

[To the Website!](#)

THE BEDLAM FILES

With Adam Groves

“I want you to laugh or cry when you read a story...or do both at the same time. I want your heart, in other words. If you want to learn something, go to school.”

—Stephen King

Streaming Now

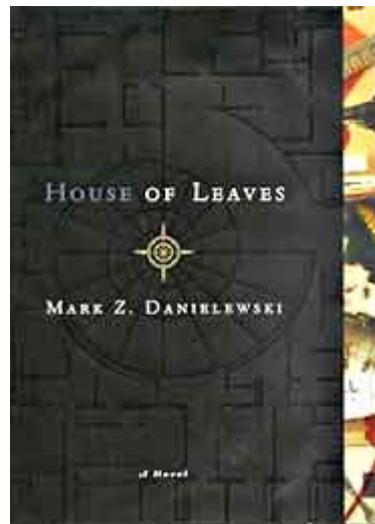
1. **THE MANIPULATED**



Easily one of the finest K-dramas I've seen lately. **THE MANIPULATED** has a B-movie narrative that's quite simple (and familiar), but it's expertly stretched over a twelve-episode canvas, with cannily executed action and suspense. The gist: a naïve courier (Ji Chang-wook) performs some routine favors for strangers, which leads to him being arrested on trumped-up charges, and growing determined to track down the individual responsible for his misfortunes. Yes, this is essentially a

Adam's Picks

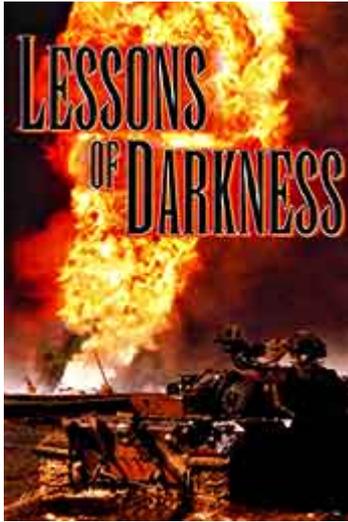
1. **HOUSE OF LEAVES**



In celebration of the recent publication of **TOM'S CROSSING**, the new novel by Mark Z. Danielewski, here's a look back at his legendary debut **HOUSE OF LEAVES**. About a house that's bigger on the inside than the outside, it's been called a postmodern masterpiece and a glorified student writing project, and is at once compulsively readable and agonizingly self-indulgent. **HOUSE OF LEAVES** may contain the secrets of the universe, or it might be a bad joke, made at the expense of over-analytical readers; having perused it twice, I can

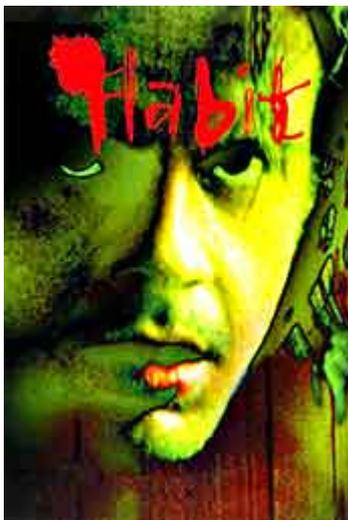
Korean FUGITIVE, but it works smashingly well. HULU

2. LESSONS OF DARKNESS



On the one hand, this visually breathtaking 1992 Werner Herzog documentary, which depicts the burning oil fields of Kuwait, is a failure. As with Herzog's earlier documentary experiment FATA MORGANA (1971), it's supposed to be a science fictional exploration of a distant planet, represented in LESSONS OF DARKNESS by charred landscapes, bubbling oil slicks, fire spouts and towering walls of smoke that blot out the sun. It's an astonishing, horrifying spectacle, but also one that nowadays isn't especially unusual (especially if you happen to live in California), meaning that as SF it simply doesn't work. CRITERION

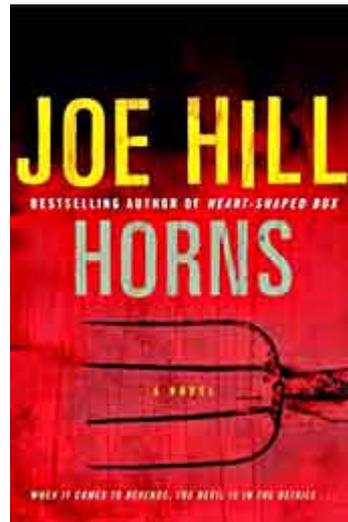
3. HABIT



One of the key films of Larry Fessenden, horror cinema's answer to

attest that both claims have some validity. I recommend reading the book yourself (if you haven't already) and making up your own mind. BOOK

2. HORNS



Joe Hill is another veteran author with a new book out. KING SORROW is said to be his magnum opus, something that cannot be said of HORNS (2010), although it is impressive. The premise is simple enough: a young man named Ignatius Perrish, or Ig, wakes up one morning to find two sharp horns sprouting from his temple; those horns turn out to have disquieting supernatural properties, among them the power to make people reveal their innermost secrets to Ig. The novel could have stood to be shorn of around 50 of its nearly 400 pages, but it contains a uniquely interesting and multi-faceted protagonist, and a narrative that's crazed, prickly and truthful to an oft-uncomfortable degree. BOOK

3. EVEN DWARFS STARTED SMALL

Martin Scorsese. The focus is on a thirtyish New Yorker (Fessenden) getting involved with a mysterious young woman (Meredith Snaider) who has a predilection for drinking blood. So assured is the filmmaking that the colossal shift in tone, from the urban grit of the first half to the hallucinatory aura of the second, never feels the slightest bit forced. In addition, the jittery camerawork and near-constant jump cuts imbue the film's NYC settings with a profoundly disquieting ambience. SHUDDER

4. NOUVELLE VAGUE



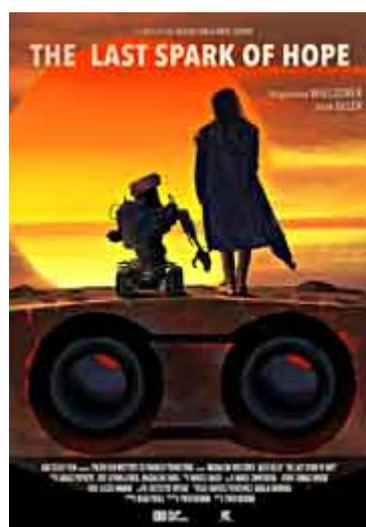
I enjoyed the Hell out of this Richard Linklater directed depiction of the Paris-based filming of Jean-Luc Godard's seminal BREATHLESS (À bout de souffle; 1960). If you're a film nerd you'll likely share my enthusiasm, but if you're not you probably won't be too enamored with NOUVELLE VAGUE, which with its black-and-white visuals and subtitled French dialogue has a genuinely archaic 1950s feel. It also boasts winning performances, particularly that of Zoe Deutch as Jean Seberg, the Hollywood actress who co-starred in BREATHLESS, and found herself increasingly flummoxed by Godard's highly unorthodox filming methods. NETFLIX

5. PINPOINT



A deeply strange, anarchic 1968 masterpiece from Werner Herzog. It can be viewed as an oblique commentary on the revolutionary fervor of the era, with the revolutionaries being dwarfs who find themselves stymied by things like cars, beds and doorknobs they can't reach. Featured are sights as striking and bizarre as any you'll see: chickens cannibalizing one another, blind dwarfs swinging large sticks at invisible opponents, a box of dead insects dressed in miniature wedding attire, a dwarf standing in place and laughing maniacally, etc. A disturbing film, yes, but also a curiously fascinating and provocative one. FILM

4. THE LAST SPARK OF HOPE



It's taken some time, but this 2023 Polish sci-fier (which I reviewed over a year ago) is finally filtering out into the streaming world. It's set in a dystopian future, and the only portion of the Earth where toxic pollution hasn't run riot: a solar-powered settlement whose



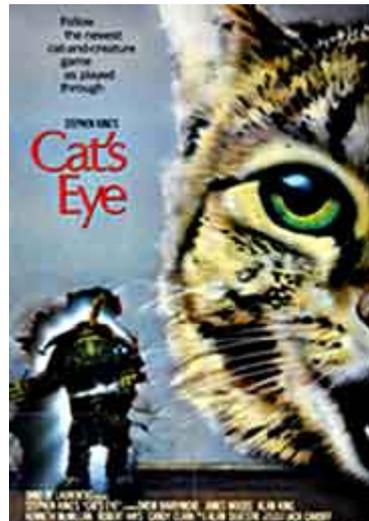
This 16-minute short is undistinguished from a storytelling standpoint, with ultra-stylized visuals being its major selling point. Those innovative and anxiety-inducing visuals, encompassing odd camera angles, a cold nocturnal color scheme and Macro lenses, serve to impart the mindset of a disturbed med student (writer-director Michael Merlino) looking for cadavers on which to practice his wares. He finds what he needs, but, as you might guess, does so in a less-than-ethical manner. YOUTUBE



Our latest mug is finally available for the holidays!

inhabitants include Eva (Magdalena Wieczorek), the Earth's last surviving human, and a military robot that's *very* bullish about security. The plot may be wafer-thin, but the visual design is skilled and atmospheric. Working with extremely minimal resources, director Piotr Biedron made his limitations work for him by keeping things simple; the set design is accomplished with a minimum of clutter, and the camerawork is dynamic and imaginative without ever seeming self-conscious. FILM

5. CAT'S EYE



This 1985 film represented the premiere example of an original screenplay by Stephen King. A starring vehicle for the nine-year-old Drew Barrymore, it's a three parter linked by the exploits of a stray cat. There are some good bits, but the quasi-comedic tone is a problem, resulting in an avalanche of cutesy King references (a boarding school named "Saint Stephen," etc.). Lewis Teague, a filmmaker who (in King's words) "just wants to get ya," isn't great with the type of playful PG-rated comedy attempted here; his specialty is the scary stuff, of which CAT'S EYE contains far too little. FILM

Also New

- **FRANKENSTEIN (2025)** (Film)

- **TRON** (Film)
- **HUMANIMALITY** (Fiction)
- **TATSUYA NAKADAI: 1932-2025** (Commentary)
- **THE VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE** (NonFiction)
- **CHERRY 2000** (Film)
- **SILENT TRIGGER: SHOOTING THE FILM** (NonFiction)
- **THE RUNNING MAN - 1987** (Film)
- **AND MORE!**



Insider Info

There's a lot you can say about **Stephen King**, but one thing you can't accuse him of is irrelevancy. At age 78 he's as ubiquitous, and controversial, as ever, having (in addition to seeing a record number of films and TV series adapted from his work in 2025) made headlines after some contentious social media posts about **the Epstein List** and **Charlie Kirk**, and a **claim about being the "most banned author in the United States."**



It's the latter comment I want to explore here. It may seem self-serving and gratuitous, especially in light of the fact that King is **one of the most widely read authors in the US**, but there are two things we need to keep in mind: **1)** King didn't come up with the "most banned" designation himself; rather, he was responding to a **banned books report by PEN America**, and **2)** The report referred specifically to school library (rather than governmental) censorship.

I'll confess I find the focus on school bans rather pointless. I vividly recall haunting the fiction section of my high school library on several occasions, which were notable primarily for the fact that I was invariably the only one there. That of course was a few years ago, when literacy rates were much higher than they are now, meaning there's little chance of modern teenagers being corrupted by books in their school libraries (or left bereft by their absence). If those kids are reading books at all,

something tells me they'll track the desired publications down outside academic settings.

Another thing to keep in mind is that reports about Stephen King school library bans aren't new. Back in 1991, an article in issue number 2 of the late GAUNTLET magazine asserted that "Stephen King is one of the most censored writers in America," and that his books have been "challenged by concerned citizens in libraries across the country." Also quoted in the article is King himself, stating "When it comes to censorship involving high school libraries, I love it, man," because "When a book gets banned, kids will read it." I couldn't agree more.

Helluva Holiday Gift!

Drink your coffee and consider your sins

The latest addition to our set of exclusive mugs:

DANTE'S INFERNO: THE 9 LEVELS OF HELL.

Available NOW NOW NOW

I WANT IT



I'm done reading. To the website!

The Bedlam Files, November 2025, Issue 25-10

Visit [The Bedlam Files](#) website. Feel free to share this newsletter as well.

You received this email because you signed up on our website. We hope you enjoy it.

[Unsubscribe](#)

