

- * *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1956) (Republic). Pods from outer space replicate our friends and neighbors, recasting them as brainwashed slaves in Don Siegel's original classic exercise in sci-fi paranoia, since remade twice.
- * *Them!* (1954) (Warner). Still the scariest giant-insect movie ever, with dad-and-daughter scientists Edmund Gwenn and Joan Weldon, assisted by lawmen James Arness and James Whitmore, tracking atom-spawned ants from the New Mexican desert to the Los Angeles sewer system.
- * *The Incredible Shrinking Man* (1957) (Universal). Exposure to a radioactive mist causes young Scott Carey (Grant Williams) to shrink, leading to marital difficulties, pet problems and a fling with a circus midget. Jack Arnold's iconic film still stands tall as both a nail-biting adventure and a pointed nuclear fable.
- * *The Time Machine* (1960) (MGM). George Pal presents a shivery version of the H.G. Wells novel, with Edwardian Rod Taylor trapped in a post-nuke future shared by mutant Morlocks and passive Eloi. Original ads hailed starlet Yvette Mimieux as "the shape of things to come."
- * *X - The Man With the X-Ray Eyes* (1963) (Warner). Scientist Ray Milland devises a formula that enables him to see through solid matter in a tense, hallucinatory sci-fi parable expertly directed by Roger Corman.
- * *Seconds* (1966) (Paramount). John Frankenheimer's sci-fi-tinged meditation on the nature of identity and wish fulfillment rates as one of the most terrifying films ever made and features sharp work by Rock Hudson.
- * *Five Million Years to Earth* (1968) (Anchor Bay). Sci-fi writer Nigel Kneale and director Roy Ward Baker craft a superior entry in the "Professor Quatermass" series, wherein a strange discovery in a London underground station unearths a chilling mystery about our alien past.
- * *Night of the Living Dead* (1968) (Anchor Bay). Hero Duane Jones copes with cannibalistic zombies and uncooperative fellow humans in George Romero's cult classic, a film that upped the nightmare ante for fear films to come. They don't get any scarier than this.

MODERN GOTHICS

- * *Horror Dracula* (1958) (Warner). Frequent Hammer Films horror director Terence Fisher crafts one of the studio's classiest scare productions, with Christopher Lee perfectly cast as the caped count and Peter Cushing shaping up as an equally ideal Van Helsing, Drac's vampire-hunting nemesis.
- * *Peeping Tom* (1959) (Home Vision). Previously prestigious auteur Michael ("Stairway to Heaven") Powell caught a lot of flak for his brilliant visionary chiller about an amateur snuff-movie maker (Carl Boehm), but history (with a little help from an admiring Martin Scorsese) has more than redeemed Powell and his frightening film.
- * *Psycho* (1960) (Universal). Oedipal wreck Norman Bates (an unforgettable Anthony Perkins) slashes his way to horror-movie fame in Alfred Hitchcock's pioneering shocker, loosely based on the real-life exploits of mass murderer Ed Gein. Beware the upcoming Gus Van Sant remake.
- * *The Masque of the Red Death* (1964) (MGM/UA). Vincent Price is deliciously malevolent as the decadent, devil-worshipping Prince Prospero, who gathers his fellow nobles for a final round of desperate degenerate revels as the plague steals ever nearer, in the best of Roger Corman's Edgar Allan Poe adaptations.
- * *Rosemary's Baby* (1968) (Paramount). Roman Polanski turns Ira Levin's novel into a modern scare-screen classic as ambitious actor John Cassavetes makes a pact with demonic neighbors Ruth Gordon and Sidney Blackmer that spells big trouble for pregnant wife Mia Farrow.
- * *The Exorcist* (1973) (Warner). Linda Blair's little devil takes on organized religion in William Friedkin's scare classic, the fright film that did for pea soup what *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* would do later for power tools. Now available in a special 25th-anniversary edition with lots of eerie "extras."
- * *Race With the Devil* (1975) (Fox). An underrated chiller-chase-movie combo, Jack Starrett's adrenalizing "Race" maintains a breakneck pace as a pair of vacationing couples (including Peter Fonda) seek to escape crazed small-town Satanists.
- * *Carrie* (1976) (MGM/UA). Telekinetic teen Sissy Spacek strikes back at nutzoid mom Piper Laurie and sadistic classmates (a young John Travolta among them) in Brian DePalma's genuinely scary Stephen King adaptation.
- * *The Omen* (1976) (Fox). Beleaguered parents Gregory Peck and Lee Remick try to cope with a brat from hell in Richard Donner's creepy mainstream horror.
- * *Poltergeist* (1982) (MGM/UA). The early-reel Spielbergian cuteness gives way to spectacular scares as vengeful ghosts invade a 'burb home - through the family TV set, appropriately enough - in this collaboration of Steven Spielberg and Tobe (Texas Chainsaw Massacre) Hooper. Craig T. Nelson and JoBeth Williams star as the petrified pater and mater, but Zelda Rubinstein makes a more lasting impression as a diminutive but determined psychic.
- * *Phantasm* (1979) (MGM). Don Coscarelli's cult chiller establishes a legit nightmare ambience as troubled adolescent Michael Baldwin runs afoul of satanic mortician Angus Scrimm and his flying, bladed silver orbs.

SCI-FI FRIGHTS

- * *The Thing* (1951) (Turner). According to star Kenneth Tobey, Howard Hawks did indeed direct this seminal sci-fi terror tale (official credit went to film editor Christian Nyby), which offers overlapping dialogue, nail-biting suspense and James Arness (of "Gunsmoke") as the hostile Veg-Man from another world, the screen's first true alien menace. John Carpenter's 1982 remake (Universal) also supplies its share of shocks, though they are of a more visceral variety.
- * *Invaders From Mars* (1953) (Englewood). Martian Commie creeps commandeer the brains of local authority figures, suck unsuspecting citizens into the sand pits and otherwise terrorize embattled youngster Jimmy Hunt in William Cameron Menzies' wonderfully febrile paranoid parable from the darkest heart of the McCarthy era.

- * *White Zombie* (1932) (Englewood Entertainment). Bela Lugosi cuts a memorably evil figure as zombie master "Murder" Legendre in Victor Halperin's sometimes melodramatic but genuinely atmospheric and overwhelmingly unhealthy tale of lust, death and voodoo on a vintage Haitian plantation.
- * *Freaks* (1932) (MGM/UA). Tod Browning's controversial fright flick, featuring actual "freaks" in co-starring roles, remains one of Hollywood's most bizarre and truly unforgettable genre outings. Still shocking after all these years.
- * *Island of Lost Souls* (1933) (Universal). With its taboo bestiality and vivisection themes, this superb adaptation of H.G. Wells' "The Island of Dr. Moreau" was strong enough to be banned in many countries. Charles Laughton is perverse perfection as the whip-cracking madman Moreau, while Bela Lugosi contributes a creepy cameo as the wolflike "Sayer of the Law."
- * *King Kong* (1933) (Turner). The titular supersimian's affections for fragile Fay Wray lead to his imprisonment, abortive show-biz career and literal downfall in one of Hollywood's truly towering achievements, crammed with powerful iconic imagery, breakthrough special effects and seat-squirming scares.
- * *The Black Cat* (1934) (Universal). Boris and Bela's first screen teaming casts Karloff as a devil worshiper with a hip hairstyle and Lugosi as his vengeance-bent nemesis. Surreal sets and Edgar G. Ulmer's atmospheric direction add to the grand gothic fun.
- * *Mad Love* (1935) (MGM/UA). Peter Lorre is in complete control as surgical genius Dr. Gogol, who grafts the hands of a killer onto pianist Colin Clive in Karl Freund's intense, streamlined shocker.
- * *The Wolf Man* (1941) (Universal). Lon Chaney Jr. scores one of his best roles (after his Lenny turn in "Of Mice and Men") as Larry Talbot, doomed to sing the full-moon blues after being bitten by a lycanthropic Gypsy (a neat cameo by Bela Lugosi) in George Waggner's tightly scripted scare classic.

QUIET HORRORS

- * *The Cat People* (1942) (Turner). The first of famed RKO producer Val Lewton's so-called "quiet" horror films, directed by Jacques Tourneur, chronicles architect Kent Smith's troubled marriage to a withdrawn Simone Simon, who's convinced she's part feline. The film's subtly disturbing tone and painstakingly choreographed shock scenes retain their original power. The Lewton-produced *Curse of the Cat People*, *I Walked With a Zombie*, and *The Body Snatcher* (Turner) also come highly recommended.
- * *Dead of Night* (1945) (Republic). Four directors contributed to this British horror anthology, highlighted by actor Michael Redgrave's over-the-top turn as a deranged ventriloquist. It still rates as one of the best fear films ever made.
- * *Night of the Hunter* (1955) (MGM/UA). Charles Laughton's only directorial assignment left him batting 1,000. A moody, idiosyncratic thriller written by James Agee, "Night" blooms with indelible imagery, while Robert Mitchum is psychosis personified as a sociopathic self-styled preacher in search of stolen bank loot.
- * *Curse of the Demon* (1958) (Goodtimes). Scare specialist Jacques ("Cat People") Tourneur returns with a brilliantly crafted terror tale pitting rational psychologist Dana Andrews against sinister mystic Niall MacGinnis.
- * *Carnival of Souls* (1962) (Englewood). A quintessential cult chiller from one-shot director Herk Harvey, "Carnival" tracks alienated car-crash survivor Candace Hilligoss' futile attempts to escape her fate. Among the most haunting movies ever made.
- * *The Innocents* (1961) (Fox). Deborah Kerr is a standout as a governess plagued by creepy kids and lurking spirits at a remote British estate. Director Jack Clayton, cinematographer Freddie Francis and co-writer Truman Capote bring Henry James' novel, *The Turn of the Screw*, to haunting screen life.
- * *The Haunting* (1963) (MGM/UA). Val Lewton protege Robert Wise's gothic horror supplies ample atmosphere, subtle chills and an excellent turn by Julie Harris as a raging neurotic.

The All -Time Best Horror Movies Ever Made!

by The Phantom of the Movies, a k a Joe Kane,
Washington Weekend magazine

As this list was compiled prior to the easy availability of old films on DVD, some of these may not be available except on video from a public library- name in parenthesis is production company or current distributor. Check www.imdb.com -- the Internet Movie Data Base-- for up to date info on what is out on DVD, then check www.Amazon.ca and www.Indigo.ca and www.themoviestore.ca -- TMS has a store at the Markville Mall and if it is out on DVD in North America, they can get it for you quite quickly. All three of the Silent Screams movies are available very inexpensively-- as in under \$8-- and sometimes at an Indigo store without even ordering on line!

SILENT SCREAMS

* *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* (1919). Now available on dvd from Kino Video, or at The Movie Store; the surreal journey of the mad Dr. Caligari (Werner Krauss) and his somnambulist slave, Cesare (Conrad Veidt), through a distorted dreamscape of expressionist sets fully retains its dark, disorienting power, thanks to Robert Wiene's masterful direction.

* *Nosferatu* (1922) (Kino). F.W. Murnau's unauthorized adaptation of Bram Stoker's "Dracula" offers more than its fair share of shocks, many of them supplied by the pseudonymous Max Schreck's authentically terrifying interpretation of the title vampire. ("Schreck" is German for "terror.") Arrow Entertainment , meanwhile, offers a "revamped" edition, with an intro by David Carradine and a haunting new score by the hard-rock group Type O Negative.

* *The Phantom of the Opera* (1925) (Kino). The ever-amazing Lon Chaney dominates as the deranged, disfigured but often sympathetic title character in Rupert Julian's alternately opulent, poignant and creepy silent-film giant, now available in a restored edition complete with the original two-strip Technicolor sequence missing from earlier video versions.

GOLDEN AGE CLASSICS

* *Dracula* (1931) (Universal). While undeniably static and stagey, the original "Dracula" remains perversely powerful and offers a groundbreaking performance by Bela Lugosi as Bram Stoker's thirsty count and manic work by Dwight Frye as his insect-starved slave Renfield. The Spanish version of "Dracula," shot simultaneously on the same sets, but with a Hispanic cast for the Latin market, is in many ways an even better, eerier version (Universal).

* *Frankenstein* (1931) (Universal). James Whale's streamlined, atmospheric adaptation of the Mary Shelley novel still packs plenty of chills and dark wit and introduced a new brand of screen monster in Boris Karloff. Whale's 1935 sequel, *Bride of Frankenstein*, (Universal) rates as an even greater terror triumph. 1939's *Son of Frankenstein* (Universal) shapes up as an equally memorable scarefest featuring a top horror cast (including Bela Lugosi as Ygor), Jack Otterson's majestically macabre sets and a script laced with unobtrusive dark wit.

* *The Mummy* (1932) (Universal). Boris Karloff steals the horror show here as an ancient Egyptian high priest, but director Karl Freund lends the film a distinct hallucinatory quality, and actor Bramwell Fletcher delivers one of the best nervous breakdowns ever seen on screen.

* *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1932) (MGM). Fredric March's intense interpretation of the infamous titular schizophrenic netted the actor a well-deserved Oscar. Rouben Mamoulian directs the best version of Robert Louis Stevenson's oft-filmed tale with a feverish urgency and atmosphere galore.

* *The Old Dark House* (1932) (Kino). James ("Frankenstein") Whale - himself the subject of the recommended new theatrical release "Gods and Monsters" - assembles a simultaneously creepy and funny fright fable detailing the plight of several travelers trapped in the title site with one of filmdom's weirdest families. Boris Karloff is a standout as a menacing (what else?) butler.