

2010: The Year in Horror—Lianne’s Overview of Theatrical Terror

Written by Lianne Spiderbaby
Tuesday, 21 December 2010 10:33



The year 2010 is almost over—and what a year it was for horror in the theaters!

At the beginning of the year, though, the genre got off to a slow start with films like *LEGION* and *THE WOLFMAN* (pictured left). Scott Stewart’s *LEGION* was so convoluted that it was almost offensive. The writing was weak so the acting suffered, and the plot barely made sense—perhaps because of the editor’s ax? I’m still not sure. *Blech*.

THE WOLFMAN was a general disappointment as well, and not because it was a badly made film—Shelly Johnson’s cinematography was fantastic, and Rick Baker is the master of makeup. Despite all of the elements being in place, director Joe Johnston’s movie was so filled with stylistic missteps, it felt like it was pulling in a million different directions at once.

Adam Green’s *FROZEN* was a brighter spot in late February. Completely original, it was frightening, realistic and upsetting—your worst winter nightmare onscreen. That month also saw Breck Eisner’s remake of George A. Romero’s *THE CRAZIES*. Compared to the original, it took the gore to the next level, but still maintained the political backdrop that was so profound in Romero’s original. Besides, after a decade of torture porn and newly desensitized audiences, it was probably necessary.



Indeed, 2010 was definitely the year of the remake, and in April, Samuel Bayer’s *A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET* was released. Bayer overstylized every shot and rarely gave pace, characters or performances any regard. The film provided its audience with no likable protagonist, and the details of Freddy’s child-molesting past were poorly executed. Michael Bay is planning a sequel to be released in 2012, but it looks like we’re in the clear for 2011.

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Steven R. Monroe pulled his own reboot trick with *I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE*, whose revenge scenes were definitely 2010’s most gory and twisted. So was the 30-plus-minute rape scene filmed from different angles but all in one take. The film apparently caused many walkouts, with stories of theater-aisle puking. It scored well with a number of horror journalists, though, despite its brutally violent and sexist discrepancies.

Summer 2010 brought us heat waves, sunshine and two horror trends that are here to stay: 3-D and controversy. Aja’s *PIRANHA 3D* was the perfect summer fright flick: sexy bathing-suit-clad men and women, a sidesplitting Eli Roth cameo and killer fish. Although a bit ridiculous a times, *PIRANHA 3D* knew how to have a good time, and rack up a tremendous body count in a matter of minutes. Audiences everywhere had a hard time getting that image of a three-dimensional, severed, floating male member out of their head. *PIRANHA 3D* was definitely the most awkwardly memorable genre film of the year.



Daniel Stamm’s *THE LAST EXORCISM* was released in August as well, and with all of these remakes coming out, we know that making an original horror film is no easy task. This film served up plenty of twists and turns right up until the credits rolled, with an ending that shocked, confused, frustrated and surprised audiences. We can look forward to more from fresh actress Ashley Bell (*LAST EXORCISM*’s Nell) when she stars in a new thriller called *THE DAY* in 2011.

Horror hero Adam Green premiered *HATCHET II* at Frightfest in late August, and the film was later (briefly) released in theaters across North America for a week in October. Green decided to release the film unrated, and horror fans all over every social media network sported the “SUPPORT UNRATED HORROR” image in their profiles. According to the AMC theater chain, the film was pulled due to poor box-office revenue; the story blew up and every major genre journalistic outlet wanted a piece of Green. This theme of horror vs. the world does not appear to be going away anytime soon, and could rear its head again in 2011.

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The fall season is the best time of the year for horror films. I had the pleasure of covering a few up-and-comers at the Toronto International Film Festival, so I can tell you that James Wan’s *INSIDIOUS* will blow your mind in 2011, while John Carpenter’s *THE WARD* will probably disappoint. Speaking of disappointment, Craven’s *MY SOUL TO TAKE* (released in October in 3D) was one of the biggest letdowns of the year, and probably the worst film Craven has ever made. The spectators who spent extra dollars to see this film in three dimensions were probably especially peeved, because the process in *MY SOUL TO TAKE* was practically nonexistent. (Just two weeks after its debut, a sneak preview of Craven’s *SCREAM 4* was shown at the 2010 Scream Awards; this very well could have been Craven’s attempt at saying, “Sorry—it will be better in 2011.” Let’s hope so.)



With October came a trio of good horror flicks: *LET ME IN*, *SAW 3D* and *PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 2*. Many fans were skeptic about *LET ME IN*, Matt Reeves’ remake of Tomas Alfredson’s Swedish *LET THE RIGHT ONE IN*, released just two years ago. However, many horror critics called *LET ME IN* the best remake of the year—quite an accomplishment, considering how many were made in 2010!

Fright lovers were equally skeptical of *SAW 3D*, the series’ final installation, but it turned out to be a gory fun-fest with a somewhat predictable plot, but original nonetheless. The *SAW* franchise shaped and changed horror in the 2000s, and while you may be tired of the sequels, you won’t be able to stop yourself from thinking about the series every Halloween from here on out.

While *PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 2* used the same formula as the first, it worked; the sequel was utterly creepy and delivered a wild ride of suspense. Some may disagree, but October brings out the best in horror fans, and the fact that this film impressed many genre critics could possibly be attributed to the horror high we all feel around Halloween. Whatever the case, *PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 2* was an entertaining film if you went into the theater with an open mind.

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Finally, December has brought BLACK SWAN to us. This film premiered at the Venice Film Festival, then Telluride before hitting the Toronto International Film Festival. Its platform theatrical release began December 3, and is already a huge success. Not so much a traditional horror movie, BLACK SWAN is more of a psychological thriller, but fear fans cannot deny the film’s creepy factor, and it’s simply an incredible cinematic achievement. This could also be a trend for 2011: a return to inner fears (as opposed to body parts strewn everywhere). THE LAST EXORCISM also toyed with this psychological theme as well.

So what can we look forward to in 2011? Hopefully, Drew Goddard’s CABIN IN THE WOODS (co-written and produced by Joss Whedon) will finally be released. SCREAM 4, INSIDIOUS and THE WARD have already been mentioned above. Other films set to be released in 2011: RED RIDING HOOD, MOTHER’S DAY, Craig Gillespie’s FRIGHT NIGHT remake, PIRANHA 3DD, PARANORMAL ACTIVITY 3, 11-11-11, possibly the AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON and POLTERGEIST remakes and THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE (FULL SEQUENCE). Should we look forward to the second CENTIPEDE? Perhaps we’ve all seen enough ass-to-mouth human-sequencing to last us a few more years, at least...

Happy New Year!

{jcomments on}