

SPECIAL DARK DUKES

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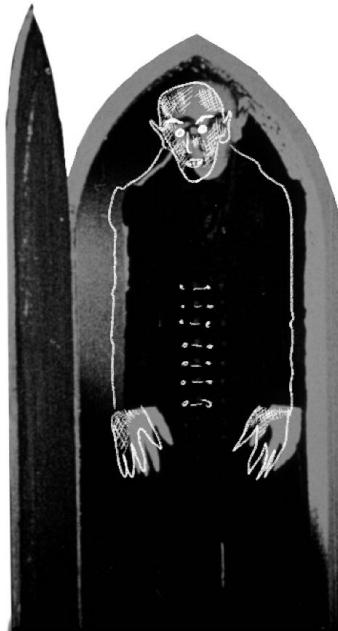
THE LANCASTER UNIVERSITY
FILM JOURNAL

CUT/TO

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DARK DUKES
FILM FESTIVAL

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Nosferatu



by: Molly Bailey



Nosferatu follows a mysterious character, Count Orlok, and where he lives his life as a vampire in Transylvania. The film was definitely interesting in style and composition as it was a revolutionary horror in the Silent Film genre. I can whole heartedly say that this film is scary. I am not sure whether it is the eeriness of the silent film combined with the compelling scary soundtrack that allows an audience to be kept on edge or if it is the look and characterisation of Orlok himself.

Personally, I do not normally find vampires all that scary but I think this was verging on being more frightening than the average modern horror film. The standard, almost boring and definitely predictable jump scares of the modern horror or thriller made it so that this was a refreshing take on the genre despite it being older. It is almost backwards to consider a film that was so influential in horror as 'something new and exciting' compared to today. However, today is what I am used to. I very rarely find anything scary and I definitely

never find anything terrifying even when going to the cinema to see 'the new and revolutionary horrors' but, that is exactly what I got with Nosferatu. I think the dramatic costume and prosthetics involved in shaping Count Orlok into a menacing villain worked really well in creating tension and genuine discomfort.

Overall, had I been viewing this back in the 1920s, I think that this film would be very difficult to watch and impossible to forget. The composition, framing and elusiveness of the villainous character all worked well together to create a movie that is a must-watch around Halloween. Though the story may seem simple and 'overdone' now, for the time I think this would have been something so surprising to audiences that we need to appreciate it now despite the new aesthetic of the 'horror genre'. I would be terrified if I had watched this when cinema was a new medium and horror films were even newer.



Enjoyment



Suspense



Scare Factor



Bodies, Bodies, Bodies



by: João Belchior

Facing an upcoming hurricane, a group of twenty-year-olds gather in a mansion to party. They are, the host - David (Pete Davidson), the recently sober Sophie (Amandla Stenberg), their new girlfriend Bee (Maria Bakalova), Alice (Rachell Sennott), Emma (Chase Sui Wonders), Jordan (Myha'la Herrold), Max (Conner O'Malley) and the older guy Alice met on tinder Greg (Lee Pace). However, not even such an exciting cast, could save the film from its own incoherence and lack of identity.

The first Act of the film sets up a good slasher, that, even though with a well-known structure, manages to leave the viewers at the edge of their seats. Just like Bee, the audience takes the position of the outsider, and it is through her eyes that we get to know the rest of the group. We soon see the potential for conflict with crossed love interests and strong hard-headed egos.

When the hurricane finally hits, in the beginning of the second act, the friends start playing the murder mystery game Bodies Bodies Bodies and all hell breaks loose. The chaotic energy of the game, however, (either because of the strong winds outside or the lack of decision by the writer (Sarah DeLappe) and the Director (Halina Reijn)), leaks onto the structure of the film, leaving the audience disorientated and confused confused confused.

As the game transforms into a real-life killing frenzy, and the body count increases, there is nothing to be felt but indifference, as the characters are all so evenly unlikable and overall forgettable. A reason for this can be the overly materialistic interests of this group of young adults, who share no common ground besides their quick judgement and their wish to keep the party going on. Furthermore, the dramatic style of dialogue that tries to replicate the Gen-Z lingo, often falls short, being either flat-out not funny, or not exaggerated enough to be comedic, repeatedly reducing the characters to the generation they belong to.

By the beginning of the third act, however, it feels like the writers finally nailed the mood, making the characters and the situations they are in hilarious. Nevertheless, because the film didn't set its tone from the beginning, the conclusion of the story, even though clever and funny, doesn't match the film watched until then.

Overall, the film feels like a failed attempt to innovate the slasher genre, that even though presents moments of quality acting, cinematography and lighting, gets lost in between two films that never were - the suspense slasher in the first act, and the comedy brilliance in the third.



Enjoyment

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Flux Gourmet



by: James Buckley

Peter Strickland's 2021 arthouse film 'Flux Gourmet' is a bizarre journey into the world of culinary horror. The film takes place in a strange art institution devoted to culinary performance and the group of residents undertaking a new artistic project under the watchful eye of the institute's head, Jan Stevens (Gwendoline Christie). During this surreal and unsettling process, rivalries form, tensions rise, and new connections are formed. If that sounds mental, that's because it is. It feels like one of those plots that could only be dreamt up by the person who wrote it. So, what I can say about Flux Gourmet first and foremost is that it's certainly not contrived.

Strickland has a very distinct style of filmmaking, and it certainly comes through here. The cinematography has echoes of Kubrick, focusing on very symmetrical static shots and careful colour coordination. There's a contrast between the order and neatness of the setting and the overwhelmingly chaotic culinary performance sequences that succeed in unsettling. The unsettled feeling I had when watching this stayed with me throughout and prevented comfort from setting in at any point, despite the sprinkling of dark comedy now and then. From the strangely unfamiliar plot to the array of unsympathetic





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tic main characters, nothing was comforting about this film whatsoever. This form of horror is what I tend to enjoy as it doesn't just rely on cheap tricks. It takes something truly unsettling to create that strange queasy feeling in your stomach and keep it there for 2 hours.

It really is a fascinating film in the way it uses food to create such discomfort. Strickland takes something so familiar to us, something that has a comforting effect on many but an adverse effect on others and turns it into a tool for horror. Closeups of indistinguishable coulis' and jus paired with an imposing soundtrack of deeply distorted noises make for a sickening experience at times. No, this isn't conventional horror, and I guarantee you haven't seen anything quite like what Strickland is doing here.

Apart from some stale performances here and there, I found *Flux Gourmet* to be a fascinating new approach to the horror genre. Some jokes didn't land and some of the sub-plots didn't quite work, but I found the fresh visual and storytelling techniques interesting and rewarding enough to come out of this film feeling satisfied (albeit slightly queasy)

Vampyr



by: James Buckley

This is not the first time I've attempted to watch *Vampyr*. Nor is it the second. In fact, this is the third occasion on which I've sat through the initial 20 minutes of Dreyer's 1932 horror flick, and the first time I've persevered beyond that point. It isn't that *Vampyr* is a bad film. Far from that fact. It has many of the necessary ingredients to be a fantastic film. Although, despite the near flawless use of classic horror techniques, I find the supernatural aspect of *Vampyr* (Around which the story is based) to be rather tedious at times. The plot follows the journey of a young traveller in the French countryside. His interest in the supernatural begins to consume him and leads his travels down an increasingly twisted path to free a woman of a vampiric curse. Despite its almost Lynchian dreamlike structure which aims to disorientate the viewer, *Vampyr* lacks one essential aspect: an interesting plot. For a film that comes in at just over an hour long, *Vampyr* seems to drag laboriously. The pacing is poor, and the disorientating nature of the film just makes this a confusing slog at times.

I'm sure Dreyer fans are grabbing their torches and pitchforks as I speak, but please hear me out. On a technical level, this is a very well-made film. The sparing use of sound creates an almost suffocating atmosphere, thanks to Dreyer's 'semi-silent' approach. Even small arbitrary sounds seem so much more significant when they break the deafening silence. Everything feels sinister and had me on edge as a viewer. In that sense, it's almost a precursor to the Hitchcockian horror of the following decades.

Another standout part of *Vampyr* is the cinematography. Probably the most praised aspect of Dreyer's filmmaking is also the primary appeal of this film. A medley of innovative and gorgeous shots ooze eerie gothic vibes. The constant contrast between lights and darks is an ever-present theme as well. I can't fault the way the film looks. The gothic aura that Dreyer managed to create is one that Edgar Allan Poe would be proud of.

Despite being a technical masterstroke from Dreyer and a film that any cinematographer would admire, *Vampyr* is an often dull and confusing journey. Many of the technical elements work well to create atmosphere and establish this as a horror film. However, there simply isn't enough happening here to give me any sense of fear or suspense. The vibe was not enough to create any tension without a comprehensive plot, and I ended my experience feeling rather underwhelmed by the whole ordeal.

CARL THEODOR DREYER
FILM PRODUCTION
PRESENTS

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Vampyr

Starring JULIA WEST MAURICE SCHÜTZ JEAN MARTEL WITH STANISLAWE SCHÖNITZ
Written by SHERIDAN LE GENEVRE Screenplay by CHRISTIAN JOL Directed by CARL THEODOR DREYER

The Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust



by: **Bobbie-Jo Glendinning**

The Vampire Hunter D: Bloodlust is an anime adaptation of Hideyuki Kikuchi's third novel from his Vampire Hunter D series 'Demon Deathchase'. Half-Human Half-Vampire, D (for Dunpeal - although should be dhampir) dedicates his eternal existence to hunting vampires. In this tale, D is hired by a wealthy father to locate his daughter, Charlotte, who has been kidnapped by the infamous Vampire Meier Link. However, D is warned that the notorious bounty hunting Marcus brothers are also on the case, and if they return with Charlotte first, they will receive the bounty award. With that D sets forth on his Demon Deathchase to return Charlotte, the damsel in distress... or will he?

As a novice viewer of traditional Asian anime, I think it would be difficult for me to be disappointed by a film like this one. As a hybrid of Anime, Horror, Western and Japanese Romance, Bloodlust is an example of cinema that combines the best of existing genres as an advantage to create a timeless, beautiful, and horrifying landscape of intense fiction. The fictional world D inhabits set in dystopian 12,090 AD and illustrated by Yoshitaka Amano is exotic and aged like a traditional painting.





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Every shot is magnificent in its own right, imbued with both muted tones of the dying world and saturated red to exemplify horror and love that is central to this tale. As a monstrous story, *Bloodlust* is as enjoyable as any other vampire film, if not more. The vampires of this fictional world sample traditional tropes of vampires that have been set since the dawn of their fiction. However, their development as characters goes beyond being evil-dead beings that thirst on the blood of virgin females. Each has an intriguing value that presents a being of ageless quality. Each conversation shared gives world development and genuine character engagement to the audience. Throughout the film, I found myself eager to reach the end of the death case, however, I was drawn deeper into the exquisite dialogue, character, and visage of this terrific film.

In all, this monstrous anime exemplifies what I believe to be the necessary qualities of a bloodlust horror while also being refreshingly unique in its presentation of characters, storylines, and beautiful landscapes.

Hocus Pocus



by: **Molly Bailey**

Hocus Pocus follows three 17th century Witches as they conjure up a diabolical plan in which they aim to keep their youth by capturing and killing children. The film adopts a slightly cheesy tone throughout that matches that of Disney's original films. I had never actually watched this film until recently despite it being made in the 1990s and it had always been recommended to me as a festive watch around the Halloween period. I think it is a feel-good family film that does sit on the edge of Disney's recognisable and loveable cringe.

The film balances the simple and easy-to-watch dialogue of the young cast with the more complex characterisation of three villainised Witches that you grow to love. Each Witch has little mannerisms and quips that individualises them in a way that makes it so that they all have their own personalities and funny faults. The comedy used throughout





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is entertaining to say the least and watching a trio of 17th century Witches navigate the modern world on Halloween was nothing short of hilarious. That, combined with the clever implementation of the parents' doubt and lack of belief surrounding the legend of the Witches makes this film feel similar to the innocence of films like E.T, Jumanji and Peter Pan.

Overall, if you love a Halloween movie that is not scary but will still keep you on the edge of your seat whilst making you laugh then this is the one to watch. It mixes the innocent tone of a Disney original with the festive, comedic feel of any holiday movie like Home Alone, Elf and Casper. Hocus Pocus is easily watchable on Disney Plus and after my viewing of the first film, I will be tuning in for the second one before Halloween arrives.

Lost Boys



by: **Bobbie-Jo Glendinning**

The Murder Capital of the World is what they call Santa Cruz in Joel Schumacher's *The Lost Boys*. A mother and her two sons, Sam, and Michael, move to Santa Cruz after financial hardship in search of refuge. Indeed, they find refuge in their grandfather home in the outskirts of Santa Cruz town, however, the boys discover darker secrets are being kept in the murder capital of the world. Michael and Sam each become entangled with groups of individuals that end up being the town resident vampires and vampire hunters.

The experience of my first viewing of *The Lost Boys* was a sort-of rollercoaster of emotions and thoughts. I went into the film expecting it to be something that it is not, then that changed to be something else, and then my new assumptions were deceived again. What I mean to say is that *The Lost Boys* generates a harmony between childish fun and horror in a remarkably enjoyable way. The film does not withdraw from the presentation of violence or horror in its tale of vampirism, however, cleverly infuses the horror sequences with a childish wonder that can still make you giggle or smile at moments of pure innocence. I place the credit for this fascinating combination on the presentation of nostalgia, a reminder of how fantastic a decade the 80's had been. Santa Cruz embodies the qualities of the 80's the decade has been most remembered for. Its fashion, music, freedom and quite interestingly, its politics. Santa Cruz's populace seems to be 90% children or teenagers and 10% adult or elderly. The younger population don famous 80's fashion, most notably that of the rock or punk rock variety - big hair, popped collars and leather jackets. The music that accompanies the images are various titles from several rock bands of the decade that perfectly enrapture the rising popularity of the genre in the 80's. On observing images with such a quality of representation - one could easily find themselves wishing to be part of such an exciting and extravagant populace of people. Feelings such as this could not possibly belong to a film considered part of the horror genre, you may think. However, in this case, it seems it can, for *The Lost Boys* resembles a fun child's Halloween flick with such representation of the 80's while never falling short on the presentation of horror. With that being said, I think contemporary horror filmmakers would struggle to emulate such a film as *The Lost Boys* now without being considered cliché or cringe. The beauty of *The Lost Boys* is the nature and decade of its production, distribution, and exhibition.

However, with its fun and nostalgic representation of the 80's I cannot overlook the facts of the decade and how this film seems to use the politics of the 80's as both villainous story points and maybe satirical criticism. While the teenage populace of the 80's became engaged with the rock and punk rock music and fashion of the decade, the older population began to fear young adolescents and blamed such fears and surges of juvenile delinquencies on such new activities. The *Lost Boys* gang of vampires are genuine representations of just that. A gang of teenagers, who dress and act like the rock bands of the decade and run/fly around the town on motorcycles committing crime after crime - often on the older generation. Their juvenile delinquency, represented through their action and attire, is to be feared in Santa Cruz. However, they also criticise the absurdities of fear mongering adolescence with these exact representations. Satire and nostalgia to save the day - ironically mirroring the film's gleeful and cliché ending.

In conclusion, *The Lost Boys* is a satirical, nostalgia, horror film that holds a childish quality while still exhibiting images of fear and violence. I wonder if this kind of quality has been or can be generated again, especially in the contemporary horror field. Would a film like *The Lost Boys* have a place in the horror industry now days? Maybe not. But this film now holds a solid place on my Halloween season must watch.



Enjoyment



Suspense



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Poltergeist



by: James Buckley

Poltergeist is one of those classic Halloween films that's been on my list for ages. The iconic line 'They're here', and the notorious 'Poltergeist curse' many attach to the untimely deaths of certain cast members, it's a film with an eye-catching reputation. So, I went into Poltergeist with high expectations and I'm happy to say that I wasn't disappointed. Of course, it does show its age at nearly 40 years old now, but there was a lot that surprised me about this film. It was far scarier than I thought and nowhere near as hammy and cringe-worthy as a lot of 80s horror films tend to be.

The film takes place in a regular American suburb and follows a pretty normal American family. Great setup for a horror film, right? Well, things start to get really weird for this family when the supernatural takes hold of the house and their daughter is kidnapped through the tv by the vengeful spirits who populate the ancient graveyard on which the house lies. It's a decent enough plot, though the pacing was poor at times and led to some big lapses in my engagement. The 2-hour run time often felt like 5, but this was broken up by some excellently done sequences which kept me interested.

The horror aspect of Poltergeist is quite well done. It's a film that terrified people when it first hit cinemas and it holds up surprisingly well today. Of course, some of the sequences don't quite hit the spot for me. Steven Spielberg supposedly ghost-directed this and there are fingerprints of those trademark

'over-the-top' 80s Spielberg-isms which spoil the tone a little bit at times. Though, generally, the film manages to maintain a pretty eerie and tense tone throughout. Its scare factor is often grounded in its realistic setting. In that sense, it gave me a similar feeling to the one I had watching The Exorcist. Seeing a normal, happy American family descend into a waking nightmare was really unsettling. It's a formula that has been used to death since then, and that just shows how well Poltergeist pulled it off. Even the idea of being abducted by your tv is a creepy (albeit slightly comical) concept as it takes something we are all so familiar with, something that's present in almost every home, and weaponizes it to create fear.

I found Poltergeist to be a worthwhile film to watch. Despite its poor pacing and inability to keep me engaged consistently, it held me in the key moments. The horror was a pleasant surprise because it didn't seem as dated as I was expecting. Visually, it's got nothing particularly interesting going for it and it's riddled with the trademarks of any other 80s horror/sci-fi film. However, it retains a lot of charm and originality from its concept which, despite achieving more popularity since, was relatively new at the time. It may not be the greatest horror film I've ever seen, but it's certainly an influential one and for good reason.

“They’re here.”



POLTERGEIST

It knows what scares you.



Enjoyment



Suspense



Scare Factor

A Girl Walks Home Alone At Night



by: Bobbie-Jo Glendinning

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night is a monstrosity story based in an Iranian city ironically named Bad City. The people of this saddened community seem to float through life grieving and lonely as they deal with death, addiction, and poverty. While Bad City sucks the life out of its residents mentally, a lonely vampire stalks the night sucking what's lefts of their life from them physically. Aware of this danger, Bad City shoulder their dead into a gully under a bridge, their dead just as another one of Bad City's disadvantages. This vampire tale makes moves to provide comment on society using irony and horror as its catalyst.

A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night approaches the horror genre in a subtler way than most other films of the genre. The representation of images is more muted and slower, which contributes to the unique atmosphere of the film but is not traditional of the vampire horror. As a vampire, The Girl shares qualities of a traditional vampire, with her fast-paced movements, stalking of the night, cold skin and fangs. However, The Girl represents something more than just a scary monster that sucks the blood of her victims. Her actions are heavily engaged with the idea of being alone or lost in the world, and this is only exemplified further as we see her choice of victim - alone, addicted, and broken men. Her pattern is broken however when she seemingly falls in love with a human man who is broken and alone but holds no addi-

tion to substances. The representation of both characters demonstrates the effects of Bad City on its inhabitants individually. However, it highlights how one finds love in the most misunderstood places to counteract a life of badness and fruitlessness. The quality of this film comes from its combination of brilliant images with a scary and classical soundtrack that incites terror while leaving audience awestruck at its beauty. It is these unique qualities in A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night that I think brings a new and different level of the vampire horror film to the industry. For me, the film feels less scary in its representation of society and emotion but surprises me in moments of small genuine terror or violence through sound and image.

Overall, A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night is a unique take on the vampire horror genre. This film utilises horror and the vampire as a tactic to represent damaged human nature and emotion. These damaged qualities are terrifying in of themselves when drawn attention to. The Girl is a Vampire that in some ways tries to use her vampirism to do better in a city rife with hate, death and loneliness. If you like slow-burn films with hidden meaning A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night is for you. You will find yourself leaving this film with a sense of fear of oneself and wondering if you could be the next victim of the vampire girl that stalks the night in your Bad City.



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Ganja & Hess



by: James Rist

Gunn's experimental Blaxploitation horror, *Ganja & Hess* is a dark look at 70's culture, religion, and the overriding power of addiction. The narrative revolves around anthropologist, Dr. Hess Green (Duane Jones) after he is stabbed by his assistant George Meda, played by director Gunn, with a cursed knife that turns him into a vampire. After being stabbed to death Hess is reborn by the blades' ancient powers with an uncontrollable craving for blood and the power of immortality.

Gunn's work behind the camera, as well as in front of it, is fairly revolutionary. Not wanting to do a typical Blaxploitation flick, Gunn's filmmaking style alone feels unique through drawn-out scenes and monologues that give his characters a greater depth. There is a familiarity to the kindred, free-spiritedness seen on screen that permeates seventies American cinema through the film's duration. Taking a concept that had gained some notoriety the year prior from the film, *Blacula* (Crain, 1972), and transitioning counter-cultural elements within the film's plot adds an extra layer to the horror displayed on the screen. Hess' character is not the archetypal vampire with fangs and a cloak, he's wealthy, methodical, and a well-mannered gentleman that doesn't lose his cool. Differentiated from the conventions set by the sub-genre of the traditional vampire film *Ganja & Hess* creates a unique take on this form of a narrative story and adds the sub plot of power and control through the character Ganja (Marlene Clark). The use of framing for her is integral to this theme as she is often shown in a lonesome longshot, appearing smaller within the corner of the frame despite her initially intimidating demeanor. The dynamic created between Ganja and Hess and its development through the narrative is the central focus of the film as Hess introduces Ganja to the darkness of his world by performing a ritual that also turns her into a vampire. Ganja's role grows in significance after this point as she must adapt to the challenges that Hess faced himself. Gunn creates unease through his use of score, specifically early on, with the choice of gospel music in the opening credits that ties into the strong themes of religion, as well as the nightmarish attack of Meda on Green that utilises sharp cuts to enhance the visual horror. There's an attempt to create discomfort through scenes of body horror and the drinking of blood that the pair take part in due to their joint desire.

Overall the mood and atmosphere created by Gunn is truly haunting. The use of shadow and colour specifically within the interior set designs and mise en scene create dark imagery, with Hess' character not being one that provokes a sense of fear in his usual, relaxed state, he is transformed within his surroundings when giving in to his urges. *Ganja & Hess* is not a film that relies on stereotypes for its horror but instead places this type of monster within a common, modern-day setting that adds a stronger sense of realism to what is displayed on the screen.



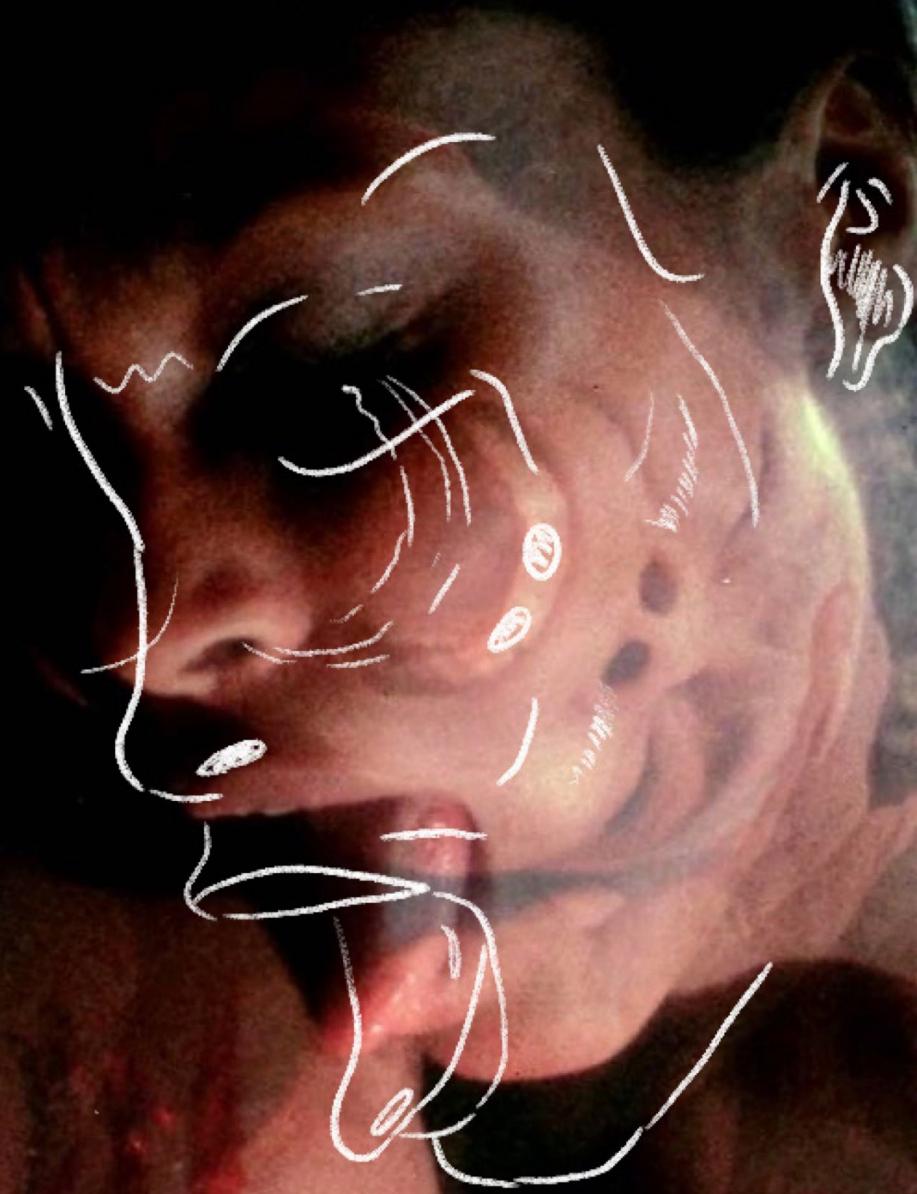
Enjoyment



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The Stone Tape



by: James Rist

Cryptic and unnerving throughout, *The Stone Tape*, takes a reasonably simple premise of a ghost sighting and forms a unique and realistic look at scepticism within a group. This team of scientists is led by Peter Brock (Michael Bryant) that moves into a haunted mansion as the base for their research facility. The group is initially attempting to develop a new recording system that will outperform Japanese competitors until Brock's assistant and computer programmer Jill (Jane Asher) is startled by the ghost of a woman falling and screaming in an old military storage room. Michael Bryant's performance as the selfish Peter Brock is very captivating, after losing patience with the belief in the walls of the Saxon room holding ghostly presences, the depiction Sasdy and Kneale attempt to give of this character's beliefs and morals is constantly shifting. He, at times, appears understanding of Jill's struggles however this is only initially and for his own gain to create a technology powerful enough to view the spirits of the room.

Nigel Kneale's screenplay makes full use of one location for the basis of the film's horror, creating discomfort and unease amongst a group with varied opinions on what they are experiencing. Limiting

the source of fear to one room creates an atmospheric paranoia rather than aiming for a consistent string of jump scares in the creation of its horror, with Sasdy's direction allowing the plot to form and shift fluidly. *The Stone Tape* is able to create much of its anticipation through character dynamics, mainly between Jane Asher's Jill and Bryant's Peter as they attempt to scientifically prove the spirit is locked within the room's foundations. This aspect of the film creates its ties as a hybrid of science fiction and horror with the pressures of technological competition being a unique sub-plot that justifies Peter's angst and impatience for a solution.

Overall, the film is distinctive for the time of its production and for applying a new twist on traditionalist ghost stories through the addition of sci-fi elements that carry the plot forward. It isn't a film that overstretches its premise and understands that the dynamics of the characters are its strongest asset in building suspense. *The Stone Tape* is a film that delivers a consistent struggle of curiosity, fear, and ultimately greed that is as enticing as it is haunting.



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Ghostwatch



by: James Buckley

I was initially confused as to why Ghostwatch was on the Dukes' line-up for Dark Dukes, isn't it just a BBC mockumentary? What could possibly put it in the category of a Halloween film? Well, turns out, quite a lot. Ghostwatch was a 1992 mockumentary made by the BBC and covers the paranormal occurrences in 'the most haunted house in Britain'. It has all the makings of a real documentary; Michael Parkinson presents from a studio where he discusses the events with supernatural experts whilst Craig Charles gives on-site coverage from the house itself. It's easy to see why this was so convincing to audiences before it was revealed to be fake.

It was an innovative idea that produced very extreme reactions from audiences at the time it was aired on live tv. The format is original and clever as it feels incredibly

real. It's like those horror films that start with a black screen and the words 'Based on a true story' stretched across; the only thing more terrifying than a horror film is a horror film that you believe to be true. Ghostwatch is constantly telling the audience that this is entirely true (Even if it isn't) through its real-life format.



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The families, though later revealed to be actors, are presented as normal people like you and me. Cameras are placed in bedrooms and living rooms like those in every house across the country. What you are seeing is the terrifying combination of real life and the supernatural. The normal and the abnormal. It is, in many ways, a prime precursor to the *Paranormal Activity* franchise with its 'hidden camera' format and real-life scenarios. Looking back on this film with the knowledge that it was faked, I can't help but find some of

the acting from the 'family members' slightly cringe-worthy. Of course, it's easy to say with hindsight that this was clearly faked. However, the dedication to the documentary format is enough to make anyone at least slightly unsure about whether this could be real. The authenticity is not really the point of this film either. The true point is the originality and ambition that went into thinking up and executing this project. It was something completely new to audiences, something from the same shelf as Orson Welles' 1938 radio broadcast of *War of the Worlds*.

Ghostwatch was an excellent viewing experience for me. I loved the originality and the diversity it offered to my horror film viewing spree. It was a fun experience, not so much a scary one. To relive a live broadcast of something so controversial in its time was a great insight into the horror genre 30 years ago. We may never see something like it again as audiences probably wouldn't be fooled like that again, however, something like *Ghostwatch* does make me wonder where the next real innovation in horror formats will come from.



Room on the Broom



by: James Rist

Based on the children's book of the same name written by Julia Donaldson, Room on the Broom is an animation that brings Axel Scheffler's original illustrations to life maintaining the book's charm from the page to the screen. With an all-star cast including Cillian Anderson, Rob Brydon, Timothy Spall, and narration from Simon Pegg the film is able to encapsulate the book's magic by keeping true to the original story and aesthetic.

The adventure aspect of the narrative is enticing throughout, with new characters being added by assisting the Witch after losing a series of items. The Cat's irritation with the Witch's generosity adds a comedic element to the story with each new arrival to the broom being disapproved of by the last. Spall's dragon is both menacing and amusing in his attempts to eat 'Witch on chips', as he follows

the quickly expanding group flying through the air. The story is one that will appeal to younger viewers with the Witch's generosity later being rewarded as she is protected by those that she helps along the way. As previously mentioned the aesthetic of the animation style has great appeal with the film maintaining the imagery depicted in the book that gives the story a stronger sense of familiarity. The forest setting that opens the film is one that feels warming in its similarity to Donaldson's other works such as The Gruffalo and Stick Man giving the feeling that there is a comforting world for these characters to live in. Room on the Broom is successful at obtaining the whimsical nature of the book and transitioning that to the screen. An enjoyable watch throughout, the film is a warming tale that the whole family can enjoy.



Enjoyment



Suspense



Scare Factor



The Feast



by: **Bobbie-Jo Glendinning**

The Feast follows Cadi, a mysterious waitress, as she navigates the home, lands and lifestyle of a wealthy family living in Wales countryside. Though Cadi's appearance is expected, there are details of her presence that disturb and unsettle the falsehoods of this family home. Cadi's job allows her to reveal family secrets that unravel the scary and disturbing nature of this rural family home. This once settled and luxurious home becomes the dinnerplate for and strange and fantastic beasts, sending a message to audiences about wealth and greed, that the film title would suggest.

Coming out of The Feast, my most prominent thought was "what?". The Feast's puzzling story reveals a slew of images that often left me feeling very confused. However, it is clear that confusion is purposefully being used as a tactic of horror truly unsettling the audience. The characters of the film have personality traits and tendencies that come through their brilliant performances that blur the lines of knowledge - having us question who or what is or will truly be the horror of this story. The film focuses its representation of the characters and their actions through wealth by parring them with images of food, mouths and eating. Now knowing the

outcome of the film, it is obvious that the grotesque nature of some of the images witnessed portray the consequence of the family's greed, as they become the feast of another's greed. Though The Feast uses disturbing and confusing images to scare and create suspense - I still unfortunately feel the film lacks a sense of continuity imperative to films of this nature. Had the film continued to be puzzling, but still feed me important pieces of information that connect to the film's ending, I feel personally I would feel slightly more satisfied with this film.

Overall, there is no doubt that The Feast is a truly disturbing and grotesque body horror film that uses the representation of a feast to expand on the horrific tendencies of greed. Though I did not feel wholly satisfied with this film, I cannot and will not deny that The Feast uses beautiful imagery and sound to cleverly scare and represent something more than just horror for horror's sake. If you're up for slow burning film with gross but fascinating images of violence that represent something more, then The Feast is a good watch for you.



Enjoyment



Suspense



Scare Factor



The Hatching



by: João Belchior

The directorial debut of Hanna Bergholm is a fantastical creature feature that does not fail to leave the audience uneasy. *The Hatching*, a film about family dynamics in the age of Vlogs, and the perfect social media life follows Tinja (Siiri Solalinnna), a twelve-year-old gymnast who struggles to keep up with her mum's expectations. Sophia Heikkilä, the mother, is a perfectionist influencer, who does all she can to best portray the make-believe perfect suburban life they live.

However, this becomes incredibly harder, when, at the beginning of the film, a wounded bird flights into their living room, causing havoc and chaos in its passage. When Tinja manages to catch the bird, the mother asks her to give it to her, with a smile, only to then snap its neck - put perfect in that!

Succeeding this, that same night, Tinja decides to nurture and keep warm an egg she finds in the middle of the forest. Her relationship with

the egg intensifies as a gymnastics competition approach, and the mother's pressure for Tinja's success increases. Tinja ends up compensating for the lack of a nurturing and caring mother figure, by embodying this role herself, regarding the egg.

When the egg finally hatches, it is not a bird that comes out of it (at least as imagined). Instead, a creature, a wa-





Enjoyment



Suspense



Scare Factor

oking allegory that keeps the audience grossed out and on the edge of their seats.

The Hatching, often resembles Aronofsky's Black Swan (2010), as both portray complex dysfunctional mother-daughter relationships, where the unhealthy pressure put on the daughter, leads things to take a dark turn. The films are also similar in the way they portray

bodies, often being revolting, falling into the body-horror genre. Even though Bergholm's film is still not quite at the same level as Aronofsky's masterpiece, it leaves the audience with great expectations regarding her next projects. Hopefully, these will include Siiri Solalonna again, as it was her phenomenal performance that made this farfetched story work so well.



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