

die.” We learn this from a poorly written, mysterious bounty hunter. How he found this out is a big secret. Perhaps he read it in the book from the *Evil Dead 2*, which Mrs Vorhees kept in her dining room. Another big surprise. The knife from the *Evil Dead* is there too, which is good, because that’s what the Vorhees in question must use to kill him. Contrary to popular belief, Jason isn’t a big guy in a hockey mask either, he’s a weird little mudskipper with fangs that crawls in and out of people through their mouths and takes control of their bodies. Nine of the movies in this series I’ve endured now, and I’m only finding this out now? I feel so ill-used.

Wes Craven’s New Nightmare. 1994

Director: Wes Craven

Almost as wonderful as the original. The plot concerns the cast and crew of the first *Nightmare on Elm Street* reuniting for a new movie, only to have Freddy’s spirit pollute the real world. As much a thoughtful meditation of the importance of story telling- horror story telling in particular- as it is a finely executed horror film. Makes a nice double feature with the first movie.

Halloween: The Curse of Michael Myers. 1995.

Director Joe Chappell

Poor Michael Myers, now he seems to be part of an occult plot to do something or other that didn’t make much sense to me, but it sure was evil. Whatever it was. This movie doesn’t so much end as run out of film.

Return of the Texas Chainsaw Massacre. 1996

Director: Kim Henkel.

There are some fine things about this film, though not many. Renee Zellweger makes a strong, and spirited final girl. This is important as the Final Girl Sequence is roughly half of the film. Unfortunately, Henkel has made a grotesque error in downplaying the family’s cannibalism in favour of sexual sadism. The aging, ugly Cook from the first film is replaced by handsome young Matthew McConaghy as the family patriarch. He’s much too attractive and thereby breaks a horror movie rule that monsters need to be in some way repulsive. (I mean, even sexy old Dracula is dead, after all.) As a result, an unspoken audience trust is broken and scenes that could be very effective are reduced to being, at best distasteful, and at worst, boring.

Urban Legends: The Final Cut. 2000.

Director: John Ottman

I rented this because my friend Shauna was in it. Shauna owes me.

Jason X :Friday the 13th Part X. 2001

Director: James Isaac

Well, it’s the 25th century and we’re aboard a space ship that’s filled with teenagers who are on some sort of space school field trip maybe. Or maybe it’s a military ship that horny students can ride for fun. I dunno. There’s a guy some of the teenagers call professor and the scariest scene of all has him wearing a lace teddy while one of his students undulates on him. But Jason is in space and he kills a bunch of people who look and act exactly alike. I’m even friends with one or two of them and I can’t tell them apart. This movie rips-off *Alien* like children playing with Star Wars action figures rip-off *Star Wars*. And *Alien* was just *Halloween* with a giant space cockroach in the first place. For the record: Kane Hodder is my least favourite Jason.

House of 1000 Corpses. 2003.

Director Rob Zombie.

An attempt to make a 1970s style horror film. It mimics *The Funhouse* and *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* without actually being even remotely interesting.

Freddy Vs Jason. 2003

Director: Ronny Yu

A monster team up in the vein of the Universal films of the 40s, such as *Frankenstein vs the Wolfman*, or *House of Dracula*, and about as goofy. It’s probably better than all of the *Friday the 13th* films, although it lacks the primitive charm of some of the earlier entries, and it’s not as bad as roughly half the *Elm Street* films. However, it suffers from being a big studio picture and plays a little like a Slasher World ride at Disney Land.

Texas Chainsaw Massacre. 2004

Directed by Marcus Nispel

This unnecessary remake has some creepy moments but is mostly dreck. It attempts to add an air of profundity to the bloody proceedings by claiming to be a work of non-fiction. However, this merely renders everything plodding and humourless. Gone is the frenetic, demented energy of the first film. Instead we get bombast and pomposity. Even poor Leatherface is played as a brooding, psychologically tormented heavy.

seems to think he's a chicken. But he has never worked at a circus so he isn't technically a geek, at least not a career-geek. He's more of a geek-hobbyist.

Halloween 5: The Revenge of Michael Myers. 1989. Director: Dominique Othenin-Girard

Michael's after his niece again, only she has a psychic link to him now. Wee! Several times, a point is made of the fact that the Final Girl is usually a virgin. However, statistically speaking, this is far from true in Slasher Films to this point. Yet two years after the end of the Cycle Proper, it has become cliché enough to be mocked. Weird.

Child's Play 2. 1990 Director: John Lafia

A possessed doll returns to forcibly inhabit the body of the boy from the first film. Moderately charming without being very good. However, it demonstrates a pitfall inherent to Slasher sequels. The first act of the film concerns the Good Guy Toy Company dealing with the bad publicity from having one of their products come to life and kill people, and all suspension of disbelief is shattered. Thus demonstrating that it's easier to believe in a psychopathic doll, or a dream-inhabiting child killer, or a masked maniac who cannot be killed, if the world they inhabit is insular. After all, if a doll came to life and killed people, the world would have more on its mind than bad PR.

Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare. 1991 Director: Rachel Talalay

Filled with more fawning, obnoxious celebrity cameos than an episode of the Love Boat, and only about a third as scary. I can't tell you how much I hate this movie. There isn't enough time, and this is only supposed to be an appendix.

Child's Play 3. 1991 Director: Jack Bender

I suppose the *Friday the 13th* series must be blamed for making Slasher films into franchises, and the *Elm Street* movies must be blamed for turning the killers into wise cracking pop icons, but surely we can blame the Chucky movies for something. Please! This was the movie that was deemed responsible for the two young Liverpool kids murdering a boy named Ray Bulger. *Child's Play 3* is too dull to inspire anything. Granted, it's got a certain big budget gloss- which is probably to its detriment- and Chucky technology has vastly improved since the first film. But still, yawn. It takes place in a military school, and part of its failure illustrates the truism that Slashers with guns are never as scary as Slashers with knives, chainsaws, hooks or meat cleavers.

Popcorn. 1991 Director: Mark Herrier

A group of film students puts on a 60s Horror/Sci-Fi Movie Marathon and a scar-faced slasher kills them off using the gimmicks from the movies. This one is fairly successful as a tongue-in-cheek Slasher, but the Films-With-in-the-Film are brilliant, spot-on, satire.

Dr Giggles. 1992. Director: Manny Kotto

I saw this one all of three days ago, and already it's all but vanished from my memory. As well as I can recall, it's about a post-Freddy slasher who dresses as a doctor and kills people while dispensing Hippocratic one-liners. I don't remember any specifics, but things like "Take two of these and call me in the morning," and then stabs his victim twice in the chest. Or maybe he says, "It looks to me like you're running a temperature," and then he sets his victim on fire. How's that for witty and clever? The sister from *Charmed*- no, not her, the other sister- plays a limp, uninteresting Final Girl. When she kills the slasher she comes up with a doctor gag of her own. I don't recall what it was exactly, but I remember being disappointed that it wasn't, "Okey Doc, now turn your head and cough."

Candyman. 1992. Director: Bernard Rose.

I rented this because it's supposed to be a Slasher Film about Urban Legends. It isn't. It also isn't very good.

Prom Night IV: Deliver Us From Evil. 1992 Director: Clay Borris

It's Prom Night. Two teenage couples sneak out to a remote mansion to celebrate and an evil, demonic priest hunts them down as punishment for their sins. Although this one comes very late in the Slasher cycle- well into it's ugly decline - it manages to steer clear of both Post-Kreugerism and postmodernism, and tell a simple, back to the basic Slasher story. This isn't to say that it's any good but it easily holds its own with earlier turkeys like *My Bloody Valentine*, and *Happy Birthday to Me*. I mean, it's crap, but at least it doesn't smirk at you while it's being crap. There's a lot to be said for that.

Jason Goes to Hell: The Final Friday. 1993 Director: Adam Marcus

Just when you thought Jason was nothing more than your run of the mill invincible knife-wielding maniac out to avenge the murder of his knife-wielding mother who was murdered while trying to avenge his accidental drowning death, a new secret is revealed! Jason can, and I quote, "change bodies like most people change shirts." Who knew? We also learn that, "Through a Vorhees was he born. Through a Vorhees will he be reborn and only a by the hands of a Vorhees will he

moment ago. It has something to do with a tent peg. Doesn't matter. Jason comes back from the dead and lazily kills a bunch of confusingly similar partying teens. The Final Girl sequence is made fractionally more interesting because she's telekinetic and can drop houses on him, instead of simply the usual hitting him with a big stick motif.

Nightmare on Elm Street IV: The Dream Master. 1988 Director: Renny Harlin

This might be my favourite in the series, although it's really far, far from the best. There's a sly little Kafka reference that amused me to no end when I was a teenager. And the Final Girl is named after Lewis Carroll's Alice. Otherwise, it's more expensive than the first film, without being half as good.

Child's Play. 1988 Director: Tom Holland

Above average Post-Freddy Slasher. The Final Girl is a little boy and the Slasher is a Cabbage Patch Doll. Having been around for the Cabbage Patch Riots of 1982 this film has socio-political weight for me that is likely lost on those not of my generation. However, it's better than most of the crap released this late in the subgenre's cycle.

Sleep Away Camp II : Unhappy Campers. 1988 Director: Michael A Simpson

At least the first Sleepaway Camp had the decency to attempt startling new ways to offend. This irritatingly self-conscious slasher/comedy doesn't even have the decency to have a final scene. Angela's back, but her penis is not; She had a sex change operation and now her doctors think she is fit to be a camp counsellor. Her campers are possibly the oldest in history. She murders them when she feels they are being sinful. The lame excuse for a Final Girl, is –of course- a professional virgin. Thereby, enforcing my suspicion that the clichés about Slasher Films have more to do with the self-referential spoofing at the end of the cycle, than with the early films that inspired them.

Hellbound: Hellraiser II. 1988. Director: Tony Randell

Like this first movie in this series, *Hellbound* is wondrous to look at, in a bloody, stomach-churning sort of way. And the Cenobites are really interesting looking monsters. Also like the first movie, this one makes no sense at all, is slackly paced, and utterly devoid of humour. However, the look of the film is awfully interesting and worth stealing.

Halloween 4: The Return of Michael Myers. 1988. Director: Dwight H Little.

Michael Myers is back with a stupid looking mask. He's trying to kill the daughter of the Jamie Lee Curtis character, as Ms Curtis was smart enough to sneak out of the series. Another Final Girl Family Trio.

A Nightmare on Elm Street V: The Dream Child. 1989 Director: Stephen Hopkins

The worm officially turned at this point in the series. Freddy had become a pop celebrity and the films had become utter drek. I've seen this film several times in my life. And I can never for the life of me remember anything about it.

Pet Semetary. 1989. Director: Mary Lambert.

Not really of the Slasher genre, I'm not sure why I'm including it here, but I must have my reasons. Maybe it's because there are lots of scenes in which a person is surprised by a cat jumping out of a cupboard, and that's a genre staple. (How do they get up there, anyway?)

Friday the 13th, Part VIII – Jason Takes Manhattan. 1989. Director Rob Hedden

One critic said this movie should be called Jason Takes A Boat Ride, which is pretty much what happens. Other than a quick shot of Times Square in the final reel and a scene in the subway, there is not much of Manhattan to be taken. This one actually starts out rather well, though. The plot, if such it can be called, concerns some high school graduates charting a boat to New York City as part of- I don't know really- I guess it's a school trip, or something. The characters are interesting, more or less. The performances perfectly acceptable, for the most part. Better still, the grotesquely over-blown comedic characters which mar the later entries in this series are nowhere to be found. Unfortunately, things go predictably wrong predictably fast. The pacing is non-existent, and the scares are even harder to find. And Jason's make-up is very silly looking.

Prom Night 3: The Last Kiss. 1989 Director: Ron Oliver & Peter R Simpson

If you ever wondered what you get when you cross *Nightmare on Elm Street Part 2* with *Teen Wolf*, you need look no further than this tedious waste of two hours of my life. If you've never wondered about crossing those films, you don't need to watch this one.

Luther The Geek. 1990 Director: Carlton J Albright.

A crazy fellow named Luther is released from prison, bites the head off an old lady and then begins to terrorize a single farm mother, her teenage daughter, and the daughter's boyfriend. Luther likes to bite the heads off things, and he

Slasher Cycle Proper. She's not far off. After this point, the self-referential nature of this branch of horror grows significantly broader and more tongue in cheek.

A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: The Dream Warriors. 1986. Director: Chuck Russell

I have a lot of affection for this series, even when it's silly. Elm Street's few remaining teens are institutionalized for their perfectly understandable sleep disorders. Freddy kills most of them as they dream. In this movie we learn all about Freddy's mother, a poor nun left in a cell with one hundred psychotic maniacs for the weekend, during which time Freddy was conceived. No wonder he turned out so badly.

Silent Night, Deadly Night 2. 1987. Director: Lee Harry.

And you thought the first film was bad! Ha! This movie is 86 minutes long. The first 46 minutes contain a truncated version of the ENTIRE FIRST FILM! The remaining forty minutes involves the murderous rampage of the original killer's younger brother. At one point, he takes a date to a movie, which- bizarrely- is *Silent Night, Deadly Night Part 1!* The critic at Fangoria magazine thinks this film is a brilliant exercise in "Neo-Brechtian alienation theory". Please! It doesn't even have the cool scary Santa song!

Hello Mary Lou: Prom Night 2. 1987. Director: Bruce Pittman

Owes more to *Nightmare on Elm Street* than the previous *Prom Night*. Not an awful film, in its own way. Most of the characters are named for the directors of previous Slasher Films. The most startling thing about it is how suddenly Slasher films become irritatingly self-referential. Suddenly they're all films about other films.

Cheerleader Camp. 1987. Director: John Quinn

A bunch of teenagers, all in their thirties, frolic with their pom-poms in the woods. The characters seem to be refugees from a mid-eighties teen jiggle comedy, lost in a mid-eighties slasher plot. The resulting muddle leaves the body count at a sleep-inducing two, until an hour into the film, when everyone decides to run off into the woods alone. I guess they're trying to make up for lost time. The film presents us with two characters who possess the necessary Final Girl qualities, so, obviously, one of them is the killer- in spite of the endless parade of other ineffectual red herring suspects. Here's a clue: the killer is likely not the girl who keeps having nightmares that she's murdering everyone; it's probably the girl in the alligator suit.

Slumber Party Massacre 2. 1987. Director: Deborah Bock

If one wanted to be charitable, one could say that this film operates in the tradition of the German expressionist classic, *The Cabinet of Dr Caligari*, and of *Nightmare on Elm Street*. However, if one would rather be honest, one would be forced to say this film in an incoherent rambling mess which proves women can write and direct slasher films as poorly as men can. The killer looks like an Elvis impersonator in black fringe leather. He sings and dances and giggles a lot and carries a big red heavy-metal guitar with an extremely clumsy looking giant drill bit on the end. He kills people with it. In the real world, it would be hard to allow yourself to get killed by so awkward a weapon, but the dopes in this movie somehow manage it. It turns out to all be a dream in the end. I spoiled the surprise. Oops. Sorry.

Night Screams. 1987. Director: Allen Plone.

It is a common occurrence in modern horror films for characters to be watching older horror films on TV. For example, the characters in *Halloween* watch *The Thing*- a great piece of 50s sci-fi paranoia. In *Nightmare on Elm Street*, they watch *Evil Dead*. The list is endless. It's a director's way of saying, "This film on TV is a movie that inspired me. I can only hope that the film you are watching now is as worthy as this film that came before." I knew I was in trouble when *Night Screams* opened with a couple watching *Graduation Day* on TV. Imagine! A film that aspires to be as good as *Graduation Day*. The good news is the film makers succeed in their dubious goal. Their plot: A football player throws a party, and people get killed. There are evil escaped convicts in the basement. I'm not sure why. No attempt is made to throw suspicion on them. On two separate occasions, we watch a couple going at it on the couch, and the man gets up to grill a hamburger. Honest. Twice this happens! "Mm! I'm getting hot and horny! Time to get up and cook a single hamburger in my underwear!" I'm willing to bet this has never once happened in real life. In another scene, a young couple is necking on the couch and the woman gets up to go for a swim by herself. This seems unlikely too, but in contrast to the Hamburger Interuptti, this happened to me once. Only the girl didn't end up with an axe in her head.

Friday the 13th Part VII: The New Blood. 1988. Director: John Carl Buecher

Well, this one really stinks. The plot, so far as I could make it out, concerns a young telekinetic girl who is brought to a cottage in Crystal Lake by her shrink, ostensibly so she can overcome the guilt of accidentally killing her father many years before in the same cottage. Really, however, the shrink has a nefarious plot; he suspects the girl's telekinesis is more prominent when she stressed, so, using his knowledge of Jason, he... Um.. Just a second. I had this worked through a

This is revealed during a very strange nude beach scene, which closes the film. If I were to write my master's thesis on the Slasher genre, instead of just a silly play, I would use this film to illustrate my assertion that the Final Girl and her Slasher constitute opposite halves of a single psychological whole- sort of Yang and Yin with meat cleavers. The Final Girl becomes wholly complete when she assimilates the Slasher into her psychology. Although in this case, she becomes a wholly complete raving maniac with a fake looking, super-imposed penis.

A Night to Dismember. 1983

Director: Doris Wishman

I couldn't get through this one. I tried. I really did. I even used the time index feature on my DVD player to make the movie happen twice as fast. I couldn't do it. Sorry. Forgive me. If you can do it, I'll eat my own feet. I can't even tell you what it's about. Except it's largely silent, save for an obnoxious narration which explains what is happening on screen. This is because it's so shoddily clipped together that nothing you see makes sense on its own. It doesn't really make sense with the narration either. Some films are so bad they defy comprehension.

Nightmare on Elm Street. 1984

Director: Wes Craven

If you ask me, this film is the zenith of the Slasher cycle. It's well structured. The Final Girl is interesting and multifaceted. The performances are perfectly fine for the most part. The central conceit is compelling. And it's actually about something! Besides that, there are some good, creative scares. Sadly, it's all down hill from here.

Friday the 13th: The Final Chapter. 1984.

Director: Joseph Zito.

The series evolves a little here: The victims are staying in two cottages, not at Camp Blood! (Actually, I guess that's true of part 3 too.) Corey Feldman is pretty good in it. And it is the first instance of the Final Girl surviving alongside a surrogate family unit. Typically this unit will consist of the Final Girl, a Small Child, and a Boy Who Survived the Killer Before.

Silent Night, Deadly Night. 1984.

Director: Charles E Sellier Jr.

Another pretty lousy film that is mostly famous for sparking outrage amongst parents who were loath to see ads portraying an axe murderer in a Santa suit. In its favour it has a creepy little scene in which a crazy Grandfather pops out of catatonic trance to tell a small boy that Christmas is "the scariest damn night of the year. If you see Santa, you better run boy!" It also has a scary Christmas Song. The lyrics to which are "Santa's watching, Santa's creeping/ You'll be nodding, you'll be sleeping/ Have you been good for Mom and Dad/ Santa's knows if you've been bad" which is scary, but not much scarier than "Santa Claus is Coming To Town" if you think about it. On the bad side, it is overtly misogynistic and not very entertaining.

A Nightmare on Elm Street 2: Freddy's Revenge. 1985

Director: Jack Sholder

Semi-competent, likely unintentionally homoerotic sequel to the brilliant original. A young man moves into Nancy's old house with his family. Freddy possesses him in his dreams, but fortunately the love of the girl next door sets him straight. This film contains strange scenes of the boy climbing into bed with his male, macho buddy, and meeting the evil gym teacher in leather bars. A perfect example of how this genre can go astray if the Final Girl is not properly placed.

Friday the 13th: A New Beginning. 1985.

Director: Danny Steinmann

Corey Feldman is all grown up, and played by a new actor in a Sleep Away Camp for Crazy Teens. The killings start again. Now the characters have become increasingly cartoonish, and the series much more winking and self-aware.

Chopping Mall. 1986

Director: Jim Wynorski

Some teens throw a party in a shopping mall, and the security robots go insane and try to kill them all. Begins and ends as a Slasher. Rips off *Dawn of the Dead* in the middle- only instead of zombies or masked killers we have these little dustbusters that shoot lasers and stun bolts and things. They aren't very threatening because it's hard to imagine that you couldn't just run up and tip them over. Imagine R2D2's evil little brother and you get the idea.

Friday the 13th Part VI: Jason Lives. 1986.

Director: Tom McLoughlin.

A third actor plays Tommy, the Corey Feldman character. In the first scene he and Horseshack bring Jason back to life by mistake, Horseshack is murdered and predictable mayhem ensues. Even more cartoon characters are dispatched. At this point in the franchise, most of the characters we meet are slaughtered with two minutes of their introduction.

Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2. 1986

Director; Tobe Hooper.

The family from the first film is now semi-nomadic and can afford two big vans and a labyrinthine living quarters underneath an abandoned amusement park thanks to their award winning chili recipe. Clover sights this as the end of the

was hiding on the beach- apparently- when the Final Girl beheaded his mother. Now he's mad and wants revenge. This begs some questions: if Jason was alive though whole time, what was his mother so pissed about? If he wasn't alive, and his mother's death brought about his resurrection, how did he age so quickly between films? Of course, none of this really matters, and the mere fact that we're thinking about it, shows we've given more thought to this film than the filmmakers did.

Halloween II. 1981.

Director: Rick Rosenthal

Not as good as the first film. Set in a hospital immediately after the events in *Halloween*. Still, it's better than the *Toolbox Murders*. But so is lying down on the 401 and counting the trucks that roll over stomach for the same amount of time.

The Funhouse. 1981

Director: Tobe Hooper

Hard to find, and very critically acclaimed. Two couples are trapped over night in a circus funhouse. Some nice work in it. Film scholars like it because it is a scary movie about people who like to be scared. Oooh! Postmodern!

Graduation Day. 1981.

Director: Herb Freed

As bad as the *Toolbox Murders*, but less than a quarter as despicable. The camera work is also astonishingly bad. As are the editing, the writing, the music and the acting.

Friday the 13th: Part 3D. 1982.

Director: Steve Miner

Most notable as the film that gives Jason his trademark hockey mask. It was released in 3D, so people throw things at the camera a lot. It was while watching this film that I felt lulled into a zen-like trance by the interminable, hypnotic, repetitiveness of these films. Jason changes a little from film to film. The fashions on the victims change. But everything else stays the same, the same, the same.

Slumber Party Massacre. 1982

Director: Amy Holden Jones.

Fairly run of the mill, in spite of an obvious attempt to be a feminist slasher film. The nubile girls are still gorgeous, and scantily clad, but they're for the most part, intelligent and resourceful. As a result, we are provided with three Final Girls, instead of the usual lone one.

Halloween III: Season of the Witch. 1982

Director: Tommy Lee Wallace.

Michael Myers takes a holiday for this outing, so I shouldn't really include it here, but if I have to sit through all the *Halloweens*, I might as well suffer through this one too. It owes more to *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* than the slasher genre. An evil Irish mask maker has a plot to make kids' heads explode on Halloween night if they wear his masks. Then bugs and snakes will come out of the exploded heads and eat all the parents. It's unclear why the mask maker wants to do this. It has something to do with his being Irish.

Christine. 1983

Director: John Carpenter

Halloween with a car, more or less. Or maybe *Herbie Goes Psychotic*. It actually gets off to a pretty good start, only to fall apart in the middle of the second act. It's too bad; there are some nice touches at the top. To the many victims of *Christine*, I posit that perhaps the best way to escape an evil, runaway car is not by running down the middle of a deserted road.

House on Sorority Row. 1983.

Director: Mark Rosman

Some co-eds kills their house mother in an ill advised prank, hide the body so they won't have to cancel their party, and – surprise!- one by one they are knocked off. Not as bad as is frequently reported, but no one in it behaves like a real human being, only like pawns in a formulaic plot. And there isn't an original frame in the film.

Sleep Away Camp. 1983

Director: Robert Hiltzik

While this film is nowhere near as morally repugnant as *The Toolbox Murders*, it still leaves one feeling in need of a good shower afterwards, primarily because the protagonists and victims are all just or not quite pubescent. Furthermore, an unsettlingly unhealthy attitude about sex pervades the film. On the other hand, most of it seems vaguely tongue in cheek, or at least too incompetent to take very seriously. So perhaps, one could either view this film as homocentric satire of heterosexual fears, or a homophobic diatribe against alternative lifestyles. I suspect the former was the intent, but this movie is so crappy from start to finish, it doesn't matter much. I had a friend in high school who thought this was the best Slasher film ever made. I thought he was crazy then, and my feelings have not changed in the matter. However, this film might have some interest on an academic level as the Final Girl and the Slasher turn out to be one and the same; shy, picked-upon Angela is actually a boy, you see, forced to live as a girl by a wacko aunt and that's why she kills everybody.

discernable reason other than a bizarre Leatherface reference. Already, eighteen years before *Scream*, the subgenre is becoming overtly post-modern and intertextual.

Prom Night. 1980.

Director: Paul Lynch

If you take *Halloween*, *Carrie*, and *Saturday Night Fever*, and put them through a blender, this is the movie that would come out. Like many of these movies, it's a Canadian Tax Shelter Film. Some of the characters are pretty interesting, actually... Well, two of them are: Kelly and her prom date Slick.

Friday the 13th. 1980

Director: Sean S Cunningham.

The first in a long series of nearly plotless films about the gory goings on around Camp Crystal Lake. Rambling dialogue and councilors' shenanigans interspersed with murder scenes that aren't a quarter as graphic as you remember them from grade four sleepover parties. Still, it made a lot of money, and although it's really only a rip-off on *Halloween*, many of the films that follow are rip-offs of it.

Terror Train. 1980.

Director: Roger Spottiswood

Halloween on a train with University students. It's derivative, but actually pretty decent. And the acting is fine too. Besides, the killer spends a lot of time in a Groucho Marx mask, and how cool is that!

He Knows You're Alone. 1980

Director: Arman Mastroianni

There is a killer on the loose who kills young women who are about to get married. And wouldn't you know it, our final girl is just about to tie the knot. Sadly, she doesn't like her prospective groom as much as she likes the goofy morgue attendant who is in love with her. More sadly, the Slasher decides he's going to branch out and kill everyone connected with the bride, I guess just for variety's sake. This semi-interesting pre-Jason entry into the genre is, in its own way, as post modern as the *Scream* series twelve years later. It begins with an urban legend inspired movie-within-a-movie sequence, and contains a lengthy treatise on the psychological importance of scary entertainment delivered by Tom Hanks in his movie debut, which is immediately followed by a Psycho-referencing shower sequence. However, unlike *Scream* this film doesn't waste a lot of energy winking at you to make sure you get the gag.

The Prowler. 1980.

Director: Joseph Zito

In 1945 an unknown war vet receives a Dear John letter, goes insane and murders his ex and her obnoxious new beau during a graduation dance. Now, it's over thirty years later, and the town is having the first graduation dance since the murder! Oh gasp! Just like the town in *My Bloody Valentine*! Will they never learn!! Well, the murders start again. Tom Savani's gore effects are much more fun and creative than those he built for *Friday the 13th*. And the acting is better. And the plotting is much more interesting- albeit almost entirely stolen from other movies.. This film is a pretty decent entry in the genre, actually. Why it never caught on and the highly inferior *Friday the 13th* did is a bit of a mystery to me. Of course, this movie doesn't end with a scary dead boy jumping out of the water. Maybe that's the big difference.

Hell Night. 1981

Director: Tom DeSimone

Four pledges must survive a night in a haunted house as part of their initiation. Unfortunately, the "Gork Son" that hides in the basement starts to kill them all. The performances border on camp, which is unusual for a film so early in the cycle. However, unlike later Slasher Films, one feels the actors are having fun with the material rather than trying to convey that they are above it. As a result, it plays like Scooby Doo meets *Halloween*. Some of the scares are rather effective, due to a maniac who seems to be a little speedier than most of his lumbering brethren.

My Bloody Valentine. 1981.

Director: George Mihalka

Halloween in a mining town. Cynthia Dale gets a pickaxe through the chest. Some decent moments, I suppose, but not many.

Happy Birthday to Me. 1981.

Director: J Lee Thompson

The most popular, wealthiest university clique members are murdered one at a time. Is the Girl From Little House on the Prairie the Killer? Or isn't she? Not bad. Again, an interesting collection of victims. And actually seems to get better the more of these films I watch.

Friday the 13th Part 2. 1981.

Director: Steve Miner.

Actually- dare I say it- fractionally better than the first film. And the first in which Jason is actually the killer. In the first film, the killer turns out to be his mother, who was angry because Jason was left to drown in the fifties by randy councillors who were having sex instead of lifeguarding. Jason pops out of the lake at the end of Part One and goes boo. He looks about eight years old. In Part Two, which happens five years after Part one, Jason is full grown, and angry because he

Eric Woolfe's Inimitable Annotated Slasher Film Index

(works cited in *The Babysitter*)

Psycho. 1960.

Director: Alfred Hitchcock.

Besides being a brilliant, well acted picture, it's also the Ur-Slasher Film. Almost everything we're going to see is there in utero: the unseen killer, the slashing kitchen knife, the Final Girl discovering the bodies, the incompetent policeman who investigates the murders only to provide another victim, and the shower scene, the killer who murders as a surrogate to the sexual act. Bernard Herriman's music is also the most frequently stolen of the genre.

Texas Chainsaw Massacre. 1974.

Director: Tobe Hooper

Carol Clover says this is where the Slasher Cycle begins. A van of hapless teens gets mixed up with a family of over-the-top cannibals. A simple, coarse, relentless film, that's also a lot of fun. The Final Girl sequence makes up almost a third of its running time.

Black Christmas. 1974.

Director: Bob Clark

Halloween, the film that all other slashers emulate, emulates this movie. A maniac is hiding in the attic of a sorority house. He makes obscene phone calls, he stabs coeds to death, and we follow his exploits through his camera POV.

God Told Me To. 1976.

Director: Larry Cohen

Not really a Slasher Film, but many of the pieces are there. It's about a cop whose investigation of seemingly unrelated murders proves both frightening and personal. Aliens are involved, as well as a hermaphroditic, psynic, megalomaniacal psychopath.

Carrie. 1976.

Director: Brian De Palma

Not a Slasher Film, but it explores a lot of the themes that *The Babysitter* explores. And Clover writes about it extensively. And the PJ Soles is in it.

Schizo. 1976

Director: Pete Walker

An almost, but not quite, successful missing link between the modern North American Slasher Film and the British Is-She-Crazy-Or-Is-Someone-Driving-Her-Crazy Gothic Melodrama. Well... actually it isn't really very successful at all. Some of the performances are all right, I guess. Unfortunately, the big, shockerooni surprise ending is pretty much given away by the film's title.

Halloween. 1978.

Director: John Carpenter.

A strong, simple film, that made a lot of money and gave birth to the Slasher Cycle to follow. It's actually a very good film, if slightly over rated- And Donald Pleasance is very silly in it, but oh well.

Tool Box Murders. 1978.

Director: Dennis Donnelly

Every once in a while you come across a film that is as despicable as Tipper Gore says it is. Might be my least favourite movie of all time.

Rock N Roll High School. 1979

Director: Alan Arkush

Of course this isn't a Slasher Film. I know that. I just wanted to see if you were paying attention. Besides, I had to watch something fun to recover from *The Toolbox Murders*.

When A Stranger Calls. 1979.

Director: Fred Walton

Also based on the Have You Checked the Children Legend. It's very good, although it's really two short films in one. The first act dramatizes the aforementioned legend-- very well I might add. The second act is a brooding, 70s-style character study of the down and out killer. The third act returns us to the first story-line. The babysitter is now grown up with a family of her own, and the killer returns to haunt her. If you skipped the middle, you'd have a nice, scary forty minute film.

Motel Hell. 1980.

Director: Kevin Connor.

Horror Comedy about a motel owner who plants humans in his garden in order to harvest them for sausages. It ends with a chainsaw duel between the farmer and his brother. The farmer is wearing a pig's head during this duel for no