

More Scary Movies for Anarchists to Watch in the Dark

Nicky Reid

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It has been one supremely horrific year since I wrote the virgin instillation of this list last October, what with apocalyptic plagues, dystopian police death squads, and collapsing empires. In many ways life has come to resemble many of the movies on it. Some might argue that horror movies are gratuitous at this point, I mean, haven't we had enough? No, dearest motherfuckers, not by a longshot. The fact that everyday life has come to resemble a George Romero flick is just proof of his unsung brilliance. No genre in cinema gets dumped on like horror movies. Yet no genre of cinema is more stunningly prophetic. That's because horror movies, good horror movies anyway, are perfect vehicles for social commentary. They seek to illuminate that which makes us uncomfortable and force us to actually fucking deal with it. And that is what 2020 needs now more than ever. We realize that we're living in a goddamn zombie apocalypse, but how do we deal with it? That is the ultimate question that anarchists wrestle with. How do we create a new society amidst the collapse of the old? And that's also what great horror movies strive to figure out.

So I made another goddamn list. A dozen more scary movies for anarchists to watch in the dark, and it's as eccentric and idiosyncratic as the last. I have a love for both foreign arthouse shockers and overlooked grindhouse pulp. They both take the necessary measures to punish the audience into thinking about shit that scares them. Like last time, many movies on the list are not horror movies in the traditional sense, but they are all movies that seek to terrify their audience into challenging authoritarian institutions. Spoiler alerts abound. Read at your own risk.

Night of the Living Dead (1968)- A movie about a black guy who tries to save a bunch of fucked up white folks during a plague and gets shot for his trouble? How the fuck was this thing made 50 years ago? George Romero's iconic budget shocker that practically invented the zombie genre was made to be a gruesome allegory for the times. Vietnam and urban upheaval inspired this terrifying story of plague induced braindead cannibalism. But its protagonist, Ben, played brilliantly by the Sorbonne trained Duane Jones, is much more George Floyd than Martin Luther King. After all, Ben wasn't trying to lead a movement, he was just some hard luck son of a bitch trying to get home without getting wasted. But the movement found him and his martyrdom made him a revolutionary hero of outlaw cinema. George Romero was a visionary.

28 Weeks Later (2007)- While in many ways inferior to Danny Boyle's 28 Days Later, this sequel feels far more relevant to the Corona Virus, mainly because it addresses the horrors of authoritarian overreaction to such a crisis. In other words, it's a lockdown movie. 28 weeks after the original, the Rage Virus has been contained by NATO, and its survivors have been safely quarantined. But the moment their armed and sanctimonious overlords begin to lose control, they become the one thing more monstrous than plague; fighting one with a police state. The results are as terrifying as they are inevitable.

The Wicker Man (1973)- One of the greatest horror movies ever made, the frightful tale of a doomed Christian police sergeant investigating an alleged human sacrifice on an insular heathen island in Northern England has enjoyed a strange and wonderful second life as a cult favorite of traumatized post-Christian heathens like myself, who not only enjoy the sights and sounds of a neopagan utopia, but relish in seeing an openly bigoted cop get his comeuppance in the sacrificial inferno of the wicker man. For sick kids like us, The Wicker Man is one horror movie without an innocent victim, just a joyous celebration of sanctimony in flames, DJed by the great Christopher Lee as a fantastically weird neofolk Willy Wonka named Lord Summerisle. Buck up, love. After all, aren't all cops bastards?

Revenge (2017)- With the establishment-fixed rise of pussy-grabber Joe Biden, 2020 was the year #MeToo died. Making it a perfect year for a wicked spin on the long maligned Rape Revenge subgenre. After being lured to her powerful married Wall Street boyfriend's desert bachelor pad and raped by one of his sleazy hunting buddies, Jen wants nothing more than to get on the next chopper out of hell. But her cheating hubby has other plans and casually shoves her off a cliff rather than dealing with the inconvenience of another mouthy mistress. What is all too typically the end of tragic stories of sexual violence among the socially privileged is just the beginning of Jen's gruesome revenge saga, as she crawls from her grave and rises up as a survivor, taking bloody justice into her own hands. It may not be politically correct, but after the merciless railroading of Tara Reid, all a pissed off feminist really wants to see is another slick sex criminal getting his black heart blown out of his chest with a 12 gauge. Metaphorically speaking, of course.

Irreversible (2002)-Then again, vengeance has a flipside. The brilliantly transgressive Gaspar Noe turned the Rape Revenge genre on its ear by simply playing it in reverse. By starting the movie with the hero getting taken away in cuffs for committing one of the most brutal murder scenes in horror history, the audience is deprived of a convenient conclusion to violent crime, and our whole moral code is called into question. Irreversible makes the perfect critique of any justice system based on reactionary vengeance by showing us that its consequences are often every bit as savage as what inspires them. Thug life attorneys like Kamala Harris should have to watch this film 16 times in a row. The ends rarely justify the means, they just make us all a little more guilty.

Waco: The Rules of Engagement (1997) & Let the Fire Burn (2013)- I put the two documentaries to make this year's list together because they're both about essentially the same damn story. The Branch Davidians and MOVE were both experimental communities trying in their own peculiar ways to drop out of the toxicity of modern society. Both were attacked by the police state for daring to live differently. And both were cowardly burned alive for defending themselves. The fact that the Branch Davidians were mostly white Jesus freaks and MOVE was a mostly Black Anarchist commune didn't make any difference to the pigs or the state they represented. They said 'No!', so they died. The only silver lining to this cloud of black smoke is that

they both died fighting with their heads held high. Sadly the same can't be said for their children. The state is the ultimate monster. Only bottom unity among the peculiar class can slay it.

A Clockwork Orange (1971)- Half a century later and people remain incensed by Stanley Kubrick's stylishly vicious little farce. Debates rage on about the real meaning behind the story of the charismatic young psychopath named Alex, played by the heinously charming Malcolm McDowell. The teenage hooligan rapes and kills for fun before being corrected by an equally sadistic method of state psychiatric torture which renders the victimizer a victim before becoming a cause celebre and being summarily returned to his smashing old predatory self. I see it as a parable about what society becomes when it leaves all its values up to crass consumer culture and authoritarian institutions. The American public school system makes droogs every day, and droogs make for equally good prisoners as they do police. God help us all.

Man Bites Dog (1992)- From brutal satire to grizzly satire. Man Bites Dog took Stanley Kubrick's challenge and raised the bar with something far more heinous and far more hilarious, a Belgian mockumentary about a sadistic serial killer who slowly drags the film crew following him into becoming active participants in his increasingly brutal crimes, all in the name of journalism of coarse. Man Bites Dog is essentially CNN and NBC's coverage of Donald Trump's tumultuous 2016 campaign in black and white. The crew knows they should just turn the fucking camera off and get some help, but they just have to get one more kill on camera for the ratings, and then another, and then another, and then another, until it's too late to turn back and we're all fucked.

Videodrome (1983)- David Cronenberg's body horror magnum opus about a TV producer infected both sexually and mentally by the hypnosis of right wing snuff footage is essentially Manufacturing Consent with a stomach cunt. It's shockingly gruesome psychosexual nightmare imagery serves to underline the awesome and all too often savage power modern day information technology wields upon both witting and unwitting consumers alike. Anyone who has ever lost a loved one to the toxic sway of Fox News or MSNBC should be intimately familiar with the rise of the new flesh. Kill your television before it can retaliate.

Hostel (2005)- The original torture porn flick has never gotten a far wrap as far as I'm concerned, especially in the US. Critics got so lost in the buckets of gore and graphic nudity that they lost all site of what Eli Roth was trying to say with those salacious mediums. Hostel is a movie about imperialism and its post modern cousin tourism. The bros come from the West to Eastern Europe to rage and fuck local whores for sport only to find themselves the sport of an even higher class of libertine tourists who pay good money to torture and kill. Rich kids come to poor countries to get laid while their parents come to kill anyone with enough of a conscience to give a fuck. But eventually the adults just keep coming to kill, even if it means killing their own children. Sex sells. Murder will cost you double.

Funny Games (1997)- What would any truly woke horror movie list be without at least one savage critique of the genre itself? Michael Haneke's Funny Games may be the cruelest film on the list and they barely need a drop of blood to get there. The story of a happy family being tormented on vacation in the Austrian Alps by a couple of handsome young house guests makes the audience complicit in their cruel games by routinely breaking the fourth wall to directly engage us and encourage us to participate. At one point one of the victims even manages to get his hands on the shotgun to make a climactic stand against us, only to have one of our fellow killers literally pick up a remote and rewind the scene to replay it in his favor. Funny Games asks us the ultimate horror movie question, did you come here to learn or are you just here to

wallow? The harsh reality is probably a little bit of both, and we probably should be at least a little ashamed of ourselves.

The Road (2009)- This stunning adaptation of Cormac McCarthy's post-apocalyptic novel is both incredibly depressing yet movingly inspiring. Just a man and his son struggling to make it to the shore through a poisoned planet teeming with clans of murderous cannibals. Viggo Mortensen plays the unnamed protagonist who does whatever it takes to keep him and his son one step ahead of the danger that always seems to be stalking them just one step behind. It's only after he succumbs to his wounds that his son realizes that they were actually being followed by another family who had been looking out for them the whole time. It's a harshly moving film about faith and mutual aid in horrific times, and I'm not ashamed to admit that it moved me too tears. Something tells me Tolstoy would approve. We need this too. We really do.

Thelma (2017)- Thelma is a lonely girl from an isolated Christian family in her first year away from home at college in the big wicked city. She begins to suffer from fits of uncontrollable telekinesis whenever she finds herself near her classmate Anja. These powers turn out to be the ghosts of her long repressed childhood trauma, as well as her long dormant homosexuality. Thelma could easily be called Nicky. I spent my early twenties crippled by a powerful mental illness that turned out to be the result of my suppressed gender identity and the childhood trauma that came with a religious upbringing that robbed me of the ability to confront it. Thelma is a horror movie about being *Queer*, and it leaves us with the seemingly cliché but totally valid message that love can conquer anything, even ourselves, and at the end of the day isn't that anarchism is truly about, demanding the impossible and courageously fighting to make it a reality? Maybe that's what horror movies are about too.

Take care of one another this Halloween, dearest motherfuckers. Only together can we survive this horror show. That's what anarchism really means, not chaos and flaming cop cars, well ok, maybe a little of that too. But at it's heart, anarchism is about empathy, putting other people above laws and leaders. That's what movies like these inspire in me. Hopefully, I'm not the only bleeding heart psycho to find strength in gore.

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