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THE BEDLAM FILES

HALLOWEEN NIGHT with Adam Groves

What's Really Scary

It's *that* time of year again, although, as I'm sure I don't need to inform you, this Halloween promises to be quite different from any other. 2020 is, first and foremost, a time in which the horrors of reality have far surpassed those of the imagination. As **Clive Barker** once told a panel of horror novelists, "you guys just aren't scary anymore," and indeed, when faced with a seemingly never-ending worldwide pandemic, widespread civil unrest and an especially unruly presidential election it's hard to get too worked about ghosts and vampires. This explains why I've tried to highlight a more reality-centered brand of horror in my selections below.

Streaming Now



1. **SHELTER**

Probably the best of the many quarantine-themed short films of recent months, a genuinely suspenseful and unnerving piece of work that's either a straightforward account of a home invasion or a REPUSLION-esque depiction of a deteriorating mind. Either way, SHELTER's are among the most gripping five minutes you'll experience. [VIMEO](#)

Adam's Picks



1. **TARGETS**

Peter Bogdonovich's 1968 debut feature remains one of the greatest horror films of our age, and one of the most topical. That's especially true now, when drive-ins, one of which provides the setting for the



2. DOG SOLDIERS

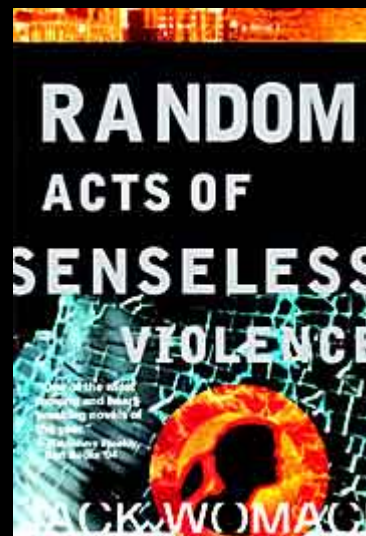
This British-centric low budgeter from 2002 is currently in the midst of a major re-release in the UK. It contains very little in the way of depth or originality, but the premise is irresistible: a band of soldiers on a combat exercise (*a la* SOUTHERN COMFORT) find themselves besieged by werewolves who can see in the dark (*a la* PREDATOR), and end up barricaded in a house with the baddies massing outside (*a la* STRAW DOGS). The film is far from the "horror classic" it's being passed off as, but the action is fast and furious, and writer/director Neil Marshall doesn't skimp on the red stuff. AMAZON



3. MONSTERLAND

Adapting Nathan Ballingrud's 2013 collection NORTH AMERICAN LAKE MONSTERS for this eight episode

film's shattering climax, have come back into vogue. So too have mass shootings like the Charles Whitman inspired one that occurs here, so be forewarned: this film means to disturb, and more than succeeds. FILM



2. RANDOM ACTS OF SENSELESS VIOLENCE by JACK WOMACK

A would-be dystopian horror story that for me hits VERY close to home. It's about a girl growing up with a screenwriter father and schoolteacher mother whose surroundings and personality change considerably as poverty and desperation overtake the family. The protagonist's gradual transformation from perky suburbanite to violent hoodlum is brilliantly, and heartbreakingly, portrayed via the language of her diaries in what is very likely the CLOCKWORK ORANGE of our time. BOOK

cable series was a ballsy move. The book's brand of down-home horror contains monsters of every conceivable type, but its true horrors are poverty, alcoholism and domestic abuse. The makers of MONSTERLAND have already paid dearly for their adherence to Ballingrud's unorthodox approach (note the not-very-impressive 5.5 imdb rating), but it's worthwhile viewing for the adventurous, and a provocative depiction of the intersection between real and reel life apprehension. HULU



4. RELIC

Not to be confused with the so-so 1997 monster movie, this is an Australian made woman-centered horror-fest that, once again, works due to its real-life resonance. It depicts an old woman (Robyn Nevin) suffering (it seems) from dementia, a condition that takes quite a toll upon her daughter (Emily Mortimer) and granddaughter (Bella Heathcote). A brooding and disquieting slow burner that won't appeal to everyone, but I suspect you'll already know if you're among RELIC's target audience. AMAZON



3. THE LAST SUPPER

In this diabolical comedy a group of twentyish liberals decide to lure a number of prominent conservative figures to a fancy house and kill 'em. I shouldn't have to enumerate the modern-day resonance of this 1995 film, which has dated quite nicely (furthermore, the above-linked review was one of the first I ever wrote, so if you should happen to read it please be nice). FILM



4. HEX by THOMAS OLDE HEUVELT

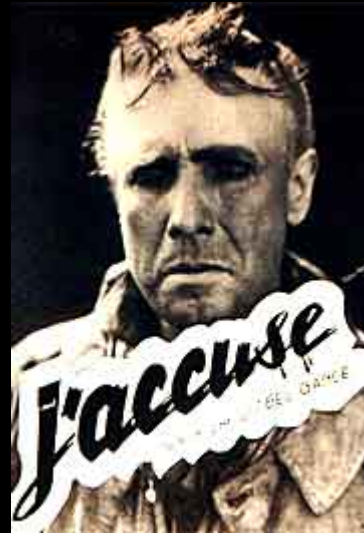
From the Netherlands, an absorbing and imaginative ghost story with a difference: the ghost in question is that of a woman who was executed as a witch in a New England town, and now roams the area and turns up unannounced in peoples' homes. This situation is amenable enough to the town's inhabitants, at least until some troublemaking teens decide to



5. LA LLORONA

This is definitely the month for geezer horror, which here takes the form of an ageing Guatemalan dictator (Julio Diaz) holed up in his mansion together with his hapless family. Outside is a mob determined to make Diaz pay for his crimes against humanity, while inside the house madness and paranoia predominate. An eerie and beautifully photographed work, although the balance between the horror and political elements is off, with the former often failing to fully register. SHUDDER

antagonize the ghost, leading to all manner of trouble. BOOK



5. J'ACCUSE!

The world's first zombie mash, a 1919 epic from France's Abel Gance that's notable for its climax, predicated on the idea that "if all the dead (of WWI) came back...the war would stop at once." Hence the masses of what look like hundreds of walking corpses, many of them bearing evident war wounds. Unfortunately, this amazing sight doesn't occur until over two and a half hours into the film, the rest of which is dull and melodramatic. FILM

Also NEW on the Site!

- **Lux Aeterna** *Film*
- **The Fury** *Fiction*
- **The Witches** *Film*
- **The Influence** *Fiction*
- **Funnybook**



Flashback: **FLINCH** *Commentary*

- **Made Men** *NonFiction*
- **And Much More!**

INSIDER NOTES

Let's not mince words: movie exhibition in the covid era is an unfolding disaster that only seems to be getting

progressively worse. The latest

bad news is that Christopher Nolan's **TENET**, which was supposed to be the savior of the industry, appears to have not only failed in that endeavor but, **according to some**, may have killed off movie going entirely. In the wake of TENET's disappointing box office several high-profile releases that were supposed to open around now, among them the new James Bond movie **NO TIME TO DIE** and **WONDER WOMAN 1984**, have been pushed back to next year (it's been rumored that the reasons for this may have to do with the fact that both films have been testing poorly).

Regal, one of the world's biggest theater chains, has **just closed all its theaters in the US and the UK**, and another, AMC, is reportedly **facing bankruptcy**. Several influential filmmakers, among them Nolan, Martin Scorsese and Clint Eastwood, have added their signatures to a letter **begging congress to help out movie theaters**, but there doesn't appear to have been any action on that proposal. Clearly we'll all need to learn to appreciate the small screen, which it seems is both the present *and* future of movie watching.



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