

# HORROR MOVIES



*As Halloween is nearly upon us, our resident movie expert in the Learning Curve has compiled a list of movies to get you in the 'spirit' of all things scary.*

*All of the films reviewed below are available on DVD format in the library, these can be borrowed using our Click & Collect Service. So get yourself comfortable, pick up some popcorn and get ready for some horrific horrors and chiller thrillers!*

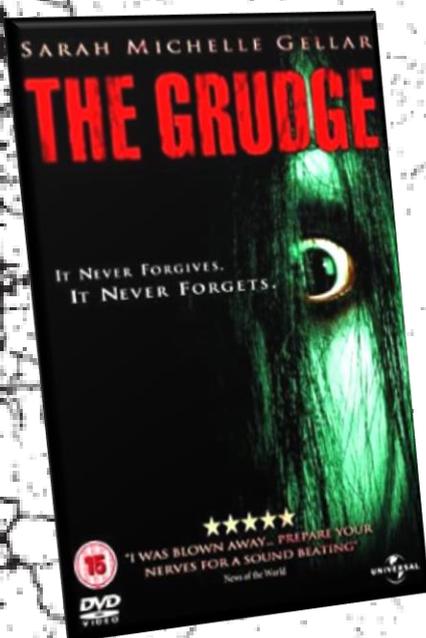
## **The Grudge (2004)**

Directed by Takashi Shimizu

An American nurse, Karen (Sarah Michelle Gellar) is living and working in Tokyo. She is exposed to a supernatural curse. This is a mysterious, vengeful spirit that marks and curses anyone who dares enter their house.

The Grudge is a haunted house experience, grabbing your attention from the start with creepy haunting images and sounds. There are moments that will make you jump out of your skin or cover your face with the bedcovers. Takashi Shimizu directed the original movie from 2002 titled Ju-on: The Grudge, which is also worth a watch. He has worked on horror movies for a long time and has a passion for the genre. The acting is very good and Sarah Michelle Gellar in the starring role is great, as she was fresh off Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

The Grudge is full of atmosphere and horrifying set pieces that makes for a great watch around Halloween.





## **The Cabin in the Woods (2011)**

Directed by Drew Goddard

Five college students go to a cabin in the woods for a weekend party, but the fun is cut short as there is more here than meets the eye. What is the truth behind the Cabin in the Woods?

If you are a fan of horror movies and/or you have seen a lot of horror movies, you have seen these characters before and you will have seen this premise before. The Evil dead movies, Nightmare on Elm Street, Friday The 13th, The Ring and many others. With that said, there is a great twist here, one I will not spoil.

This is a celebration of the horror genre, as these movies inspired the writers and director. The cast is great from Chris Hemsworth, Kristen Connolly, Anna Hutchison to Richard Jenkins and Bradley Whitford.

This is a fun, entertaining, exciting and funny movie that keeps you on the edge of your seat. Love horror, then be ready for that twist.

## **Psycho (1998)**

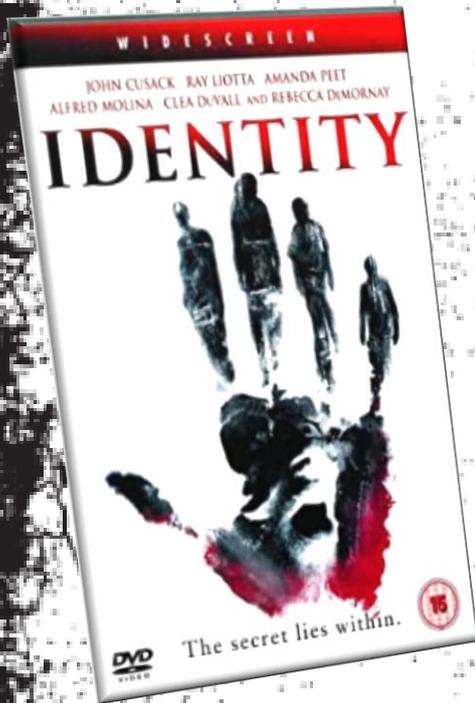
Directed by Gus Van Sant

Marion Crane (Anne Heche) steals \$400,000 from her employer to help her boyfriend Sam Loomis (Viggo Mortensen) out of debt. While traveling across the states to Loomis' town, she is caught in a heavy rainstorm. She stops at the Bates Motel for the night and meets Norman Bates (Vince Vaughn).

This is almost a shot for shot remake of the original Psycho (1960) directed by Alfred Hitchcock. Gus Van Sant has stated that the reason he remade Psycho shot for shot, was a statement to say that the (1960) movie is perfect and no one else would have to. So, whether you watch the (1960) version or the (1998) version you are still getting the same story for the most part. This is a classic story, with a very famous twist. Both movies are a master classic in storytelling, suspense, and character on screen. This movie inspired many filmmakers working today from John Carpenter, Stephen Spielberg and Martin Scorsese.

Psycho may send you mad with the twist but that's okay, "We all go a little mad sometimes" (Norman Bates – Psycho).





### **Identity (2003)**

Directed by James Mangold

Ten strangers stranded at a desolate motel during a heavy rainstorm, find they have things in common, such as they have the same birthday and they are targeted by a murderer.

A classic 'whodunnit' premise that twists and turns but never becomes confusing or a disorganised mess. The storytelling is tight and works very well. The writer Michael Cooney has written a wide range of movies from the comedy Christmas horror Jack Frost (1997) to the sci-fi thriller The I Inside (2004). I believe Identity is his best writing as the mystery and characters are strong, and keep you guessing. This is early in James Mangold's film career as a director but you can see his talent on the screen, and he went on to direct Walk the Line (2005), 3:10 to Yuma (2007) and Logan (2017). The isolated motel is a great back drop to this murder mystery and the tension of who is next is pulled tight. A suspenseful horror will have you guessing the identity of the murder.

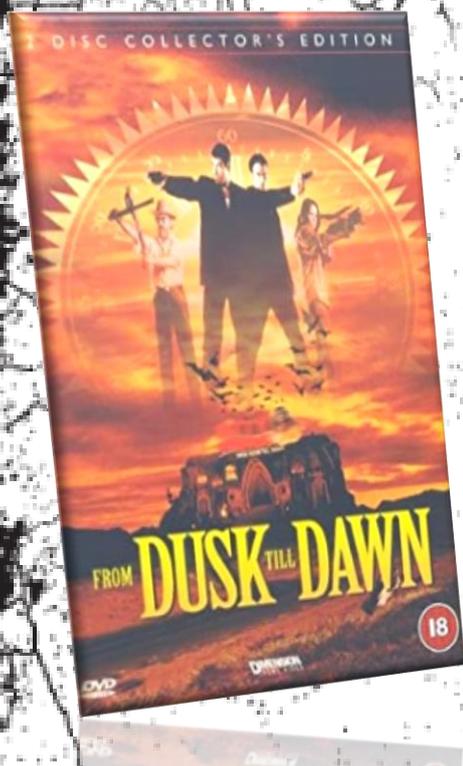
### **I Know What You Did Last Summer (1997)**

Directed by Jim Gillespie

After four friends knock down a person in their car, they decide to dump the victim's body in the sea and cover up what happened. One year later, they all receive notes reading "I Know What You Did Last Summer". Now their lives are in danger.

The writer Kevin Williamson was fresh off Scream (1996) and once again he hit a great balance between teen slasher horror and mystery. There is a little more at play here than just murder, blood, and gore, as there is a mystery to who is harassing them. The cinematography is amazing here and has great vibrant colours. A few jump scares, suspense and an interesting story. This is more than just a teen slasher horror from the 90's and will get you into the Halloween feeling. A fun and exciting horror for October and maybe summer.





### **From Dusk till Dawn (1996)**

Directed by Robert Rodriguez

Two criminals take a family hostage to cross the Mexico border, to get to a biker bar and wait for their partner Carlos till dawn.

Although this starts out as your average crime action movie directed by Robert Rodriguez and written by Quentin Tarantino, it really isn't. Halfway through this movie it switches genre and becomes a survival horror movie, where the name of the game is who can stay alive till dawn. This is fast paced, with sharp witty dialogue and great practical effects and make up designs. This movie also has a great cast, George Clooney, Harvey Keitel, Juliette Lewis, Salma Hayek and Danny Trejo.

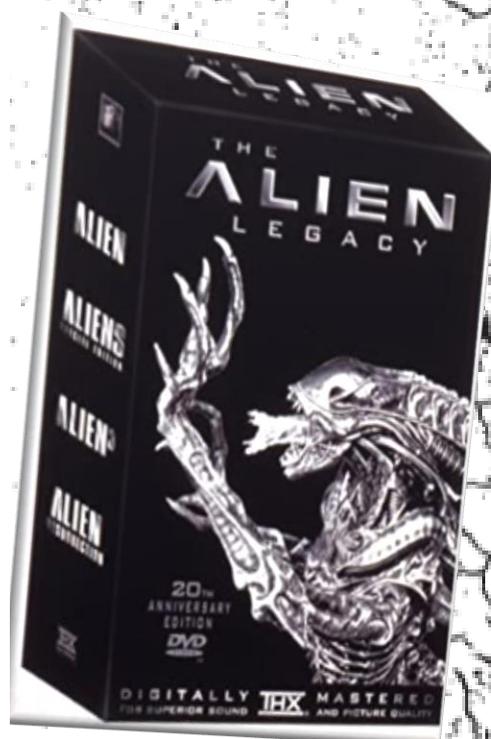
From Dusk till Dawn isn't your typical movie, it starts as one movie, a cat and mouse crime movie and then changes into a fight for your life horror movie. It is an exciting thrill ride, which changes gears fast and doesn't let up.

### **Alien (1979)**

Directed by Ridley Scott

The crew of the spaceship Nostromo are on their way home when they receive an unknown distress signal from a distant moon. They land on a dark uninhabitable moon to find a ship that has crash landed. While exploring the ship, one of the crew members is attacked by a creature. Attaching itself to the crew member they take it on board of the Nostromo to examine it.

Alien has been described as Jaws in space but I think there is a little more here. With Jaws, the characters had to enter the sea to come face to face with the danger. Here the danger lives on the claustrophobic corridors of the ship floating in space. There is no escape from this alien, that is picking the crew off one by one. From the set designs to the lighting the movie has this close atmospheric feeling, like the alien could be hiding anywhere. Sometimes the alien is in the shot, but you may not notice it till it moves. Starting at a slow pace and giving time to get to know these likeable characters, you are suddenly thrown into this sci-fi horror that is full of surprises. Alien is a must watch this Halloween and remember, in space no one can hear you scream.





### The Shining (1980)

Directed by Stanley Kubrick

Jack Torrance (Jack Nicholson) is hired at the Overlook Hotel to be a live in caretaker during the winter season, when is closed to the public. His wife Wendy (Shelley Duvall) and son Danny (Danny Lloyd), live in the isolated hotel but are they alone?

This is adapted from Stephen King's novel with the same name but has many changes, so much so that King does not like this movie. Mainly because Kubrick only uses the novel as a reference point and takes it in his own direction. This is an interesting horror, as for the most part, the horror creeps in slowly. A scene will play out like a family drama, then a flash of horror then back to the family drama. The Shining is a staple in the horror genre, with its themes, subtext and tones. The Shining is an interesting watch, as it always feels slightly off balance, from the acting over the top and strange dialogue and the design of the hotel. For example, with the hotel, hallways that lead to nowhere and an office in the centre of the hotel, yet has a window to a garden that can't exist. The Shining is entertainingly creepy from start to finish and will leave you with a strange feeling of horror and Jack Nicholson's face burn into your brain saying "Here's Johnny!"

### Jaws 2 (1978)

Directed by Jeannot Szwarc

Police chief Brody believes that there is another shark off the coast of Amity Island. He will stop at nothing to protect the citizens and keep them off the menu.

Jaws (1975) is known as the first box office movie, as it was the world's number one movie of that year. The original was directed by Steven Spielberg, but not wanting to return as he was done with sharks, Jeannot Szwarc took over. He does a great job, helming the movie and building tension and dread. Jaws 2, is compared to it's predecessor and critics say that 'it's not as good as the original' but it is still an entertaining movie, with its own personality. The movie has a fun summer feeling, spending time on the beach with the holiday makers and families. It is an effective horror, with exciting scares and edge of your seat scenes. We see the shark a little more and it is a great practical effect. When you see it out of the water and its size of the shark, is impressive.

The movie is slow paced as it builds to the show down between Brody and the shark. Roy Schneider returns to his most famous role, as Chief Brody, and he doesn't disappoint. Jaws 2 is a charming, family horror with a more than enough scares to keep you on the edge of your seat and just when you thought it was safe to go back in the water...





## Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror (1922)

Directed by F.W. Murnau

The Vampire Count Orlok is interested in a new residence to pray upon and he wants the real estate agent Hutter's wife to be his next victim.

It is amazing that we can watch Nosferatu today. A short lived German movie production company 'Prana Film' was unable to get the rights to the Bram Stoker Dracula story, so they change one or two plot points and the names. The storyline is still the same as the Dracula novel so Stoker's wife 'Florence Balcombe' sued 'Prana Film'. The movie company had already filed for bankruptcy, so Balcombe asked for every copy of the movie to be destroyed. Some copies survived from been burnt, survived almost a century (which is amazing due to most silent movies from the era were lost in time or decayed) and eventually copies of Nosferatu was discovered and pieced back together.

Max Schreck plays the role of the first famous vampire Count Graf Orlok, and he does an amazing job here, with his haunting gaze and creepy walk. The makeup design from Albin Grau gives the vampire an iconic ghoulish look, from standing still in doorways, or his shadow gliding up the stairs, we know these images through osmosis. As a vampire's first outing, it is a shocking look, more devil looking than human. The movie style itself is, German Expressionism, is best described as 'anti-realism' but not 'surrealism'. It focuses more on emotion than objective reality, this lends itself to a romanticised view of the world or using the supernatural to explain the natural. Directed by F.W. Murnau, he gives the movie a dream-like state in the romantic and calm scenes, when it's time for the horror, he experiments with shadow and lighting, giving the movie a nightmare feeling.

The set design is visually interesting, as is the German Expressionism, shadows are painted on the ground and walls, houses and windows are crooked, and buildings too close together, all give a claustrophobic feeling. Most may be put off by the fact that Nosferatu is an old, black and white silent movie, as a horror won't be scary but I would ask you to watch this with an open mind. The haunting images from this movie have inspired countless filmmakers such as Tim Burton, Guillermo Del Toro, James Whale and Alfred Hitchcock. It's like watching someone's nightmare play out, the black and white images make for some interesting strange visuals and the eerie silence covers you.