

Raving Mad Masercola: My Top 10 of the Decade: Part Two

Written by Nick Masercola

Wednesday, 16 March 2011 10:33



To start a conversation on the last 10 years of horror and also get back into the swing of blogging, I've rounded up what I consider to be the top ten horror films of the past decade (check out the first half [here](#)). The following are my personal top five—what I consider to be the absolute must-see flicks of the past decade. So read on fellow horror fanatics, and tell me what picks you agree with, and what you want to tear my head off for not including.



5. HARD CANDY

There's nothing I love more than a good sucker-punch, and **HARD CANDY** packs some of the meanest uppercuts of the last decade. Billed as a movie about a possible pedophile luring a 14 year old girl to his house, it begins with one of the most genuinely uncomfortable first acts ever, and then just when you think you know what's going on, it drops a bombshell and completely spins into a different (and darker) direction. To say any more would ruin the surprises for people who haven't seen it. A great script and fantastic performances by Ellen Page (pre-JUNO) and Patrick Wilson have you constantly changing whose side you're on in this ugly yet fascinating horror-character study.



4. KING OF THE ANTS

Stuart Gordon is my favorite old horror director still working today, and the three films he's made this decade (including this, **EDMOND** and **STUCK**) have been complete knockouts. The man is absolutely fearless in his choice of material (who else would take the story of a real life tragedy where a woman ran over a homeless man and turn in into a dark comedy?) and in my opinion, is the only old-school horror director still on top of his game.

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That being said, I'm still in awe at the insane, off-the-wall, darkly humorous, nihilistic and incredibly mean-spirited KING OF THE ANTS. Sean Crawley (Chris McKenna, in a fantastic performance) is an everyman eking his way through life doing menial jobs, until one day he's hired by a local mobster (Daniel Baldwin) to follow and kill a man for \$13,000. When he does the deed but no one wants to pay him, well...things get ugly. It may sound like a regular crime flick, but I promise you that this movie goes places no crime movie would dare touch. An arresting mix of ugly violence, hilarious dialogue (Baldwin's monologue about trying to have sex with his 18-year-old secretary is one for the books), twisting plot and one of the darkest thematic messages I've ever seen in a movie puts this firmly at the number four spot.

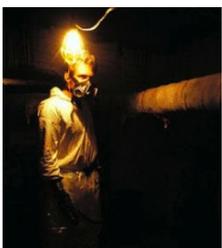


3. BATTLE ROYALE

What is wrong with the Japanese? When they're not making movies with little girls crawling out of televisions or from between bedsheets, their doing flicks about 9th graders being forced to kill each and every one of their classmates on a deserted island.

Wait...what was that last one?

A brutal, darkly funny commentary on Japanese education where a class of high schoolers are given random weapons and then pitted against each other, BATTLE ROYALE manages to take us on an exciting ride while serving up some thought provoking questions. A well-paced script, good performances and with one hell of a mean streak and generally f***ed up scenes of nastiness, BATTLE ROYALE is one of the best horror films of the decade, and most assuredly, one that Hollywood couldn't remake if their life depended on it.



2. SESSION 9

One of the most overlooked genre films I've encountered (it's listed in Fango's 101 BEST HORROR FILMS YOU'VE NEVER SEEN), SESSION 9 stands as one of my favorite mind-f**k horror films. When five stressed, overworked asbestos removers take on the mammoth job of cleaning out an abandoned mental asylum within a week, keeping their wits about themselves proves a difficult task. But when one member of the crew disappears, the other four begin to wonder if the dark past of the mental asylum is coming back, or one of their own has gone off the deep end.

SESSION 9 is a moody, unsettling exercise in minimalism, taking one deliciously creepy setting (in this case, an abandoned and decrepit mental asylum), a cast of characters under extreme stress, the echoes of previous dark deeds, and throws them all in the blender producing a strangely compelling film where you're never quite sure what's behind the madness until the final frames. Good performances, a solid script and one of the most tension-filled final 20 minutes you can get in a horror movie pushes it into second place.



1. A TALE OF TWO SISTERS

This is, without a doubt, my favorite horror film of the past decade. Released in 2003, A TALE OF TWO SISTERS is one of the most unnerving movies I've ever seen, an odd mix of fairytale aesthetics, family drama and absolutely crushing dread. It's part poetic masterpiece and part absolute nightmare, but equally brilliant in every way.

The story begins fairly innocently, but it's merely a trick for you to let your guard down. Sisters Soo-mi and Soo-yeon come home after a yearlong stint in the psychiatric ward of a hospital, but upon arrival, their father is oddly cold to them and their stepmother is acting strange. In fact, everything is just a bit off...

To say anymore would ruin the film. The pace is slow at times, but the story is fantastic, and just

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as you think you have everything figured out, it makes quick work of your theories. Not only that, but the direction and soundtrack are top-notch, and the movie contains some of the out-and-out scariest scenes of any movie I've ever watched. Smart, terrifying, heartbreaking—this is what great horror is, and while I've loved every other film on this list, this film was the true gem of the last decade.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

LET THE RIGHT ONE IN

Lord knows many genre fans are pissed this wasn't included in the list. And while I admit it's a very good film (and definitely the best vampire film in a long time), I think that people were a bit too kind to it. Yes, the story is good, the performances are well done and some scenes (such as the end pool bit) are kick ass, but to me, the whole film is just a bit too slow and meandering, with several scenes (cat lady?) that should have been cut out. Good? Yes. Not great.

INSIDE

Sorry, but I'm one of the minority that for the most part, hates all of the French new-wave horror. HIGH TENSION and FRONTIERS were awful, boring movies, and the less said about the pretentious, overlong MARTYRS, the better. However, I will admit that the first 70 minutes of INSIDE are pure tension-laced genius, as a frightened mother must protect her unborn child from a stranger who wants to cut it straight out of her stomach. Why only an honorable mention? The last 10 minutes has one of the dumbest plot turns in history, involving a man who was shot in the head literally coming back to life in order to push the movie into its last act, a twist so bad it knocked the movie straight out of my list. The first 70 minutes though? Pure gold.

THE RING

By far the best of the Japanese remake trend (and in my opinion, bettering the original), THE RING was pretty damn scary and original when it was released. While subsequent imitations, remakes and rip-offs have diminished this movie's appeal, it stands as a defining horror film of

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the past decade, if not quite one of the finest.

SAW

I had a real hard time deciding whether or not this would make the top 10, and in the end, I couldn't quite do it. Although highly unique when it was released, with a tightly wound plot and an awesome twist ending, the endless sequels and glut of torture porn have eroded much of its appeal. While it still holds up, the past six years have revealed a few more of its flaws to me (Cary Elwes' acting? DAMN...) and have taken the bite out of the initial viewing.



A SERBIAN FILM

To be honest, I'm still not sure where I stand with this movie (see my blog post about my take on its violence [here](#)). While I actually consider it the best horror film of 2010 (which would seem to warrant it a spot in my top 10), I can't in good conscience recommend a movie where a majority of the horror film populace might not even be able to sit through it. When all is said in done, A SERBIAN FILM is a tremendously powerful film that's both extremely intelligent and disgustingly barbaric, filled with moments both touching and inhumanly grotesque. It's a rarity: a very well-made, well-written and well-acted movie with a strong message that most people should never, ever see.

So that's that, a whole decade's worth of genre awesomeness. Happy with the picks? Pissed? Let me know below.

{comments on}