

Movies to Get You Into Evil Holiday Spirit

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This week I was going to share with you my experience touring the USS Nightmare, a famously haunted, quality Halloween attraction here in Cincinnati (on the Ohio River, at Newport on the Levee).

But in preparing to write about it, I got thinking about other scary things, like horror movies. And I'm a big fan of horror movies. Before I knew it, I was writing down titles and ranking my favorites.

So, I'm throwing out my original plan and instead am sharing with you 10 of my favorite scary movies, in no particular order.

The Others: One of my all-time favorites, this haunted house movie starring Nicole Kidman is one of the few horror-suspense movies that actually got me – I never saw the ending coming. Kidman plays a widowed mother of two who questions her sanity following a series of bizarre occurrences.

Ghost Ship: A salvage crew discovers a ship, missing since 1962, and prepares to claim it and its treasures for themselves. During repairs needed to enable it to be towed back to civilization, strange things begin to happen. What makes this movie so good is the fantastic special effects – the ghostly ballroom scene is one to pay special attention to.

Cabin Fever: A group of campers celebrating their recent college graduation at a remote cabin in the woods. Long story short: the film features sex, alcohol, a mysterious stranger, a crazy old hermit and a flesh eating disease. Good stuff.

Children of the Corn: This movie, based on a Stephen King story, features some of the creepiest children ever. Boy preacher Malachai leads a cultish group of his peers in killing all the adults in a small Nebraska town. Travelers beware.

The Grudge: Based on a famous Japanese movie and produced amid a flurry of remakes, this movie scared the crap out of me. I had to turn the lights on. The Grudge stars Sarah Michelle Geller as an American nurse in Tokyo who must save herself from the grips of a curse that would result in death. The movie effectively presents the back story of a house of horrors and warns the viewer of impending horror with peculiar and surprisingly effective sound effects. Wonderfully filmed and presented and wonderfully scary.

The Birds: Appearing on this list more for nostalgia than for real scares, The Birds is a horror/suspense classic. Starring Tippi Hedren and Jessica Tandy, and directed by Alfred Hitchcock, this film is a story of, well, birds. Mean, vicious, killer gulls to be exact. Hedren's character visits an acquaintance on a remote island when the resident gulls

begin to behave oddly, attacking and killing people in a manner that seems to be completely intentional. Never have the beach scavengers been so menacing.

Thinner: Stephen King scores another hit on my list. Fat lawyer hits and kills old gypsy woman while receiving sexual favors from wife in car. Lawyer and friends cover up death. Old gypsy man curses old gypsy woman's killer. Fat lawyer loses weight – a lot of it - and becomes thinner and thinner. Can lawyer reverse curse before it kills him? I'd never give away the ending of this low budget but fun flick.

Open Water: This movie preys on fears of abandonment and water. Very loosely based on a true story, a young couple is accidentally left behind in the middle of the ocean following a scuba diving excursion. In addition to the expected dangers of dehydration, saltwater poisoning and jellyfish, the couple also turns on one another, each blaming the other for their predicament, so that the sharks are not the only things tearing them apart.

The Amityville Horror: Also based on supposedly true events (widely debunked over the last several years), this is the story of a family who got the deal of a lifetime on a house that was home to the murder of an entire family, a known devil worshipper and an tribal burial ground. An oldie but a goodie.

The Mist: Yes, another Steven King adaptation. While this movie features some bad-ass bugs, it also has one of the absolute best movie endings ever. It also features Marcia Gay Harden in a role for which she should have been nominated for an Oscar. She was robbed.

I could go on and on, but space limitations limit me to those 10 movies. Others worth a brief mention include Rosemary's Baby, The Shining, The Ring, Scream, Shaun of the Dead, Idle Hands, Final Destination, An American Werewolf in London, Whatever Happened to Baby Jane and any movie from the 1950s or 60s starring Vincent Price. And if you want to check out the USS Nightmare, it's well worth the \$16 admission. It may not have many real scares but it does offer several fun startles along with amusing actors and excellent props. USS Nightmare continues tours Wednesday through Sunday, starting at 7 p.m.

Did I overlook your favorite scary movie? Email me at conlinka@email.uc.edu.