

# 15 reasons to be scared Halloween weekend

By **Howie Nave**

Oh, how I love Halloween and all that goes with it. From the costume parties, the trick-or-treat candy to the horror movies – Halloween is my favorite time of year.

I remember staying up late as a kid on a Saturday night living in the Bay Area watching “Creature Features” on KTVU Channel 2 (before it became a FOX affiliate) and marveled at all those classic horror flicks that would keep me up in to the wee hours of the morning so it would be daylight when I knew the monsters wouldn’t try to kill me and the vampires were asleep in their coffins.

I give you 15 of my all time favorite scary movies because a Top 10 just wasn’t enough. I still love a good scare and there’s nothing like taking your mind off the real horrors of the world by escaping into a theater or staying up all night watching good horror flicks on DVD at home until the wee hours of the morning where I know the daylight will give me some time to sleep before the monsters decide to wake up later that night.

## **Halloween, R (1978)**



What better way to begin than with the title flick that would spawn so many sequels? “Halloween” is director/writer John Carpenter’s horror masterpiece and introduced us to the new Queen of Scream, Jamie Lee Curtis and became the sci-fi/horror standard in which other movies copied. Starring the late, great Donald Pleasence as Dr. Sam Loomis, “Halloween” had it all, didn’t it? A psychotic murderer, The Shape (later

to be known as Michael Myers in subsequent sequels) who loved to slash his victims, a terrifying music that sticks to your soul and by far one of the most frightening experiences I have ever had in a theater. There were some equally scary sequels but nothing that captured that first scream as the original.

### **Alien, R (1979)**

To this day when you witness that alien bursting out of John Hurt's stomach you know director Ridley Scott's terrifying flick has you captivated. "Alien" and its sequel "Aliens" (1986) are still two of the better sci-fi/horror flicks out there even though their version of high tech by today's standards looks antiquated. The aliens are still some of the creepiest and scariest I have ever seen in a movie which by the way were based on the work of H.R. Giger (for which he received an Academy Award under Best Visual Effects category).

### **The Exorcist, R (1973)**

It would forever typecast its little known actress, Linda Blair. After this flick it was tough for Blair to get any real serious roles forever typecast as that possessed girl who spit up pea soup. Of course it was supposed to be barf, but soon everyone found out it was pea soup and then people would always imitate her making a mess. One of the scariest and psychologically tinged movies ever, "The Exorcist" caused a sensation when it first premiered including religious protesters that of course only made me want to see it more. And yes, there were countless sequels and prequels, but none of them holds up to the mother of all satanic movies.

### **Hellraiser, R (1987)**

Clive Barker knows a thing or two when it comes to messing with people's minds and this to me is one of his best in that department and one of the most original, too. Originally titled, "Sodomasochists from Beyond the Grave," Barker (who wrote, directed and produced) must have been on some sort of

medication (or stopped taking it) when he came up with this classic horror gem. The character of Pinhead, the lead Cenobite is truly one of the more original icons in horror. You'll never play with a Rubik's Cube again if you haven't seen this classic that's for sure. Go ahead ,I dare ya.

### **The Grudge, R (2004)**

Based on Takashi Shimizu's Japanese movie, "Ju-On: The Grudge") the American version is just as good. Why? Because someone out there in Hollywood was smart enough to let Takashi Shimizu do a remake from his own movie. How about that? The original creator gets to do his own work and wow – the results are impressive. Starring Sarah Michelle Gellar as an American nurse living and working in Tokyo, she discovers (and is exposed) to a mysterious curse that causes a person to experience an uncontrollable rage before taking their life. The part that still creeps me out is that of images of zombied looking kids in this waterlogged black and white image with freaky noises that stay with you long after the movie has ended. You'll never want to enter an uninhabited house again unless accompanied by an army of eye witnesses.

### **The Thing, R (1982)**

Hands down one of the best remakes ever. There's a new one out that's more of a precursor but this version is still one of my absolute favorites. I first saw this as a double feature in the theater not knowing what to expect, but was blown out of my seat it was that good. Starring a bearded Kurt Russell as the head of an American Antarctic expedition, "The Thing" still boasts some of the best special effects ever and has an all-star stellar cast that includes Wilford Brimley, T. K. Carter, David Clennon, Keith David, Richard A. Dysart and Charles Hallahan. Directed by the master himself, John Carpenter, you'll be grabbing anything when you see what happens when an alien being replicates itself into anything starting with huskies and moving on up from there. Every movie

mentioned so far has had a sequel or two and yet this one is the one that I wanted to see a sequel but alas Carpenter felt otherwise.

### **Poltergeist, PG-13 (1982)**

Would you believe that back then executive producer (and writer) Steven Spielberg had to lobby to give this movie a PG rating? The film was originally given an R rating so he (along with the filmmakers) protested successfully and got a PG rating (the PG-13 rating did not exist at the time). This was the movie that gave us the immortal line, "They're baaaaaack" that was uttered by Heather O'Rourke, the cute little blonde who played Carol Anne, daughter of Craig T. Nelson and JoBeth Williams in the movie. The movie is a stark reminder of what happens when developers, in their zeal to construct urban sprawl forget to move bodies from a cemetery they are building on. The movie took on a life of its own with real life actors dying in each production. The eldest daughter in the movie (played by Dominique Dunne) was killed in real life by her boyfriend upon completion of the first film. Actor Julian Beck died of stomach cancer after shooting the second film and actress Heather O'Rourke died of a mystery case of intestinal stenosis shortly before completion of the third film. Also, many cast members' careers have suffered after appearing in the films. The ghosts at first appear friendly moving moving objects around the house to the amusement of everyone but then they turn nasty and start to terrorize the family before they "kidnap" Carol Anne. Still a great scare factor to this day, "Poltergeist" has a great story and great effects that rival only that of "The Thing."

### **Psycho, PG (1960)**

The one movie that would forever make showers a scary experience (if you're a woman) and would brand those of the male species who were too close to their mom a horror just waiting to unfold. Think of it as a momma's boy becoming

momma. Leave it to Alfred Hitchcock to deliver one of the truly frightening masterpieces of all time. Phoenix office worker Marion Crane (Janet Leigh) is fed up with the way life has treated her. She has to meet her lover Sam (John Gavin) at lunch breaks and they cannot get married because Sam has to give most of his money away in alimony payments. One Friday afternoon Marion is entrusted to bank \$40,000 by her employer. Seeing the opportunity to take the money and run, Marion leaves town and heads toward Sam's California store. Tired after the long drive and caught in a storm, she gets off the main highway and pulls into The Bates Motel. The motel is managed by a quiet young man called Norman (Anthony Perkins) who seems to be dominated by his mother. An interesting piece of trivia: After the film's release Hitchcock received an angry letter from the father of a girl who refused to have a bath after seeing "Les Diaboliques" (also on this list), and now refused to shower after seeing "Psycho." Hitchcock sent a note back to the father simply saying "Send her to the dry cleaners."

### **28 Days Later, R (2003)**

Movies that contained a virus theme in them have always creeped me out because you just can't see them and in the current climate we live in you never know what's going to kill our species. Will it be an in-your-face detonated device or an anthrax type of monster? Whichever it might be director Danny Boyle plays on that scenario combining the terror of its after effects and the tried and true zombie story. The movie also takes a look at what might happen if we experiment on things that go unchecked. It's that unknown element that can be the scariest psychologically. Londoner Jim (Cillian Murphy) wakes up in a hospital room all alone. No one else is in the entire hospital. He puts his clothes on, walks out into the empty streets. He does meet other survivors but how long will they survive? Not just that but it's the manner in which they die that will make you writhe.

### **Night Of The Living Dead, R (1968)**

If this movie were made today, it would be considered tame for the current crop of gore permeating the marketplace, but "Night of the Living Dead" is a true classic that definitely deserves its place in the Smithsonian Institute of Horror. The movie is still quite effective. I had the rare privilege of seeing this film in a theater at a midnight screening. The audience found themselves screaming and jumping as I did in certain parts. It's raining weird rays from outer space that causes the dead to awaken from their graves to feed on human flesh for sustenance. After seeing this movie originally on television, I never slept near my sister again when camping with the family.

### **Diabolique, R (1955)**

This movie (original French title "Les Diaboliques") centers around a nasty headmaster having an affair on his wife who, as it turns out treats his mistress just as badly as he treats his wife. In a twisted three-way the two women conspire to do in the headmaster. Robert Bloch, author of "Psycho," called this his favorite horror movie.

### **The Fly, R (1958)**

You know a movie is good when a generation of fans who crept out on the original decide that when they become filmmakers in the next generation to try and top the original. They don't. Tough to make a better one when you have Vincent Price in the original. When a scientist experiments with matter transference and a fly accidentally becomes part of that matter well, let's just say if you've never seen this classic you'll never look at flies the same way again.

### **Seven, R (1995)**

For one thing I liked seeing Brad Pitt in a role where even he looked scared. David Fincher's "Seven" stars Pitt as a rookie

detective with veteran detective Lt. William Somerset (played Morgan Freeman) tracking a serial killer who gruesomely kills for world's ignorance of the Seven Deadly Sins. It gets really good when they get into the killer's mind and start thinking as he does.

### **Jaws, PG (1975)**

This was the movie that literally put a young Steven Spielberg on the cinematic map and if you think the PG rating is too tame, you're correct. But back then they hadn't come up with the PG-13 rating which is what this should be if seen today. This is one of the best psychological horror-adventure flicks I've seen in a while. The idea of a lone, killer shark bent on eating people in a vacation resort community just begs buffet specials. That coupled with the signature shark music of John Williams makes this an all time fav of mine and even to this day I ask myself, "Is it safe to go into the water?"

### **Paranormal Activity, R (2007)**

Maybe it's the low-budget quality that made it so real with its single-camera, rapid-movement-shot in the first-person style but whatever it was sure scared me and this was the first one. Less than four years later the second sequel is released and still raking up box office receipts. With the success of another very low-budget flick, "The Blair Witch Project," "Paranormal Activity" works because the tension is just as shaky as the movie plus since there's no big names in this movie you don't know who is going to be killed off or saved.

### **OK, some Honorable Mentions worth checking out too:**

There are so many other flicks that make Halloween worth celebrating include the original "Saw" (2004), "Basket Case" (1982), "The Omen" (1976), "House of Wax" (not the Paris Hilton version but the original 1953 rendition with Vincent Price), "The Haunting" (1963), "A Nightmare on Elm Street"

(1984), "The Blair Witch Project" (1999), "Scanners" (1981) and the Alfred Hitchcock masterpiece, "The Birds" (1963). For campy horror fun you must see "An American Werewolf in London" (1981), "Scream" (1996) and my personal fav, "Shaun of the Dead" (2004).

*Howie Nave is host/emcee/manager of The Improv at Harveys. You can hear him Monday-Friday 6 to 10am on KRLT FM-93.9.*