

2011: The Year in Horror—Bekah's Top 10

Written by Bekah McKendry
Wednesday, 04 January 2012 11:31



Seems it's that time again. Time to reflect on the prior year, the magnificent accomplishments you made and all the bodies you had to hide along the way. It's also the time we here at FANGORIA pause to look at the prior year in horror. 2011 was not a legendary horror year by any means, but it kicked the shit out of 2010.

Last year, I found myself struggling to find 10 titles. I ended up peppering my list with TV shows like UGLY AMERICANS and DEXTER simply because I couldn't find enough films that merited a place on my list of "the horror awesome." I ended my recap last year by pleading with genre filmmakers to give up the remake shtick and cough up some original scary content. In 2011, the fright industry took a collective step closer to something good, stuff that wasn't ripoffs of the latest video game/book series/'70s-grindhouse-film-that-Hollywood-remakes-with-less-sex-and-violence-so-it-can-play-a-t-a-mall-near-you. While 2011 may not have been epic, I'll applaud the industry collectively for its fresh content.



10. THE WOMAN: I was not expecting to like this film. I had enjoyed OFFSPRING and I usually dig all things Jack Ketchum, but the premise of THE WOMAN (an overbearing and abusive dad ties a savage woman up in his basement and tries to civilize her) left me a little turned off. It sounded like a torture film in the making, but I should have known Lucky McKee would not let me down. Smart, poignant, with a stiff shot of radical feminism, THE WOMAN turned out to be both extreme and genius.

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9. **HOBO WITH A SHOTGUN**: My horror-aficionado friends hated this movie. But I gotta say, I f'n loved it. It was insane violence with little reason other than for insanity's sake. Though I'm always game for a good social message (see **ATTACK THE BLOCK** below), **HOBO** didn't really need one. The point was pure exploitation. The film is not there to give a deep commentary on the homeless or poverty. Just giggle and clap your hands in excitement as the mayhem ensues. Need a message? "When life gives you razor blades, you make a baseball bat covered in razor blades!" That may be my mantra for 2012.

8. **FINAL DESTINATION 5**: Damn it! I just spent my whole intro applauding the horror industry for its original content, and just a few steps out of the gate, I put a part five on my list. OK, well, I'm not taking it off, because I love these films. And this one was in 3D, so the love was literally thrown at my head. I know a lot of horror fans look down on the **FD** franchise, but they offer an interesting premise that still amuses me after five different versions. Plus, I'm always excited to see the new inventive ways to die, and new things I have to be afraid of. Add laser eye surgery to the list after this one.



7. **SEASON OF THE WITCH**: As I write this article, I'm currently in a Los Angeles coffee shop with a number of **FANGORIA** writers who are floored I put this title on my top 10 list. Suck it, chumps. **SEASON OF THE WITCH** rules. Critics have been putting **SEASON** on their dreaded "worst films of the year" lists, and I will admit the film at times seems a bit silly. Keeping his American accent (and even lingo at certain points), Nicolas Cage plays a medieval crusader who has been entrusted to transport a witch to her execution. The movie has an old-school Hammer vibe to it, but is also a buddy road picture and a comedy. Yes, it's got a strong vein of lunacy that seems to seep its way into a lot of Cage's films (for instance, the **BAD LIEUTENANT** sequel and **DRIVE ANGRY**, which I also loved). But I'm now fairly certain Cage is selecting these films/roles on purpose. This lunacy is defining him, and that just makes this film a fun romp, full of gore and ghouls.

6. **RUBBER**: Clever. Very clever, yet gory too. Next time you're killing time at the office, go to Wikipedia and look up "Theatre of the Absurd" and "Theatre of Cruelty." This film marries the two art forms in the strange story of a serial-killing tire. **RUBBER** is a profoundly well-made example of several hard-to-execute art forms. It's like if Antonin Artaud and Luis Buñuel decided to make a '70s exploitation flick with ample exploding heads.

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5. [REC] 2: OK, this movie is from 2009, but it just made it to Stateside DVD in 2011, bringing more zombies, more cameras and a lot more creativity! This flick delves into a lot of the unanswered questions from the first one. As more characters become involved in the madness, additional camera views come into play. The filmmakers work the multiple angles with a cunning genius that is used to shock and disturb. You know what’s scarier than zombies? Zombie children! This film also adds elements of the occult, which is a fresh take on the otherwise overworn zombie concept. Be sure to watch with the lights out!



4. ATTACK THE BLOCK: This film has what a lot of horror films lacked in 2010—energy! ATTACK THE BLOCK has a passion that’s refreshing to see. Though the aliens are a tad cheesy, the witty and hilarious script more than makes up for a low FX budget. Pitting aliens against street kids, this film uses the horror and sci-fi genres as frameworks in which to discuss larger social issues, in this case class struggles and poverty in the United Kingdom.

3. I SAW THE DEVIL: I was a tad torn between putting I SAW THE DEVIL and A SERBIAN FILM here as my fave extreme film of the year. I SAW THE DEVIL won this round. The Korean film is intense and grisly, but keeps the viewer hooked into the riveting story and brutally beautiful and visceral filming style. The taxi sequence is epic!

2. AMERICAN HORROR STORY (pictured at top): This TV series has stuck with me. While DEXTER, THE WALKING DEAD and TRUE BLOOD have become “catch them when I have the time” shows for me, I’m hooked on AMERICAN HORROR STORY. It’s a traditional haunted-house story, but with a good amount of Hollywood legend and David Lynch-style absurdity mixed in. I’m a bit scared for the fate of this show, as just within the first year, it has gone to great lengths to provide jaw-dropping twists and surprises. I’m worried that it will keep exploding to the point that it will collapse into itself by second season.



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1. **INSIDIOUS**: This film scared the crap out of me. Seriously, the shot where the Darth Maul-looking demon is standing behind the dad in the dining room...I screamed out loud in a critics' screening. Not only did **INSIDIOUS** bring back the haunted-house story for me, but it did so with a graceful terror and a sharp creativity. This is also a virtual textbook of creepy camera and lighting tricks, all executed flawlessly.

Honorable Mentions:

TUCKER AND DALE VS. EVIL: I had this on my top 10 list in 2009, and in 2010 as it was stuck in distribution hell and screening endlessly at conventions. Glad this gem finally got a release.

WAKE WOOD: This modern-day Hammer film is a far cry from the classic monster reboots the studio became legendary for, but it is equally great. Directed by Ireland's David Keating, **WAKE WOOD** is an atmospheric story about a pagan-practicing town that can bring loved ones back from the dead—with often ill consequences. I watched this film with my mom, and I don't think she slept for a week.

Others: **THE INNKEEPERS**, **BLACK DEATH**, **THE TROLL HUNTER**, **CHILLERAMA**, **YELLOWBRICKROAD**, **MONSTERS**, **A SERBIAN FILM**

My Five Worst Horror Films of 2011: **THE THING**, **HELLRAISER: REVELATIONS**, **VANISHING ON 7TH STREET**, **RED STATE** and **COWBOYS AND ALIENS**