

The Scary Bits: 2008 in Review - The Moviefone Blog

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June 30, 2011



I've been sitting here for about five minutes trying to decide the best format for this year-end article. Do I just throw out a bunch of titles and then wait for the inevitable response(s) of "Dude, we've seen those ones. Got anything more obscure-ish?" Or do I list EVERY single horror film that hit the scene in 2008, and then

give each one a star rating and a few pithy comments?

But then I remembered how much I love chronological order. My life, for example, is lived chronologically, and I wouldn't have it any other way. So let's start in January and simply slither forward. I'm including only the highlights of each month, so if you're looking for me to make fun of stuff like *Pulse 2*, *Shutter*, or freakin' *Prom Night*, I'm sorry to disappoint you. (OK, fine: I'll cover the crap too. I just can't say no to gorehounds.)

January -- The 18th saw the arrival of two fine genre films: One a big hit called *Cloverfield* and the other a little indie piece called *Teeth*. Obviously a monster movie and a flick about a toothed vagina don't have much in common, but indeed, both were smarter than they had to be, dark and nasty here and there, and quite a bit of fun. Also pretty surprising: The relative quality of *White Noise 2*. (Booo: *One Missed Call*, *Boogeyman 2*, *Lake Placid 2*)

February -- From overseas we got *Shrooms*, *Storm Warning*, and *Black Water*. All three are worthy of a rental. From the indie-makers we got *Spiral*, *Diary of the Dead*, and *The Signal*. Solid stuff. From Hollywood? A freakin' remake of *The Eye*. I've seen scarier film on old pudding.

March -- So it was *One Missed Call*, and then *The Eye*. So logically this month gives us an A-horror remake called *Shutter*. Thanks, Hollywood. On the other hand, we also got an oddly familiar *Funny Games* remake, a half-decent De Palma remake called *Sisters*, and a low-budget gorefest called *Automaton Transfusion*. Oh, and *Bats 2: Human Harvest*. Yes, someone proposed a sequel to *Bats*. Yeesh.

April -- Now THIS is a horror month. Even Hollywood got in on the act with *The Ruins*, one of the bleakest and most distressing studio horrors in quite some time. (And, of course, it died quickly at the box office.) The following weekend saw the release of *Prom Night*, which is the perfect example when you're discussing pointless remakes that suck eternity through a garden hose. Then a limited release of the strangely interesting *Pathology*, a visit to the *Zombie Strippers*, and a low-end chintzy remake of *Day of the Dead*. Buried treasures on the video shelves include the well-crafted croc flick *Rogue* and the dizzyingly hardcore *Inside*, which is easily one of the best horror films of the year.

May - The scary stuff usually dries up once the tentpoles get planted, but we did get a visit from *The Strangers*, which was creepier than I expected. Plus the freaky French import *Frontier(s)* finally hit the scene, as did Stuart Gordon's amusingly twisted *Stuck*. On video, you could do worse than a visit to *The Cottage*.

June -- Yikes! Next to nada. I dug Dario Argento's *The Mother of Tears* more than most horror fans seemed to, but I've always had a soft spot for this Italian master. (Argento and Fulci. OK, and Bava.) And if you bothered to track down the Pakistani zombie flick *Hell's Ground*, then congrats.

You're my kind of cultured.

July -- A month of sorta-horror. Sad to say that scary flicks don't get much respect come summertime. But ***Hellboy 2: The Golden Army*** is a wonderfully weird concoction of action, adventure, dark fantasy, romance, comedy, it's all in here, and then some. Awesomely fun movie that gets better with repeat viewings. And then there's ***X-Files: I Don't Care to Believe***, which I haven't seen and probably never will. (Sorry.) From the indie side we got ***Exte: Hair Extensions*** (which is just as insane as it sounds), ***Baghead*** (which isn't really horror, but the fans will still like it), ***Transsiberian*** (which is yet another fine thriller from Brad Anderson), and the anthology piece ***Trapped Ashes***, which didn't do all that much for me, but it counts as a curiosity. Oh, and ***Lost Boys: The Tribe*** came out in July, and boy did THAT thing suck.

August -- A month of unexpected treats, if you ask me. ***The Midnight Meat Train*** left a big impression, even if its theatrical release was little more than a slap in the face. ***Jack Brooks: Monster Slayer*** is precisely the sort of movie I want from a video store monster flick. And I know I'm in the minority on this one, but I halfway liked Alex Aja's ***Mirrors***. Weird, I liked an American remake of an Asian horror movie. That's kinda rare. On the video shelves we got ***Starship Troopers 3: Marauder***, which was more pulpily entertaining than I'd anticipated, ***The Killing Gene***, which used to be called *WAZ*, and is actually pretty solid, and ***The Wizard of Gore***, which is just about the best Crispin Glover *gore noir* you're likely to find.

September -- Ugh. Uwe Boll's ***Seed***. DTV sequels like ***Pulse 2*** and ***Rest Stop 2***. And that's about it.

October -- Yeeha, this is gonna be a big paragraph! From the wide release bin we remember the solid enough copycat ***Quarantine*** and the fifth lurching of the ***Saw*** franchise -- but there were some really great horrors hidden just beneath the surface. My favorite film of the month (and indeed the whole year) was the Swedish import ***Let the Right One In***, and it pleases me endlessly to see the film doing so well in its limited release. Also small but interesting were the rough import ***Eden Lake*** and the nifty chiller ***Splinter***, both of which I aim to own on DVD. Lots of stuff from the straight-to-video department, including titles like ***Feast 2*** and ***The Devil's Chair*** (both watchable), as well as ***Anaconda 3*** and ***Joy Ride 2*** (both of which stink). But the real buried treasure was my pal Gregg Bishop's ***Dance of the Dead***. I could be saying how much fun the movie is because I know Gregg -- or you could just rent the movie and see that I'm simply telling the truth.

November -- Pretty much a washout. ***Repo! The Genetic Opera*** seemed to please its intended audience, which is cool. Ditto ***Twilight***, which is just about the only vampire-centric movie I've never had any desire to see. The DVD offerings ranged from passable (***The Zombie Diaries***) to the purely ridiculous (***Return to Sleepaway Camp***).

December -- As usual, the year in horror dies down with more of a whimper than a roar. Guess the holiday season isn't the best time for crazed slashers and maniacal monsters. By my reckoning, the only semi-horror theatrical release was the wonderfully twisted ***Timecrimes***, but if you prowled the video stores you probably came across titles like ***Wild Country***, ***Pulse 3***, and ***Resident Evil: Degeneration***. You'll have to let me know how they are. I'm a little busy right now.

So my Top Ten 15 of the year, horror division, looks like this:

1. ***Let the Right One In***
2. ***Inside***
3. ***The Ruins***
4. ***The Midnight Meat Train***
5. ***Cloverfield***
6. ***Dance of the Dead***
7. ***Teeth***
8. ***The Signal***
9. ***Splinter***

10. *Eden Lake*
11. *Frontier(s)*
12. *The Strangers*
13. *Quarantine*
14. *Diary of the Dead*
15. *The Devil's Chair*

Bottom 10

10 through 2: Several pieces of crap

1: freakin' ***Prom Night***.

Special note: Flicks like *Martyrs*, *The Horseman*, *Acolytes*, *The Burrowers*, *My Bloody Valentine*, *The Broken*, *Dying Breed*, *Donkey Punch*, *Tokyo Gore Police*, *Cold Prey*, and *Manhunt* might have made my list, but they're not 2008 releases. So there. And if you'd like a few more opinions, definitely check out the year-end wrap-ups at [Bloody-D](#), [HND](#), and [Shockdrop](#).

Check out the rest of Cinematical's year-end lists [over here](#).