

The Demonic Dozen

Selections by Vince LePlayv

Good Evening!

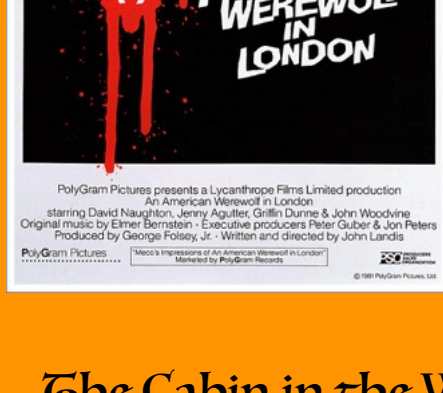
It was one hour from midnight on October 30th, 2009. I was a freshman in high school and couldn't get to sleep. Perhaps I didn't want the ghouls to get me if I did. I flicked on the old tube and searched through the channels until I came across Turner Classic Movies (a bastion of hope amongst the slog of reality shows and endless news cycles). A film was just about to begin, one I'd only heard about but had never seen. I knew nothing about the plot, it was black and white and came out well before I was born. Yet I felt adventurous and thought "it's an old movie... it can't be that scary." Pushing myself out of my comfort zone I continued to watch. As the credits rolled, the score kicked in. Slashing, screeching violins. Then a jagged, perverse title sequence. In that instant something came over me. A feeling I'd never felt before. A feeling that told me I was about to witness something very special, very shocking and above all very, very scary.

The film was Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho*. I was in for it. As the witching hour ushered in a fresh new Halloween, I was transported. Everything about it had me hooked. The secret affair (controversial in 1960), the stolen money, the police pursuit, the voice narration and the eventual arrival at a small motel that contained something more sinister than I could have ever imagined. What appealed to me more than any of the aesthetic elements was the story of it all. Suspenseful, emotional, unconventional, unpredictable and downright TERRIFYING. The strings seemed to slash harder. The stark black and white became a menace in itself. Anything could happen. No one was safe... including me. It was one of my unforgettable movie experiences.

They say the hallmark of a truly great horror film is one that not only entertains but taps deep into the social psyche of the current human condition, breaks all the rules and in the process reinvents the genre. In the list below are a collection of exceptional entries that do just that: spooky selections that have sated the thirst of devoted fans and rooted within me a deep personal connection that warrants return visits every October. Without further ado I proudly present THE DEMONIC DOZEN.

For those of you who have yet to see some of these gruesome gems, I truly envy you as a first-time viewer. You are about to go on a frightening exploration into fear. Read on... if you dare.

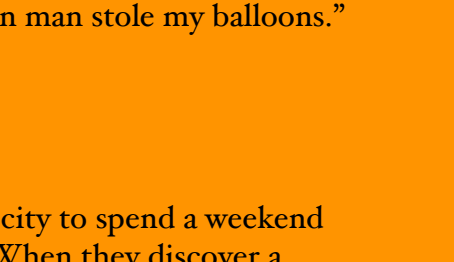
An American Werewolf in London (1981)



Two friends are attacked by a vicious wolf while on a backpacking trip through the English countryside. When one survives the violent confrontation, he must find a way to cope with the terrible curse put upon him before the next full moon.

Director: John Landis

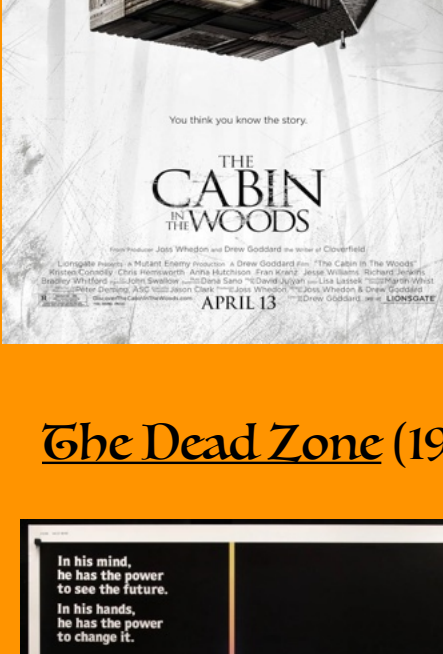
Starring: David Naughton
Griffin Dunne
Jenny Agutter



Includes: -haughty English townfolk
-vivid nightmare sequences
-groundbreaking makeup work

Favorite Quote: "A naked American man stole my balloons."

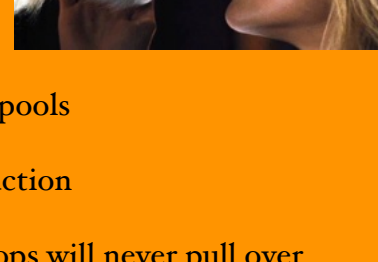
The Cabin in the Woods (2011)



Five college students escape the city to spend a weekend at a friend's remote lake house. When they discover a hidden elevator that leads deep beneath the property, they find out this typical forest getaway is not at all what it seems.

Director: Drew Goddard

Starring: Chris Hemsworth
Richard Jenkins
Bradley Whitford



Includes: -demented office betting pools
-goofy stoner humor
-massive genre deconstruction

Favorite Quote: "Statistical fact: Cops will never pull over a man with a huge bong in his car. Why? They fear this man. They know he sees further than they."

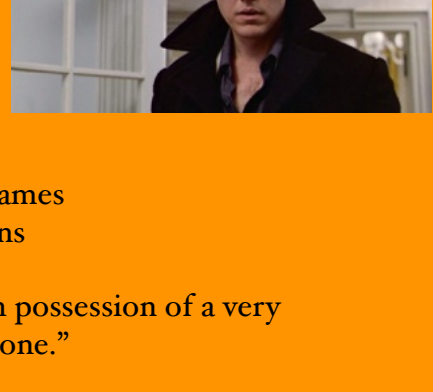
The Dead Zone (1983)



A small town schoolteacher suffers a near-fatal car accident that thrusts him into a five-year coma. When he awakens and discovers he has psychic powers, he must use them to stop a political plot that could threaten the entire world.

Director: David Cronenberg

Starring: Christopher Walken
Brooke Adams
Martin Sheen



Includes: -banevolent senator-elects
-lethal pick-up hockey games
-eerie piano compositions

Favorite Quote: "You are either in possession of a very new human ability... or a very old one."

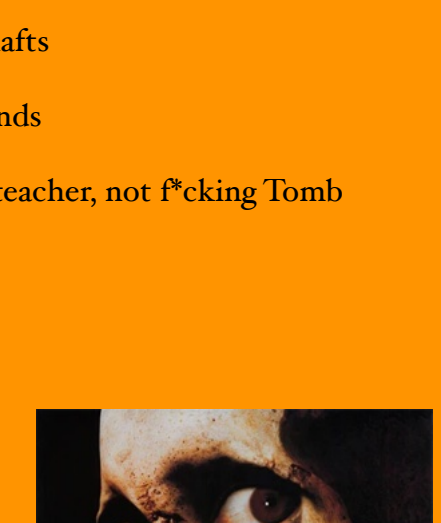
The Descent (2005)



Six long-time friends reunite for a weekend expedition involving subterranean cave spelunking. What waits below tests the women's will to survive as well as their bonds amongst each other.

Director: Neil Marshall

Starring: Shauna Macdonald
Natalie Mendoza
Alex Reid



Includes: -claustrophobic cave shafts
-infrared night vision
-underground blood ponds

Favorite Quote: "I'm an English teacher, not f*cking Tomb Raider."

The Evil Dead/Evil Dead II (1981/1987)



A gang of young teens depart for an abandoned woodland cabin. Once there, they discover the Book of the Dead and unwittingly unleash demonic spirits that possess them one by one.

Director: Sam Raimi

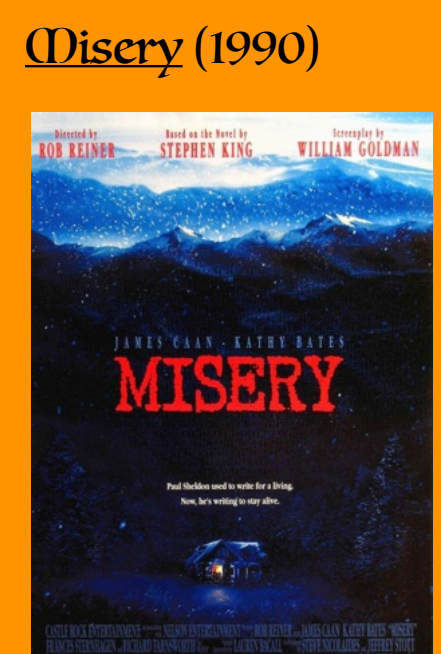
Starring: Bruce Campbell

Includes: -sexually assaultive trees
-chainsaw appendages
-zany DIY camerawork



Favorite Quote: "I'll swallow your soul!"

The Last House on the Left (1972)



A band of escaped mental patients hold two local girls hostage in the woods outside of town and commit a series of atrocities from grisly torture to sexual perversions.

Director: Wes Craven

Starring: Sandra Peabody
David Hess
Fred J. Lincoln



Includes: -vengeful parents
-stunning autumnal landscapes
-folk rock/bluegrass music

Favorite Quote: "How'd you like me to put my boot up your ass... sideways?"

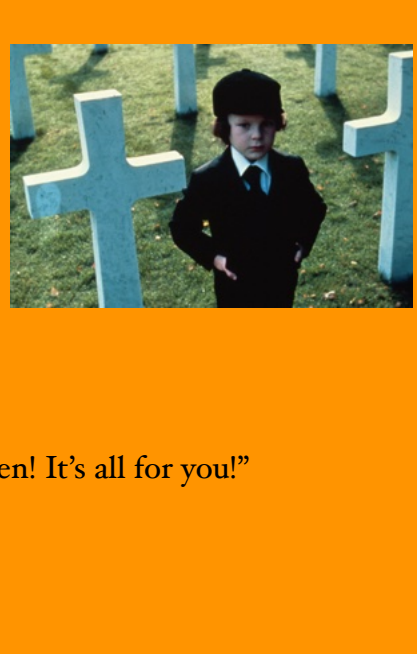
Misery (1990)



A famous author of a successful collection of romantic novels becomes snowbound with an obsessive fan that demands he rewrite the final book's ending at the expense of his very life.

Director: Rob Reiner

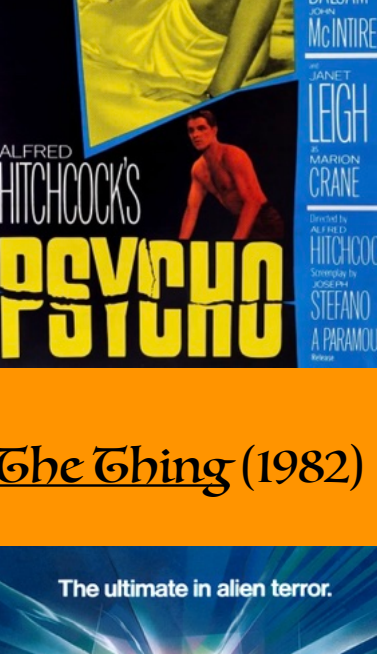
Starring: James Caan
Kathy Bates
Richard Farnsworth



Includes: -turbulent snowstorms
-sledgehammer hobbling
-Oscar-winning acting

Favorite Quote: "Yooouuuuu... you dirty birdie."

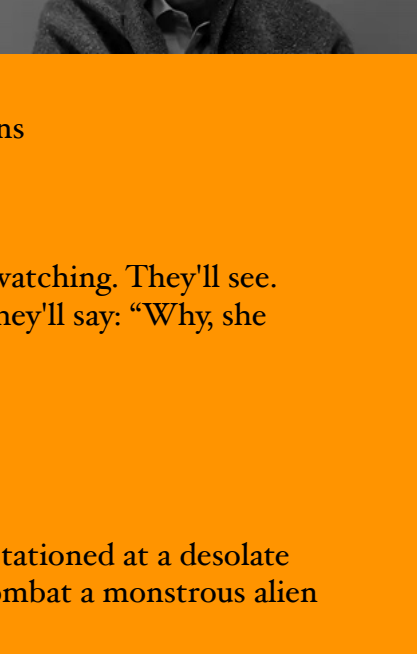
The Omen (1976)



When a streak of horrific incidents and mysterious events surround a young boy, his parents come to believe that he may in fact be the Antichrist.

Director: Richard Donner

Starring: Gregory Peck
Lee Remick
David Warner



Includes: -Roman burial grounds
-diabolical nannies
-sheet glass decapitations

Favorite Quote: "Look at me, Damien! It's all for you!"

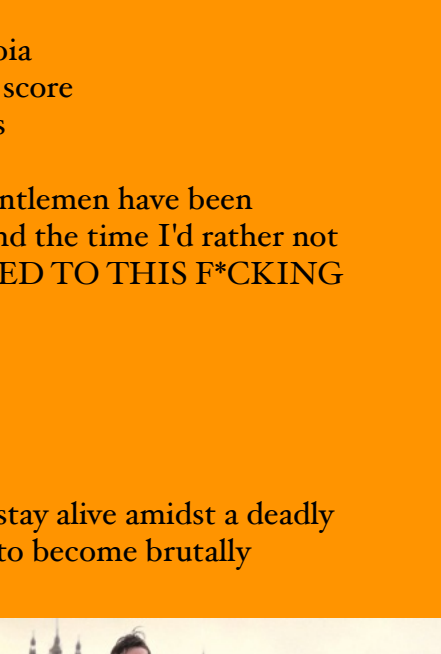
Psycho (1960)



When a bank teller goes on the lam with her boss's stolen money, she books a stay at the secluded Bates Hotel and meets its lonely proprietor, Norman.

Director: Alfred Hitchcock

Starring: Janet Leigh
Anthony Perkins
Martin Balsam



Includes: -creamy afternoon liaisons
-steamy avian taxidermy
-vindictive mothers

Favorite Quote: "I hope they are watching. They'll see. They'll see and they'll know and they'll say: 'Why, she wouldn't even harm a fly.'"

The Thing (1982)



A crew of scientific researchers stationed at a desolate outpost in the Antarctic must combat a monstrous alien life form that mimics the appearance of anything it comes into contact with.

Director: John Carpenter

Starring: Kurt Russell
Keith David
Wilford Brimley



Includes: -mind-splitting paranoia
-pulsing electro-synth score
-legendary gore effects

Favorite Quote: "I know you gentlemen have been through a lot... but when you find the time I'd rather not spend the rest of this winter TIED TO THIS F*CKING COUCH!"

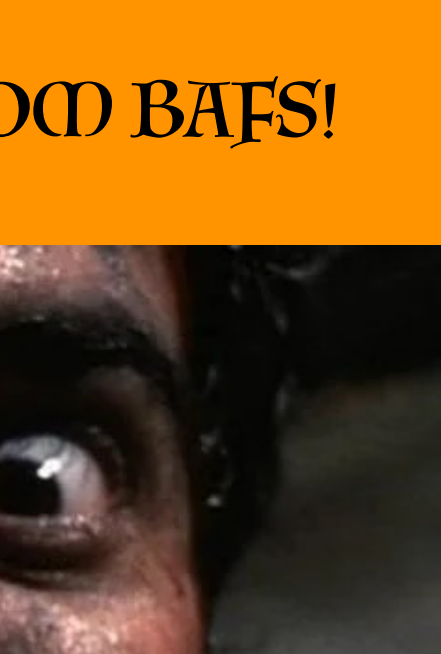
28 Days Later (2002)



A group of strangers must fight to stay alive amidst a deadly viral outbreak that causes humans to become brutally aggressive zombies.

Director: Danny Boyle

Starring: Cillian Murphy
Brendan Gleeson
Naomie Harris



Includes: -grainy digital video
-murderous militiamen
-bloodthirsty chimpanzees

Favorite Quote: "You'd never think it... needing rain so badly. Not in f*cking England!"

The Witch (2015)



An exiled Puritan family in pre-colonial New England encounter an ancient evil that stalks them from the nearby woods.

Director: Robert Eggers

Starring: Anya-Taylor Joy
Ralph Ineson
Kate Dickie



Includes: -malevolent farm animals
-haunting forest tableaux
-hair-raising period dialect

Favorite Quote: "Black Phillip, Black Phillip!"

HAPPY HALLOWEEN FROM BAFS!

