to Me* (1981)—also followed in *Halloween's* footsteps, with the cult parody film, *Student Bodies* (1981), opening the field to comedy long before the *Scary Movie* franchise (2000-2006) was created. In 2007, Robert Rodriguez and Quentin Tarantino released *Grindhouse*, a flashback double-feature reminiscent of the drive-in era, and between the two movies (*Planet Terror* and *Death Proof*) rising directors contributed fake movie trailers for intermission. The *Halloween* influence was showcased

in the trailer for the holiday horror film, *Thanksgiving*, directed by Eli Roth. In the same year, only four months later, Rob Zombie became a remake director.

Zombie made his way into horror films directing the fan-favorite *House of 1000 Corpses* in 2003 and the critically acclaimed *Devil's Rejects* in 2005. Both films show a respect for the genre, offering homage to traditional themes, motifs, storytelling and visuals, and they were both original films written by Zombie. He also filmed a trailer (*Werewolf Women of the S.S.*) for *Grindhouse* that evoked both classic cult women-in-prison films and mad scientist movies. Zombie became a hot ticket in horror, but when he announced a remake for *Halloween* fans and critics took a step back to question his decision. With the success of Zombie's previous films, it seemed odd that he would not be making another original film instead of remaking a classic. Fans demanded Zombie to speak out on why he would do a remake and he replied, "I wouldn't even go near this project if I didn't feel like I had a fresh, worthwhile approach to the material. Besides, I'm not touching one single frame of Carpenter's classic. That film will remain as it always has" (*HalloweenMovies*). Although Zombie's project is a re-imagining of the original and not a full remake, "fresh" and "remake" are words that do not work well together,. It is important to look at the film itself to find out what changes were and were not made, and how they alter the reception, innovation, spirit, and impact of the original film and its full franchise.

There are three main changes between the original film and the re-imagined vision: the beginning sequences, Dr. Loomis, and Laurie Strode's fight with Michael Myers. The first two-thirds of Zombie's *Halloween* is the most troubling aspect of the

remake. The film avoids the original production in order to showcase Michael Myers as a child, his homelife, troubles at school, and four murders (a bully, his sister, his sister's boyfriend, and his mother's boyfriend) that get him committed to a sanitarium. Instead of the opening sequence of six-year-old Myers murdering his sister in Carpenter's film, *Zombie* makes his character a ten-year-old boy suffering from severe depression and psychological problems. His mother is a stripper, and his homelife is less than ideal. The remake is extremely heavy-handed in depicting a child affected by his environment, thereby offering some rationale for his behavior and murderous actions; however, this is akin to saying Myers played violent video games and so became a violent individual from the exposure. *Zombie*'s explanation and overly-long presentation of the killer as a child is ambitious but unnecessary. When the audience is presented the lengthy history of the young Myers, an effort to understand the killer mitigates the aspect of fear from the production and storytelling; the film becomes a televised movie-of-the-week instead of a study in horror. *Zombie* manages to turn shock and fear of the unknown into a drama that attempts to explain too much. Instead of the audience's fear of what lies behind the mask in the original production, the remake pushes viewers to see the monster as just a boy who was picked on as a child and had a family life that forced him to strike out against others. *Psycho* previously showed audience the fear of "normalcy," which makes *Zombie*'s attempt outdated.

In the *Halloween* remake, Myers almost kills Loomis and leaves him for dead. This is a huge divergence from the original film which made the doctor's character a staple of its many sequels. *Zombie* said in countless interviews that this was one of the

changes made to ensure studios would not ask him to do a sequel, but then he made a sequel. The act of wounding Loomis (the viewer sees Myers squeezing his head), who is a clear father figure for Myers, is almost relevant for the story. The beginning of the remake acknowledges Loomis as the only stable male figure in Myers's life (minus rare interactions with a mental health institution employee). Loomis visits Myers everyday for several years to talk to him and watch over him like a surrogate. When Myers attacks Loomis, the act could represent the struggle between a father and son if the relationship had been developed more, but *Zombie's* departure from the original screenplay makes the sequences seem arbitrary.

The director's other notable change comes at the end of the film. Before the showdown between Strode and Myers, the viewer witnesses a few reenacted scenes from the original such as the memorable scene where Myers appears in a sheet pretending to be Lynda's boyfriend. At the end, Myers and Strode engage in a battle royal that pits his brute strength against her smarts. More of an action film than the original, in final sequence Myers charges Strode and both fly out a window off the second story balcony (the original film depicts Loomis shooting Myers until he falls off the balcony to his death, disappearing moments later). Strode regains consciousness on top of Myers's body; she is beaten, battered, bloody, and covered in dust. She straddles him, points a gun to his face, and fires three times but the gun is empty. In the last twenty seconds of the film, Myers grabs her arm; Strode shoots; the gun fires a single bullet to his face; she drops the gun and begins to scream uncontrollably. The camera closes in on her bloodied face and the screen dissolves to a shot of Strode as a baby being cradled in the arms of

her mother. *Zombie* changes film genre to action inside the house, and at the end he invokes 1970s rape-revenge exploitation, which many critics now label as torture porn. This change in genre informs the viewers that the world is a mad, mad place, but it does nothing to advance or better the lore of Michael Myers. Loomis is apparently mortally wounded; Myers can only be presumed dead after being shot in the face; Strode is enduring a mental breakdown; and sirens heard in the distance announce the eventual arrival of the good guys. This ending, however, did offer narrative closure until *Zombie* decided to make a sequel.

Zombie's remake accomplishes more kills, a psychological back-story that removes the monster's shroud and lessens the element of fear, a patchwork recreation of original scenes, and an ending that kills main characters in an effort to offer closure to be subverted by the production of a sequel. This is not a film that helps the horror genre progress and develop; it is another remake that demonstrates the current state of the field—confusion and loss of direction. “If it ain't broke, don't fix it” is more than a cliché, but *Zombie* tried anyway and the resulting film and its sequel (unrelated to the original sequel) continue to mar the franchise and the contribution to horror Carpenter struggled to create over thirty years ago.

Zombie literally has a name befitting horror, but that does not provide him a free pass to remake or re-imagine Carpenter's classic. *Zombie*, it is true, was given the ultimate green light when he contacted the original film's director. “I talked to John about it and he was very supportive. He basically said, ‘That's great Rob, go for it and make it your own.’ What more do I need?” (*HalloweenMovies*). Here is a major problem for the

proliferation of remakes: when the original directors, producers, actors, and/or production houses offer support for the films to be created; some even work with the new teams on the remake. Originality in horror fades more each year and these collaborations between the new and original creators only exacerbate the watering down of the genre. Once again it is all about money. Carpenter says he did not want to make the original *Halloween II*, and when he was asked to reunite with Curtis for *H20*, he was happy to be consulted but turned down the project; however, he remains content with the serialization of the franchise, remake included, because he is a capitalist and enjoys all the residuals he receives from the continual efforts to keep Michael Myers alive in more films (*Halloween: A Cut Above the Rest*). If money is the only true concern, then Carpenter probably does not care whether *Zombie* made the film his “own” or not; his interest lies in how much money the film would make at the box office and how much of that revenue would filter into his own hands.

The original *Halloween* had a production budget of \$325,000 and grossed \$47 million (\$60 million worldwide); *Zombie*’s remake cost an estimated \$15 million to make and earned over \$58 million (over \$80 million worldwide). The clear winner, if there were a battle, is the original film which was designated one of the most successful independent films of all time. It was also selected by the National Film Registry to be preserved as a “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant” work of filmmaking (*Halloween [1978 film]*). America is, of course, a capitalist society; however, when someone remakes a film that is classified as art, preserved by the Library of Congress,

celebrated as a production that changed a film genre, and viewed as a historic cultural marker, it tarnishes the creation by turning it into a cash cow.

CHAPTER V: *FRIDAY THE 13TH*:

SUPERSTITION BROUGHT UNIVERSAL APPEAL . . .

You see, Jason was my son, and today is his birthday.

– Pamela Voorhees

Camp Crystal Lake is a woodsy retreat for kids and young-adult camp counselors. The participants get to swim, hike, tell ghost stories by campfire, make new friends, and join in a host of other events in the summertime. The mother of a kid who drowned at the camp while the supervising counselors were preoccupied does not find the activities any fun since dealing with the death of her son, Jason Voorhees. In 1980, *Friday the 13th* made its way to theatres to do for camping what *Jaws* did for boating, swimming, and other water sports. Sean S. Cunningham directed a film portraying a mother's revenge for the accidental death of her son—a mentally challenged young man who drowns while no one is watching. The film has nine original sequels; however, Jason was not the killer in the original film or its fourth sequel, *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning* (1985).

Friday the 13th is the ultimate cautionary tale for campers and sexually-active teens going out into the woods to explore their newly-developed adult bodies and hormones. With its masked killer, recognizable theme music, and final-girl syndrome, the film represents the offspring of *Halloween* and the grandchild of *Psycho*. All the elements are there, most notably a knife for killing and teenagers in jeopardy, but this time the mother is the killer. This twist shows what life might have been like should Norman Bates's mother been alive before her son took over the business of killing. *Friday the 13th* was not the only slasher film to emerge post-*Halloween*, but it mastered the elements of

the subgenre to become one of the top three alongside its precursor and before *Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984).

The franchise travels a road similar to *Halloween's*. In the original *Friday the 13th* Pamela Voorhees exacts revenge on unsuspecting young camp counselors whose only fault is working at the same camp where her son drowned. These teenagers know the story of Jason but none of them were working at Camp Crystal Lake when the event took place. Pamela takes it upon herself to punish the new counselors who are oblivious to their surroundings because they are too involved with sex, drinking, and/or drugs. John Carpenter says teens died in *Halloween* because they were not paying attention, not directly because of sex or drugs, and the same is true here. Before Pamela is beheaded by the last girl standing (Alice), she tells the story of the boy-who-would-be-killer:

Did you know a young boy drowned the year before those two others were killed? The counselors weren't paying any attention. They were making love while that young boy drowned. His name was Jason. I was working the day that it happened, preparing meals . . . here. I was the cook. Jason should've been watched every minute. He was, he wasn't a very good swimmer. We can go now, dear. (*Friday the 13th*)

After the legendary battle by the lake, Alice wakes up in a hospital after a supposed dream of Jason attacking her from the water, but the police have no idea what she is talking about, and so the time of Jason begins.

It is never revealed to viewers how Jason came to be, but speculation dictates he never drowned and Pamela had been caring for him *or* his mother's death brought him to

life to carry out the killing. He takes Pamela's place in the sequel (1981) and sports a potato sack over his head while stalking victims, until he, too, meets his match by a final girl (Ginny) who uses a machete to slice into his shoulder. Ginny and her boyfriend race back to a cabin where Jason attacks again, but that scene cuts to her waking up like Alice in the first movie with memory loss and no knowledge of what happened to Jason. By the time this sequel came out, the franchise had already set in stone the open ending to leave room for its killer to return in later segments, and the final girls were seemingly mystified by Jason's presence because they always seemed to be disoriented about the murderous events and the killer's whereabouts in the end. *Friday the 13th Part III* (1982) again picks up where the previous film ended: Jason removes the machete from his shoulder and begins killing teens at a home not far from the lake. He is bested by another teenage girl who brings an axe down upon his head, and again the survivor's mental capacity is injured after being taken away by the police. The importance and significance of *Part III*, however, is that this is the sequel where Jason acquires the infamous hockey mask from one of his victims. This sequel solidified the character who had been developing into a monster since his mother talked about him as a darling boy in the original film.

Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter (1984), *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning*, and *Friday the 13th: Jason Lives* (1986) offer a mid-franchise trilogy that chronicles the life of Tommy Jarvis, a young boy who "kills" Jason in the third sequel after Jason escapes the morgue. Tommy is committed to a mental health facility in the fourth sequel where he faces Jason again, only to discover it was a copycat killer seeking revenge for the death of his son at the institution. Tommy appears a final time in the fifth sequel where lighting

strikes a rod impaled in Jason's body and revives him. This is the first time the killer returns through some form of extraordinary or supernatural means. Tommy, however, chains an enormous rock to Jason and leaves the killer to drown in the lake where it all started.

The franchise seemed to follow in the footsteps of *Halloween*, which by this time was wandering into the land of convoluted storytelling; however, *Friday the 13th* made choices to go the way of inconsistent and ridiculous Jason resuscitations—storytelling took a backseat to bringing Jason back to kill and be killed again. This point is illustrated in *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood* (1988), where telekinetic Tina accidentally revives the monster and has to use her powers to defeat him at the end, sending him back into the water yet again. He is brought back by an electrical cable in *Friday the 13th Part VIII: Jason Takes Manhattan* (1989), and chases after teens in *The Big Apple* (a long journey from home akin to Michael Myers's trek to California). At the end of this sequel Jason is killed by raw sewage washing over him, but his remains reveal the innocent boy he was at the time of his drowning in the original film. The sequence baffles fans and critics alike because it is completely ludicrous to think that Jason was a mature, monstrous shell hiding the body of a small child within, but that is how it was filmed.

Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday (1993) premiered when the films could not get more incomprehensible. There was no explanation for his resurrection, and he began to possess people by having them devour his heart. Jason needs to find a family member to regain his physical body and the story proceeds to reveal he has a sister and a niece (all-too reminiscent and copied from *Halloween*). After he reconciles with his body, his

niece stabs him with a magic dagger, and giant hands come out of the ground to take him to Hell. The story does not relate at all to the original film but fans eat it up (pun intended). As awkward as this sequel is in relation to the franchise—everyone knew that the word “final” had been used in a title before and did not stop the serialization—*Jason X* hit theatre screens in 2002. In this final sequel of the original franchise Jason boldly goes where no horror villain had gone before (other than *Critters 4* [1992], *Hellraiser: Bloodline* [1996], and *Leprechaun 4: In Space* [1997]). In short, Jason returns (no one knows how) and is cryogenically frozen, awakening over 400 years into the future. The technology that brings him back resurrects him as an indestructible cyborg that the team aboard a spaceship must try to defeat. After an arduous and comical struggle, Jason’s body is hurdled toward the planet “Earth Two” like a meteor in flight. A couple of teenagers at a lakeside setting witness what they think is a falling star and head in the direction to investigate, and the cameras show Jason’s mask sink to the bottom of the water.

The *Friday the 13th* franchise began in 1980 as a clear offshoot from *Halloween*, but by the time it came to an end, the sequels were unrecognizable in relation to anything other than slashers relying on the kills. Continuity problems plagued the series; unknown writers, directors, and actors worked on the productions and cranked out sequels in rapid fashion; and the idea of a legacy like *Halloween* faded as every new installment distanced itself from the original concept.

In its inception, the film carried over clear mirror markers from *Psycho*: the knife as murder weapon and Pamela Voorhees as the overbearing, controlling mother of Jason

in a relationship not unlike that between Norman Bates and his split personality mother figure (Pamela channels Jason to kill; Norman channels his mother). *Friday the 13th* did not, however, carry with it the critical support *Psycho* achieved. Roger Ebert slammed the film and called it an “immoral and reprehensible piece of trash” (*His Name was Jason*) and was joined by his reviewing partner Gene Siskel, but the bad publicity simply made audiences more curious about the film and brought in more viewers.

It is a unique horror franchise because the killer in the original story is not the iconic masked villain of its sequels. It also features a sequel in which a copycat killer does all the work. This situation is the same as the unrelated second sequel in the *Halloween* series which shows the serialization of slasher films is never a road of certainty. Seth Grahame-Smith, author of *How to Survive a Horror Movie*, supports the notion that *Friday the 13th* remains a unique film in a sea of slashers because of its iconic star. He says, “Jason started as a drowning victim—that’s as simple as you can make it. And he’s just a little boy who was ignored by his camp counselors and couldn’t swim very well and drowned. And no matter what movie you’re talking about, he’s still a victim” (*His Name was Jason*). Although Jason’s origin seems markedly different from Michael Myers and other figures that followed, his status as victim seeking revenge is not as different as Grahame-Smith purports. The *Halloween* films demonstrate that Myers is a troubled kid, somewhat influenced by society, a mental-health disorder, and a ritualistic curse, and in a movie like *Nightmare on Elm Street*, Fred Krueger is a sinister villain, but he’s also seeking revenge for the vigilante justice of his fellow citizens who killed him without letting government personnel do their jobs.

Jason, like Michael Myers, did not become a horror icon because of his origin story. A large majority of people watch movies in the *Friday the 13th* franchise for the kill factor. The film series outnumbers its *Halloween* predecessor and *Nightmare on Elm Street* successor, but quantity over quality has a way of watering down horror, and *Friday the 13th* suffers from this situation after a couple of sequels. Instead of audiences being afraid of Jason, viewers came to celebrate his inventive slayings as horror entertainment; frightening moments in the series became camp.

The fear in the original *Friday the 13th* comes from storytelling, not killing and not a masked villain. Michael Myers starts his killing spree with five victims in the first *Halloween* and his numbers climb into the teens by the production of the third sequel. Jason starts with nine victims and his numbers climb to almost thirty in *Jason X*. The more victims slaughtered in the films, the more desensitized audiences become to the carnage. *Halloween* relies on collaborations between music, masked fear, and stalking, even when the kills became more in number. The *Friday the 13th* series, on the other hand, has always hooked audiences into seeing the films by offering more kills and more creativity to the kills. Joe Lynch, director of *Wrong Turn 2* (2003), says the movies in the series are “really about watching Jason do his thing; he was the protagonist in these films” (*His Name was Jason*). The innumerable death counts, however, take away fear and make the murders comedic, expected, and celebrated by an almost audience-participation agreement. Fans have been known to count the death scenes as a sequel would play on the big screen, and this attention given to the number of violent deaths

removes fear and replaces it with a more active viewer response too attentive to scorekeeping to allow defenses to drop for fear to take over.

Jason's hockey mask is as iconic as the Shatner mask of Myers and should be able to inspire the same amount of dread, but the element of fear does not reside in his hidden face. Throughout various sequels the audience is allowed to see his face when the mask is knocked off somehow and although it is a disfigured appearance, Jason's malformation is more about shock than fear. There is also a clear difference between the two masks: a hockey mask is easily recognizable as equipment in a sporting event, but a Shatner mask that has been altered—eyes widened, sideburns removed, eyebrows removed—creates a Freudian *unheimlich* reaction, where viewers are torn between the recognition of a human face and the fear of its alien appearance. If Jason had not picked up the hockey mask in the second sequel it is possible that the films would have relied more on fear of the unknown rather than fear of an iconic mythology. He wears a potato sack in the first sequel, hence he is shrouded like the Grim Reaper and misunderstood like Cyclops in *Krull* (1983), and the mystery created by that sack is certainly scarier than a hockey mask. The mask is a recognizable symbol for horror entertainment, but there is no inherent fear because of it. The element of fright emanates from the origin story told in the first film.

Friday the 13th utilizes the campfire tale. Such a story, told at night around a roaring fire in the open air while a circle of friends listen intently, is presented by one camp counselor to the others as a joking way to break the ice of newfound or reconnected camaraderie. The story extends beyond the circle into the movie theatre or living room

where viewing audiences become a part of the listening group. Characters and viewers become so engrossed in the storytelling that they all jump or scream when the quiet, whispered tale is interrupted by another counselor who appears from nowhere to make a loud noise or act wildly. The first three films make storytelling the trademark of fear. Counselors tell the stories with such honesty that the other characters fall into the trap; however, none of them know the story is true within the scope of the film. Audience members realize this is storytelling contained in a fictional presentation (known in narratology as a frame tale), but they are scared, too, because almost everything in life is “based on a true story”—the phrase that seems to always bring intrigue, mystery, and fear.

Pamela Voorhees uses the same aspects of storytelling to frighten and reveal the truth in her final encounter with the counselor who claims her head. Her flashback tale informs the audience she is the killer, and the shocking information turns to fear when she says: “You let him drown! You never paid any attention. Look what you did to him,” before attacking Alice. From campfire tale to confession, *Friday the 13th* effectively uses rhetoric to scare its characters within the action and audiences looking in on the film. As the sequels continued to be produced, the storytelling aspect got shorter, more rapid, and less frequent; it was replaced by abundant, creative kills.

Jason simultaneously decapitates three paintball players standing next to each other in *Friday the 13th: Jason Lives*; he slices a machete into the face of an unsuspecting character whose wheelchair rolls backward and bounds down an enormous flight of stairs in the rain in *Friday the 13th Part II*; and in *Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood*,

Jason grabs a sleeping bag with the female victim struggling inside, slings her into a tree trunk, and kills her instantly. These kills are never about fear; they do not make audiences scream at Jason's sudden appearance. These kills are about anticipation, which is an adrenaline rush much different from fear; they make audiences question, "What is he going to do now?"

The storytelling within *Friday the 13th* exacts fear from its viewer, and much like the telling of a tale the emotion is cyclical and returns when triggered. Anticipation, however, leads to relief usually in the form of laughter. After the original film and its sequel, storytelling begins to fade and so does the element of fear. All that remains throughout the rest of the franchise is a celebration of innovative, absurd kills. Audience participation is present throughout the entire series, but fear takes a backseat to gimmick.

Friday the 13th lacks star power in its series of films. Compared to *Halloween*, there is no comparison: Sean S. Cunningham, Steve Miner, John Carl Buechler, and Joseph Zito are the only directors whose careers got a boost from the franchise with a boost in their careers. Cunningham recently found a home producing remakes such as *Friday the 13th* (2009) and *The Last House on the Left* (2009); Miner directs television episodes including the popular series *Smallville* (2002) and *Psych* (2008); Buechler currently serves as director for the remake of the 1986 cult horror flick *Troll*, set for release in 2012; and Zito found limited exposure directing the 80s action movies *Missing in Action* (1984) and *Red Scorpion* (1989). None of these directors have gone on to achieve the success of Carpenter from his work with *Halloween*. It is easily argued that the big splash (or slash) that *Halloween* made in the horror genre could not be repeated

with an offshoot like *Friday the 13th*. The directing skills were there, but the original film and its sequels cannot match the significant impact of *Halloween*.

The actors have suffered the same fate. Jamie Lee Curtis became an overnight sensation because of her role as Laurie Strode, but no female or male actor from the *Friday the 13th* franchise can say the same. There are a few actors who appeared in the films that have continued to work in the entertainment industry, but most of their names or achievements have not been able to reach or surpass Curtis's success. One of those actors is Corey Feldman, who had been acting for six years before he appeared in the third sequel at age 13. He went on to act in high-profile projects like *The Goonies* (1985), *Stand by Me* (1986), and *The Lost Boys* (1987) to attain teen heartthrob status, but his career fell off the map even as he continued to work in film and television. Now approaching 40 years of age, Feldman uses his former teen status to reprise the role of Edgar Frog in the direct-to-DVD sequels *Lost Boys: The Tribe* (2008) and *Lost Boys: The Thirst* (2010). He is probably the most recognized actor from *Friday the 13th*, alongside Shevar Ross from *A New Beginning* who went on to work in the acclaimed television series *Different Strokes* (NBC 1978-1986), *Magnum, P.I.* (CBS 1980-1988), and *Family Matters* (ABC 1989-1998). Ross is also able to say that his character broke the African-American racial stereotype in horror films by surviving the onslaught of Jason. Kevin Bacon, Crispin Glover, and Miguel A. Nunez, Jr. also appeared in the films and went on to bigger careers, but all of their characters were simply kill formulas; none of them survived in the movies to have any real impact on the storylines.

The biggest star from the films is, of course, Jason Voorhees. Jonathan Crane is surprised by Jason's star power: "With nothing more in his favor than gutting teens in enormous multitudes, Jason has become an American institution. What is exceptionally interesting about Jason's stardom is that it is the persona who is popular and not the actor or a combination of actor and character" (142). There's no denying the character's popularity, but Crane should also realize that the actors/stuntmen playing the character are also widely-recognized by supporters (fans) of the genre, especially at horror and comic-book conventions. To devout horror followers, the men who have stood behind the mask of Jason have been just as famous as the character. The figure is portrayed by various actors and/or stuntmen throughout the series until the last four films, in which Kane Hodder has become the masked killer. Taking on the role of Jason in four consecutive films provides Hodder with a huge fan base all over the world even if audiences never see his true face, and he shares this fame with the makeup effects artists who each got to stamp their own creative visions in constructing different looks for Jason's disfigured face.

Outside the film franchise, Jason enjoys constant cultural appreciation in the form of Halloween masks (ironically) and collectible figurines and dolls. Michael Myers and many other horror villains have been merchandized, but in terms of star power the *Friday the 13th* series celebrates this as more of an accolade than the not-so-great accomplishments of its actors, directors, and producers. Jason's iconic status also lends influence to other film and television productions. He appears animated in cameos for *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy*, *South Park*, and *Robot Chicken*. Jason remains a masked

killer, but the shows portray him in a comedic light. When *Friday the 13th* became serialized, Jason's fear-appeal diminished; his overexposure turned into slapstick kills instead of spreading terror in theatres.

In film, his influence was felt immediately after the original movie and its first sequel when *The Burning* (1981) and *Just Before Dawn* (1981) were released; both films employed the scary camp killer motif. The same year also saw the release of the horror spoof *Saturday the 14th* which took liberties with the horror film's title and themes of superstition. Jason also manages to stay current in music with rapper Eminem dropping the character's name in several of his songs. In addition, the franchise spawned a television series of the same name about cursed antiques, established the final girl syndrome en masse, inspired Nike commercials, *MadTV* episodes, lunchboxes and thermoses, and Jason accepted a lifetime achievement award at the 1992 MTV Movie Awards and also appeared on *The Arsenio Hall Show*. His celebrity extended into a haunted house attraction at Universal Studios and a published book detailing memories of Camp Crystal Lake (*His Name was Jason*). Star power for *Friday the 13th* relies on branding, merchandising, and cultural awareness. Both brand and merchandise were rebooted seven years after the ninth sequel in the series.

The problem with *Friday the 13th* returning in 2009 as a remake is that it represents another remake receiving support from its original production team. Sean S. Cunningham served as producer for the *Friday the 13th* remake, directed by Marcus Nispel, a man previously known for his remake of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* in 2003. Cunningham says, "It's made by people who love the franchise, but who are going

at it with many more resources than we ever had or ever dreamed of” (*His Name was Jason*). Resources, as with most remakes, simply means money, and too many people working on these films feel that more money will create better films to pay homage to or even replace the originals. Cunningham, like Carpenter, had few resources to create his original horror vision but that lack of funding for actors, locations, equipment, and special effects forced the production teams to be creative about how they would make the movies, and these are the stories they all celebrate on DVD extras, in interviews, and in retrospectives made about the heyday of horror. It is all too easy now with bigger production budgets to utilize computer generated imagery, hire well-known actors, attract high-profile producers, and create aesthetically pleasing sets or travel to lush locales to make sleek, glossy horror films. Horror was never a “pretty” genre because the films of the 1970s and 1980s were visceral in subject matter and that content was matched in production value and presentation. As indicated before, the newer, polished remakes turn horror films into blood-drenched action movies, and these days it seems there is only one man to credit such a development: Michael Bay.

Bay, known for his pulse-pounding action productions like *Bad Boys* (1995), *The Rock* (1996), *Armageddon* (1998), and the *Transformers* series (2007, 2009, 2011), serves as producer on remakes for *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (2003), *The Amityville Horror* (2005), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (2006), *The Hitcher* (2007), *Friday the 13th* (2009), and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (2010). For each of these remakes he teams up with a relatively unknown director, or in the case of Dave Meyers, Samuel Bayer, and Marcus Nispel, the directors all have a history of music video

directing experience working with top talents such as Green Day, The Cranberries, Janet Jackson, Dave Matthews Band, Missy Elliot, Britney Spears, and Cher. Bay also directed a couple of music videos in the early 1990s. In this manner, the “new horror” wave of remakes is nothing more than a growing number of over-produced, big budget music videos with blood, young Hollywood actors, loud soundtracks, and CGI components for mainstream American audiences. Video killed the radio star, and those who make videos will kill the horror genre, as well. The box-office numbers do not lie; audiences cannot get enough.

The new *Friday the 13th* is different from the *Halloween* reread because it is part of the remake machine juggernaut led by Bay that always features teens or young adults cast from popular television shows. The storytelling has also been altered and Jason’s actions are not as monstrous as they were in the original series. Previously-mentioned remakes produced by Bay feature popular actors like Jessica Biel, Ryan Reynolds, Sophia Bush, and Eric Balfour from hit TV series *7th Heaven*, *Two Guys, a Girl, and a Pizza Place*, *One Tree Hill*, and *Six Feet Under*. These actors were well-known as television stars before jumping onto the remake machine to boost their mass audience appeal and recognition for film projects. *Friday the 13th* features Amanda Righetti from *The O.C.* and *North Shore*, Danielle Panabaker from *Shark*, and Jared Padalecki from *Supernatural* and *Gilmore Girls*. They are all recognized actors with large television audience followings, and are cast in remakes in the hope viewers will follow them into the theatres thereby helping to create film careers for the actors and revenue for the filmmakers. The actors also find themselves doing more than one remake to gain popularity and a name in

the film industry. Padalecki appeared in *House of Wax* (2005) and Panabaker acted in *The Crazies* (2010). It is definitely an intelligent move on both parts for stardom and box-office numbers (the original film had a production budget of \$550,000 with over \$39 million made in the theatres; the remake cost \$19 million with a box-office pull of almost \$65 million), but the notion of originality in horror and the memory of Cunningham's film pay the price.

The story of *Friday the 13th* also suffers. Nispel turns the remake into a giant mashup of the first three films in the franchise. His film opens with a short sequence that plays while the credits roll. Audience members see a recap of the events that take place at the end of the original film; the sequence is reshot in the rain with new actors. After the actor portraying Pamela Voorhees is decapitated, the final girl runs off and a young boy walks over to the lifeless body. This is Jason, depicted as witnessing his mother's death in order to give explanation and reasoning behind his killings (a scene not shown in the original), but the audience has to use its imagination and own deductive reasoning in order to figure this out in the 1980 production. After the audience is spoon-fed this sequence, viewers are also able to witness the young Jason pick up the machete his mother's attacker used and walk off into the woods to become the legend he is today. It is understandable that filmmakers of remakes want to dive into the story of iconic figures like Jason, Michael Meyers, and Freddy, but there is something to be said about audience credibility and intelligence; not every part of a story has to be presented onscreen for viewers to make their own connections about how the narrative proceeds. Watering down

storylines by presenting too much information leaves no room for audience participation in the movie-going experience.

Once the opening sequence is complete, the formula of young adults camping, nudity, drug use, and Jason killing ensues. Five campers are slowly picked off one by one by Jason (sporting a potato sack over his head and later acquiring the infamous hockey mask to bring the 1980s-film mashup full circle) because they have stumbled upon his homeland. The first is killed while trying to obtain marijuana, which implies Jason is growing the plant around his home and kills the victim for attempting to steal. Next, a female victim and her boyfriend are killed, but the boyfriend's death is problematic because he is first snagged in a bear trap. This implies Jason is a hunter-gatherer or a forest child who has grown up to depend on the land to live (humanized instead of a killing machine that cannot be stopped). Another couple is also attacked while rummaging through Jason's home. They find a locket Pamela Voorhees carried when she was alive that contains pictures of herself and Jason, and it is suggested that the girl (Whitney) resembles Pamela. The boyfriend is dragged beneath the floorboards where he meets his maker, but Whitney escapes and Jason gives chase. These are classic slasher film themes and motifs (minus the human factor), but there is one situation with the girl who escapes that changes the entire design behind the *Friday the 13th* franchise.

Jason takes Whitney prisoner; he abducts her and shackles her to a bed underground. Many slasher films, the original *Friday the 13th* movies included, have moments where the killer becomes humanized by a victim trying to reason with him/her in order to stay alive. Victims often call the killer's name to make him remember his

humanity. Typically the killer stops mid-attack, tilts the head to show understanding, and for a moment listens to what the victim has to say. But soon some action takes place to break the moment—a vase shatters, another character stumbles into the scene, or as in *Friday the 13th Part II*, a slight movement reveals the severed head of Pamela Voorhees and Jason realizes the girl standing before him is only impersonating his mother—and the killing resumes.

The remake, however, goes beyond a moment of recognition and Jason takes Whitney underground to live with him. It is uncertain what would have happened to her had she not been rescued, but Jason keeps her with him for at least six weeks before she is discovered. Jason is one of slasher films' most formidable killers, and there is insufficient reasoning behind his keeping a teenage girl captive because she is wearing his mother's locket and bears a slight resemblance. This is another effort to humanize a serial slasher from the 80s who has never before acted in such a manner. For six weeks he would have had to take care of his victim—feed her, allow her to relieve herself, and take care of her in possible sickness. Jason is not a homemaker or a father; he is a masked killer who claims the life of anyone who dare set foot on his property or around Camp Crystal Lake. The original film franchise is iconic because Jason is a killing machine that cannot be stopped, but its historical standing in the horror genre is lessened when filmmakers turn the villain an old curmudgeon who misses his mother and is protecting private property.

Monsters and other horror villains who have humanistic qualities can be scary, but that is how those characters are created in their origin stories. This is not the Jason

that Cunningham created thirty years ago, and there is no reason (not even connected to franchising, money, merchandise, etc.) to humanize him now. It may seem like a small alteration in order to make the new film show a different point of view, but every change made to a film that revolutionized the horror genre is another reduction of the field's significance in cinema.

CHAPTER VI: *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET*:

THE SAFETY OF SLEEP WAS VIOLATED . . .

Whatever you do, don't fall asleep. – Nancy

When people sleep, they allow themselves to slip away from the harsh realities of the real world into a landscape of dreams. They fly, make love to celebrities, relive good times with friends and family, and sometimes find themselves naked in a classroom unprepared for a final exam. These dreams can bring physical and mental pleasure; even the awkward birthday suit dreams give people something to laugh about when they wake up. But not all dreams are pleasant—a sunny day turns into a dark tunnel, weddings become funerals, body gratification becomes injury, and a multitude of other oddities, scares, and emotional downfalls present themselves. These are nightmares; they are still the stuff dreams are made of but nothing anyone ever wants. It is during the occurrence of dreams and nightmares that people are at their most vulnerable. All over the world people experience the dream of falling downstairs, off a building, and into an endless abyss of black, but they wake up before hitting the bottom and wonder what would have happened had the dream continued.

The age old question of whether death during sleep correlates to death in reality is answered in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*. The film's premise centers on Fred Krueger, an accused child molester, rapist, and murderer who is burned alive in Springwood, Ohio by a group of neighborhood parents concerned for the welfare of their children. Krueger returns from physical death to invade the dreams of his attackers' children on Elm Street and, out of revenge, kill them one by one. As the sins of the parents are revisited upon

their teenage kids, it is up to the victims to band together in an effort to survive the brutal murders during sleep.

Wes Craven established a pivotal moment in horror history by writing and directing *A Nightmare on Elm Street*—much as John Carpenter (with Debra Hill) did with *Halloween*. Unlike Carpenter or Sean S. Cunningham, however, Craven was a well-established director before he created *Nightmare*. His previous films, *The Last House on the Left* (1972), *The Hills Have Eyes* (1977), and *Swamp Thing* (1982) gave him a name in both science fiction and rape-revenge/exploitation horror films. These were not genres most people celebrated; in fact, exploitation films, especially of the rape-revenge subgenre, typically made people see their directors as immoral human beings. *The Last House on the Left*, however, Craven's first feature film, demonstrates his focus on the human spirit and the importance of story. *Last House* is basically a remake of Ingmar Bergman's *Jungfrukällan* (*The Virgin Spring* [1960]), a film derived from a 13th century medieval ballad. His early films depict the resilience of humankind, and *Nightmare* is no different. The slasher elements—teenagers, sex, drugs—are present (along with more parental figures than *Halloween* or *Friday the 13th*), but the film sets itself apart from others by using dreams as its killer's stalking grounds.

Other horror films like *Friday the 13th*, have given viewers dreams, but those sequences are typically daydreams by the protagonist or scenes intended to fool the audience into believing it is witnessing the appearance of the killer. Although other films had previously utilized the concept of mind control and psychic abilities (*The Fury* [1976], *Carrie* [1978], *Scanners* [1981], and *Firestarter* [1984]), none of them used the

idea of the dream format as a new frontier in which to attack unsuspecting teenagers. *Dreamscape* (1984) premiered a few months before *Nightmare*, and although its main villain killed people in their dreams, the film was more of a science fiction production involving government funding and psychic abilities, and it was not a commercial success. *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, in comparison, preyed on the natural sleep patterns of teenagers and allowed its killer to terrorize and surprise victims supernaturally.

The film appeared during a time when the slasher subgenre was inundated and satiated with knockoffs from *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*. It seemed every weekend in the early 1980s a new slasher film made its way into the theatres. Both filmmakers and audiences were getting tired of the same masked killer story, naked teenagers dying gory deaths, and a decline in production value and acting ability. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* revived the slasher film. Wes Craven and Robert Shaye (producer) found themselves in the same spot as Carpenter with *Halloween*—no studios wanted to take on the film because they all felt people had seen slashers before, and no one would be interested in a movie about dreams (*Going to Pieces*). *Nightmare*, however, took some of the slasher subgenre conventions and retooled them to energize the spirit of horror again. The film succeeded where many others had previously failed, and the original spawned six sequels.

The *Nightmare* franchise was more stable and distinctive than its two main predecessors. The *Nightmare* movies have no break in storyline like *Halloween III: Season of the Witch* or *Friday the 13th: A New Beginning* or a need to venture into uncharted territories like space or demonic possession. Freddy is always the killer, and

in the land of dreams and nightmares anything can happen. This is the franchise that brought cinematic respect back to the slasher subgenre with a clear story, solid filmmaking, and endless creative possibilities in the new arena of dreams.

In the origin film, Nancy (Heather Langenkamp) is the final girl who must atone for her parents' (and their neighborhood associates) transgressions against Fred Krueger (aka Freddy). Freddy kills all of Nancy's friends (and mother), which leaves her alone to try to bring him out into reality where she can do him the most harm. Nancy discovers she basically has to wish "there's no place like home" to make everything normal again. The ending—a mix of reality and dream, happy ending and ambiguity—is no masterpiece and Craven has said before that it is not an ending anyone could decide upon; however, the film marks the beginning of a rejuvenated slasher film period.

A Nightmare on Elm Street is the bastard child of *Psycho*, via *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, because it owes its creation to the 1960s classic but survives on its own merits. Freddy is known as "the bastard son of 100 maniacs," which is a fitting title because his film reached audiences after *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and a mass of copycat movies that featured prolific onscreen killers and carnage. The knife that passed from *Psycho* to *Halloween* to *Friday the 13th* becomes Freddy's finger-knives in a reinvigorated slasher subgenre.

Nightmare continued to set itself apart from its inspirations in the first sequel, *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge* (1985). In the follow-up film, Freddy returns to terrorize teenagers, specifically one who has moved into the house where Nancy lived in the original film. This plot sounds like a typical slasher sequel, but in this

one Freddy makes the teenage protagonist do the killing for him. His proxy also happens to be a male (Jesse), which ignored the slasher tradition of having a female protagonist. Freddy invades Jesse's body and uses him to kill a victim or two before becoming corporeal and tackling the job on his own. Although not a fan favorite in the franchise, this production became known as the "gay sequel," because the filmmakers presented the audience with a final boy scenario that adhered to final girl rules. In clichéd fashion, Jesse wakes from his nightmares screaming in a high-pitched voice, his clothing feminized (tight jeans, colorful shirts, ornate accessories), and his would-be girlfriend (Lisa) playing the supportive and strong boyfriend role. He dances to cutesy pop music and visits his best male friend (a fit, muscular guy clad only in tight briefs) in the dead of night with the request that he watch over him while he sleeps in the same manner Nancy petitioned Glen in the original film. Jesse takes Nancy's role as the final "girl" and the script befits a female protagonist. Some viewers can say, "It was the 1980s" and that is how guys and girls were during that decade. Either way, the sequel goes against type and represents a departure from the other classic slasher franchises. In the end, Lisa helps Jesse break away from Freddy, and the dream killer is defeated again.

The second sequel, *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors* (1987), reunited Wes Craven as writer, Robert Shaye as producer, and Heather Langenkamp as Nancy. The original final girl returns to help teenagers who are suffering terrifying bad dreams in a mental health facility. Nancy learns that the teens are being terrorized by Freddy, so she steps in to help them rid their dreams of the monster. She harnesses her powers from the first film to teach the teens that they, too, have powers in their dreams to

use against the killer. Kristen, the strongest of the teens, works with Nancy to defeat Freddy but not before he is able to kill the franchise's original heroine. The two also receive help from Dr. Gordon, who meets Freddy's mother Amanda, who informs him that her son's bones must be buried in hallowed ground in order to stop the killer for good. This sequel represents the start of the "dream series," three consecutive sequels that all focus on the idea of a dream world landscape where Freddy lives and invades and in which the teenage victims must learn to control their dream personae to survive. In these films the franchise began to resemble *Friday the 13th* by delivering the inventive kills its audience wanted.

Kristen reappears in *A Nightmare on Elm Street 4: The Dream Master* (1988). Freddy kills her and the other survivors from the previous sequel, but she transfers her knowledge and power to Alice, a school friend, before dying. Alice indirectly pulls friends into her dreams where Freddy lies in wait to kill them. She does not kill for Freddy—like Jesse does in the first sequel, but her dreams supply victims for him. Alice, who does not fancy herself strong enough to defeat Freddy alone, absorbs the strength of her fallen friends and uses their combined powers to become a master of the dream world and defeat him.

As the franchise closed out the 80s, Kristen lingers on into another sequel, *A Nightmare on Elm Street: The Dream Child* (1989). This time she is pregnant, and Freddy begins using her unborn child's life force to revivify himself and kill more unsuspecting teenagers. Viewers witness the return of Freddy's mother who manages to trap her son in the dream world while Kristen and the manifestation of her unborn baby

(Jacob) escape to freedom. The audience learns that Freddy was conceived by Amanda, a nun working in a mental health facility who was inadvertently locked within its walls and raped repeatedly by “100 maniacs.” The dream series of sequels establish more about Freddy’s character—how he was conceived and the many ways he can manipulate the dream world to take victims—and let the audience see his development from scary killer in the original to a more wise-cracking, sinister villain crowds have come to love.

Two years later, *Freddy’s Dead: The Final Nightmare* (1991) was released. It is revealed that Freddy has a daughter and he needs her in order to go beyond the boundaries of Springwood to be able to kill even more teenagers. Freddy, it seems, has plans for nation-wide death and destruction. In a quick succession of flashbacks, the killer’s homelife and childhood is visualized for the audience: a broken home, abusive father, animal cruelty, peer ridicule, loss of wife, and the moment he is given immortality in dreams by spirits of the nightmare landscape (or a version of hell); it is not a lengthy, exploratory sequence like that of Rob Zombie’s *Halloween*. Freddy’s daughter (Maggie), however, is a smart cookie and picks up various dream manipulating skills to help fight off his attacks, bring him into the real world, and defeat him as a man much like Nancy tried to do in the first film. Maggie’s last words in the sequel are meant to solidify the closing of the franchise. She says, “Freddy’s dead,” which simultaneously reminds audience members of the title and assures them they have just witnessed the end of an era with the obliteration of Fred Krueger. But Freddy is dead in the original film, so Maggie’s announcement is a somewhat tongue-in-cheek hint that in death Freddy lives.

Four years later that life is realized. *New Nightmare* (1994) breaks from formula completely to create an entirely new kind of slasher horror film. Wes Craven returned again to write and direct this sixth sequel, which reprised the role of Nancy and her father, Lt. Thompson. Nancy's three-time appearance in the franchise matches multiple appearances by Laurie Strode in *Halloween* and the three-film sequence of the Tommy Jarvis character in *Friday the 13th*. Tommy lives after his third appearance, Strode dies in her final (fourth film) meeting with Michael Meyers, and Nancy dies the second time she encounters Freddy, but Craven devised a way to bring his original final girl back and satisfy a fan base that wanted another *Nightmare* film.

Craven uses a meta-fictional approach to deliver this final sequel in the original franchise. The setting for *New Nightmare* takes place in Los Angeles where Heather Langenkamp, Robert Englund, Wes Craven, John Saxton, Robert Shaye, and others live as actors, directors, and producers. Their lives (friendships, loves, and business dealings) are chronicled for the audience in a way that shows what they go through everyday in the film industry. It is almost a documentary production until they start to realize that, upon the tenth anniversary of the original film, all of the previous *Nightmare* films they produced have created an evil entity who has taken on the form of Freddy Krueger in an attempt to break into the real world. Langenkamp's husband (Chase) is killed in a freak auto accident, her son (Dylan) starts to have bad dreams about a man with a knifed-glove, Englund begins to paint creepy artwork with apparitions of Freddy, and constant earthquakes demonstrate something odd is happening between the boundaries of dream and reality. Craven reveals he is writing a new *Nightmare* film and Shaye wants

Langenkamp to star in the vehicle as a tribute film for the fans and a movie to put the character of Freddy to rest once and for all. The terrifying events and deaths force Langenkamp to portray Nancy one last time in an effort to travel into the dream world of the *Nightmare* films and defeat the sinister presence.

This sequel defied all other “final” franchise movies by stepping outside the fiction in order to let audiences get a glimpse into the lives of the real people playing the roles. Of course the “reality” is itself scripted, but the blend of fiction elements and faux-real world happenings makes the film a unique gesture of horror in the slasher subgenre. In fact, *New Nightmare* would be wrongly labeled a slasher film; its innovative design breaks from standard formula. Craven gave audiences a fan-friendly sequel in which moviegoers could revel in once again seeing Nancy, Freddy, the Elm Street House, the infamous glove, and a few kills, but he complicated (in an intelligent manner) the film by stripping off the cinema façade, or breaking the fourth wall, to reveal the actors, makeup, special effects, script writing, producing, promotional advertising, and industry professional lifestyles behind the scenes. Fans, however, do not like too much of anything “new” in a well-established slasher franchise and their lack of appreciation was demonstrated at the box office. The film cost approximately \$8 million dollars to produce, and its box office yielded just over \$18 million. Although it earned back its budget and then some, the film represents the least successful film in the original franchise. It offered a new approach to yet another slasher series that had been watered down from its inception, but the originality was lost on empty theatre seats. This was also the 1990s, a time period many consider the horror film to be dead or nonexistent, and

although that is a strong statement to make, the lack of offerings during the era had made it apparent that horror films were not on the frontlines of cinema. Other franchises—*Warlock* (1989) and *Child's Play* (1988) at the close of the 80s, and *Leprechaun* (1993), *The Prophecy* (1995), and *Tremors* (1990) in the 1990s—tried to become box office success stories but were lost in the shuffle as American independent film began its ascent.

Only two years after the disappointment of *New Nightmare*, Craven partnered with Kevin Williamson (writer), Marianne Maddalena (his executive producer on *New Nightmare*), Bob and Harvey Weinstein (executive producers), and a host of popular young acting talents to direct *Scream*, the film that changed the face of horror and slasher films in one box-office swoop. The film cost an estimated \$15 million to produce but became box-office royalty by taking in over \$100 million in six months. The formula that Craven was developing in *New Nightmare* is fully realized in *Scream*; the characters are self-aware about the horror genre; rules for survival are provided to the audience; and viewers are able to participate in the film (answering trivia questions and playing whodunit) in a way that *New Nightmare* did not provide.

The *Nightmare* series interrupted the humdrum slasher retreads that had become so common after the releases of *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*. Themes, motifs, and other elements of the slasher were evident, but the productions took into account that audiences already knew not to go into the water, or go camping in the middle of nowhere, or even babysit on an ominous holiday. There was a new killer in town and his name was Freddy. Craven's killer wears no potato sack, hockey mask, or altered William Shatner face. His appearance is not shrouded and the films hold nothing back in letting the viewer

get to know the villain. In the origin story it takes some time for characters and audience members to know who the monster is, but once his story is told, his menacing presence is not assuaged; it is his confrontational actions that create much of the fear and unlike the silent killers of *Halloween* or *Friday the 13th*, he can talk to, taunt, and play tricks on his victims. The overt human factor makes fear more tangible because it lets characters and viewers know just how dark the human spirit and heart can get when seeking revenge. Until he is named, Nancy echoes the thoughts of the audience when she says, “I don’t know who he is, but he’s burned and he wears a weird hat and a red and green sweater, really dirty. And he uses these knives, like giant fingernails.” The monsters that scare audiences on the screen, the ones moviegoers know do not exist, are nothing compared to those that scare people in real life because they have seen them before on the news, in documentaries, and in history books.

Fred Krueger was a monster before he became Freddy. He molested, raped, and killed children, and this is not a scenario that had to be made up for the film because such despicable crimes do and have occurred in the past entirely too often. Freddy is the embodiment of those fears in a heightened form for entertainment, but the meaning behind his creation is quite easy to understand. Craven says, “With some slasher films I think it’s just, it’s just blood and guts and torture and things like that which are pretty reliably upsetting, but I think kind of a cheat, and to me it’s much more about the social, economic zeitgeist of what’s going on in the culture at the time that I try to get at” (*Going to Pieces*). Under Craven’s direction, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* achieves social and cultural relevance. Everyone, no matter what culture, race, age, or religious background,

has an emotional response to the destruction of a child's innocence. Audiences must connect with a film in order to have a physical or mental response to the material, and Craven achieved the ultimate repulsion in his creation of Freddy.

Because the power of imagination in a darkened theatre is much stronger than anything a script, recap, flashback, or dream sequence can provide, the audience never sees Krueger interact with children or commit crimes against them. *Freddy's Dead*, however, does attempt to show snippets of Krueger's life from child to adult, but after a handful of sequels the audience does not need its imagination directed toward these visions. By showing clips of Krueger's life pre-Freddy, the filmmakers take away the collaborative effort of film to present a production and have audience members engage with it. Freddy, somewhat of a mixture of Michael Myers and Jason, is fear personified without need of a full back-story.

His face is burned, his hand is clad in a glove with knives that extend and cover the fingers, and his language is less than pristine. Viewers (and characters) fear him for the many reasons we fear physical harm. People are afraid to be burned alive, and no one likes getting poked in the eye accidentally, certainly not with a sharp object; these are acts in which the soft tissue of the body is being inflicted with pain. Freddy also represents social fears of death or dying and experiencing the rot and decay of the body. His presence is that of a social degenerate encroaching upon the safety of suburbia from a sleazy dark alley. Craven took the temperature of America and incorporated the rational (to a degree) fears of the 1980s in his film.

An even more universal element of fear is the vulnerability of sleep. Freddy represents a dangerous sandman character, and in a sleep state, there is no escaping the killer—he cannot be run from like Jason—unless someone understands the difficult art of controlling dreams. In dreams, people like to let go and let the imagination run rampant, but in that freedom also lies the possibility of nightmares or worse, the realization that something could happen to the body outside the sleep state. People pray, “If I should die before I wake . . .” to seek protection during slumber, hoping nothing comes near the body to do physical damage, but the fear is magnified when the harm may come from within their minds while cut off from the waking world.

When the first sequel in the franchise is considered, Wes Craven’s social commentary extends even further into collective fears about the body. He did not write, direct, or produce the sequel, but the film is based upon characters he created, and the presence of social fears does not disappear. Both fans and critics joke about and speculate upon the queer readings of the sequel, but in 1985 this movie could not have been more relevant to America’s social climate. Homosexuality has never been an easy subject for the American public for many reasons including religion, race, and politics. *A Nightmare on Elm Street 2* embodied national fears concerning the discovery of HIV/AIDS and the use of the “homosexual panic” defense in court cases. *Aliens* (1986), which at the heart of its story has fear rooted in contaminated blood, is another that supports this notion. Even if a director or writer is not trying to provide an overt social message, s/he is influenced by the contemporary society surrounding, and that atmosphere becomes historicized in the film.

Along with all of the kitschy scenes of Jesse screaming, dancing provocatively, growing shy after a girl kisses him, and waking in night sweats after he has been stalked by a male figure in his dreams, there is also the pivotal murder where Jesse enters the dream state and finds his coach in what looks to be a bar filled with stereotyped leather daddies, butch lesbians, and other “alternative” lifestyle bar hoppers. Jesse’s coach sports a leather outfit, punishes Jesse by making him run laps in the gym, and then tells him to hit the showers where he later appears. The coach is stripped of his clothes, tied to a shower faucet, whipped with towels, and then sliced with the infamous glove, which is revealed to be on Jesse’s hand, and then of course Jesse screams.

This scene depicts classic stereotypes of master-slave relationships, bondage and S&M play, daddy-son relationships, and then the rejection of such by murdering the coach. In one sequence, America’s fears of stereotypical homosexuals and their behavior is both spotlighted and destroyed. Such repulsion was reflected in a 1980s court case in which “a defendant in a Louisiana murder trial, who claimed that when the victim touched his leg, it unleashed his ‘excessive hostility toward and fear of homosexuals’” (Slovenko 313). Fear of bodily harm is common in slasher films, but Craven’s creation of Freddy allowed the first sequel to highlight a social issue that still exists in the 21st century. More so than *Halloween* or *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street* reveals American society to itself, and fear translated from the screen lives of the audience members is not easily shaken once the house lights come back up.

The film gave fear a new name, a new look, a new subtextual meaning, and also a new sound. One lasting image from the *Nightmare* series will always be little girls

dressed in white dresses, jumping rope and singing a memorable tune. They sing, “One, Two, Freddy’s coming for you. / Three, Four, better lock your door. / Five, Six, grab your crucifix. / Seven, Eight, gonna stay up late. / Nine, Ten, never sleep . . . again.” The sound of this nursery rhyme sung by children haunts the soundtrack and fills the viewer’s ears with a melody that should be pleasant but eerily establishes the presence of the killer. Children are not inherently scary, but childhood can be and most viewers will remember the things that scared them as a child compared to the fears they have overcome as an adult. The chant is a double play on childhood as a carefree time of freedom, growth and uncertainty, where everyone and everything seem more self-aware, larger, and threatening. Moreover, childhood is the one thing Freddy took from kids as a molester, rapist, and murderer. It is only fitting that the sweet, haunting sound of children at play guides the viewer through films that depict the loss of innocence; the chant lyrics also serve as instructions for how to survive an encounter with Freddy. *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, like *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, lives on in classic slasher history with the fear it created for the American public. The film also scared up big box-office and helped launch careers.

Wes Craven was already a somewhat-known director by the time *A Nightmare on Elm Street* was produced, but the film put him in the spotlight as a horror film director, showing that slasher films could be intelligent, have good narratives, and support strong performances from its actors. He went on to direct *The Hills Have Eyes II* (1985), *The Serpent and the Rainbow* (1988), and *New Nightmare* (1994) before mainstream success descended upon him with the production of *Scream* in 1996 and its two sequels in 1997

and 2000. It was a fresh start on a film with new characters, new kills, a new villain, and much more for audiences to digest. The *Scream* trilogy had a combined budget of almost \$80 million dollars and earned over \$290 million in profit at the domestic box office. Craven's career was secured and fully established by the *Scream* franchise, and he is currently at work on bringing the franchise back to life after ten years in *Scream 4* (2011). Each of the films showcased rising and established young acting talent including Neve Campbell, Courtney Cox, Drew Barrymore, Rose McGowan, David Arquette, Matthew Lillard, Skeet Ulrich, Liev Schreiber, Jada Pinkett Smith, Omar Epps, Heather Graham, Scott Foley, and independent film queen Parker Posey. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*, however, introduced audiences to three young actors whose names would become just as recognized as those in the *Scream* films.

Heather Langenkamp appears in three *Nightmare* films as Nancy Thompson, one of two final girls it takes Freddy three times to successfully kill. Her career as an actress received a boost from the first film and she went on to appear in television hits *Just the Ten of Us* and *Growing Pains*. Although she hasn't had a prolific film or television career since *Nightmare*, her name is written in horror history as one of the genre's most memorable characters.

Nancy's boyfriend in the first film is Glen, who is portrayed by a young Johnny Depp in his feature film debut. The movie catapulted Depp into the public eye and soon he appeared on the television vehicle that would make him an American heartthrob and a bankable product in Hollywood: *21 Jump Street*. Depp has starred in a host of films

throughout his career, but when *21 Jump Street* was ending in 1990 he paired up with director Tim Burton to star in *Edward Scissorhands* alongside Winona Ryder. That film solidified Depp and Burton as a collaborative film force as they continued to create critical favorites and box-office gems such as *Ed Wood* (1994), *Sleepy Hollow* (1999), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (2005), and *Alice in Wonderland* (2010), all the while cranking out four films for the *Pirates of the Caribbean* franchise (2003 - 2011). Depp has always been known for his quirky film choices and character portrayals, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* was the one movie that put him on the road to stardom and financial success beyond any other actor in the *Nightmare* series.

The other final girl Freddy desperately tries to kill is Kristen, first portrayed by Patricia Arquette in *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: Dream Warriors*. Like Depp's, this *Nightmare* film was Arquette's feature film debut; however, her success did not come as quickly afterward. Arquette worked steadily through the end of the 1980s and early 1990s until landing high-profile projects like *Ed Wood*, *Lost Highway* (1997), *Bringing Out the Dead* (1999), and *Holes* (2003). She returned to the world of the supernatural on television as Allison Dubois in 2005 to star in *Medium*, currently in its sixth season on the air. All of these actors became household names because they starred in an original horror film. Remakes, on the other hand, cannot offer the same boost in star power because the actors are already well-known from television or other films.

Although Nancy, Glen, and Kristen die, one person can be seen in every *Nightmare* film: Robert Englund as Fred "Freddy" Krueger. Englund had been a working actor in television and film since the mid-1970s, before he landed the role of Willie on

the cult miniseries-cum-television series *V* in 1983, but his role as Fred Krueger in 1984 turned him into a slasher icon. The role also made Englund into a horror genre household name and fan favorite, and even if he made cameos in other less-than-great horror films, fans supported the movie just to see what he would do in his appearance. Unlike the actors and stuntmen who braved the horror waters as Michael Myers or Jason, audiences were able to see Robert Englund the actor beneath all the makeup; he was a slasher villain with personality, character, and a recognizable face. This gave the actor a bigger celebrity presence and star power than the other men whose followings have mostly been supported by horror and comic-book conventions. Other than the *Nightmare* films, Englund has never had a star vehicle to make him a mainstream name like Depp, but his work in horror has crowned him a living legend in the genre. His last portrayal of Freddy came in 2003 with the versus-film *Freddy vs. Jason*, directed by Ronny Yu. Englund also appears in contemporary horror productions such as *Hatchet* (2006), *Jack Brooks: Monster Slayer* (2007), and *Zombie Strippers!* (2008), and maintains his pop-culture status with television appearances in shows like *Charmed* (2001) and *Bones* (2010).

The *Nightmare* franchise brought new life to slasher films, and it even helped revive its predecessors, *Friday the 13th* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre (Going to Pieces)*. It signaled the end of the classic slasher film as the monstrous Freddy became comical and turned into a medium for catch-phrases instead of blood-curdling dialogue. Englund worked on the television series *Nightmare Café* in 1992, and as he hosted episodes like the Crypt Keeper, the image of the slasher villain continued to decline. As stated before, Craven saved the slasher film with the production of *Scream*, but the

Nightmare influence still lingered as films at the end of the 80s and 90s started to mix horror and the supernatural/dream state, sometimes with big talent: *Bad Dreams* (1988), *In Dreams* with Annette Bening and Robert Downey, Jr. (1999), and *The Cell* with Jennifer Lopez and Vince Vaughn (2000).

To this day, the popularity of the *Nightmare* franchise continues, as viewers have seen imitations of Freddy show up in *The Simpsons*, and a *Robot Chicken* episode that informs its audience that Freddy received his hat and red-and-green striped sweater as bad Father's Day gifts. Some credit the box office disappointment of *April Fool's Day* (1986) as the beginning of the end for horror (slasher films specifically) as genre icons like Freddy started to become mass marketed to middle America; studios wanted money but audiences became bored with the same formula and the once scary villains becoming camp (*Going to Pieces*). Only a year after *April Fool's Day* was released, the *Nightmare* series released its second sequel, and at that time the gloved killer started using an abundance of one-liners before slaying his victims. In order to correct this typical slasher villain demise, filmmakers brought Freddy back in 2010.

Samuel Bayer's film makes the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* remakes much more credible in comparison. *Zombie* is a clear fan of horror and attempted to provide a cohesive story with visuals that matched elements of horror, and although Nispel made a glam production it still showed a connection to the original franchise in its mashup scenes and narrative. Bayer's production is an extremely empty film, void of any meaning the original franchise imparted to its audiences. Character changes and story presentation are the major problems. Employing the sleek visuals and casting of the typical contemporary

remake with young star talent—Rooney Mara from *Youth in Revolt* (2009) and Kyle Gallner from *Veronica Mars*, *Big Love*, and *CSI: NY*—the remake indulges only in surface appearances.

Freddy's physical nature onscreen in the remake is less menacing and sleazy than in the original production. The character (played by Jackie Earle Haley) is portrayed as more of an annoyance (rubbing his finger-knives together as teenagers click tongue rings to teeth) and brute-force killing machine (punching his hand through a victim's back and slinging another victim to and fro bedroom walls and ceiling) than someone the audience is to believe molested, raped, and killed children. In almost all of his speaking scenes, which are quite few, the voice is obviously dubbed and/or in voiceover, which is effective for theatre sound but makes the action on screen seem less immediate or horrific. Being able to recognize this technical aspect of production removes the fear audiences are supposed to experience watching the film and makes it more about viewers being savvy about film production. The atmosphere in the theatre fills up with Freddy's voice, but that does not bring the audience closer to feeling immersed in the movie; it distances the audience because the technique is not subtle.

Freddy's back-story is also interrogated in the film, which misdirects the spirit of the franchise. The original films construe Freddy as a child rapist, killer, and son of 100 maniacs, but the remake tosses out a red herring that maybe he was unjustly burned alive. The last two victims, Nancy and Quentin, play Scooby Gang to uncover a school photo showing all the kids Freddy is murdering as teenagers, and along their journey they find more proof their parents may have killed an innocent man. The two are led to an

underground room, hoping to find evidence that will clear Freddy of the crimes he allegedly committed only to discover he wanted them to go there in order to remember all the bad things he did to them when they were children. In this manner, the story reveals that the parents of the Elm Street kids all knew their children had been abused by Krueger and decided to kill him while simultaneously hiding evidence to keep their kids from remembering this part of their lives. It also puts the two teenagers in the awkward position of trying to clear the name of the man who abused them as children.

The original film does not suggest or even hint that Krueger abused Nancy, Glen, and the other teenagers when they were kids, and the audience is provided no evidence to use the imagination to make such a connection. The original story simply tells the audience that parents burned Krueger for the crimes he committed against some (unnamed) children in the neighborhood. In the remake, the blame—for Freddy abusing the kids, the parents erasing the childhood of their sons and daughters, the teenagers working to exonerate their captor—is all around, and Freddy loses his status as the antagonist of the film. The crimes he committed as a human and then again as a slasher monster are certainly evil, but the parents worked together to kill another human being and steal memories from their children. It is understandable that the parents do not want their kids to remember the abuse, but by removing photos, school enrollment information, and other documentation they knowingly erase friendships and any other good life memories the children had when they were in school together. As long as child abuse continues to be a social problem it will remain relevant in film, but the *Nightmare* remake focuses more on the corrupt actions of the parents than the abuser and his victims.

Another issue that must be addressed is the idea of Fred Krueger as a child molester and pedophile. He is described this way in the original film and the remake does the same, but one important change in story alters the narrative. In the original film, he targets the teens of the parents who murdered him, but nothing is ever said about him specifically abusing their children. The remake makes it explicit that he abused all the children he now hunts as teenagers. The film further complicates this idea by Freddy's sexual innuendos toward the victims before he kills them. He talks about having time to play while one victim's body bleeds out and runs his finger-knife up Nancy's leg while saying, "Your mouth says no, but your body says yes." It is obvious the filmmakers gave no attention to research or they would have understood that pedophiles are drawn to youth, to the untouched and pure life of children. Typically once a child reaches a certain age, usually puberty, a pedophile loses interest. Freddy's advances to his teenage victims simply do not match the child molesting profile the film tries to create for him when he was still known as Fred Krueger. It is understandable that the victims would still fear Krueger as their abuser, but his pursuit of the children into adulthood weakens his characterization as a pedophile. He would also have no interest in wanting the teenagers to remember what he did to them when they were children because he would have already moved on to other children. If the filmmakers want to show how Fred Krueger, the child abuser, becomes Freddy, the slasher villain, they need to put more effort in understanding character than creating sparks on the wall when Freddy drags his finger-knives toward a victim.

Re-envisioning a new *Nightmare* film could not be stopped; the remake machine called for it mostly due in part to the success of other remakes before it, but it seems the character development and changes from the original are made without giving consideration to the franchise's history. Alongside Freddy stands Nancy, the original final girl of the first film. In the remake Nancy works at a diner, is a loner, and has no boyfriend. Other than her name, which the film tries desperately to establish in the opening sequences by her diner nametag and its prominent use by other characters, she is a completely different character from the original. She is extremely mousy and quiet, which could be a result of being abused by Krueger when she was a child, but again the character development comes off as a flat, superficial portrayal of someone who has endured abuse and is currently fighting for her life. The new Nancy also refuses to take a shot of adrenaline to stay awake, while the original Nancy did whatever she could to keep from falling asleep. The original Nancy says, "I'm into survival," but the remade character has no sense of direction whatsoever. Nancy's father is also missing from the story, and no explanation is given for the change from the original. Showing only Nancy and her mother does not let the viewer know if the father is on vacation, at work, deceased, or if her parents are separated or divorced, or if she is adopted and in a single-parent household. Any of the situations could be used to further story and character development but none are addressed and the narrative remains flat because of it.

Craven's original film taps into the social atmosphere of the 1980s, but the one-dimensional remake removes almost all subtext. The relevancy of social ills—alcoholism, strained parent-child relationships, teenage sexuality, strained parent relationships, bars

on windows as representations of crime infiltrating suburbia and a notion to keep teens safe from the real world—are removed in the remake. The film contains little social or cultural commentary as it becomes an exploration of computer generated special effects and high-gloss production value. *A Nightmare on Elm Street* in 1984 contains an alcoholic mother, parents on the verge of divorce, teenage girls being pressured into sex by their boyfriends, the fear of growing old (Nancy's grey hair and her statement about looking twenty years old), teen suicide (Freddy kills Rod and makes it look like he hung himself), and coping with death. In one scene, Nancy's mother tells the story of how the parents killed Fred Kruger and the audience learns she hid his glove in the basement as a keepsake. This scene illustrates a 1980s sensibility to the threat of suburban home invasion. Freddy is never too far from Nancy because the symbol of his evil resides in her home. The remake does not incorporate this scene or provide Freddy any connection to the house, thereby disregarding a significant social issue.

In addition, the first film showcases the famous sleepover scene. Nancy sleeps in the guest bedroom, and her boyfriend Glen sleeps downstairs on the sofa while Tina and Rod have loud, raucous sex in her bedroom (we later see Rod roll from atop Tina's body to lie beside her, thereby indicating the sexual act is complete). Glen remarks, "Morality sucks" to the sounds of intercourse because he and Nancy are dating but have not taken their relationship to an intimate, physical level. When Freddy presses through the bedroom wall, a crucifix falls and awakens Nancy. She studies the Christ figure before returning it to its hook and going back to sleep. When Freddy attacks Tina in her sleep

Rod jumps from the bed, clad only in briefs, and begins to scream her name and reach for her, but he is helpless against the villain.

This one sleepover sequence is almost completely removed in the remake. Nancy is not at the house where her friend dies and when Freddy moves within her bedroom wall there is no cross to knock down and wake her up. Nancy also has no boyfriend; Quentin (the new Glen) likes her, but they are not dating. The cameras never show any sexual acts between Chris (the new Tina) and Jesse (the new Rod), and the viewer only sees them sleeping next to each other. When Chris is attacked, Jesse jumps out of bed wearing boxers and is unable to help his girlfriend. The differences between the two segments are massive on the level of social and cultural relevance. The remake removes any notion of religion or a tie-in to the “One, Two, Freddy’s coming for you” chant by erasing the crucifix imagery. The film eliminates the reality of teenage sexuality by removing allusions to sex between Chris and Jesse and not providing Nancy a boyfriend. Also, when the depiction of male undergarments changes from briefs to boxers the male body is less-sexualized. Briefs show the male form and highlight sexuality by the impression of genitalia through the material. These “simple” changes speak volumes about a remake movement that is rapidly erasing meaning from horror films. Teenage sexuality and dating, religious concerns, and body obsession are all real issues for young adults and their parents.

The original sequels address these topics and more as well, and although they are all serious issues that do not fade away in American society, the remake ignores them all. The drugstore scene where Quentin tries to get more ADHD medication could bring

awareness to addiction or the idea that a 21st century teen population is being sedated, but he is only there to get something to help him stay awake. The burned visage of Freddy could easily allude to burn victim survival, but the film sends no message about that aspect of society. Teenagers in the original films come together because of the shared nightmares they have about Freddy and this delivers a poignant message about the collective fears American teenagers (and parents) have growing up, but the re-envisioned production uses the dream connection as a plot device to move action forward. The real-life situations audiences see reflected in film frighten them because they are windows into their lives. When these elements are removed, film gives way to fantasy, an escape from real problems, and there is no depth provided to the subject matter. Samuel Bayer's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* gives audiences something to look at but little to take away from the experience.

CHAPTER VII: THE INTERVIEWS:

INDUSTRY PROFESSIONALS RIFF ABOUT THE STATE OF HORROR

Critics, movie reviewers, and fans all have something to say about horror—about the technical aspects of the filmmaking, the quality of writing and acting, the cinematography, the film’s endings, the levels of gore, sex scenes, favorite lines, and even the goofs and bloopers. Industry professionals, however, work on the development of films and often offer critical insight about the state of horror filmmaking that no critic, movie reviewer, or fan is able to provide. These are the people responsible for creating the films audiences clamor to see or avoid altogether. It is only fitting that a few industry professionals speak about the current state of horror and its proliferation of remakes, reboots, and re-envisioned productions.

Five insiders—Tom Savini, Jeff Delman, Tony Timpone, and Matt Riddlehoover—agreed to give their perspectives on the current state of American horror, the invasion of remakes, and what the future holds for the genre. With diverse backgrounds in writing (screenplay and journalistic reporting), acting (Englund is easily classified a slasher-film icon), directing, special effects/makeup creation, each offers a unique point of view; they, too, are also fans of the genre who have become a part of its professional cadre. All interviewees were asked the same questions to keep the interview process formal and balanced; they were also not provided any opinionated commentary from the interviewer in order to leave bias on the cutting room floor. At most, the interviewees were provided the title of the dissertation—“Recycled Fear: The Contemporary Horror Remake as American Cinema Industry Standard”—and asked if

they would participate in a Q&A session about contemporary American horror films. All interviews are presented untouched from the original responses.

Interview Conducted May 11, 2010 / Interviewee: Tom Savini

Tom Savini, known worldwide for his makeup, special effects, and acting in the early George Romero films *Martin* (1977) and *Dawn of the Dead* (1978), is a horror living legend. He directed the 1990 *Night of the Living Dead* remake with Tony Todd as the ill-fated character Ben, created groundbreaking makeup and special effects for horror favorites like *Creepshow* (1982) and *Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter* (1984), and has acted in iconic genre films such as *From Dusk Till Dawn* (1996), the remake *Dawn of the Dead* (2004), and the forthcoming *Machete* (2010)—inspired by Robert Rodriguez’ “fake” trailer for *Grindhouse* (2007). As someone who has and still wears all hats of the genre trade, Savini is a key professional with whom to discuss the current market of American horror movies.

Q: What are your thoughts on contemporary American horror cinema?

A: You mean do I think they’re scary . . . or worthy to be called Horror Cinema? Terrible Cinema is more like it. The old classic stuff used the best way to scare an audience. Suspense. Sorely lacking in today’s flicks, and all I see is torture porn. A group of kids is kidnapped and tortured, a villain captures people and forces them to dismember themselves . . . and the assorted gay sparkling vampires . . . yuk, and anyone can jump up and go boo, and these cases a group of birds fly out of an opening or the cat jumps through the window. Chairjumpers

(boo) . . . it lasts a couple of seconds . . . is cheap . . . and not what the masters did. Suspense.

Q: What is creative and original about contemporary American horror cinema?

A: Are you kidding? Nothing. Pay attention. Are you not seeing all the remakes and sequels? Your cell phone can kill you, or Jessica Alba gets an eye transplant and can travel time. The original ideas they're coming up with are stupid . . . thus . . . sequels and remakes. It's all about the money.

Q: Horror remakes are currently in full force. What do contemporary horror remakes accomplish?

A: See above. Profit.

Q: What designates success for a horror remake? Which horror remake would you classify as the most successful and why?

A: It depends. Is your definition of success . . . profit, or a retelling that is interesting . . . more interesting than the original? *The Thing*, and because of Rob Bottin's effects work.

Q: Have you seen Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) remake? What makes films such as *Psycho* too classic/sacred to remake?

A: Yes and I liked it a lot. I went through the same thing when I directed the remake of *Night of the Living Dead*. Was that too sacred? You can add that to the list above of successful remakes and why. I know it sounds like I'm blowing my own horn, but I hated my remake for a long time because of all I didn't get to do. The film is about 30% of what I intended to do. BUT . . . the response is that it is

interchangeable in the trilogy and one of the best remakes done . . . not my words. *Psycho*, from the standpoint of a director . . . was great to me. Sacred yes . . . why did they do it . . . who knows . . . but to have achieved such a thing is great work.

Q: What responsibility do the people (directors, actors, studios, etc.) who produce horror remakes have to the original productions?

A: None. They are only thinking of using the title and the success of the original to make money. Period.

Q: Horror films of the 1970s and 1980s carried strong social, cultural, and moral messages of their eras. What messages do horror remakes convey to contemporary audiences?

A: None that I'm aware of. A good documentary that illustrates what you're asking is *American Nightmare*. Very few directors use these tools in their films.

Q: What film would you like to see get the remake treatment and why?

A: *The Most Dangerous Game* because I've written it and want to see it.

Q: What sets horror apart from all other genres? Is there one film that best represents American horror cinema in your opinion?

A: Horror is a thrill ride. You pay someone to scare you. Just like going to an amusement park and paying them to strap you into some contraption and scare the shit out of you. Some films make you laugh, some make you cry, some make you think . . . horror scares you. I would think that's obvious.

The Exorcist. Alien . . . like that.

Q: Where do you see the horror genre venturing in the next decade?

A: Sorry, the crystal ball is not working, and that's what it would take to answer that. No one knows.

Savini's responses show a clear understanding that remakes are about profit first and anything else that results (a good story, social commentary, shedding light on what the original achieved or failed to do) is secondary and/or arbitrary. His insider perspective demonstrates the dual mentality that films like the original *Psycho* can be classic and sacred from a viewer standpoint but with respect to other industry professionals who would tackle such an endeavor, the production can be quite an accomplishment that should be given due reverence. Savini does contend that there is nothing new about contemporary American horror because the element of suspense has been lost; unfortunately, this missing element gives no clue as to where the genre is heading next, but it can only be assumed that he will be there to ride the wave. From Savini's point of view, horror is a welcoming genre, open to filmmakers and fans who may not like every movie being produced, but there are enough options to suit individual tastes.

Interview Conducted May 12, 2010 / Interviewee: Jeff Delman

Jeff Delman is a director whose first job in the horror market was working as a production assistant on the set of *Friday the 13th Part 2* in 1981. Like Savini, Delman has worn many filmmaking hats: director, actor, writer, and production team crew. His horror directing debut came in 1986 with the film *Deadtime Stories*, which appeared at a time when most were saying the slasher film and horror in general was on the decline. But Delman's film is not a slasher; it is a take on childhood bedtime stories with an adult-

horror twist. The film features three segments that focus on a witch, a Little Red Riding Hood character, and the framework for *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*. This sets Delman apart from many contemporary horror film directors because his film focuses on storytelling. There can be no element of fear without a good story to hold a movie together, and *Deadtime Stories* works well because its storytelling highlights one of the scariest times in life: childhood.

Horror films and children's literature have always held close ties from the storytelling perspective of fright. Everything about childhood is grounded in fear: physical size in relation to others, the dark, open spaces and confinement, the closet, the crawlspace under the bed—all the terrifying unknowns that children have to confront in order to recognize fear and defeat it. Children are also made to address very real, direct concerns of fear through childhood teasing from others, abuse, abandonment, and other overtly cruel or situational circumstances. They cannot rely on parents, as well, to protect them from fear as adults are quite often the fear inducers, randomly instilling in babies and children how much they want to “eat them up.” Childhood is simply a phase of life where fear is available from all sides and even related to all senses concerning what is seen and unseen, what is heard and silent, what can be touched or touches back, what can be smelled or sniffs back, and what can be tasted or possibly tastes and consumes in return. It is these elements of fear that lie at the root in much of children's literature and the narratives of horror.

Delman's concern with storytelling in *Deadtime Stories* makes him an industry professional worthy to comment on the growing field of horror remakes which disregards

storytelling by using the narrative from an original film; even if the remake changes the dialogue, action, opening/ending sequences, and actors, the framework of the original story remains and nothing new is created other than money at the box office.

Q: What are your thoughts on contemporary American horror cinema?

A: I am troubled by two things: the plethora of remakes, and lack of originality they demonstrate. I also have concerns about so-called torture porn films. Horror, at its best, should project the identifiable, inner fears and anxieties of well defined characters in a grotesque way on the surrounding world. Films that are merely about pain may strike visceral cords, but ignore the deeper core of what horror has to offer.

Q: What is creative and original about contemporary American horror cinema?

A: The new freedom that technology offers; from low-tech indie films to well utilized CGI effects. But story is still critical, and too many filmmakers let spectacle get in the way of plot, character, and (especially in horror) theme.

Q: Horror remakes are currently in full force. What do contemporary horror remakes accomplish?

A: Remakes accomplish little more than generating income for creatively vapid studios. One rationale might be industry concerns that the original movies being remade seem dated to modern sensibilities. While this is a valid point (and the charm of nostalgic cheesiness is at best debatable) the rush to remake perpetrates creative laziness.

Q: What designates success for a horror remake? Which horror remake would you classify as the most successful and why?

A: I've seen bits of a few, but not enough to comment. If pressed, I'd have to say Philip Kaufman's 1978 remake of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*. At least until the last few minutes, when it completely falls apart.

Q: Have you seen Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) remake? What makes films such as *Psycho* too classic/sacred to remake?

A: I recall as Van Sant's *Psycho* was released, the public rationale for it was that the modern audience won't watch black-and-white films, and so a color remake is necessary so kids today can see this classic. (Sort of like saying Shakespeare is too hard to understand, so here is *Hamlet* in Classic Comics form.) Aside from the fairly moronic rationale (never mind the question: Why is it so critical everyone see *Psycho* in the first place?) the remake did not do what it was supposed to do. It was supposed to be a shot by shot remake, but even though each shot was similar to each corresponding shot in the original, critical details were ignored. For instance, take the scene where Norman meets Marion Crane. In the Hitchcock version, there is a mirror in the shot, so we see two Normans. Hitchcock uses the motif of visually doubling to shadow Norman's secret. The shot in the Van Sant version is flat, and no such mirror is in frame. This is just one example of the attention to detail that makes Hitchcock, Hitchcock. In a Hitchcock film, every frame was saturated with multi-leveled meaning. His films were great, not

because they were lurid pot-boilers, but because they were lurid pot boilers that attained high art, that commented on the human condition using cinema-as-poetry.

Q: What responsibility do the people (directors, actors, studios, etc.) who produce horror remakes have to the original productions?

A: Filmmakers need to take just the germ of what works in the original's premise, and re-shape it to fit a new point of view, as opposed to simply re-shooting an old premise whole cloth.

Q: Horror films of the 1970s and 1980s carried strong social, cultural, and moral messages of their eras. What messages do horror remakes convey to contemporary audiences?

A: Each film reflects the tastes, aesthetics, and peculiarities of the creative team making it. In this way, a remake is not necessarily different from an original film, unless the filmmakers are simply coloring by numbers off the sensibilities of the earlier version.

Q: What film would you like to see get the remake treatment and why?

A: I haven't been giving this question much thought. Generally, I'd say I would not remake hit films, but films that for one reason or other screwed up a really good premise or hook.

Q: What sets horror apart from all other genres? Is there one film that best represents American horror cinema in your opinion?

A: Hmmmn. One film . . . (That's kind of like asking, what's the best rock 'n roll song. Are we talking 1950s, 1960s, 1970s . . .) Horror at its best works to expose

out frailties, secret fetishes, and fears. Any film that taps into these often cringe-worthy emotions is a great horror film. It is tapping into the inner recesses of our minds, hearts, and souls that makes horror such a timeless genre. That answers both questions, by the way.

Q: Where do you see the horror genre venturing in the next decade?

A: That depends where the pop culture goes. Even though in each wave of horror, one film will set a trend, that film taps into the prevailing zeitgeist. The zeitgeist is now in a transition, so it is hard to say.

Delman's commentary demonstrates his awareness of the importance of story in any film genre, but certainly horror which can be overwhelmed by special effects and shock value. The more remakes made, the more story value seems to disappear in horror. Although the growing number of remakes is a concern, Delman focuses on an element of filmmaking missing from many of the movies: meaning. The *Psycho* reread does not accomplish the goal stated by its director; if horror remakes had rationales more than box-office revenue, maybe the productions could add some value to the contemporary landscape of the genre. Delman purports that the future of horror is anyone's guess, but its direction will certainly follow popular culture to offer comment upon the times. His overall discussion demonstrates concern over the amount of remakes in production but offers hope that no matter what kind of horror film is created—remake or original—as long as the film makes a connection to the audience (emotional or physical) there can still be worthy additions to the genre forthcoming.

Interview Conducted May 31, 2010 / Interviewee: Robert Englund

Story is also a major concern for Robert Englund, iconic star of the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise as its villain, Freddy Krueger. As discussed earlier, his importance to the horror genre is unquestioned. His expressed views on horror and the remake trend are vital, especially with the remake of his career-launching film now in theatres.

Q: What are your thoughts on contemporary American horror cinema?

A: I think horror films have gained popularity in recent decades because they have adapted classic ingredients to contemporary expectations. However, it is disappointing that when technology permits immense creativity, so many of the stories are recycled or unoriginal.

Q: What is creative and original about contemporary American horror cinema?

A: Movies like *District 9*, *28 Days Later*, and the Swedish original *Let the Right One In* have invigorated contemporary cinema with their fresh interpretation of classic stories.

Q: Horror remakes are currently in full force. What do contemporary horror remakes accomplish?

A: Remakes do provide an opportunity to unleash the newest technology on classic stories. Sadly they often rely only on visual whizbang instead of adding anything new and interesting to the story.

Q: What designates success for a horror remake? Which horror remake would you classify as the most successful and why?

- A: A remake that re-imagines or improves upon the original is a success. John Carpenter's *The Thing* qualifies as a success.
- Q: Have you seen Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) remake? What makes films such as *Psycho* too classic/sacred to remake?
- A: Some films are products of their time and represent a perfect moment in cinema history. *Psycho*, *Wizard of Oz* . . . these are not improved by remaking them. However, there will always be the drive to remake because there is a built in audience, a brand name recognition factor and there are only so many stories to tell.
- Q: What responsibility do the people (directors, actors, studios, etc.) who produce horror remakes have to the original productions?
- A: Sadly, none. Obviously, if you can't improve it, why remake it? The responsibility should be to preserve the core integrity of the original storytelling.
- Q: Horror films of the 1970s and 1980s carried strong social, cultural, and moral messages of their eras. What messages do horror remakes convey to contemporary audiences?
- A: Very little. It is mostly nostalgia for some views and an introduction to others.
- Q: What film would you like to see get the remake treatment and why?
- A: *Forbidden Planet* because as wonderful as the original is, it is also a prisoner of its 50's production design. It is such a great story: a sci-fi/horror reworking of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

Q: What sets horror apart from all other genres? Is there one film that best represents American horror cinema in your opinion?

A: Horror makes you confront your own mortality more than any other genre. *Rosemary's Baby* because it confronts the American preoccupations of greed and consumerism.

Q: Where do you see the horror genre venturing in the next decade?

A: I would like to see the new technology used to enhance period horror.

Englund's responses are quick and to the point, but they offer a wealth of insight into the current state of horror from a key figure who helped the genre achieve popularity and sociocultural relevance for more than twenty-five years. He credits advances in technology for hindering story value; however, it is his hope that new technological discoveries can be used in the future to highlight specialized horror. This is an approach that shows recognition of the field and the direction it is heading, but with a caveat that its current path does not have to be as destructive to the genre as many people predict. Englund identifies characteristics of the remake movement—audience participation, star power, and reverence for a time long gone; he also states there are a finite number of stories to tell, with rare American and international productions like *District 9* and *Let the Right One In* proving the exception. Horror films certainly exhibit common themes, motifs, storylines, characters, settings, music, camera techniques, and scare tactics, but there have to be some fragments of the original narrative left to present on the big screen. The production of endless remakes suggests to the American public that the only thing left of horror is repetition. Englund reiterates the notion that horror films are significant

because they touch upon human existence like no other genre, and it can only be hoped that this single point of distinction keeps the field pertinent even in the growth of the remake movement.

Interview Conducted May 12, 2010 / Interviewee: Tony Timpone

One man who has been integral in keeping an eye on these up-and-coming films, with a vast knowledge of all that has come before, is Tony Timpone, longtime editor of *Fangoria* magazine (May 1987 – Feb. 2010). Under Timpone's direction, *Fangoria* helped genre fans stay current with all horror happenings from films in production to new creature creations. He has held the position of magazine editor longer than any other since its inception in 1979, and these twenty-plus years have allowed him to see the face of horror change from the heyday of the 1980s to the remake explosion in the 21st century. Timpone's career extends beyond the magazine into cameos in horror films like *House of the Dead* (2003), producing the television mini-series *The 100 Scariest Movie Moments* (2004), and helping establish the popular Weekend of Horrors conventions where fans and industry names like George A. Romero, Clive Barker, and Bruce Campbell can mix and mingle to explore the world of horror together. His knowledge of the genre and its trending films is unmatched in horror entertainment publications.

Q: What are your thoughts on contemporary American horror cinema?

A: It's in pretty sad shape if you look at the major studios. Everything is either a remake or a sequel, just about. The most daring and interesting work is being done in the independent field, as usual.

Q: What is creative and original about contemporary American horror cinema?

A: That it continues to break taboos. Good example is the US-Canadian-French co-production *Splice*, which explores the ethics of gene splicing but also deals with some intriguing sexual themes.

Q: Horror remakes are currently in full force. What do contemporary horror remakes accomplish?

A: They are usually more popular than the films that inspired them. *The Crazies*, for example, probably made more at the box office in its first day than the original did during its entire run. Plus they have the benefit of (hopefully) introducing modern audiences to the original works. They also have today's incredible FX technology as a tool in their creative arsenals.

Q: What designates success for a horror remake? Which horror remake would you classify as the most successful and why?

A: A successful horror remake should be able to stand on its own. *The Crazies*, again, is a good example. Though not a perfect film, it is actually better than its inspiration, which fell short due to lack of budget. The new version is legitimately scary and suspenseful all on its own.

Q: Have you seen Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) remake? What makes films such as *Psycho* too classic/sacred to remake?

A: I have nothing against remakes if they go in a new, fresh direction. Van Sant made the mistake of trying to make an exact copy of the Hitchcock original, but fell short because he did not have the great cast and skills (and talent!) that

Hitchcock had at his disposal. The new *A Nightmare on Elm Street* also failed because it stuck too close to the previous version. Remakes are better when they go off in totally different directions, like the *Dawn of the Dead* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* reduxes did.

Q: What responsibility do the people (directors, actors, studios, etc.) who produce horror remakes have to the original productions?

A: They should respect the creators of the original films and their fans by not disparaging their work to build up their own.

Q: Horror films of the 1970s and 1980s carried strong social, cultural, and moral messages of their eras. What messages do horror remakes convey to contemporary audiences?

A: *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Night of the Living Dead*, *Dawn of the Dead*, *The Hills Have Eyes*, to name a few, spoke to the eras in which they were made, the turbulent 1960s and 1970s. The potential messages of the remakes are lost in the search for box office revenue or diluted by mainstream and commerce sensibilities.

Q: What film would you like to see get the remake treatment and why?

A: The 1958 sci-fi horror film *Fiend Without a Face* would be a good remake. As would *Squirm*, *Prophecy*, *Horror Hotel* ... Films that were made poorly the first time, like *The Keep*, are better fodder for remakes than films regarded as classics.

Q: What sets horror apart from all other genres? Is there one film that best represents American horror cinema in your opinion?

A: Horror films, more than any other genre, are a more visceral and immersive experience. You go into one for a specific emotion: to be scared.

Q: Where do you see the horror genre venturing in the next decade?

A: More 3D and immersive experiences (IMAX) will become the norm rather than the exception. More low-tech, DIY horror too, in the vein of *Paranormal Activity*, as Hollywood tries to capture lightning in a bottle.

Timpone identifies major studios/mainstream, big budget filmmaking as a force that is driving horror into the ground while independent films struggle to see the light of day and bring something new to the field. On the other hand, having a sizable production budget can help a film achieve its goals; he notes the original version of *The Crazies* suffered while its remake performed better financially and as a film overall. Money is always an issue with remakes and lush mainstream horror productions, especially with the ease that film companies have discovered in developing “cheap” (\$10-15 million) projects whose return will be great enough to spawn sequels, prequels, and other related enterprises; advanced technology in special effects does not hurt either.

The longtime editor makes a point to say that directors are not the only people responsible for remake failures; films are cohesive projects involving directors, producers, actors, writing, and much more. His comments about *Psycho* reveal that the star power of Janet Leigh and Anthony Perkins, coupled with the direction of Hitchcock, could not be matched by Anne Heche, Vince Vaughn, and Gus Van Sant. Remakes are going to be made but they have to take a different path from the original to adjust to the

era in which they are being produced; without this attention to detail, the films are no more than empty vessels trying to make money at the box office.

Interview Conducted: May 17, 2010 / Interviewee: Matt Riddlehoover

Money, however, is never the concern for the independent filmmaker—at least not in profit. As a writer, director, and actor in independent films, Matt Riddlehoover represents the unrepresented in filmmaking. His third directing effort, *To A Tee* (2006), garnered the MySpace Film User’s Choice Award and put his name on the map as a new independent filmmaker to watch. From the independent side of the filmmaking spectrum, Riddlehoover understands the plight to create original content in a sea of repetition. He is currently working on making his first foray into horror with the film *brotherZ* presently in development.

Q: What are your thoughts on contemporary American horror cinema?

A: Let’s unleash some new ideas! Surely Kevin Williamson isn’t the only person with an imagination. What are studios so afraid of? Now there’s a horror movie!

Q: What is creative and original about contemporary American horror cinema?

A: Nothing.

Q: Horror remakes are currently in full force. What do contemporary horror remakes accomplish?

A: Big numbers at the box office, that’s what they accomplish.

Q: What designates success for a horror remake? Which horror remake would you classify as the most successful and why?

A: I enjoyed *Dawn of the Dead* (2004). Is it the most successful remake? That I cannot say; I tend to stay away from the remakes. (I've yet to see the *Friday the 13th* and *Last House on the Left* remakes, and a number of others.) I also tend to dislike them greatly. I recently saw *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (2010) and, in all honesty, I'm not mad at it. It's a well-written, well-directed, wonderfully-executed production. However, it unfortunately lacks the simplistic authenticity of Craven's 1984 classic. But, what can you do? Kids these days need back story, right? What's so wrong with allowing the monster to just be a monster?

Q: Have you seen Gus Van Sant's *Psycho* (1998) remake? What makes films such as *Psycho* too classic/sacred to remake?

A: I saw it twice in the theater as a way of convincing myself, "Yep, it really was as every bit of awful as you thought." First of all, a closed-framed shot-by-shot remake is a ridiculous thing for anyone to do. (Unless, of course, you're Michael Haneke and you're reintroducing your film *Funny Games* to U.S. audiences. But even as authentic and well-executed as the remake of *Funny Games* was, that shot-by-shot formula left a trite, posed kind of aftertaste.) Secondly, and most importantly, *Psycho* is Hitchcock. You don't touch Hitchcock, Mr. Van Sant. I'm sorry, but no. I can understand wanting to introduce the story to a new generation, but let's face it, the masses don't have patience for stories like *Psycho* anymore. Besides, who doesn't know who Norman Bates is? Who can't reference that infamous shower scene, even if they've never seen the original? I mean, really? Van Sant, your film lacks a major ingredient: the element of surprise. Not to

mention: bad casting. Vince Vaughn? Seriously? Joaquin Phoenix would've been a better choice and I'm not even giving it much thought. Anne Heche? You didn't want us to care when she died, did you? I certainly didn't. The most exciting part of the movie was Marion's non sequitur parasol.

Q: What responsibility do the people (directors, actors, studios, etc.) who produce horror remakes have to the original productions?

A: They make money and take the blame.

Q: Horror films of the 1970s and 1980s carried strong social, cultural, and moral messages of their eras. What messages do horror remakes convey to contemporary audiences?

A: Basically: evil does not exist. Something made that person evil. So, shame on whatever that something was. Are we teaching kids to be injustice collectors? My life isn't working out so well and I do bad things because this happened and that happened? If the monsters were really monsters, void of bad childhoods or wrongful accusations, we'd see responsibility being taken for something. Freddy is a prick because he enjoys being a prick—not because someone made him that way.

Q: What film would you like to see get the remake treatment and why?

A: I don't even know. If *Rosemary's Baby* happens, I'll be first in line—but only because I'd want to see how ineffective it was.

Q: What sets horror apart from all other genres? Is there one film that best represents American horror cinema in your opinion?

A: I absolutely love the original *Black Christmas*. It's a masterpiece of subtlety. No motive, no back story—just pure evil lurking in your home at Christmas.

Q: Where do you see the horror genre venturing in the next decade?

A: Hopefully we see it venturing in another direction—an original one where new monsters exist.

Riddlehoover's words offer support to previous interview commentary; contemporary American horror has lost its sense of originality by trading it for financial gain. He also proposes that, if competent directing, acting, and intent are featured elements, some remakes can be successful artistically as well as financially. But the strongest opinion in Riddlehoover's remarks concerns horror villains. The problem with remakes is they try to explain too much and spoon-feed audiences entirely too much information to explain the horrific killing sprees of iconic (and new) monsters. *Zombie's Halloween*, for example, gives viewers a killer born of his environment: his mother a stripper, a father figure absent, bullied, kept in a mental health facility away from his mother and baby sister, driven deeper into depression and maniacal thoughts. Nispel's *Friday the 13th* shows the viewer a young boy who witnesses his mother's decapitation by a camp counselor, which sends him on a murderous rampage (although the mother talks about her son being a drowning victim so the storyline is off-kilter, as well). And Bayer's *A Nightmare on Elm Street* depicts a despicable human being, but one who should have been turned over to the police in order to be legally prosecuted for his crimes instead of being burned in a ring of vigilante justice. Where there is no longer a monster, fear no longer exists. Riddlehoover's independent filmmaking experience allows him a

voice to speak out against contemporary horror films that tell instead of show, thereby leaving a story open enough to let audience members use their imaginations to fill in the natural narrative gaps. Sometimes monsters can just be monsters without overwrought explanations, and maybe the horror genre will revisit this idea in the future.

The panel of interviewees all touch on relevant topics concerning contemporary American horror cinema and its propulsion into the remake zone. Torture porn films where horror elements take a backseat to exploitative depictions of pain, body mutilations, and other visceral presentations come under scrutiny. Films like *The Last House on the Left* (1972), *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978), and the contemporary *A Serbian Film* (2009) were created with intentional meanings relating back to drug culture, gender equality, and widespread genocide. Torture porn horror makes people think the entire contemporary genre overflows with this aesthetic. Stephen Prince says, “Horror films today, arguably, are more disturbing than those produced in earlier periods. In films of the classical Hollywood era, for example, the monsters were reliably killed at the end, and the hero and heroine safely prevailed and went on to lead their ordinary, banal lives” (3). In the remake, indeed in most contemporary horror films, good does not always win, but it did not always reign victorious in the classic era either. The contemporary American horror film and its remake wave are only “more” disturbing because people generalize about the genre according to elements of torture porn. Too much is seen on the screen in current horror; classic films knew how to provoke fear without being so covert with the subject matter. *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) resonated with many critics because it harkened back to that era of scaring people without showing them the

monster's face. Audiences, on the other hand, were split; some appreciated the old sensibility of atmospheric fear while others had become too accustomed to always seeing the killer and wanting to see everything in the open.

Current films labeled as torture porn—the ongoing *Saw* franchise (2004-2010), *Hostel* and *Hostel II* (2005, 2007), *Wolf Creek* (2005), *Train* (2008), and others—simply represent glossy productions of violent killings with no intrinsic film or story value. Moviegoers would do as well renting the controversial *Faces of Death* series (1978, 1981, 1985, 1990, 1995, 1996) where they can witness a mixture of faked and real deaths with no relevant story content. These films, and countless upcoming remakes like *I Spit on Your Grave* (2010), have no cultural significance other than shock value to bring in money at the box office.

No one is under the impression that remakes are going away anytime soon, but if the films are going to continue being made at an alarming rate, filmmakers must ask themselves what, other than making money, makes the movie relevant for audiences. Attention must be given to detail (social and cultural climates, storytelling, acting) not overshadowed by special effects, the popularity of an actor, or a desire to utilize the fame of the original to springboard a new career in directing. The remake machine is gearing up to unleash a horde of “new” films but industry professionals are watching, and they have the power to work from within the system to change the trend. The American public, on the other hand, has to show its disapproval for movie replication and demand a return to the screen of originality and creativity. Unless something is done soon, the contemporary American horror film will fade into oblivion altogether as remakes of

remakes start to filter into the market . . . but then again, that has already begun (*The Thing from Another World* [1951], *The Thing* [1982], and *The Thing* [2011] serve as just one example. See Appendix A for a full listing of remakes 1931-2008).

NOTE: Sean S. Cunningham was contacted for this interview chapter, but his responses to the questions are still pending.

CHAPTER VIII: WHAT'S TO COME

The contemporary American horror film is dead, and it seems there *is* nothing left for the genre's future; however, a few novelties remain. Before examining what passes for new, discussion must shift briefly to a technology that came to cinema decades ago and has returned to help horror sink even lower: 3D. The remake machine assassinated the horror genre and must assume responsibility for adding 3D to some of its current and future projects. Examples of this trend include *My Bloody Valentine 3D* (2009), *The Final Destination 3D* (2009), *Piranha 3D* (2010), and the rumored or in-development projects *Hellraiser* (2012), *Halloween III 3D* (2011), and *Zombieland II 3D* (2011).

It is true that special effects play a powerful role in attracting patrons to contemporary horror films, hence the ridiculous number of films being remade as these films attempt to heighten fear by way of special effects. *My Bloody Valentine* was a film not many younger viewers would know from the 1980s, but remaking it with a 3D edge brings in that crowd to experience "fear" enhanced by technology. The same can be said about the upcoming *Piranha 3D* movie. It would be interesting if filmmakers were crafting projects to relive the experience of the drive-in where proximity to the unknown was closer at hand; all that separated viewers from the darkness was a glass pane in the form of a car window instead of stadium seating, theatre walls, hallways, concession stands, arcade rooms, and lounges. The return of such "advanced" special effects lower the artistic value of horror films rather than make them more interesting.

The idea behind 3D filmmaking began in the 19th century, but its notable applications in horror cinema are typically recognized for productions in the 1950s like

House of Wax (1953). The application made a comeback in the 1980s with *Piranha II: The Spawning* (1981), *Friday the 13th Part 3* (1982), and *Jaws 3* (1983) and then seemed to fade away in the early 1990s with *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare* (1991). Other genres have employed the effect quite liberally; it evolved into a staple of 21st century cinema for children and young adults. *Spy Kids 3: Game Over* (2003), *The Adventures of Sharkboy and Lavagirl* (2005), *Monsters vs. Aliens* (2009), and *Coraline* (2009) are just a few contemporary productions that have utilized 3D as gimmicks to attract audiences. 3D has never been truly “good” for movies. Moviegoers were already frightened by *L'arrivée d'un train à La Ciotat* (1896), which presented a steamroller in close proximity to the crowd; the filmmakers did not need a special effect to get audience reactions. 3D gave audiences something to poke fun of or marvel at. Its current exploitation in the remake machine creates movies that are schlock stacked upon schlock with a side order of schlock. Watching *Freddy's Dead* is tough enough with its awkward storyline and flat acting, and it is no better when one of the characters points a dagger at the screen and twists it for a menacing effect that only sparks laughter and groans from the audience. 3D is not the worst thing to happen to horror films, but it will not enable the remake machine to produce anything commendable for the genre.

Parody horror films are also a sad joke. It would not be surprising to see a fifth installment in the *Scary Movie* franchise pop up soon, but this series (and offshoots like *Shriek If You Know What I Did Last Friday the Thirteenth* [2000] and *Stan Helsing* [2009]) has lost all steam and box-office appeal. When movies such as *Friday the 13th* were the new thing in horror, a parody film could have resonance. *Saturday the 14th* is

little-known today but it paved the way for campy patchwork movies to prey upon the success of current horror remakes. *Repossessed* (1990) may be the last relevant parody horror film. The movie's promotional ads gave the appearance that it was a part of *The Exorcist* series; Linda Blair was mentioned and a shot reminiscent of the original film, or possessed eyes, had fans clamoring for its release. But once it was revealed that Leslie Nielsen would star in the film, audiences quickly understood it would be a spoof. In this respect, *Scary Movie 2* (2001) not only parodied *The Exorcist* but *Repossessed*, as well in a downward spiral of metafiction too tangled to fully investigate but clearly contributing to the remake trend.

Although remakes (3D and non-3D) and parodies have caused many people to say true horror no longer exists, which may well be true for American horror, international productions reveal that the genre has life left in it. As Badley mentioned earlier, Asian cinema (notably Japanese and Korean, or J-Horror and K-Horror) helped fuel the American remake train with *The Ring* (2002), *The Grudge* (2004), *The Eye* (2008), *The Uninvited* (2009), and other single-article single-name titles. The remakes continue, but the force of that wave has declined. Asian cinema continues to produce moody, atmospheric films but they are lost among the sequels and prequels of movies American cinema has already appropriated into remakes. *L'horreur est maintenant aux mains des Français* (horror is now in the hands of the French). There have been interesting showings of horror from Australia (*Wolf Creek*, 2005), New Zealand (*Black Sheep*, 2006), Spain ([*REC*], 2007), Mexico (*El orfanato* [*The Orphanage*], 2007), the UK (*The Cottage*, 2008), Sweden (Låt den rätte komma in [*Let the Right One In*], 2008), Norway

(*Død snø* [*Dead Snow*], 2009), and *The Netherlands* (*The Human Centipede* [*First Sequence*], 2009). Most of these films lean toward comedy with a foundation in horror, and a few of them are on the remake block ([*REC*] was remade into *Quarantine* [2008]), but it is French cinema that continues to create innovative horror true to the genre's visceral nature. Four French films—*Haute tension* (2003), *À l'intérieur* (2007), *Frontières* (2007), and *Martyrs* (2008)—are emblematic of a new movement in horror that could help put a stop to remakes.

What is likely to become known as French New Wave Horror owes much of its contemporary development to Alexandre Aja's second feature-film *Haute tension* (*High Tension*). Released to initial mixed reviews, it made both critics and viewers take notice of Aja as a talented director. The story follows Marie and Alexia, two college girlfriends (not lovers) taking a trip to visit Alexia's family for school break. A grisly madman murders the family in the dead of night and kidnaps Alexia, and Marie takes the hero role to save her friend. The plot and conflicts are standard horror fare until the film nears its conclusion. In a twist of psychological narration, it is revealed that Marie is the madman; she has multiple, or at least two, personalities. This surprise ending is the predominate reason many panned over the value of the film because they found it a hokey parlor trick or a filmic cheat: the way Marie and the madman are depicted in the movie does not make physical sense. Roger Ebert, longtime critic of horror films, says there are "several crucial events in the movie that would seem to be physically, logically and dramatically impossible, but clever viewers will be able to see for themselves that the movie's plot has a hole not only large enough to drive a truck through, but in fact does have a truck driven

right through it.” His commentary might well be extended to *Hide and Seek* (2005), a film with a similar presentation of mental breakdown. *Haute tension*'s surprise succeeds, however, in shocking viewers and offending some by its premise, but nevertheless leaves audiences with discussions of storytelling and an attempt to decipher Marie's split personality.

Aja is problematic as a representative director for this new wave, or perhaps he exemplifies the inevitable. After *Haute tension*, his focus turned to *The Hills Have Eyes* (2006) and *Mirrors* (2008), two high-profile remakes, and his remake of *Piranha* in 3D this year. Some argue that *Haute tension* is not original because it is an adaptation of the Dean Koontz novel *Intensity* (2000), but remake films are the subject matter here. What seemed to be a burgeoning career in French horror may have already succumbed to the remake machine and ended before it had a chance to influence new directions for horror cinema.

Storyline aside, *Haute tension* fills the screen with a visceral killings (the father decapitated by the madman), creepy moments (the madman pleasuring himself with a severed head), and an unrelenting mood of terror that shows the viewer no one, not even a child nor animal (Alexia's sibling and family dog) escapes alive. What is also interesting about *Haute tension* as a representative film for this new wave of French horror cinema is its concentration on female characters. The movie exposes female sexuality (Marie masturbating), physical strength, mental faculties (endurance and breakdown), and strong characterizations of women as killers and victims.

French cinema has always offered elegant film noir and thrillers with strong female characterizations like *Les diaboliques* in 1955 (remade in 1996 as *Diabolique* with Isabelle Adjani and Sharon Stone). A female lead portrayed as survivor or final girl is nothing new to American cinema, but the French reimagine the essence of the motif without making it something to mock or anticipate as an uninspiring genre trait. This illustration of woman as simultaneously a merciless torturer and a devastated survivor removes the stereotypical male aggressor—female victim binary. *Haute tension* is a flawed film, but it complicates women in horror and allows other movies to experiment with the same narrative constructs.

À l'intérieur, a simple story of a pregnant woman (Sarah) and her husband who are involved in a car crash, toys with a surprise ending and female conflict, as well. Sarah and her unborn child are the only survivors. A few months pass and when Sarah expects to deliver, a strange woman (*La femme*) begins to terrorize her in attempt to take her baby. *La femme* is later revealed to be the unseen second party to the car crash that opens the film. Her actions are meant to avenge the miscarriage she suffered from the accident. *À l'intérieur* is a film about a woman's body as much as *Haute tension* is about a woman's state of mind. Both characters (Marie and *La femme*) stop at nothing to get to their victims by killing anyone who gets in the way. *La femme* terrorizes Sarah to the point where she accidentally kills her own mother. *À l'intérieur's* story structure works best as a short film narrative, but its content and visuals (most notably a c-section performed with scissors) remain striking throughout the film's entirety. Despite the French and other international filmmakers leading the way in producing noteworthy

films, the American remake influence continues to spread. Jaume Balagueró, director of Spain's [*REC*], has already mentioned the possibility of remaking *À l'intérieur* (McAllister). Balagueró's remake intentions demonstrate that creativity is losing the battle against commercialized remakes.

Frontières is a departure from *Haute tension* and *À l'intérieur* in terms of story, but the confrontational/assaulting visual images remain. In the midst of political upheaval and rioting, a group of five friends plan to leave Paris and head for the Amsterdam border with stolen money. The only female in the group (Yasmine) is pregnant to one of the guys, her brother is shot and hospitalized before they can leave the tumultuous streets, and to make a long but interesting story short, all the characters come to face certain death at the hands of a cannibalistic Nazi family that operates an inn outside Amsterdam. Politics, social climate, pregnancy, theft, sibling love, romantic love, cannibalism, capitalism, incest, and brothel hospitality are just a few elements of the film that allow it to break genre stereotypes. *Frontières* as a title is fitting because the film and its movie peers question the boundaries of human suffering and devotion/love. A lot of this (particularly in *Frontières*) involves eye gouging, bodies drenched in blood, head shaving, scarification, deformity, post-traumatic stress, and other physical and mental maladies. The narrative is extremely original; however, Yasmine is a final girl of sorts and the Nazi family can be connected to classic crazies in films like *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* (1974), *Motel Hell* (1980), and *The People Under the Stairs* (1991).

These filmic traits are presented in raw fashion in *Martyrs*. The depictions of physical torture and mental abuse in this film are probably some of the most raw and

poignant representations in new French horror. It is another tale of two women (Lucie and Anna) whose friendship is forged after Lucie is brutally tortured as a child. Anna, also a victim of abuse, stands by Lucie through her traumatic hallucinations and personal quest to locate the people who abused her. When Lucie is certain she has identified the woman who held her captive, she murders the entire family, and Anna sweeps in to help clean up the mess. At this time, a secret society of people storm into the family's house; they kill Lucie and take Anna prisoner to face the same torture Lucie suffered as a child. Mademoiselle (the female torturer) is the leader of the group whose intentions are to create martyrs via trials of physical and mental abuse.

The way the film visually presents the human body evokes memories of Julia from Clive Barker's *Hellraiser* (1987); Anna's skin eventually resembles Julia's flayed body as a result of body mutilation. *Martyrs* attempts much by taking what most viewers and critics call torture porn and turning it into a philosophical debate concerning the spiritual enlightenment that victims can receive from their oppressors. Its narrative drive overshadows body bondage and flaying. Not many filmmakers would tackle such heady material, and the same can be said for audiences willing to endure the experience.

Films like *Martyrs* challenge critical voices like that of Jonathan Crane who says contemporary horror films "refuse to entertain the unconscious as they, instead, offer meaningless death in response to the terrors of everyday life" (39). Crane reduces the many faces of horror by generalizing about new *and* old horror films. "Old horror" does some of the same things "new horror" does and vice versa. *Martyrs* completely invalidates Crane's statement about the unconscious. This film is possibly the most

intelligent and academically-informed horror film in the past two decades, and it is reminiscent of the content in *Dead Ringers* and other Cronenberg films that deal with the body and explore the mind in innovative ways. When moviegoers think about horror, their minds conjure images of axes, bare breasts, darkened forests, creepy houses, and sounds of blood curdling screams. It is rare, and indeed groundbreaking, to have a horror film offer its audience unstable representations of theology and metaphysical testaments. This is a new direction for horror that is innovative and helps the genre achieve artistic merit; however, critics and filmmakers of the films question their validity.

James Quandt discusses the idea of new French horror cinema in *ArtForum*. He identifies the components of the films but completely disagrees that a new wave exists. Quandt's words are strongly opinionated but they must be read in full to appreciate the depth of his argument.

The critic truffle-snuffing for trends might call it the New French Extremity, this recent tendency to the willfully transgressive by directors like Francois Ozon, Gaspar Noe, Catherine Breillat, Philippe Grandrieux—and now, alas, Dumont. Bava as much as Bataille, Salo no less than Sade seem the determinants of a cinema suddenly determined to break every taboo, to wade in rivers of viscera and spumes of sperm, to fill each frame with flesh, nubile or gnarled, and subject it to all manner of penetration, mutilation, and defilement. Images and subjects once the provenance of splatter films, exploitation flicks, and porn—gang rapes, bashings and slashings and blindings, hard-ons and vulvas, cannibalism,

sadomasochism and incest, fucking and fisting, sluices of cum and gore—proliferate in the high-art environs of a national cinema whose provocations have historically been formal, political, or philosophical (Godard, Clouzot, Debord) or, at their most immoderate (Franju, Bunuel, Walerian Borowczyk, Andrzej Zulawski), at least assimilable as emanations of an artistic movement (Surrealism mostly). Does a kind of irredentist spirit of incitement and confrontation, reviving the hallowed Gallic traditions of the film maudit, of epater les bourgeois and amour fou, account for the shock tactics employed in recent French cinema? Or do they bespeak a cultural crisis, forcing French filmmakers to respond to the death of the ineluctable (French identity, language, ideology, aesthetic forms) with desperate measures?

Quandt is absolutely correct to name rape, bodily fluids, incest, and gore as story elements present in horror films. No one can dispute his assertion; however, to a degree film *is* taboo because it reveals things viewers know about and/or practice but would rather not have on public display. Film, especially French horror cinema, does not create these acts or taboos; penetrations, mutilations, erections, and more have existed before and beyond the scope of any film genre. Quandt also discusses French film as an art form that historically elevated political and philosophical concerns; he assumes new French horror films do not offer some of the same elements. Previous explorations of *Frontières* and *Martyrs* demonstrate that the films present political and philosophical issues in their innovative narratives.

Quandt is not alone in his criticism. The filmmakers of *À l'intérieur* (Julien Maury and Alex Bustillo) and *Martyrs* (Pascal Laugier) offer perspectives that partially support his argument. Maury does not believe there is anything new about the French films. He says, "This 'new wave' is not really a wave, they're more separate films. It's really hard to find funding because the movies you're talking about like *Frontier(s)* and *Martyrs*—they're not big hits at the box office here. They're not flops, but the audiences are always fairly low" (McAllister). The problem with Maury's statement is that he grounds his argument in box-office returns and not in the quality of film (story and visuals).

Laugier holds a similar opinion in his disregard of a new French horror cinema. In an interview with John White of *HomeCinema*, Laugier says

The fact is that we are much more successful in foreign countries and in our homeland it's always the same stuff where you're never a prophet. What I mean is that even the horror fans, the French ones, they are very condescending about French horror films. It's still a hell to find the money, a hell to convince people that we are legitimate to make this kind of movie in France. So I know from an American point of view and probably an English one too, there is a kind of new wave of modern horror film, but it's not true. It's still hell. My country produces almost two-hundred films a year and there are like two or three horror films. It's not even an industry, French horror cinema is very low budget, it's kinda prototype. I think that a genre really exists when it's industrially produced

like the Italians did six-hundred spaghetti westerns. So we can't really say that there is a wave of horror in French Cinema, I don't believe it.

He, too, seems convinced that a new French horror cinema depends on money, but what he says about how many French horror films are produced per year and how genres are created is interesting.

Laugier takes a classic American perspective concerning production: quality versus quantity. A genre does not and should not mean conformity or mass production. Genre is about representative types, and there do not have to be six-hundred films to construct a French horror genre. If moviegoers are asked to consider the American political documentary, most would name Michael Moore as a representative director, and yet he has only made five notable films. Laugier is trying not to make a big deal of the role he plays in new French horror; he is either being extremely humble or he dislikes the movies he has created. He states, "To be honest, I don't like anything in my job. Writing, I find very hard, when I shoot I find it unbearable, and when I edit it I find it very boring. Sometimes when I am doing a film I am wondering why I have chosen this profession, and when I have finished I am glad it's finished. After one month or two I just can't wait to do another one. It's like a disease" (White). This is an awkward example of tortured artist syndrome, but what he says does provide reasoning behind the subject matter he tackles in *Martyrs*.

Although Laugier does not support a new French horror cinema, his words betray him in a discussion of the production and content of *Martyrs*. He tells White

It was one of the goals . . . To play with the archetypes and codes of the genre, trying to bring something fresh to it . . . I wanted to do a film that was as unexpected as possible so that the audience wouldn't leave the film. They would wait for the last few minutes of the film to find out the whole point of the picture. That was my intent. Because the more I was writing it, the more I realised how brutal it was, and, after a while, I realised that the brutality and the violence was the subject of the film itself. Normally, it's there to tell a story but here it's the very point.

Laugier admits to intentionally wanting to create something new for horror by making a film that would play with the rules and regulations of the genre. There is certainly a story to *Martyrs*, but the experience of the film is also important to viewers.

I understand the debates around the film very well. The film forces the audiences to have a position about it. And I understand it, and I'm not sure as a member of the audience that I would love the film. I'm not sure at all. It's not a very likeable movie, it's an exploration. Once again, I always understand the horror genre as transgressive, as an experimental one, and I wanted to do a film very far away from actual formulas. I wanted the film to be free, experimental, so that the audience would have some feeling whether that's a love or hate relationship. They would have a strong feeling and an experience.

This is the current development for horror in French cinema, or the "New French Extremity," in which movies are created with connections to traditional/conventional

horror, but their subject matter, viewer experience, and visual presentations push the genre outside its boundaries. The films present a progression or fluid spectrum of women: *Haute tension*'s single women explore mono, hetero, and homosexuality and the fragility of mental states; *À l'intérieur* showcases the classic struggle of a woman fighting for her unborn child's life and another attempting to steal the child; *Frontières* demonstrates the extremes a woman would go to in order to save her unborn baby; *Martyrs* exhibits the strength of female bonds and the mind's capacity for torture; and the upcoming *La meute* (*The Pack*, 2010) will no doubt display a mother's relentless efforts to keep her children alive and how troublesome offspring can be after they are born.

Such films are still in danger of not fully developing and energizing the genre because the remake machine crosses international borders. *À l'intérieur* and *Martyrs* are already set for remakes. Maury and Bustillo were approached by the Weinsteins to direct a *Hellraiser* remake, but when creative differences surfaced the project passed to Laugier. Although he is currently working on the film, Laugier told White, "I don't want to do a remake of *Hellraiser* because the original was so good, you know redoing the original with more money—that's not the point. The point is to bring something new and fresh to the franchise, and still staying very faithful to Clive Barker's work." His comments again speak to a statement about franchising, money, and marketing while creativity is left on the cutting room floor.

Maury and Bustillo were later approached to direct *Halloween II*, but Rob Zombie came on to the project, and they bowed out. Maury says, "And though we'd said we weren't going to go through the same thing again after *Hellraiser*, it was like a dream to

film Michael Myers! We couldn't say no! So we began to work on it for a few months, but then Rob Zombie came back—and compared to Rob Zombie we are nothing, so we said bye-bye!” (McAllister). It is strange that a creative team compares itself so lowly to Rob Zombie, who is hardly a master of the genre. The power of Hollywood is strong enough to hinder innovation from foreign directors who believe they are no match for American filmmakers. This is another roadblock in an attempt to stimulate the horror genre.

The French filmmaking sensibility has to overcome its own humble nature and make films regardless of American standards. According to Maury, “The battle is now in France, because . . . horror and ‘fantastique’ movies aren’t really popular here. The audience does exist—the *Saw* franchise was a big hit with teenagers—but they don’t seem to trust French horror films. They’re like, ‘Horror movies in France? Bah! It’s going to be two people talking in a kitchen!’ It’s a pity, but they just like American horror movies, so we have to convince them” (White). This should not mean that French filmmakers have to make movies that adhere to American standards. French cinema is celebrated by viewers in America, and if the audiences are not showing up in France, new strategies should be undertaken when the films are promoted overseas. French horror films should have wide, international releases, but the filmmakers and production companies have to safeguard the projects from being remade and/or selling the rights to American producers. If America cannot make its own developments in horror then its cinema will have to suffer setbacks until creativity returns.

Contemporary French horror films are approaching a pivotal moment in cinema that represents a revival of what the horror genre was and an exploration of what lies beyond its genre parameters. Linda Badley describes the inception of horror, and her words offer an understanding of where French horror is heading:

Horror was a bastard: it plundered the media for its iconographies, and for its themes and metaphors it drew on sources from advertising to biochemistry to postmodern philosophy. Soon it had become more than a genre. It was a widespread mythology that informed and constructed mass culture, causing people to think and speak about themselves and their feelings in particular ways. It was awful and it was interesting for precisely that reason. (2)

Horror has a long way to go before it can regain a strong presence in society and cinema, but the French have definitely stumbled upon something to cultivate even if critics or the film directors do not believe it; however, the future of contemporary American horror is uncertain, and maybe there is no future in it at all.

CHAPTER IX: CONCLUSION

Contemporary American horror has become a genre of remakes, and the originality and creativity of horror films from the 1970s, 1980s, and early 1990s seems lost. The impressive number of horror remakes has developed into a film movement whose influence is filtering into other genres. Hitchcock's *Psycho* is one of horror's most revered films, but Van Sant's remake removes some of its historical importance. *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *A Nightmare on Elm Street* owe their successes to *Psycho*, but their remakes have diluted the genre's relevance in cinema. Original horror films are important because they often reflect social and cultural atmospheres, but remakes only offer box-office revenue and star power. Horror films also represent cinematic works of art that are worthy of academic study and historic preservation. Filmmakers must return to making original films before remakes completely invalidate the genre.

I grew up watching horror films. This is the story I have told my friends and students for as long as I can remember, but I have never put the words on paper. When I was younger my mother would cover my eyes if a sex scene was onscreen, but if someone were being decapitated I could watch it without restriction because it "wasn't real." I learned a lot about blood and gore films, psychological thrillers, exploitation cinema, and all the subgenres including zombie, slasher, demon possession, ghost story, serial killer, monster, contagion/infection films, and others. While most kids were reading children's literature, I was watching Jeffrey Delman's *Deadtime Stories* (1986). I cannot count how many times I watched *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and *Equus* (1977) as a kid,

though I did not know what those movies were about until I was an adult. Here I am today: a normal functioning member of society who studies the link between children's literature and horror films (my PhD areas of concentration) and someone who will always be a fan of innovative horror movies for his personal viewing experience, not mass audience appeal.

Working on this project has been an exhilarating experience for the horror fan within as well as the developing scholar. It has also conjured up feelings of disappointment with what the horror genre has become and the directions it may soon take. I can only hope for a swift sociocultural and ecopolitical change in climate to bring about an atmosphere in which horror may better itself instead of continuing to decline into remakes, 3D productions, and a complete lack of acknowledgement for what it represented in the past. The film industry will probably begin cranking out films that tell the story of the BP oil spill off the Gulf Coast in the style of *Armageddon* or *2012*, and the horror industry will continue remaking films from the past as well as those that are too current to justify redoing.

It would be great if production companies re-released original works of horror into theatres. Audiences who remember the great originals and new viewers would have the chance to see novel creations that cannot be easily remade. Long ago we sat near each other in dark theatres as strangers to the movies on the screen. We jumped, screamed, cringed, and averted our eyes from terror, but now we laugh at cheesy music, predictable acting and reactions, and American scare tactics that have dismissed any use of atmosphere and mood. People lined up around the block to see the *Star Wars* trilogy

(1977-1983) return to the silver screen (albeit with remastering and a few additional scenes). People could be equally excited if *Poltergeist* (1982), *The Howling* (1981), *Hellraiser* (1987), and other films are re-released in theatres; *Psycho* should have been re-released instead of Gus Van Sant attempting to clone the original. Original horror films should be re-released or new films should be produced; remakes do not offer cultural or social relevance or creativity to the genre.

It sounds as if horror remakes popped up overnight, but they did not; their overproduced, devoid-of-fright style grew out of progressive changes in the field. When *Scream* was released, the industry began using star power in horror. When *Psycho* was remade, star power was mixed with director prestige. As more remakes started to appear, more formulae were thrown in to bring in box-office figures. *The Ring* (2002), *The Grudge* (2004), *The Fog* (2005), and *When A Stranger Calls* (2006) all exhibit star power and lack well-known directors, but in a ploy to make more money were released in the theatres with PG-13 ratings, thereby allowing younger, larger audiences to see the films than the usual R-rated crowds. The new 3D movies are produced not for the viewing experience, but to draw patrons into movie theatres that typically charge double the normal ticket price. Unlike the “old days” in which moviegoers were provided the flimsy 3D glasses with movie tickets, the glasses must now be purchased, and merchandisers are savvy enough to make them aesthetically-pleasing (constructed like sunglasses) so people feel their money has been well-spent. All of these money-making methods test well. (*Psycho*, for example, did not fare well in the states, but it was solid with its foreign box-office.)

It is all about money, and when I spoke to Matt Riddlehoover he suggested remakes were also a part of rejuvenating a fallen economy. When a feature-length remake is released, it sparks interest in consumers to buy/rent the original (the entire franchise if there are sequels and prequels) because they assume the film's predecessor(s) must be good to watch if it is being made a second (or third) time. Money pours into the economy at the box office, in video stores, in chain stores, local retailers, and online enterprises. The economy strengthens on remakes, but just as the dollar has no intrinsic value, a remade film is empty representation.

Remakes, of course, are not limited to horror films. Recent productions like *The Karate Kid* (2010) and *Death at a Funeral* (2010) have been remade from an old American franchise and an original British film, respectively. The films are representative types for the remake machine because *Death* was remade only three years after its original, which shows how quickly the films are being made and how they cross international borders. *Karate* demonstrates how important revenue is for remakes because as I write it has already taken in over \$160 million domestically (over \$40 million internationally) in five weeks in box-office sales with a production budget of \$40 million. The remake machine largely created by contemporary horror production is spreading into other genres.

As a fan of horror and a scholar of film, I watch remakes. I do not watch every production released, but I do my best to keep up with what is being turned out. Although my entire argument calls for an end to horror remakes, I can admit that *Dawn of the Dead*, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and *The Crazies* (2010) supply validity to the

genre. *Dawn* and *Chainsaw* are a part of the early wave of remakes and are aesthetically-pleasing and relevant. This does not mean they are “pretty” films; the filmmakers worked together to demonstrate that remakes can have cultural and social value. Zack Snyder directed the *Dawn* remake and although he had previously directed two music videos, he was basically an unknown, but has to be given credit for making George Romero’s original modern and relevant. The remake showcased contemporary American consumerism, race relations, single-parenting, and fear of bodily decay and death.

Chainsaw, on the other hand, is a little different and more fallible because it is the first film from Michael Bay’s production line of remakes. It represents a major turning point in remake production in which the actors were from popular television shows and the camera work shifted the film from horror to action. Bay’s partnership with Nispel as the director resulted in a film with a style that matched content. The film entertains some of Tobe Hooper’s original vision and did not feel like a complete waste. The aesthetics highlight rural decay and poverty and the content revisits subject matter from the original film such as the dangers of picking up a hitchhiker and small-town justice.

The Crazies, yet another Romero remake, offers a mix of elements from other films in the current wave, but it is a solid film. There are no cheap special effects, the acting and directing are in tune with action on the screen, and the social significance of government involvement in the lives of private citizens still resonates from the original film. The only downfall is that Breck Eisner, the film’s director, has become a remake director. He was relatively unknown before directing *The Crazies*, but he is now set to helm remakes of *The Brood* (2011), *Flash Gordon* (2012), and *Escape from New York*

(2013). This demonstrates how a single remake can be both a positive contribution to horror and another step toward its demise.

These standout films are rare in the remake movement. Earlier films—Kaufman’s *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978), Carpenter’s *The Thing* (1982), and Cronenberg’s *The Fly* (1986)—are excellent examples that demonstrate remakes can contribute strong directing, acting, dialogue, special effects, and social commentaries to the horror genre. The contemporary American horror film, however, is still on a downward spiral, with originality, relevance, fear, and artistic value in decline. (See Appendix A for a full listing of remakes 1931-2008.) I expect (and would be interested) to see remakes of *Candyman* (1992), *Rawhead Rex* (1986), *Madman* (1982), and *Phantasm* (1979). It is surprising these films have not already been remade because they are all strong, cult horror, but I am sure it is only a matter of time. If the remake trend is not leaving anytime soon, I can honestly say that I would welcome these productions.

As a self-proclaimed visual person, I understand that all forms of art are inspired by various media. Homage is due those considered masters of their crafts, and the catch phrase “imitation is the best form of flattery” makes sense, but it is my hope there is enough individual expression in American society to keep remakes from outnumbering original horror films. Directors such as Michael Haneke and Takashi Shimizu, are even remaking their own original films. Haneke directed *Funny Games* in 1997 and 2007, and Shimizu directed *Ju-on* in 2000 and 2002 (as *The Grudge*). Both films were remade into American films, which again shows border-crossing influence, and Shimizu remade his film only two years after its original production.

Several contemporary films that keep the American horror genre breathing are worth mentioning: *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* (2006), *Feast* (2006), *Hatchet* (2006), *Slither* (2006), *The Ruins* (2008), *Splinter* (2008), *Drag Me to Hell* (2009), *The Hills Run Red* (2009), *The House of the Devil* (2009), *Jennifer's Body* (2009), and *Zombieland* (2009). *Feast* and *Slither* pay homage to creature features, but add in modern humor with quirky acting and meta-commentary to make the films resonate with audiences. The special effects may not be polished, but the acting and atmosphere of the movies work well. *Hatchet*, *Behind the Mask*, and *The Hills Run Red* are excellent slasher films for the 21st century because they introduce new villains to the subgenre. Each film incorporates elements of classic slasher horror but offers original stories, good acting, innovative kills, and a mix of fear with humor and suspense.

Jennifer's Body and *The House of the Devil* are completely different films, but both contain intelligent writing that speaks directly to horror audiences. With its quick-witted pop culture references, *Jennifer's Body* shows viewers the turmoil of being a contemporary teenager, and *House of the Devil* uses 1980s nostalgia (feathered hair and no cell phones) to show horror as an art form. *Zombieland*, on the other hand, is a commercial horror film, but zombie culture (defined by George Romero) has always been connected to consumerism. It is a film about crisp cinematography, makeup effects, and zombie rules-of-survival that fans appreciate. Sam Raimi's *Drag Me to Hell* is funny and utilizes the gross-out factor by showing what happens to the human body via old age, death, or while under the influence of a Gypsy curse. The filmmaking is reminiscent of

The Evil Dead, and fans of that film are able to see the same camera techniques that made it a cult favorite.

A lot of contemporary horror succeeds because of the restriction of camera space to one location, which heightens the constructs of fear and suspense: *Feast* takes place in a bar, *The Ruins* is filmed atop a Mayan temple, *The House of the Devil* has its protagonist take a babysitting job in a creepy house, and *Splinter* is filmed inside a gas station convenience store. *Pontypool* (2009) is a Canadian film, but it deserves honorable mention for turning the zombie/infection-film upside down by focusing on rhetoric (how language becomes poison) instead of diseased monkeys, bacterial infections from meat, or a supernatural occurrence that awakens the dead. Horror is potentially a smart genre, and these films demonstrate that creativity still exists.

Each decade of American horror has at least one representative film that stands out as a “moment” to be remembered, but the 21st century has so far proven it has little to offer. Kendall Phillips says,

This history of the horror film, at least as I’ve tried to understand it, is as much about American culture as it is about film. These films emerge at particular points in time, and in my reading, it is their relationships to the cultural moments that has energized their reception. In this way, the successful, groundbreaking horror film tells us a great deal about the culture that reacts to it, about its fears and dreams, its anxieties and aspirations. Read in this way, the horror film is an important barometer for the national mood and an important cultural space in to which citizens

may retreat to engage and examine the tendencies in their culture and to make choices about how to interpret and react to them. In the final analysis, the lesson of the history of the American horror film is clear: the things that we fear, and the ways that we express this fear, tell a great deal about us. (198)

When horror loses cultural perspective, the genre is lost altogether. I eagerly await the return of the contemporary American horror film because the remake machine has killed it—stabbed, butchered, decapitated, exsanguinated, axed, slashed, electrocuted, burned, drowned, severed, ripped apart, gutted, sliced, mangled, eaten, beaten, gnawed, chewed, devoured, raped, sawed, chopped, impaled, staked, blinded, broken, shot, and left for dead. There is one hope for American horror cinema, and the production is currently a year away from release, so I am unable to speculate on its content and the effect it will have on society, culture, and film studies; however, it is a film that features young Hollywood, which has been a bad call for remake productions. At this time I am only able to say its name and hope that it does for the genre what its previous trilogy franchise did for the field mid-90s. Its name is: *Scream 4* (2011).

NOTE: I have not included discussion of films such as Freddy vs. Jason (2003) because “versus films” are their own branch of entertainment. Like AVP (2004), these films are neither original sequels nor remakes; they are fan favorites from comic books and video games that are typically made to rejuvenate the separate franchises.

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My Bloody Valentine. Dir. George Mihalka. Paramount Pictures, 1981. Film.

My Bloody Valentine 3D. Dir. Patrick Lussier. Lionsgate, 2009. Film.

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Night of the Living Dead. Dir. George A. Romero. Walter Reade Organization, 1968.
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Night of the Living Dead. Dir. Tom Savini. Columbia Pictures, 1990. Film.

Nightmare Café. NBC. 1992. Television.

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Piranha 3D. Dir. Alexandre Aja. Dimension Films, 2010. Film.

Pirates of the Caribbean. The Walt Disney Company: 2003, 2006, 2007, 2011. Film.

Planet Terror. Dir. Robert Rodriguez. Dimension Films, 2007. Film.

Poison Ivy. Dir. Katt Shea. New Line Cinema, 1992. Film.

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Pontypool. Dir. Bruce McDonald. IFC Films, 2009. Film.

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Single White Female. Dir. Barbet Schroeder. Columbia Pictures, 1992. Film.

Six Days Seven Nights. Dir. Ivan Reitman. Buena Vista Interational, 1998. Film.

Six Feet Under. HBO. 2001-2005. Television.

Sleeping with the Enemy. Dir. Joseph Ruben. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation,

1991. Film.

Sleepy Hollow. Dir. Tim Burton. Paramount Pictures, 1999. Film.

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- Splinter*. Dir. Toby Wilkins. Magnet Releasing, 2008. Film.
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- Stand by Me*. Dir. Rob Reiner. Columbia Pictures, 1986. Film.
- Stan Helsing*. Dir. Bo Zenga. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 2009. Film.
- Starman*. Dir. John Carpenter. Columbia Pictures, 1984. Film.
- Star Wars*. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation: 1977, 1980, 1983. Film.
- Student Bodies*. Dir. Mickey Rose. Paramount Pictures, 1981. Film.
- Supernatural*. CW Television Network. 2006. Television.
- Supernatural*. The WB Television Network. 2005-2006. Television.
- Suspiria*. Dir. Dario Argento. International Classics, 1977. Film.
- Swamp Thing*. Dir. Wes Craven. Embassy Pictures Corporation, 1982. Film.
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The Amityville Horror. Dir. Andrew Douglas. MGM, 2005. Film.

The Arsenio Hall Show. Paramount Television. 1989-1994. Television.

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The Blair Witch Project. Dir. Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sanchez. Aristan Entertainment, 1999. Film.

The Blob. Dir. Irvin S. Yeaworth, Jr. Paramount Pictures, 1958. Film.

The Burning. Dir. Tony Maylam. Filmways Pictures, 1981. Film.

The Cell. Dir. Tarsem Singh. New Line Cinema, 2000. Film.

The Cottage. Dir. Paul Andrew Williams. Screen Gems, 2008. Film.

The Crazies. Dir. Breck Eisner. Overture Films, 2010. Film.

The Day the Earth Stood Still. Dir. Robert Wise. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1951. Film.

The Devil's Rejects. Dir. Rob Zombie. Lions Gate Films, 2005. Film.

The Evil Dead. Dir. Sam Raimi. New Line Cinema. 1978. Film.

The Exorcist. Dir. William Friedkin. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1973. Perf. Film.

The Eye. Dir. David Moreau and Xavier Palud. Lionsgate, 2008. Film.

The Final Destination 3D. Dir. David R. Ellis. Warner Bros. Pictures, 2009. Film.

The Fly. Dir. David Cronenberg. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1986. Film.

The Fog. Dir. John Carpenter. AVCO Embassy Pictures, 1980. Film.

The Fury. Dir. Brian De Palma. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1978. Film.

- The Goonies*. Dir. Richard Donner. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1985. Film.
- The Grudge*. Dir. Takashi Shimizu. Columbia Pictures, 2004. Film.
- The Hand That Rocks the Cradle*. Dir. Curtis Hanson. Buena Vista Pictures, 1992. Film.
- The Haunting*. Dir. Robert Wise. MGM, 1963. Film.
- The Haunting*. Dir. Jan de Bont. DreamWorks Distribution, 1999. Film.
- The Hills*. MTV. 2006. Television.
- The Hills Have Eyes*. Dir. Alexandre Aja. Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2006. Film.
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- The Hills Have Eyes II*. Dir. Wes Craven. Anchor Bay Entertainment, 1985. Film.
- The Hills Run Red*. Dir. Dave Parker. Dark Castle Entertainment, 2009. Film.
- The Hitcher*. Dir. Dave Meyers. Rogue Pictures, 2007. Film.
- The House of the Devil*. Dir. Ti West. Magnet Releasing, 2009. Film.
- The Howling*. Dir. Joe Dante. AVCO Embassy Pictures, 1981. Film.
- The Human Centipede (First Sequence)*. Dir. Tom Six. IFC Films, 2009. Film.
- The Karate Kid*. Dir. Harald Zwart. Columbia Pictures, 2010. Film.
- The Keep*. Dir. Michael Mann. Paramount Pictures, 1983. Film.
- The Last House on the Left*. Dir. Dennis Iliadis. Rogue Pictures, 2009. Film.
- The Last House on the Left*. Dir. Wes Craven. Hallmark Releasing Corp., 1972. Film.
- The Lost Boys*. Dir. Joel Schumacher. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1987. Film.
- Them!* Dir. Gordon Douglas. Warner Bros. Pictures, 1954. Film.
- The Man Who Knew Too Much*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Paramount Pictures, 1956. Film.
- The Man Who Wasn't There*. Dir. Joel Coen. USA Films, 2001. Film.

The Most Dangerous Game. Dir. Irving Pichel and Ernest B. Schoedsack. RKO Radio Pictures, 1932. Film.

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The People Under the Stairs. Dir. Wes Craven. Universal Pictures, 1991. Film.

The Prince. Dir. John Carpenter. Circle of Confusion, 2010. Film.

The Prophecy. Dir. Gregory Widen. Dimension Home Video, 1995. Film.

The Ring. Dir. Gore Verbinski. DreamWorks Distribution, 2002. Film.

The Rock. Dir. Michael Bay. Buena Vista Pictures, 1996. Film.

The Ruins. Dir. Carter Smith. Paramount Pictures, 2008. Film.

The Serpent and the Rainbow. Dir. Wes Craven. Universal Pictures, 1988. Film.

The Silence of the Lambs. Dir. Jonathan Demme. Orion Pictures Corporation, 1991. Film.

The Simpsons. Fox Network. 1989. Television.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre. Dir. Marcus Nispel. New Line Cinema, 2003. Film.

The Texas Chain Saw Massacre. Dir. Tobe Hooper. Bryanston Distributing, 1974. Film.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning. Dir. Jonathan Liebesman. New Line Cinema, 2006. Film.

The Thing. Dir. John Carpenter. Universal Pictures, 1982. Film.

The Thing. Dir. Matthijs van Heijningen, Jr. Universal Pictures, 2011. Film.

The Thing from Another World. Dir. Christian Nyby. RKO Radio Pictures, 1951. Film.

The Uninvited. Dir. Charles Guard and Thomas Guard. Paramount Pictures, 2009. Film.

The Vampire Diaries. CW Television Network. 2009. Television.

The Ward. Dir. John Carpenter. Echo Lake Productions, 2010. Film.

- The Wolfman*. Dir. Joe Johnston. Universal Pictures, 2010. Film.
- Thir13en Ghosts*. Dir. Steve Beck. Warner Bros. Pictures, 2001. Film.
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- To A Tee*. Dir. Matt Riddlehoover. Createspace.com, 2006. Film.
- Trading Places*. Dir. John Landis. Paramount Pictures, 1983. Film.
- Train*. Dir. Gideon Raff. Lionsgate Home Entertainment. 2008. Film.
- Transformers*. Dir. Michael Bay. Paramount Pictures: 2007, 2009, 2011. Film.
- Tremors*. Dir. Ron Underwood. Universal Pictures, 1990. Film.
- Troll*. Dir. Johh Carl Buechler. Vestron Video, 1986. Film.
- True Blood*. HBO. 2008. Television.
- True Lies*. Dir. James Cameron. Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation, 1994. Film.
- Twilight*. Dir. Catherine Hardwicke. Summit Distribution, 2008. Film.
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- Two Guys, a Girl and a Pizza Place*. ABC. 1998-2001. Television.
- Underworld*. Dir. Len Wiseman. Screen Gems, 2003. Film.
- Van Sant, Gus, dir. *Psycho*. Universal Pictures, 1998. Film.
- Veronica Mars*. UPN. 2004-2007. Television.
- Vertigo*. Dir. Alfred Hitchcock. Paramount Pictures, 1958. Film.
- Village of the Damned*. Dir. Wolf Rilla. Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), 1960. Film.
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Warlock. Dir. Steve Miner. Trimark Pictures, 1989. Film.

Werewolf Women of the S.S. Dir. Rob Zombie. Dimension Films, 2007. Film.

When a Stranger Calls. Dir. Simon West. Screen Gems, 2006. Film.

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Wolf Creek. Dir. Greg Mclean. Dimension Films, 2005. Film.

Wrong Turn 2: Dead End. Dir. Joe Lynch. 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment, 2007. Film.

Youth in Revolt. Dir. Miguel Arteta. Dimension Films, 2009. Film.

Zombieland. Dir. Ruben Fleischer. Columbia Pictures, 2009. Film.

Zombie, Rob, dir. *Halloween*. Dimension Films, 2007. Film.

Zombie Strippers! Dir. Jay Lee. Stage 6 Films, 2008. Film.

APPENDIX A: THE REMAKE MOVEMENT

The following is a listing of original films and remakes, chronicled from productions starting in 1931 through 2008. Data has been gathered from the Internet Movie Database (IMDb.com) and verified with Box Office Mojo (boxofficemojo.com) in effort to eliminate any discrepancies. The films are in order by production date, not alphabetical order, and although not all of the films originate in the United States the remakes are being produced in America. Only domestic box-office results are presented, and only films with theatrical releases are listed, with a few exceptions that are recognized titles in horror (i.e. the miniseries *It*, based on Stephen King's novel, is being remade into a feature-length film). Other films, such as *Rosemary's Baby* and *The Evil Dead*, do not appear on the list because their remakes continue to live in rumor and no concrete deals have been made to produce them.

Each original film is detailed on the left side of the list column by its title, release date, MPAA rating (or earlier Production Code rating depending on the year of release), budget, and box-office revenue, where information is available; its remake appears on the right with the same information. If a film has been remade more than once, the second and/or third remakes appear below the original following the same left-to-right format. In some cases, film ratings were revised or petitioned and the changes are noted with a "/" separating the modifications from left to right.

The list demonstrates changes in MPAA rating categories, remake acquisitions from international territories, trends in budgetary spending and box-office revenue, and the rapidly increasing response time for filmmakers to create remakes from original

productions. It should also be noted that some budget and box-office figures have been approximated due to currency exchange rates from international locations.

Original Title	Remake Title
Release Date	Release Date
Rating	Rating
Budget / Box Office	Budget / Box Office
<i>Frankenstein</i>	<i>Frankenstein</i>
1931	1994
UR	R
\$291,000 / \$12 million	\$45 million / \$22,006,296
<i>Island of Lost Souls</i>	<i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i>
1932	1977
UR	PG
N/A / N/A	\$6 million / NA
<i>The Island of Dr. Moreau</i>	
1996	
PG-13	
\$40 million / \$27,663,982	
<i>King Kong</i>	<i>King Kong</i>
1933	1976
Approved	PG
\$670,000 / \$1.7 million	\$24 million / \$52,614,445
<i>King Kong</i>	
2005	
PG-13	
\$207 million / \$218,080,025	
<i>Bride of Frankenstein</i>	<i>The Bride</i>
1935	1985
Approved	PG-13
\$397,000 / N/A	N/A / \$3,558,669
<i>The Wolf Man</i>	<i>The Wolfman</i>
1941	2010
Approved	R
\$180,000 / N/A	\$85 million / \$61,937,495

<i>Cat People</i> 1942 Approved \$134,000 / \$4 million	<i>Cat People</i> 1982 R \$18 million / \$5,694,940
<i>The Beast with Five Fingers</i> 1946 Approved N/A / N/A	<i>The Hand</i> 1981 R \$6.5 million / \$2,447,576
<i>The Thing from Another World</i> 1951 Approved N/A / N/A	<i>The Thing</i> 1982 R \$15 million / \$13,782,838
<i>The Thing</i> 2011 N/A \$35 million / N/A	
<i>House of Wax</i> 1953 Approved \$658,000 / N/A	<i>House of Wax</i> 2005 R \$30 million / \$32,048,809
<i>Invaders from Mars</i> 1953 Approved \$290,000 / N/A	<i>Invaders from Mars</i> 1986 PG \$12 million / \$4,884,663
<i>Creature from the Black Lagoon</i> 1954 Approved N/A / \$1.3 million	<i>Creature from the Black Lagoon</i> 2011 N/A \$750,000 / N/A
<i>Gojira</i> 1954 UR \$1 million / \$412,520	<i>Gojira</i> 1984 PG \$200,000 / \$4,116,395
<i>Godzilla</i> 1998 PG-13 \$130 million / \$136,314,294	<i>Godzilla</i> 2012 N/A N/A / N/A

House on Haunted Hill

1959
UR
\$200,000 / N/A

House on Haunted Hill

1999
R
\$19 million / \$40,846,082

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

1956
Approved
\$417,000 / N/A

Invasion of the Body Snatchers

1978
PG
\$3.5 million / \$24,946,533

Body Snatchers

1993
R
\$13 million / \$428,868

The Invasion

2007
PG-13
\$80 million / \$15,071,514

The Blob

1958
N/A
\$240,000 / N/A

The Blob

1988
R
\$19 million / \$8,247,943

The Blob

2011
N/A
N/A / N/A

The Fly

1958
UR
\$700,000 / N/A

The Fly

1986
R
\$15 million / \$40,456,565

Psycho

1960
Approved / M / R
\$806,947 / \$32 million

Psycho

1998
R
\$25 million / \$21,456,130

13 Ghosts

1960
Approved
N/A / N/A

Thir13en Ghosts

2001
R
\$20 million / \$41,867,960

Village of the Damned

1960
UR
\$200,000 / N/A

Village of the Damned

1995
R
\$22 million / \$9,417,567

<i>The Birds</i> 1963 Approved / PG-13 \$2.5 million / \$11,403,529	<i>The Birds</i> 2013 N/A N/A / N/A
<i>The Haunting</i> 1963 Approved / G \$1.4 million / N/A	<i>The Haunting</i> 1999 PG-13 \$80 million / \$91,411,151
<i>Two Thousand Maniacs</i> 1964 UR \$65,000 / N/A	<i>2001 Maniacs</i> 2005 R \$3 million / N/A
<i>Night of the Living Dead</i> 1968 UR \$114,000 / \$12 million	<i>Night of the Living Dead</i> 1990 R \$4.2 million / \$5,835,247
<i>Night of the Living Dead 3D</i> 2006 R \$750,000 / \$215,000	<i>Night of the Living Dead: Origins</i> 2011 N/A N/A / N/A
<i>The Wizard of Gore</i> 1970 NR \$60,000 / N/A	<i>The Wizard of Gore</i> 2007 R N/A / N/A
<i>The Last House on the Left</i> 1972 R \$90,000 / \$3.1 million	<i>The Last House on the Left</i> 2009 R N/A / \$32,721,635
<i>Don't Be Afraid of the Dark</i> 1973 UR N/A / N/A	<i>Don't Be Afraid of the Dark</i> 2010 R \$12.5 million / N/A
<i>Don't Look Now</i> 1973 R \$1.5 million / N/A	<i>Don't Look Now</i> 2011 N/A N/A / N/A

<i>The crazies</i> 1973 R \$275,000 / N/A	<i>The crazies</i> 2010 R \$12 million / \$39,103,378
<i>The Forgotten</i> 1973 R N/A / N/A	<i>Don't Look in the Basement!</i> 2011 N/A N/A / N/A
<i>The Wicker Man</i> 1973 R N/A / N/A	<i>The Wicker Man</i> 2006 PG-13 \$40 million / \$23,643,531
<i>Black Christmas</i> 1974 R \$686,000 / \$4,053,000	<i>Black Christmas</i> 2006 R \$9 million / \$16,235,293
<i>Deathdream</i> 1974 PG \$235,000	<i>Zero Dark Thirty</i> 2010 N/A N/A / N/A
<i>It's Alive</i> 1974 PG N/A / N/A	<i>It's Alive</i> 2008 R \$10 million / N/A
<i>The Texas Chain Saw Massacre</i> 1974 R \$83,532 / \$30,859,000	<i>The Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i> 2003 R \$9.2 million / \$80,571,655
<i>The Rocky Horror Picture Show</i> 1975 R \$1.2 million / \$139,876,417	<i>The Rocky Horror Picture Show</i> 2011 N/A N/A / N/A
<i>Carrie</i> 1976 R \$1.8 million / \$33.8 million	<i>Carrie</i> 2009 N/A N/A / N/A

<i>The Omen</i> 1976 R \$2.8 million / \$4,273,886	<i>The Omen</i> 2006 R \$25 million / \$54,607,383
<i>The Hills Have Eyes</i> 1977 X / R \$230,000 / N/A	<i>The Hills Have Eyes</i> 2006 NC-17 / R \$15 million / \$41,778,863
<i>Suspiria</i> 1977 R N/A / N/A	<i>Suspiria</i> 2010 N/A \$13 million / N/A
<i>Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!</i> 1978 PG \$90,000 / N/A	<i>Attack of the Killer Tomatoes!</i> 2011 N/A N/A / N/A
<i>Dawn of the Dead</i> 1978 R \$650,000 / N/A	<i>Dawn of the Dead</i> 2004 R \$28 million / \$59,020,957
<i>Faces of Death</i> 1978 NR \$450,000 / \$35 million	<i>Faces of Death</i> 2011 N/A N/A / N/A
<i>Halloween</i> 1978 R \$320,000 / \$47 million	<i>Halloween</i> 2007 R \$15 million / \$58,272,029
<i>I Spit on Your Grave</i> 1978 X / R N/A / N/A	<i>I Spit on Your Grave</i> 2009 N/A \$1.5 million / N/A
<i>Long Weekend</i> 1978 N/A N/A / N/A	<i>Long Weekend</i> 2008 R N/A / N/A

<i>Piranha</i>	<i>Piranha 3D</i>
1978	2010
R	N/A
\$600,000 / N/A	\$24 million / N/A
<i>The Fury</i>	<i>The Fury</i>
1978	2010
R	N/A
\$5.5 million / \$24 million	N/A / N/A
<i>The Toolbox Murders</i>	<i>Toolbox Murders</i>
1978	2004
R	R
\$185,000 / N/A	N/A / N/A
<i>The Amityville Horror</i>	<i>The Amityville Horror</i>
1979	2005
R	R
N/A / \$86,432,520	\$19 million / \$65,233,369
<i>When A Stranger Calls</i>	<i>When A Stranger Calls</i>
1979	2006
R	PG-13
\$740,000 / \$21,411,158	\$15 million / \$47,860,214
<i>Friday the 13th</i>	<i>Friday the 13th</i>
1980	2009
R	R
\$550,000 / \$39,754,601	\$19 million / \$64,997,188
<i>Prom Night</i>	<i>Prom Night</i>
1980	2008
R	PG-13
\$1.6 million / \$14,796,236	\$20 million / \$43,869,350
<i>The Fog</i>	<i>The Fog</i>
1980	2005
R	PG-13
\$1 million / \$21,378,000	\$18 million / \$29,511,112
<i>The Shining</i>	<i>The Shining</i>
1980	1997
R	UR
\$22 million / \$44,017,374	\$25 million / N/A

My Bloody Valentine

1981
R
\$2.3 million / \$5,672,031

Scanners

1981
R
\$4.1 million / \$14,225,876

The Entity

1981
R
N/A / \$13,277,558

Poltergeist

1982
R / PG
\$10.7 million / \$76,606,280

The House on Sorority Row

1983
R
\$425,000 / \$4,330,028

Children of the Corn

1984
R
\$3 million / \$14,568,989

A Nightmare on Elm Street

1984
R
\$1.8 million / \$25,504,513

The Hitcher

1986
R
\$6 million / \$5,844,868

Angustia

1987
R
\$228,789 / N/A

My Bloody Valentine 3D

2009
R
\$15 million / \$51,545,952

Scanners

2011
N/A
N/A / N/A

The Entity

2010
N/A
N/A / N/A

Poltergeist

2011
N/A
N/A / N/A

Sorority Row

2009
R
\$16 million / \$11,915,856

Children of the Corn

2009
UR
\$2 million / N/A

A Nightmare on Elm Street

2010
R
\$35 million / \$63,005,877

The Hitcher

2007
R
N/A / \$16,472,961

Anguish

2011
N/A
N/A / N/A

<i>Hellraiser</i>	<i>Hellraiser</i>
1987	2011
R	N/A
\$1 million / \$14,564,027	N/A / N/A
<i>The Stepfather</i>	<i>The Stepfather</i>
1987	2009
R	PG-13
N/A / \$2,488,740	N/A / \$28,802,131
<i>Child's Play</i>	<i>Child's Play</i>
1988	2010
R	N/A
\$9 million / \$33,244,684	N/A / N/A
<i>Night of the Demons</i>	<i>Night of the Demons</i>
1988	2009
R	R
\$1.2 million / \$3,109,904	\$10 million / N/A
<i>They Live</i>	<i>They Live</i>
1988	2011
R	N/A
\$4 million / \$13,008,928	N/A / N/A
<i>Pet Semetary</i>	<i>Pet Semetary</i>
1989	2012
R	N/A
\$11.5 million / \$57,469,179	N/A / N/A
<i>It</i>	<i>It</i>
1990	2011
NR	N/A
N/A / N/A	N/A / N/A
<i>The Witches</i>	<i>The Witches</i>
1990	2011
PG	N/A
N/A / \$10,360,553	N/A / N/A
<i>Joyû-rei</i>	<i>Don't Look Up</i>
1996	2009
UR	R
N/A / N/A	N/A / N/A

<i>Funny Games</i> 1997 UR N/A / N/A	<i>Funny Games</i> 2007 R \$15 million / \$1,294,640
<i>Ringu</i> 1998 UR \$1.2 million / N/A	<i>The Ring</i> 2002 PG-13 \$48 million / \$128,579,698
<i>Honogurai mizu no soko kara</i> 2002 PG-13 N/A / N/A	<i>Dark Water</i> 2005 PG-13 \$30 million / \$25,473,352
<i>Kairo</i> 2001 R N/A / \$49,046	<i>Pulse</i> 2006 R / PG-13 \$20 million / \$20,259,297
<i>Gin gwai</i> 2002 R \$3.2 million / \$503,714	<i>The Eye</i> 2008 PG-13 \$12 million / \$31,418,697
<i>Janghwa, Hongryeon</i> 2003 R N/A / N/A	<i>A Tale of Two Sisters</i> 2009 PG-13 N/A / \$28,573,173
<i>Ju-on</i> 2002 R N/A / \$325,661	<i>The Grudge</i> 2004 PG-13 \$10 million / \$110,175,871
<i>Die Nacht der lebenden Loser</i> 2004 UR \$4.3 million / N/A	<i>Night of the Living Dorks</i> 2010 N/A N/A / N/A
<i>Shutter</i> 2004 NR \$3.38 million / N/A	<i>Shutter</i> 2008 PG-13 N/A / \$25,926,543

Sigaw

2004
N/A
\$350,000 / N/A

Al final del espectro

2006
N/A
\$838,926 / N/A

Gwoemul

2006
R
\$11 million / \$2,201,412

Myortvye docheri

2007
N/A
\$1.2 million / N/A

[Rec]

2007
R
\$1,845,300 / N/A

Låt den rätte komma in

2008
Rated R
N/A / \$2,122,065

The Echo

2008
R
\$5 million / N/A

At the End of the Spectra

2010
N/A
N/A / N/A

The Host

2010
N/A
N/A / N/A

Dead Daughters

2010
N/A
N/A / N/A

Quarantine

2008
R
\$12 million / \$31,691,811

Let Me In

2010
N/A
N/A / N/A