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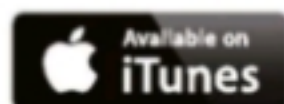
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BATMAN 3

BEYOND GOTHAM



*NOT FINAL ARTWORK

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PS3 PS4 PSVITA XBOX ONE XBOX 360 PC WiiU NINTENDO 3DS

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HYPER>> HORROR SPECIAL

» I dig horror. It's my thing, or at least it's my thing now. When I was a kid I was terrified by anything remotely scary, until one day I realised that it was all smoke and mirrors, special effects and jump cuts. Now I can't get enough horror movies, games, books, comics and what have you. Welcome to the Hyper Horror Special. To keep from fainting, keep repeating:
It's only a magazine...
Only a magazine...
Only a magazine...

Daniel Wilks, Lord of Tears

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RIPLEYS, BELIEVE IT OR NOT

HEIDI KEMPS knows the apple never falls far from the tree

ALIEN: ISOLATION

PLATFORM: PS3/4, Xbox 360/One, PC

CATEGORY: Survival horror

DEVELOPER: The Creative Assembly

PUBLISHER: Sega

DUE: October 7



It's really amazing when you look back on the first Alien movie and realize just how ahead of its time it was. This is a film with a relatable, engaging, resourceful female protagonist who defends herself against a terrifying, living threat – one that seems to defy numerous laws of nature. It's a superb blend of atmosphere, pacing, setting, and practical effects that's just as frightening and engaging today as it was thirty-five years ago in 1979.

The past few decades, however, haven't been the kindest to the Alien series – several poorly regarded later films have essentially beached the cinematic portion of the franchise, and branches in other mediums have been filled with ups and downs. While there have been several noteworthy Alien-themed videogames – games such as Capcom's beloved arcade brawler Alien vs. Predator and Wayforward's superb Metroid-styled Alien: Infestation among them – we also have the awful 16-bit Alien 3, badly-aged 32-bit efforts, and the crushing disappointment and developmental mess that was Aliens: Colonial Marines.

Indeed, in the aftermath of Colonial Marines, any Alien game coming down the pipe would need to be of exceptional quality to make up for the shattered expectations for that title.

After my demos with Alien: Isolation, I feel like I can safely say that Creative Assembly has not only made that quality game, but may have created the best Alien-related title to date.

HER MOTHER'S CHILD >>

Alien: Isolation tells the story of Ellen Ripley's daughter, Amanda, as she searches for her mother. Fifteen years ago, her mother promised she would return home for her birthday, yet she has seen no sign of her since. Now employed by Weyland-Yutani, Amanda hears that a flight recorder from the Nostromo has been found at the decommissioned Sevastopol trading station. She and her crew head to Sevastopol, only to discover that things have

gone terribly, horribly awry – and that something lurks there that wants them dead.

"Ripley's daughter existed in the Alien universe, but her story had never been told before," notes Alien: Isolation creative director Alistair Hope. Her plight of being pursued by the alien on the Sevastopol echoes that of her mother, but Amanda's not a clone of her parent – she is a distinct character in her own right, and being in her shoes gives players the opportunity to experience her completely new story.

But while Amanda isn't meant to be Ellen Ripley 2.0, the developers are trying to deliver a similar experience to what her mother experienced in the film. "One of the things that defined Ripley was her ability to keep clarity of thought under pressure," says Hope. "If you look at the cast in Alien, they all kind of died by their own flaws." This truth carries over into the game, as well: if you are too

“MAKE TOO MUCH NOISE MOVING AROUND, AND YOU WILL BE FOUND AND VERY SWIFTLY EXECUTED.”

NOSTROMO UEMATSU

The Alien franchise has a mixed history in the realm of videogames, but there are some fascinating bits of gaming history that involve the license. One such factoid is the 1987 Aliens game for MSX released by future Final Fantasy creators Squaresoft, complete with a Nobuo Uematsu soundtrack. A version for the Famicom Disk System was planned and cancelled, though a prototype was later discovered. (Perhaps it's for the best – the game's a barely-mediocre action/platformer.)





careless, too trigger-happy, too trusting, you may find yourself a bloody mess very, very quickly. Mistakes are harshly punished: fail to hold your breath as you hide in a locker or make too much noise moving around, and you will be found and very swiftly executed. The ability to make smart decisions based on your circumstances is absolutely necessary to staying alive.

The thought of a single screw-up leading to Amanda's untimely demise may sound harsh, but actually playing the game reveals a significant amount of freedom in how you can tackle the various threats. Many games in the

survival horror genre are quite linear, but in stark contrast, *Alien: Isolation* is constantly expanding, and allows you to return to areas you may have already visited. "One of the interesting things we found out early on was how immersed people got into the world," continues Hope. "They were actually taking much, much longer to play the game than we expected. We'd make a section we expected would take 15 minutes, they'd take a half hour, forty minutes. I don't want to give an exact number of hours for how long the game will take to complete, but I think players will find it to be a big experience."

It should also be noted that while the titular xenomorph is the main threat in the game, it's far from the only danger Amanda will be facing. She's not alone in being stuck on Sevastopol with an inhuman killing organism, and some of the other NPCs on the station are... well, not exactly in the most grounded of mindsets, to say the least. Between paranoid, unstable humans and synthetics with extremely rigid programming, Amanda can't really trust anyone or anything to have her back.

"The humans are unpredictable," notes Hope. "Sometimes they are a benefit to the player. But there's also potential for them to be extremely dangerous." Not everyone is good at handling extreme mental pressure in the face of almost certain death, after all.

Adding to the pervasive sense of tension is Amanda's limited arsenal for combating threats. She has some tools she can assemble from scavenged objects - noisemakers, medical kits, Molotov cocktails, and others. Parts like sharp blades, batteries, and ethanol can prove to be scarce in times of need, so making and using the right items at the right times

IT'S NOT CALLED ALIEN: TOGETHERNESS

Alien: Isolation will feature some various play modes, but one thing the game won't have is multiplayer, including co-op. Why is that? Besides going against that whole "isolation" bit in the title, developer Jon McKellan asserted in an interview with website Rock Paper Shotgun that "if you had two or three humans facing up against one alien it's a completely different experience where you're working together to overcome it rather than just trying to survive." Makes sense

is absolutely critical. (The game doesn't pause during the crafting process, either, so you can forget about making a lifesaving item in the thick of being pursued.)

She also has a few weapons, like a revolver and the iconic flamethrower. But these aren't typical videogame guns that annihilate everything with a well-placed headshot: they're cumbersome, loud, and generally laughed off if you try to use them to kill a giant

space creature. Trying to blast your way through the game like a first-person shooter will result in a very painful demise, as the creature (and other humans/synthetics) will be attracted to the source of the sound. Careful thought should therefore be applied before using force - in fact, the developers have gone on record saying that it's possible to finish the game without killing anyone.

Your most useful tool,





therefore, winds up being the motion tracker: a simple device that detects living things moving within your vicinity. Even this lifesaving tool is fairly rickety: while it detects motion around you, it doesn't give the most precise readings of where said motion is actually taking place. Most importantly, it doesn't give you an idea of where things it detects are within 3D space, so if you've got a xenomorph hanging out in the ducts above you waiting to pounce, you're in a very, very bad position.

If all these tough situations aren't enough for you, the game also features a mission-based Challenge Mode outside of the main game. In this mode – which we demoed at E3 – you are put into a small section of the Sevastopol with limited resources and tasked with completing a set task within a time limit. Certain actions, like checking your motion tracker, would give you demerits, while completing bonus objectives, locking down a stairwell, would subtract from the total time at the end. If the alien was threatening before, it was downright terrifying in this mode, seemingly able to be anywhere at a moment's



notice, able to sniff you out from hiding places that looked safe, spearing you through the chest from behind as you believed you had managed to outwit it. A fully-powered flamethrower blast to the face would only stop it momentarily, yet it catching up to you meant a sure skewering.

Despite several attempts, we didn't complete the mission. Challenge mode, indeed.

RETRO CHIC >> One thing

the team at Creative Assembly has nailed down is recreating the overall atmosphere of the original Alien films. This isn't the future as it exists now – it's the future as seen through the lens of when Alien was created, filled with harsh neon-green-on-black glows of CRT monitors and a strange, monotone sterility to the rooms and hallways. It's a bizarre, anachronistic view of the future that doesn't mesh



with our current expectations, making the game's setting feel that much more unfamiliar and foreboding.

"A big part of what we like about that first film is the lo-fi sci-fi aesthetic," says Hope. "It's really unique. You see a lot of games dealing with sci-fi in a shiny, idealized sort of way – holograms, touchscreens, and whatnot. What helped make *Alien* great was its believability... It's a very grounded world, and that's something we really wanted to capitalise on." There are lots of little nods to the films in the setting itself, as well, and fans will find lots within the sprawling corridors of the *Sevastopol* that helps further expand upon the greater universe of the *Alien* franchise.

Even better is the potentiality of experiencing the inside of the *Sevastopol*, the retro-sci-fi-aesthetic, and the abject terror of alien pursuit through the VR view of the *Oculus Rift*. A prototype of the game running on the *Oculus*

was showcased at E3, and while it's not yet certain if the full game will have support for the fledgling VR device, what the demo showcased was enough to convince us that this would be the ideal way to experience Amanda's struggle to survive. Walking through dimly lit corridors filled with steam and metal, moving your head nervously from the environs to your trusty motion tracker, praying silently that it isn't detecting anything – it's one of the most immersive and emotionally involving experiences we've yet seen with VR tech. It's astonishing just how utterly terrifying seeing your tracker go off and knowing you're being pursued by the alien is when you're completely surrounded by the game. Here's to hoping that the full game on *Oculus* will become a reality.

ALL THE OLD GANG >> It's pretty clear that the minds working on *Alien: Isolation* are very passionate about

the source material by this point, but what cements their commitment to creating a fantastic experience for fans is the recently announced DLC that reunites the cast of the original 1979 film. The DLC allows players to relive some of the tense scenes from the original film in interactive form, complete with all of the original actors voicing, including star Sigourney Weaver as Ripley.

Players who pre-order the game will be automatically upgraded to the "Nostromo Edition" of the game. This includes the first of two DLC missions, called "Crew Expendable." Brett has been killed, and assuming control of Ripley, Dallas, or Parker, you'll try to find a way to get the *Alien* into the ship's airlock. Each character has different resources and skills at their disposal, giving the DLC some additional appeal and replay value. The second DLC, "Last Survivor," is available to those who pre-order the game at GameStop in the US, and will be widely available to all owners of the game at a later date. This mission puts you in control of Ripley during the film's climax, as you initiate the



ship's self-destruct sequence and make for the shuttle in order to escape.

Alien: Isolation is shaping up to be a noteworthy game on many fronts: a superbly designed survival horror title, a rare example of a superb licensed game, and a fantastic new story for fans of the film universe. We're eagerly anticipating hours of cowering sweaty-palmed in all-consuming terror beneath makeshift cover while a towering, nigh-invincible killer tries to sniff us out. For fans of classic and interactive horror, October 7th can't come soon enough. **«**

66 WE'RE EAGERLY ANTICIPATING HOURS OF COWERING SWEATY-PALMED IN ALL-CONSUMING TERROR

Q+A

With **Alistair Hope**, Creative Director**HYPER:** So why do a survival horror game?

Alistair Hope: I've always been a big fan of the first Alien, and I guess we felt that nobody had yet made the Alien game that we really wanted to play. We had the idea of taking the values of that first film, making a really compelling experience out of them... I guess it was kind of this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I knew Sega had the IP, so we just decided, "Hey, let's go for it."

It feels like there's a bit of a resurgence in "traditional" survival horror right now, the sort of games where you are less powerful and have limited resources...

Hmmm... I don't know, I think we've kind of moved away from the Japanese origins of survival horror. Actually, I think you can find a lot of survival horror type experiences in a lot of games, not just those that bill themselves as such. In some ways, I think Minecraft is the most successful survival horror game of the generation – it's about resource gathering, not really having the strength you need... that first night, coming into that game completely cold, when everything comes out and starts banging on your door – that's really quite scary! It's not about killing, not about mowing down foes. And all these kids are into it! That's kind of amazing.

But whether we're directly involved in some sort of resurgence of survival horror? It's hard to say, because we've been working on this game for so long – about four years now. We couldn't really say it was planned. Maybe it's because we live in uncertain times, perhaps the trend is mirroring some feelings people have in real life.

You guys aren't really known for this genre, though.

It's interesting – I was employee #8 at CA, so I've been there a very, very long time. (We're at about three hundred now.) I think two of the strengths of the studio are quality – we have really high benchmarks for what we do – and authenticity, whether that's the Total War guys striving to render historical reality or us now trying to take you back to Ridley Scott's outer space. Because I've been at the studio for so long, I always felt that we were capable of doing things in a wider scope than it seems from the outside.

In a game like this, I imagine that the enemy AI is among the most important elements. How much work goes into the AI to make the enemies believable?

It's been very challenging. The alien also has an incredibly complex layered animation system, which means it can move very naturally and fluidly. But what's rewarding about it is seeing people playing the game, having great experiences, and seeing that work paying off.

What I found particularly interesting in the demo is how the humans trapped along with you can be just as dangerous as the alien. Where did that idea come from?

I was really inspired by the classic War of the Worlds by H.G. Wells. There's a book that's over a hundred years old, but his description of how things fall apart within days is absolutely terrifying... the Martians appear, and society collapses. The sort of savagery people inflict on each other in desperate situations is horrifying. That was something I was thinking about when we started on the project, and it's persisted since.

Is there a lot of pressure to live up to the high expectations that fans of the franchise have?

Considering that this is something we proposed and made ourselves, we're free to take this in a new direction. Nobody else has tried to make this game before. Really, I think we're the ones putting pressure on ourselves.



THE FOREST

PLATFORM: PC
 CATEGORY: Survival Sandbox
 DEVELOPER: Endnight Games
 PUBLISHER: Endnight Games
 DUE: 2015

DANIEL WILKS has a taste for the other, other white meat

WAYWARD SON

Although we haven't discovered his significance as yet, the introductory plane crash shows a young boy holding tight to the player. He survives the crash only to be taken away by a cannibal. It's assumed that this boy is the player character's son and that rescuing him will play some part of a meta-narrative, but given the basic survival structure of the game and its sandbox nature, how this will be achieved is as yet unknown.



» The unnamed airliner that falls from the sky at the beginning of *The Forest* is a marvellous thing. Not only is the opening of the game one of the best plane crashes we've seen in a game, the company that runs the airline apparently also publishes the most comprehensive seat pocket safety guide in the history of everything. It's essentially a paper version of the Hitchhiker's Guide, albeit one complete with schematics for building effigies out of multiple body parts so as to scare away cannibal mutants.

In the fine tradition of Italian cannibal movies, *The Forest* seems to question who is the real monster on the island – the cannibal mutants who aren't always aggressive, or the outsider who seems to want nothing more to hack them apart with an axe to

build decorations. But deeper philosophy aside, *The Forest* is a game about brute survival. Initially armed with nothing but what can be scavenged from the downed plane, scattered luggage and a single flight attendant with an axe buried in her chest the player must find ways to survive on the island, building shelter, hunting or foraging for food, building fires to keep warm and scare away predators and traps to catch or deter any cannibals curious enough to get too close.

Much in the same vein as *Minecraft*, all of the crafting ingredients needed for shelter or tools can be found in the environment. Trees can be cut

down for the logs needed to build shelters, walls or boats. Stones needed to stabilise construction can be scavenged. Sticks for finer crafting can be scavenged from the forest floor and leaves, a necessary fuel source for starting fires can be pulled from shrubbery. Iguanas can be hunted and killed for their flesh and their skin, the former being a good source of sustenance and the latter being a necessary component in body armour – I said the airline safety guide used for crafting patterns was rather comprehensive. And of course there are also the effigies intended to scare off the cannibals. The main crafting

materials for these are heads and limbs, making *The Forest* the first game we can think of that includes dismemberment as a gathering skill. There doesn't seem to be any indication to an optimal ending to *The Forest*, so survival for the sake of survival seems to be the order of the day.

The Forest, in its current early alpha state is a gorgeous place – at least on the surface. The thick pine forests of the island and the mountainous interior are beautiful to look at, as are the sunrises and sunsets that cast light through the top branches of the trees adding a wonderful diffuse glow to the place. But beneath the glory of nature is a labyrinth of tunnels and caves teeming with the nocturnal cannibals and far worse things besides. *The Forest* is currently available through Steam early access. «

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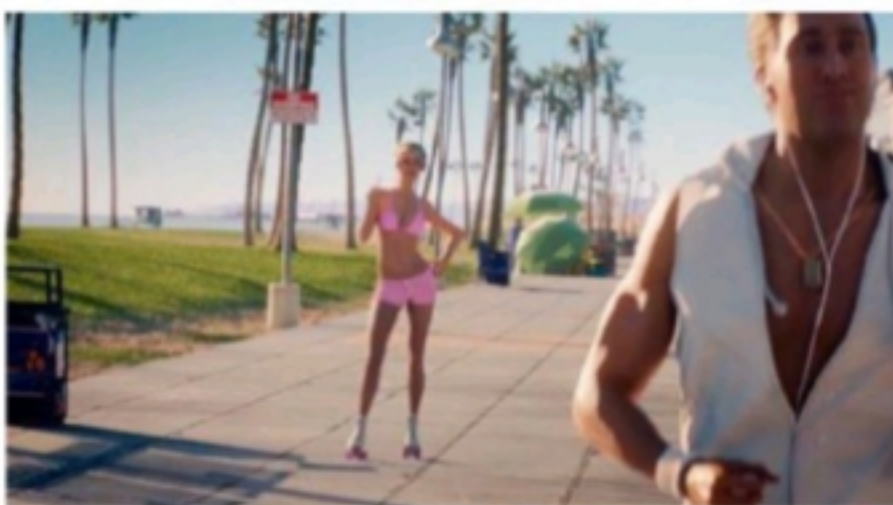
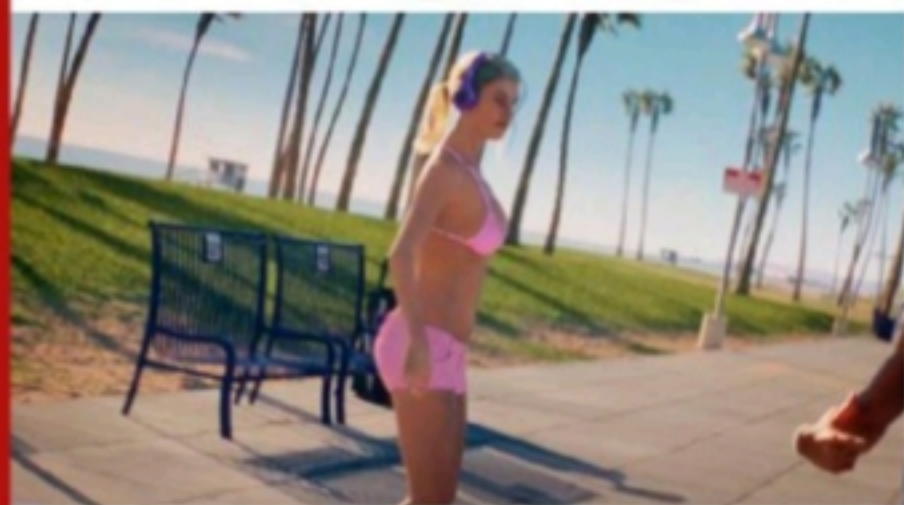
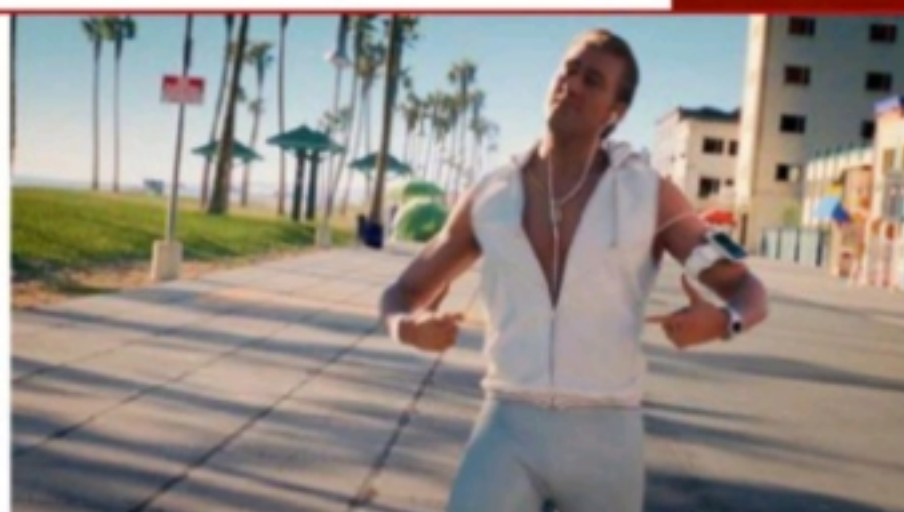
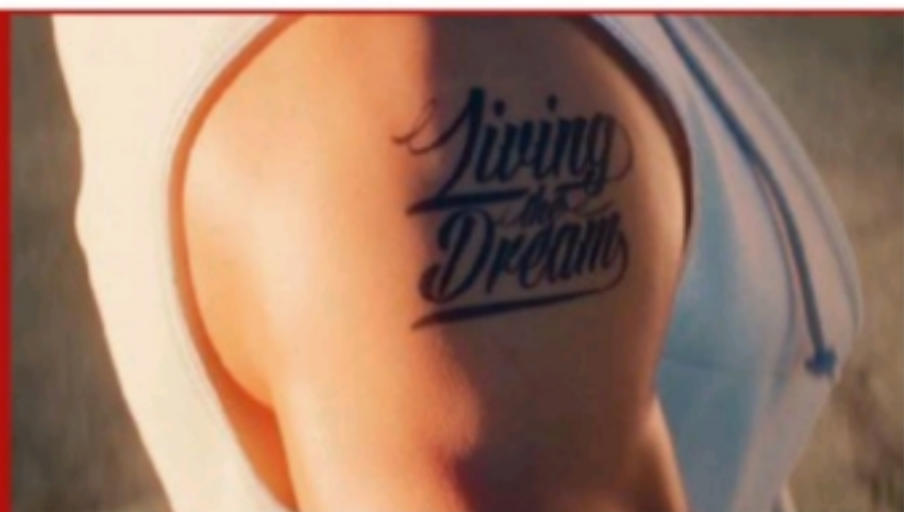
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KILLIFORNIA DREAMING

ANDREW WHITHEAD is pretty sure Venice Beach has enough zombies



➤ The tonal shift from *Dead Island* to *Dead Island 2* was apparent from the first moment I saw it. The first game's now well-known trailer featured the reversed footage of a zombie infested resort rewinding back to where it started before the first attack. It was impactful if not a little maudlin and overly sentimental. *Dead Island 2* has no such pretense. The serious nature remains but the new trailer shows a more tongue-in-cheek style as we watch a Californian gym freak enjoying a leisurely jog along a zombie plagued beachfront before succumbing to the virus himself.

"[We] are not dark and depressing nor ridiculous and stupid," said Pete Brolly, International Brand Manager at Deep Silver as the trailer ended. "We are cool and kick ass."

SHUT IT DOWN >> *Dead Island 2* takes place several months after the original outbreak from the first game. The virus is now spreading around the world and the sunny state of California has been hit hard and subsequently locked down by the US government.

"It's a bright and beautiful world of California to be explored," said Brolly. "And

we're bringing you to the most iconic locations of the golden state including the San Francisco pier, the LA beaches, the Hollywood hills and many more. We say embrace the zombie outbreak, this is the apocalypse of your dreams."

That's the attitude of the heroes of *Dead Island 2*. They're not just survivors in a zombie wasteland; they're in the quarantine zone because they want to be. It's a chance for them to forge their own path with no jobs or bills to worry about. And better than that, they're immune from the virus. They can of course be mauled to death by a group

of flesh eaters, but they can't become one of them, so why not rob a few mansions and make a name for yourself?

NICK OF TIME >> You are definitely not alone in zombie California and the biggest character to come to your aid throughout the game is a resourceful opportunist named Max.

"Max is not immune so he drives his custom tank with his beloved cat Nick Furry," explained Brolly. "Also for him the California outbreak is a second chance for Max because he can live out his nerdy childhood dream of

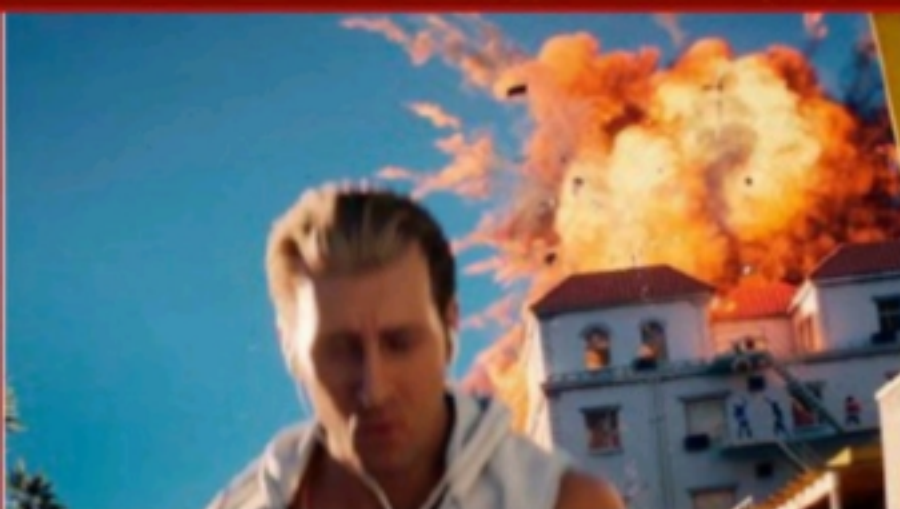
DEAD ISLAND 2

PLATFORM: PS4, Xbox One, PC
 CATEGORY: Action role-playing
 DEVELOPER: Yager Development
 PUBLISHER: Deep Silver
 DUE: Q1/Q2 2015



MESSY BREAK-UP

Arguably the biggest change happening in Dead Island 2 isn't actually in the game. Yager Development, the makers of the brilliant but flawed Spec Ops: The Line, were announced as the new developers at E3. The creators of the first game Techland jumped ship during the early stages of development and joined up with Warner Bros. to make their new zombie gore-fest Dying Light. So basically at worst zombie fans will be spoiled for choice in 2015.



“WE SAY EMBRACE THE ZOMBIE OUTBREAK, THIS IS THE APOCALYPSE OF YOUR DREAMS

being the leader of a zombie task force.

“And Dead Island 2 is the first ever game to motion capture a cat.”

Realistic felines aside Dead

Island 2 also boasts a wider variety of different zombies than in the previous game as well as a complex component system meaning no two zombies will look the same. But it's not just the dead you have

to worry about as different human factions are out to get theirs in zombie California.

“This time around human factions play a very important role,” said Brolly, “so we ex-prisoners abandoned US forces and raiders for example that keep the world alive and thriving.

“And obviously to kill all of these bad boys we need weapons. Most of our weapons are focussed on melee combat but we now have motorised weapons as well. They are kind of a double edged sword because on the one hand [they deliver huge damage] but they also use

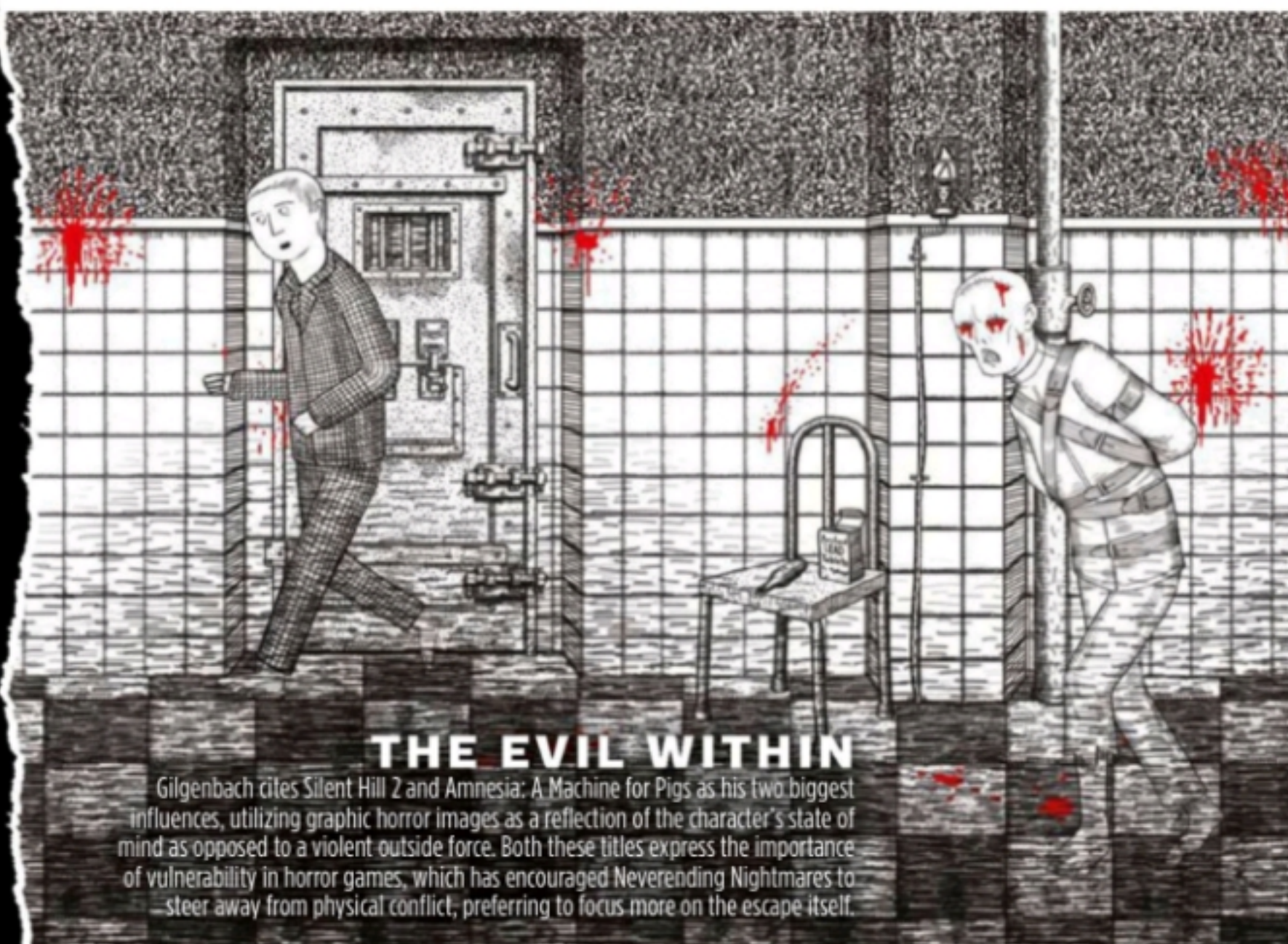
fuel and resources that are scarce in the apocalypse. They also create noise and noise attracts zombies, but then again maybe you want that.”

DEAD AGAIN >> From what has been shown of Dead Island 2 the real star of the game looks to be zombified recreation of California. The zombies and weapons will no doubt impress but the attention to detail in the recreation of the world looks very impressive and will hopefully be enough to set the game apart from the horde of other living dead games coming soon.

NEVERENDING NIGHTMARES

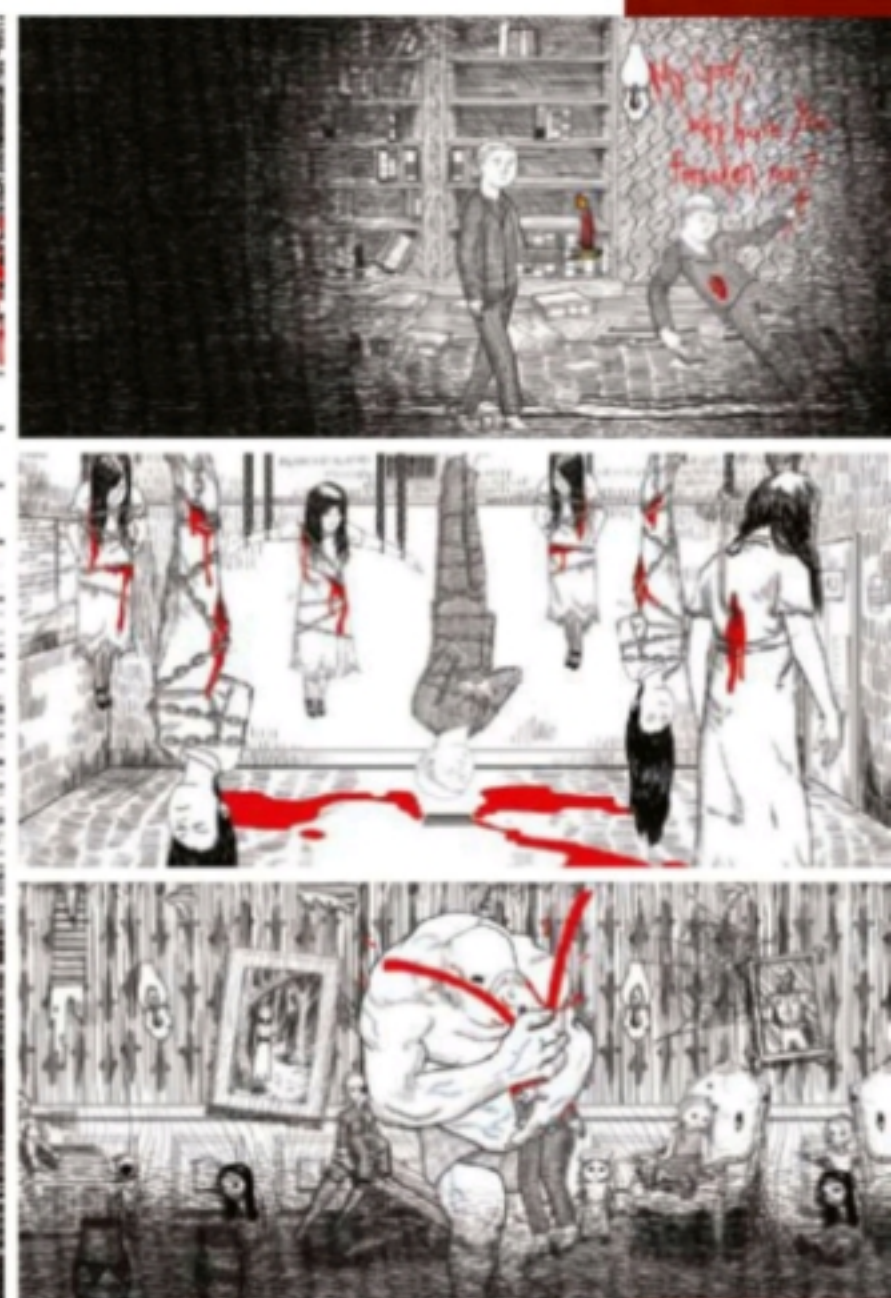
PLATFORM: PC, Mac
 CATEGORY: Existential horror
 DEVELOPER: Infinitap Games
 PUBLISHER: Infinitap Games
 DUE: September

ALEX MANN delves into the personal hell of mental illness



THE EVIL WITHIN

Gilgenbach cites *Silent Hill 2* and *Amnesia: A Machine for Pigs* as his two biggest influences, utilizing graphic horror images as a reflection of the character's state of mind as opposed to a violent outside force. Both these titles express the importance of vulnerability in horror games, which has encouraged *Neverending Nightmares* to steer away from physical conflict, preferring to focus more on the escape itself.



Everyone has nightmares, but not everyone's nightmares are quite as terrifying as Matt Gilgenbach's. Having battled mental illness in the form of obsessive-compulsive disorder and depression, the Infinitap Games founder and co-founder of 24 Carat Games has taken it upon himself to shine some light on his more hellish experiences through his work-in-progress title *Neverending Nightmares*.

DREAM WEAVER >> The game follows main protagonist Adam as he navigates his way through a set of recurring nightmares, challenging the player to sort the real from the imaginary. The pencil-stroke art successfully creates oppressive, dark environments that draw inspiration from legendary illustrator Edward Gorey, but it's the brutality of the blood-

red gore that really stands out against the hand-drawn black and white aesthetic. "Many of the disturbing images came from intrusive thoughts that came from my OCD" Gilgenbach reveals in his dev diary, not ashamed to share the truth of his illness. "I suffered a lot, and why did I suffer a lot? Because I was born with mental illness."

Despite being met with critical acclaim, *Retro/Grade* (Gilgenbach's first indie game) was unsuccessful financially, and the shock sent the designer spiraling into depression. "All the memories of when I was at my darkest points came flooding back," he recalls, "I just wished I could communicate what I was feeling to others but I couldn't find the words." According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, approximately one

million Australians currently suffer from depression, a number that's believed to be grossly under exaggerated. But Gilgenbach won through, as he turned the situation to his advantage. "I soon realised that this was a great opportunity. I could channel my experience into a game and recreate the fear, the terror, the anxiety of suffering from OCD and depression."

BARE BONES >> To do this, Gilgenbach has put the focus on immersion, avoiding the use of any HUD and UI elements that may distract players or break tension. As a result, the black and white art style has become key, as players will only be able to interact with objects that are in colour. This single handedly negates the desire to spam clicks across a screen, allowing the pace and

atmosphere to fully embed themselves in a gamer's mind. To make matters even more tense, the game is set to branch out into multiple paths depending on player decisions, with the intention of providing as wide a variety as possible.

A demo of *Neverending Nightmares* is currently playable online. While only a mere taste of what's to come, it's already got hearts racing, but Gilgenbach isn't solely malicious in his drive to dish out scares. "While drawing on true psychological horrors is a great way to create a terrifying and disturbing game, I feel like this is the opportunity to do so much more," he says. "I feel like with this game I can help people who are suffering and show them they're not alone. If I can help people through their struggles... that makes my hellish struggle worthwhile."

EVIL TAKES HOLD 16.10.14

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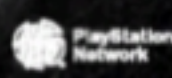
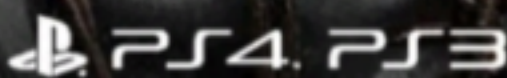
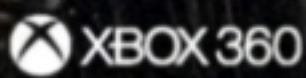
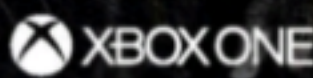
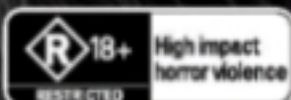


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DEAD BEFORE DAWN

ANDREW WHITEHEAD has plugged in his night-light again



Though zombie games never really went away I couldn't help but feel there were more titles featuring the living dead than usual at this year's E3. So to rise above the crowd you have to do something pretty special and Dying Light has just enough to ensure it won't get lost in the undead shuffle.

Set in a fictional Istanbul-style city of Harran the world of Dying Light is, as you'd expect, filled with a variety of living dead monsters. The basic slow and stupid biters are at the bottom of the ladder but they can still pose a serious threat as can the agile runners

who can just about match your climbing abilities. There are creepy infected children called screamers whose voice can distort your vision and bloated zombies that shoot acidic goo, but the king of the living dead only comes out when the sun goes down.

"During the night we have the volatile," explained Maciej Binkowski, Lead Game Designer of Dying Light, "which are the night creatures that can

tear you to pieces in seconds. When you see them you don't even think about fighting them. They're very agile and they also work as a pack so when one sees you it'll call for support and then you're in real trouble."

RUN FOR YOUR LIFE >> So you've got a lot to deal with and more often than not running away is going to be your best bet. During my hands-on time I found my

parkour abilities served me well as I was often out-matched and in need of finding a place on the map, such as rooftops or narrow alleyways, to give me a tactical advantage.

One of the most notable features is how well the game handles your presence in the world. Your character feels weighty and the variety of climbing animations make the act of clambering up a wall look as hard a task as it probably is in real life.

"One of our team members said a lot of times in games you feel like a balloon full of air," said Maciej Binkowski, "so we spent a lot of time

“THEY'RE VERY AGILE AND THEY WORK AS A PACK, SO WHEN ONE SEES YOU IT'LL CALL FOR SUPPORT”

DYING LIGHT

PLATFORM: PS3/4, Xbox 360/One, PC
CATEGORY: Open world first-person shooter
DEVELOPER: Techland
PUBLISHER: Warner Bros. Interactive
DUE: February 2015



TROLLING FOR ZOMBIES

Whether you love them or hate them pre-order bonuses are here to stay. And as much as it pains me to say it Dying Light's sounds like it might be worth going in for. "Anybody who pre-orders the game gets access to this special mode called Be the Zombie," said Maciej Binkowski, "it's a [player-versus-player] mode where you get to play as a super-infected zombie and you jump right in and act as a powerful enemy and troll them."



giving you weight and giving you the feeling that this body has momentum when you're running. The same goes for the combat we tried to make it visceral and we want you to feel like you're hitting things."

LIVE IN LIGHT >> So often in videogames darkness is one of your closest allies. Hiding in shadows and staying out of sight has been key to survival in a plenty of games but in Dying Light the glow of a street light at night is a beacon of hope against the light fearing monsters that hunt you.

"Night creatures are light sensitive so you can even

use your flashlight to stun them," said Binkowski. "This extra second might be just enough to save your life, but it's nothing that will keep them away for long. So when you're securing shelters you've got to make sure there's a lot of bright light, so each zone that is considered 'safe' is well lit."

As fun and unique a lot of the climbing and fighting mechanics in Dying Light are it was the tension of staying alive that I found most compelling. The zombie genre might be blowing up again like a sledgehammer to the skull, but at least it's bursting with games that seem well worth your time.

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DIAL 'S' FOR SLAUGHTER

JAMES O'CONNOR wears a gazelle mask



As a critic, there's an unwritten law against calling a game 'perfect'. When you got in the zone though, and the music, the visuals, and the horrifying experience of laying down pain all came together, it felt like Hotline Miami was the exact game the developers wanted it to be. 'Perfect' was the word that came to mind.

So where do you go from there? Judging by what I managed to play of Hotline Miami 2 at E3, you don't go far... because you don't need to. The basics of the gameplay – burst in, kill everyone, maintain a combo, become

entranced by the violence that will later sicken you on reflection – are the same, but there are little flourishes and changes that make the game feel fresh. While the visual style hasn't changed, the second level had a few neat environmental details. A round clothing rack to the left of the level's entrance spun when shot, and on one attempt at the section a hoodie came flying off a shelf

“BURST IN, KILL EVERYONE, MAINTAIN A COMBO, BECOME ENTRANCED BY THE VIOLENCE

(I suppose I was in a clothing store – when you're focused on killing in Hotline Miami, you're not always so aware of where you are beyond where the walls and doors begin and end). The soundtrack remains a highlight, but the music seemed even more intense than in the first – pulsating, aggressive, ever so slightly nauseating.

Exactly what you'd expect and want, in other words.

BOOM! SHAKE THE ROOM

>> It's hard to say just how much was being shown on the floor beyond the two levels I played, because Hotline Miami 2 isn't an ideal game to play in a crowded area – showing in both the indie and Playstation sections, it was the only Vita game that actually attracted a crowd, and having onlookers patiently wait for you to give up after dying over and over and over again can be a humiliating experience. The first mission gave me a choice of four masks; I managed to try out two of them. The zebra mask allows you to roll around with a tap of the X button,

HOTLINE MIAMI 2: WRONG NUMBER

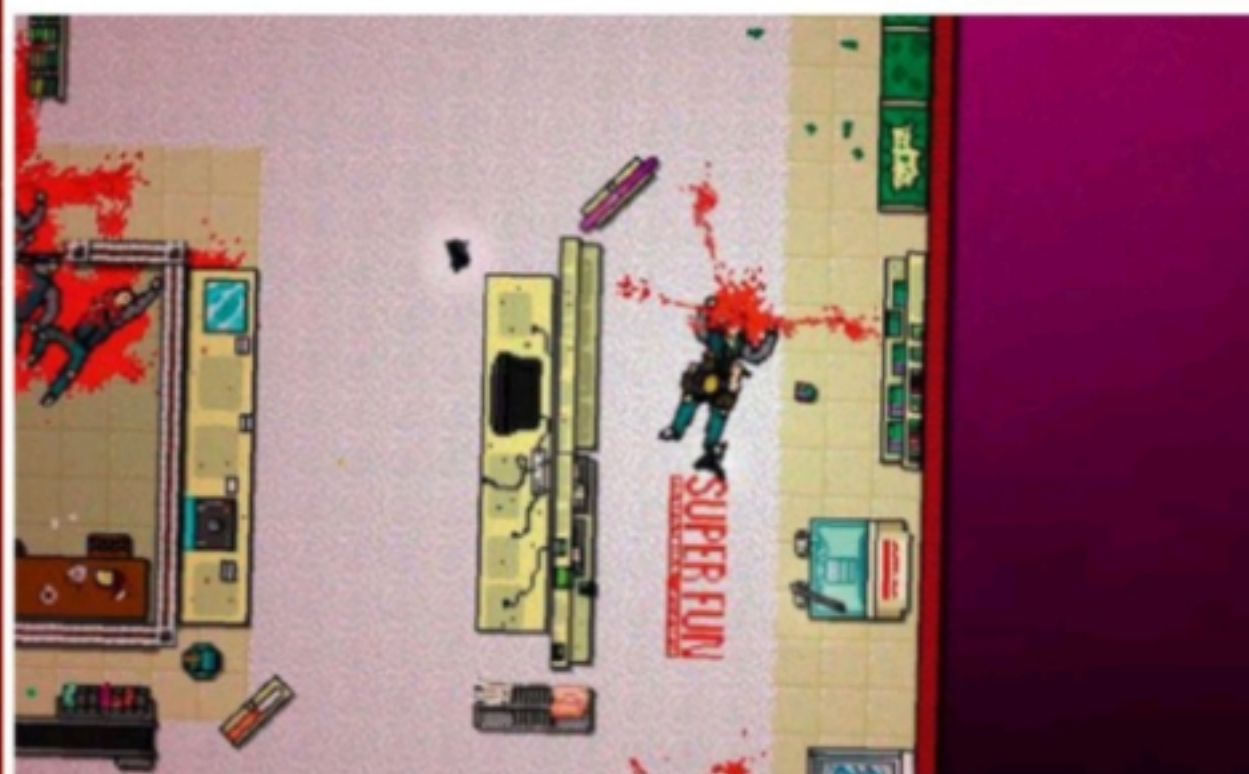
PLATFORM: PS3/4, Vita, PC

CATEGORY: Action

DEVELOPER: Dennaton Games

PUBLISHER: Devolver Digital

DUE: TBA 2014



BEHIND THE MASK

Masks are definitely going to change the game more fundamentally than they did in the first. The Tiger mask will still give you immediately lethal punches, but it will also prevent you from picking up weapons – no more throwing or shooting. Pick the swan and you'll control two characters, one with a gun, one with a chainsaw. Classic Hotline Miami.



which is a real game-changer – I perfected a motion in which I shot a target, rolled into another room before backup arrived, killed the armed man in this room with another forward roll, and quickly beat down his two friends.

Hotline Miami 2 is still a game about being confident – about barging through a door and knowing exactly what to do on the other side of it – and the roll ability really accentuates this. The other mask I tried, the bear, gave me access to dual machine guns. When I held L1, the character slowly arced their arms sideways, pointing in

different directions so that they could effectively cover two directions at once – a move that didn't really come in handy in this early level, but which looked so cool that I kept trying for it anyway. The second level gave me no choice in my mask, and felt very vintage Hotline Miami – the same great level design, the same practiced brutality, the same finesse and confidence.

Hotline Miami 2 is as horrifying and twisted and gratuitously blood-soaked as its predecessor – and, hopefully, just as near to perfection. **«**

THE EVIL WITHIN

PLATFORM: Xbox 360/One, PS3/4, PC
CATEGORY: Survival Horror
DEVELOPER: Tango Gameworks
PUBLISHER: Bethesda Softworks
DUE: October 23

JAMES O'CONNOR is actually the dark half pseudonym for another writer



THE HUMAN FACE OF ZOMBISM

One really appealing thing about The Evil Within, if the demo is representative of the full game, is that there seems to be a huge number of enemy character models. When the undead are getting all up in your face, it's very noticeable when they all look different. Good stuff, next generation.



When it comes to the levels of intensity I can handle, 'an unkillable monster will appear at random and stalk you as you flee in impotent terror' is about a mile beyond my 'I'm out' point. I took a hands-on booking at E3 expecting the game to be a bit too old-school horror for me. Instead I got was an experience that felt far more like a sequel to Resident Evil 4 than any of the last several Resident Evil games did.

UN FORASTERO! >> I jumped right into the second of the two chapters offered, Chapter 8, setting the difficulty to 'Normal' because 'Casual' sounded a little too relaxed. This chapter opened outside a big Resident-Evil-homage of a mansion - it's what the GameCube remake of Resident Evil would look like if they remade it again, although

the controls and interface have been updated. There's an actual health bar, and you can move and shoot at the same time... but rather than feeling like concessions, it seems Mikami and his team have used these as excuses to simply ramp up the horror further. The mansion was filled with traps, and the whole 'enemies will spring back up unless you burn the corpse with your limited matches' schtick is terrifying. At one point as I entered a room the screen took on a blue tinge and the music kicked up - presumably this meant that the unstoppable monster I alluded to in the first sentence, which I'd heard about from folks who had played the game previously, had appeared, but I didn't stick around to see it. Truth be told, I panicked my way through the level, failing to solve the major set-piece

puzzle and eventually being killed by a zombie.

DEATH BECOMES YOU >>

Alright, lesson learned. Back to the menu, back to Chapter 4, difficulty brought down. This chapter felt closer to RE4 than RE1: it was a little more open, with an extensive outside section, and only one overt homage to the Spencer Mansion (a clear visual reference to the first zombie encounter). By the end of the first enemy encounter, I was out of ammo - the game is actually quite generous with it, but damn am I a bad shot when I'm panicked. Moving forward, a woman's scream outside cut right through me: The Evil Within is filled with iconic tropes, but they're all done really well. I spent most of the level leading a doctor through a mad little village,

seeking a young woman, and once we found her the whole game went all Silent Hill on me. Casual difficulty had suited me just fine, but here the game really started to mess with me: the geography ceased to make sense and the walls grew bloated with viscera as Ruvik, the game's Big Bad and resident Unpredictable Unkillable Monster, suddenly appeared in a cutscene and starts messing with me. I died soon after, swimming through a pool of blood, beset by zombies. Most of my health had shredded by a horrifying spider woman, and I was totally enamoured with the experience.

The Evil Within seems to have found a way to scale the horror experience without compromising the intensity - even as a genre novice, I came away wanting more.

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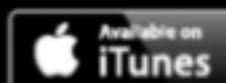
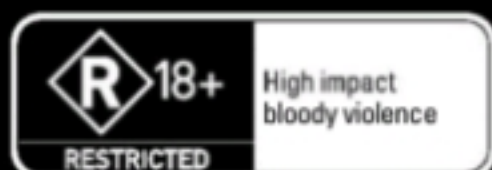


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ROUTINE

PLATFORM: PC, Mac

CATEGORY: First-person Exploration Horror

DEVELOPER: Lunar Software

DUE: TBC

Fear feeds on isolation. We are vulnerable when we're alone, when there's - to paraphrase an old tagline - nobody to hear us scream.

Developed by indie startup Lunar Software, Routine looks set to exploit our dread of total aloneness to the maximum allowable by law, placing us smack dab in the middle of an enormous, creepily abandoned moonbase and saying, more or less, "have fun!"

who will not hesitate to kill you dead.

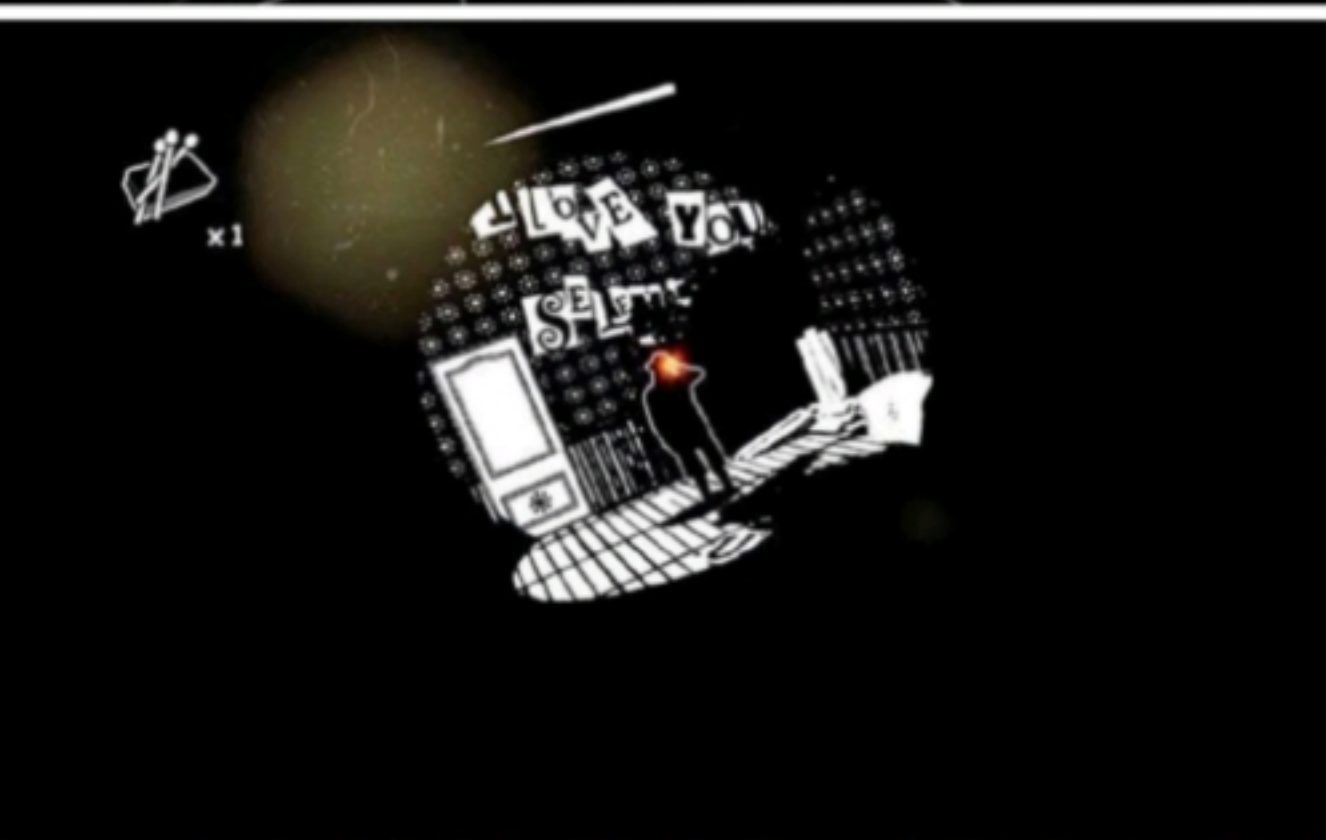
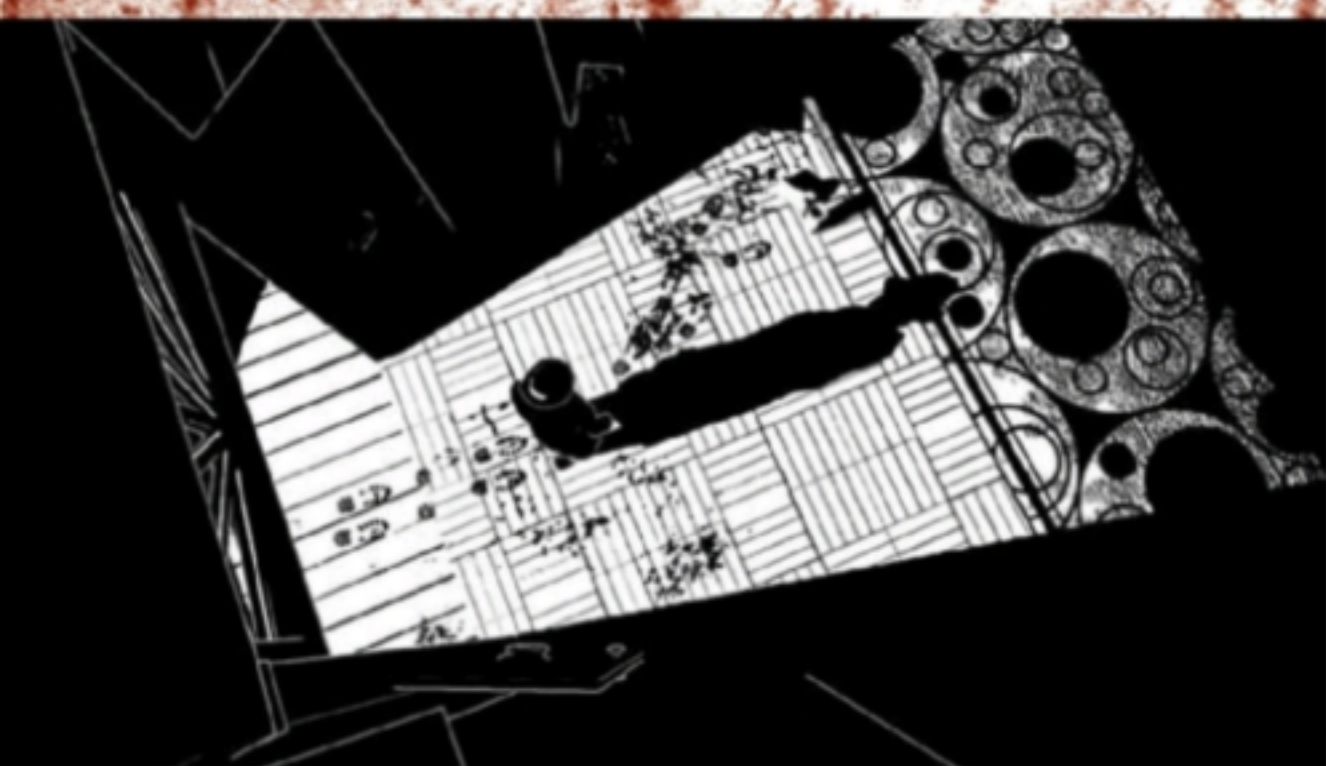
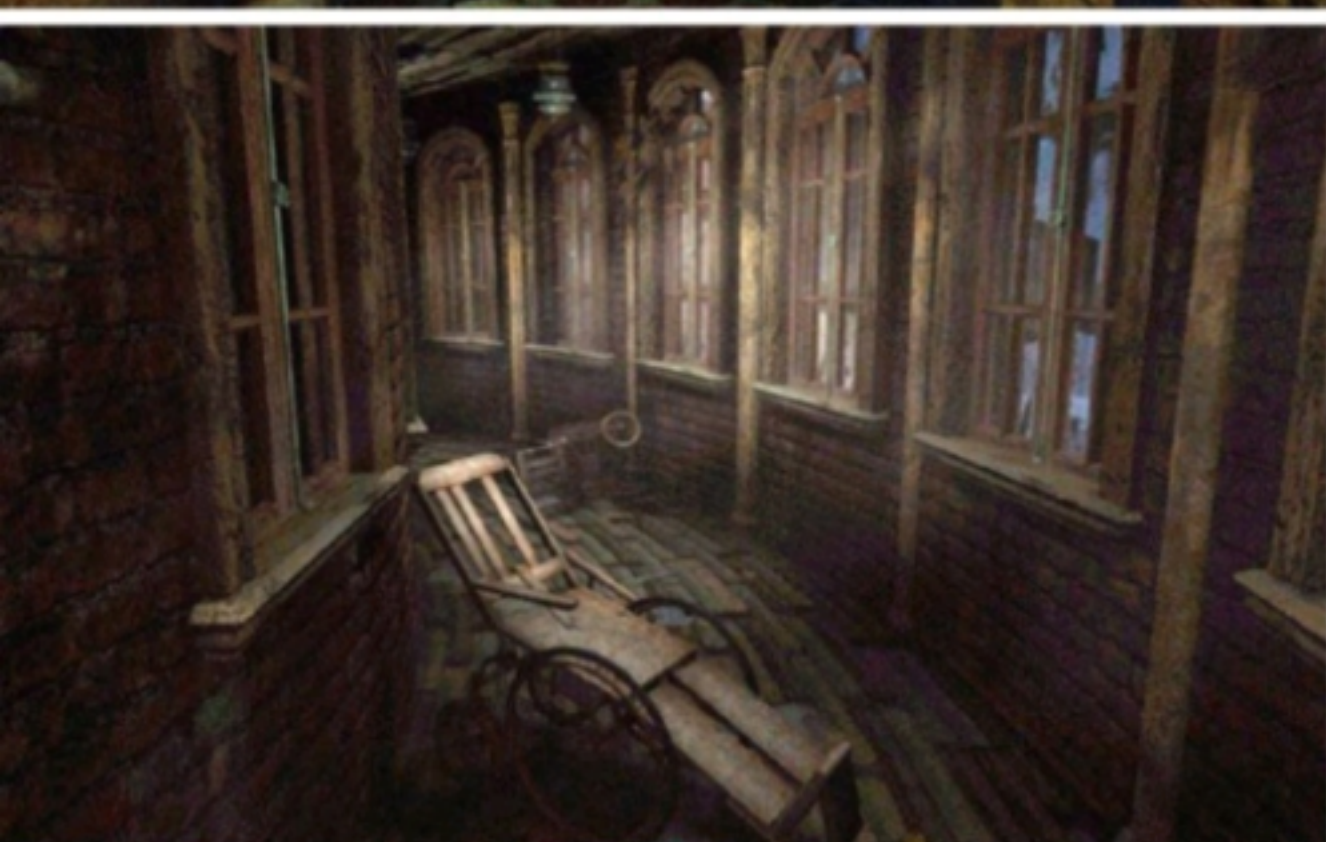
Speaking of death: it's permanent. There are no lives in Routine, no quick-saves, no second chances of any kind. You only get one shot and if you blow it that's it - game over, try again. The idea, of course, is to give death a bit of weight so that the threat of death, which is near constant, is tangible and terror-inducing. (How Lunar Software proposes

“THERE ARE NO LIVES IN ROUTINE, NO QUICK-SAVES, NO SECOND CHANCES OF ANY KIND”

Inspired by the boxy griminess of 80s sci-fi, said moonbase is dirty and industrialish and bedecked with glowing neon, looking something like a cross between Aliens' LV-246 and System Shock 2's Citadel Station. Lunar Software is remaining mum on narrative particulars, but it's obvious something terrible has gone down because the base, you soon discover, has been overrun by murderous robots and other unnamed horrors

to mitigate the frustration inherent to irreversible death remains an open question...)

For those of you lucky enough to not get the VR vomits, Routine will also be compatible with the Oculus Rift - which is a class-action lawsuit waiting to happen, in our opinion. Imagine the headlines: "TERRIFIED GAMERS SUFFER CARDIAC EPISODES IN VIRTUAL REALITY!" Yeah, nah. We'll stick with good old flat 2D, thanks.



ASYLUM

PLATFORM: PC, Mac, iOS
CATEGORY: Adventure
DEVELOPER: Sensescape
DUE: TBC

Inspired by Lovecraft and the real, legitimately terrifying history of mental health care in the west, Asylum is a first-person point and click adventure with a strong emphasis on psychological horror. Although it's impossible to die in the game, developer Sensescape is promising to keep player scalps atingle by blurring the lines, Eternal Darkness-style, between what's real (in the game) and what's merely the product of your protagonist's own tortured psyche.

Authenticity is one of the game's strongest selling points. The fictitious Hanwell Mental Institute has been created with painstaking attention to detail and is fastidiously faithful to the real-world "Kirkbride plan" asylums that inspired it. This is not a thinly veiled

spookhouse: there's a strong sense of place, of genuineness, that pervades Hanwell and tethers it to reality, making it all the more unnerving when shit gets creepy.

Asylum is Sensescape's first official game, although Agustín Corde – who seems to be the company's only full-time employee – also released the critically acclaimed but largely unknown Scratches, also psychological horror. The fact that Asylum's been in development for something like three years now is a bit of worry, not least of all because it was originally slated to come out in 2013, but Corde's constant activity promoting the game and updating its Kickstarter blog is reassuring. Our guess? The game'll be out September. Don't quote us on that, though.

WHITE NIGHT

PLATFORM: PC, Mac
CATEGORY: Survival horror
DEVELOPER: Osome Studios
DUE: TBC

Along with indie film and indie music and indie pretty much everything else, indie games are often described as "pretentious" by their detractors, a kind of vague catch-all pejorative that says more about the creators than the games themselves. Prediction: White Night, a black and white homage to Alone in the Dark inspired by the "crepuscular poetry" of David Lynch and the "threatening perspectives" of German expressionism, will be called pretentious.

Is it, though? Who even knows. Who even cares. A pretentious homage to Alone in the Dark is still an homage to Alone in the Dark, and if there's one thing the world needs more of it's homages to

Alone in the Dark, which pretty much invented survival horror in 1992 and is still genuinely unsettling to this day.

So far the similarities are encouraging and multiple. For instance, both games tell the same basic story: a resourceful but otherwise fairly ordinary guy gets stuck in a spooky supernatural mansion and has to escape. And then there's the gameplay: solving puzzles, running from monsters, exploring room after room after room.

Not that White Night doesn't have its own identity. Look at the screens, noting in particular the stark black and white Mad World-esque art direction: that's identity up the wazoo. Whether or not it's too much identity – where it's "pretentious" or not – remains to be seen.

GRAVE

PLATFORM: PC, Mac, Xbox One
CATEGORY: Open-world horror
DEVELOPER: Broken Windows Studios
DUE: Early 2015

DayZ meets Dali in this "open-world, surrealist-inspired, procedural survival horror experience" from neonate developer Broken Windows Studios. It's a broad, ambitious game, this one, the kind of game that could easily falter under its own weight. But if it succeeds... well let's just say the comparison to DayZ is warranted. The demo, which is available to download from the game's website at grave-game.com, is encouraging. During the daytime the sense of isolation is oppressive: the desolate sandy landscape, pockmarked by the husks of skyscrapers and abandoned (?) shacks, is enormous and flat and lifeless.

At night, when the monsters emerge drooling and hungry from the dark places, this aloneness is displaced by intense omnipresent dread. How/if you survive until dawn is up to you. Our advice: get some light.

Along with a sharp spike in monster-related activities, another thing that happens during the night in Grave is that the landscape changes, sometimes right in front of your eyes. Mountains burst up like pimples, houses are swallowed into sinkholes, fissures form and close again. It's quite unsettling and makes navigating after sunrise more or less impossible, which we suppose is the point.

And no, before you ask, we don't know what the title refers to. We're kind of hoping it's just a placeholder.



FRAN BOW

PLATFORM: PC, Mac
CATEGORY: Adventure
DEVELOPER: Killmonday Studios
DUE: TBC 2014

Developed by a delightful Swedish duo, Fran Bow is a Tim Burtonish take on the traditional point and click adventure. Its saucer-eyed protagonist is Fran: a headstrong but fragile-looking little girl who is locked up in a mental institution after witnessing her parents' grisly, mysterious, and evidently sanity-rattling murder. Imagine American McGee's Alice, but likeable.

When the game begins, Fran is conniving to escape the institution and track down her beloved cat, Mr Midnight. You wouldn't think a pasty 12 year old would have much hope of escaping a locked-down mental home, but then most pasty 12 year olds can't take medication and peer through the veil of reality into the bulging eyes of the blood-soaked horrors that lurk

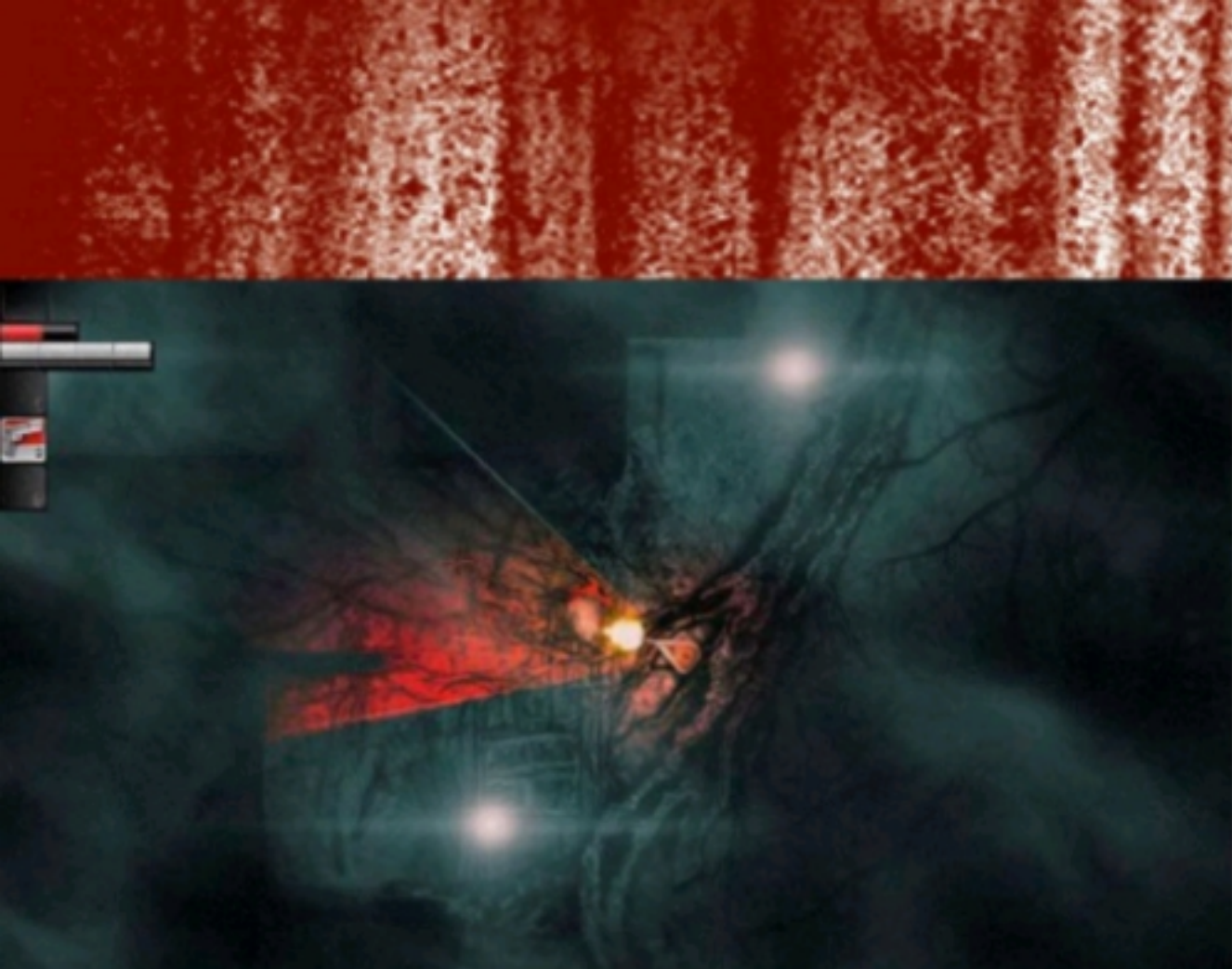
beneath.

Fran can.

Also, she's pretty smart for her age.

According to developer Killmonday, the duality of Fran's reality will be the driving force behind many of Fran Bow's puzzles, which puzzles animator/designer Natalia Figueroa describes as "very logical" - which claim we're totally going to hold her to come launch day. Because if there's one thing that makes an otherwise charming adventure game sag it's nonsense puzzles. (See, for example, LucasArts' entire back catalogue save Fate of Atlantis.)





DARKWOOD

PLATFORM: PC, Mac
CATEGORY: Roguelike RPG
DEVELOPER: Acid Wizard
DUE: 2014

We don't blanch easily here at Casa del Hyper. Most of us grew up soaked in virtual gore, consuming media violence at a rate psychologists today would describe as "extremely unhealthy". So when we tell you that Darkwood - a top-down procedurally generated roguelike RPG - is conspicuous-swallowing-noise inducing capital s scary, you can trust we're not exaggerating for effect.

As with Routine, a pitiless permadeath system ensures maximum player tension at all times and, in keeping with roguelike tradition, pretty much everything in this suffocatingly dark and unpredictable world can kill you. So when the shadows

begin to ominously creep and the sound of gnashing teeth grows near, it's hard not to get a little jumpy and start shooting at nothing. This is a game where you never feel safe. Period.

Underneath the scary exterior, developer Acid Wizard has crafted what appears to be a reasonably

deep RPG replete with perks, skills, and crafting. A lot of people, we suspect, won't be able to get over the game's punishing difficulty to appreciate them, which is fair enough but also their loss. We couldn't be keener, though.

THE VANISHING OF ETHAN CARTER

PLATFORM: PC
CATEGORY: Adventure
DEVELOPER: The Astronauts
DUE: Late 2014

Looking very spooky and surreal and Twin Peaksish, Ethan Carter follows a psychically gifted private investigator named Paul Prospero as he works to resolve the mysterious disappearance of a local boy.

Playing not unlike the recent Murdered: Soul Suspect, The Vanishing focuses exclusively on exploration and investigation, with combat and death left entirely to the wayside, design-wise. As Paul, your job is to explore the game's creepy fog cloaked environs, solving murders with your psychic powers as you piece together the larger picture and close-in on Ethan.

Paul apparently has quite a few paranormal abilities at his disposal. As well as possessing a kind of psychic spider-sense,

he can also recreate the last thirty seconds of a corpse's life simply by touching it - which you can understand how that'd be useful for a detective. In gameplay terms, this means finding clues and arranging crime scenes in a way that "matches" what happened, a system that - as anyone who played the Edgeworth game will tell you - is often frustrating in the worst possible way and leads to hair-pulling scenarios where you KNOW the answer but can't figure out exactly HOW the game wants you to present it.

According to developer, that's not going to happen with The Vanishing of Ethan Carter. Hm. We'll see. In any case, any game that more or less recreates Twin Peaks is okay with us.

KODOKU

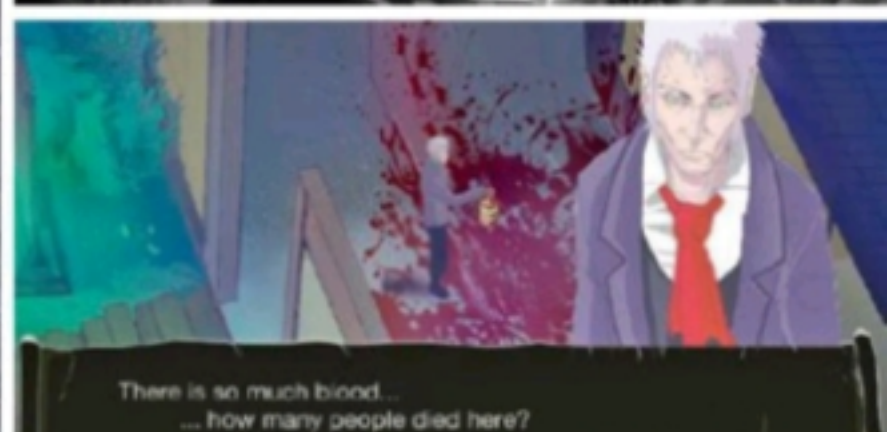
PLATFORM: PS4, Vita
 CATEGORY: Stealth Horror
 DEVELOPER: Carnivore Studio
 PUBLISHER: Carnivore Studio
 DUE: 2015

DANIEL WILKS
 is a Kafkamorph



BUGGING FANS

The Carnivore Studio crew ran an unfortunately unsuccessful Kickstarter campaign to create and distribute a prequel comic called *Kodoku Origins*, detailing the history of the island before the start of the game. The comic would have featured the story of a priest and his companions on the island succumbing to madness and insectile death, in a story the Carnivore crew described as being like "Spirited Away", but in a Horror way.



▶ To create a Kodoku, a sorcerer must place a number of insects in a jar and allow them to fight until there is only one survivor. The fluids of the surviving insect can be used as a poison to control or kill the victim, or the insect itself can be used as a kind of wealth charm. In return for riches, the owner of the insect is expected to provide it with food. If they do not the spirit will be enraged and eat the owner of the Kodoku charm. This ritualistic magic, thought to stem from Chinese Gu (poison) magic that supposedly concentrated poison by forcing a number of deadly insects and arachnids to fight each other until there was only a single survivor, has formed the basis of a number of anime and manga. Now it forms the basis of a game. Although it's being developed by the very British

Carnivore Studios, *Kodoku* is an incredibly Japanese game, drawing from Japanese mythology as well as some more contemporary sources, such as the works of Lovecraft (an author beloved in Japan) and Edo Gawa Rampo, a famous Japanese horror novelist with a style similar to his phonetic namesake, as well as modern horror manga and anime.

YOKAI WAR >> Set on a small, abandoned and haunted island, *Kodoku* casts the player as an investigator sent to retrieve a rare book. Exploring the island will reveal the nature of the paranormal phenomena that plague the place but of course place the researcher at risk of supernatural wrath. Rather than allowing the player to fight back against the ghastly beasts that inhabit *Kodoku* (the island

and the game), players will instead have to resort to stealth, hiding and sorcery to escape or evade danger. Utilising shadows, listening for audio cues for danger and causing distractions will all apparently be the flavor of the day. To aid this play style, the player will somehow be able to temporarily focus the investigator's sense, making it easier to detect nearby danger. How this will work has not been revealed as yet. The finished game will also feature a crafting system allowing the player to combine different objects into useful spells, essential for distracting enemies and solving the many puzzles that dot the island. Fingers crossed one of the crafting recipes will call for a glass jar and a number of hungry insects.

WTHIWWJP? >> Little of the

actual gameplay has been shown as yet, but the footage we've seen of the game, combined with the especially creepy, body-horror centric teaser trailer definitely make us hungry to see more of *Kodoku*. Horror games far too often invest their main characters with too much agency and power to make the situations they are stuck in particularly scary, but the lack of weapons and giving the player no real ability to fight back against the demons and spirits of the island, combined with the incredibly disturbing art style definitely make *Kodoku* look like a real nightmare maker.



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THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON HORROR

PATRICK STAFFORD knows what scares you and knows why you love it



» In George Orwell's classic dystopian novel, 1984, the protagonist Winston is tortured by a totalitarian state. He is finally brought to Room 101, where his torturer, O'Brien, warns him of the horrors within: "The thing that is in Room 101 is the worst thing in the world".

Each person brought to Room 101 is faced with their worst personal fear. For Winston, that means being gnawed to death by rats. He gives in.

The word "horror" can mean completely different things to different people. It's why the best media in the genre goes heavy on suspense and light on monsters – before the hooks and chainsaws come out, this is primarily matter of psychology.

Video games use this to their advantage. Amnesia turned so many heads in 2010 not only due to its no-weapons strategy, but its mechanic: players aren't allowed to even

THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FEAR >>

It's almost boring to acknowledge it – the unknown is the core of fear, and by extension, horror. But as Frictional Games creative director Thomas Grip explains, it gets a little more complicated than that.

"Just thinking, "when is the next scare going to come at me?" is the basic form of that unknown. That someone is going to pop out of the box," he says.

"That goes further into a brooding feeling of being unsure of the situation, and there being an uncertainty to it. It's about being unable to control the immediate future of what's happening."

If facing the unknown is the primary driver of fear, then agency is its twin. It's why so many people fear flying – it isn't cruising at 32,000 feet that's the problem, it's the knowledge they're not at the controls if anything goes wrong.

“THE WORD "HORROR" CAN MEAN COMPLETELY DIFFERENT THINGS TO DIFFERENT PEOPLE

look at the monster that's chasing them. Dead Space crafts unworldly music with crescendos strung throughout the game to keep the player constantly on edge – never certain of what's behind the corner.

The unknown. It's what developers have been using against players for years – and it's what makes players of horror games coming back for more. Story-telling is about showing, and not telling. In horror, it's the opposite: showing too much tempers the fear.

"Video games are different when it comes to horror," says Teresa Lynch, a PhD student and researcher at the University of Indiana – she specialises in video game horror. "If you're watching a scary movie and you know there's a monster in a room, you might shout out, "don't get in there"."

"But playing a game, you have to put yourself in the line of sight of a threat. Developers are manipulating those experiences in order to heighten fear."

Are they ever.

It's also why survival horror games such as Amnesia, Silent Hill or even a game like The Last of Us strip away weapons from the player.

"If people feel less empowered, they're going to feel vulnerable," says Lynch. That goes for the digital realm as well. In fact, Teresa says research points out the type of fear we feel when playing a video game is very much the same type of fear we have in real-life.

"When we see a threat, we get a very rapid emotional response. And that's similar to the way we would react in the real world," she says. "It's engaging that type of fight or flight response."

"I think that's where video games depart from more traditional media –you tend to become much more engaged with the character you're playing."

So what is that response? What is it that triggers in our minds while playing a horror game?

For Thomas Grip, it's all in the anticipation.

"When a torturer gets someone to talk, the scariest

part is not the pain. It's them slowly putting on the gloves, and place instruments in front of him," he says.

Grip says there's something inside of us – something carried through evolution, perhaps – which enables us to identify a threat. When ancient humans saw a rustling piece of grass, assuming it was a ferocious animal ready to devour serves them better than pretending it's nothing at all. It's how we've survived.

"Let's say you're walking through grass and you see it moving. It might not be a tiger, but if you run and ride, you're safe. If you're a skeptic and don't care, then it might be a minority occurrence but you will eventually get mauled by that tiger," he says.

"Evolution has been more kind to people who are constantly afraid of moving shadows. I believe that's built into us."

Lynch says it's true – we have an instinct to stay alive.

"Psychological tension is one way to heighten the fear experience, and also increasing levels of what we call adverse tendencies, or negative effects – negative emotional experiences which lead to fear."

"This is why we see things like disgusting creatures, because disgust is an adverse reaction to things in your environment. They compound into fear."

"Fear is one of the most powerful experiences because it's relevant to survival."

It's one of the few emotions which actually cause people to act, Lynch says. You might feel happiness, joy or even sadness, but these rarely prompt you to make an immediate action.

Fear is different. Fear sends electrical signals through your organs, causing you to run faster than you would otherwise. It heightens your senses, raising the hair on your appendages to feel more sensitively.

"There is a rapid ramping up of your motivation systems when scared. It takes away parts of the body that aren't relevant to survival," says Lynch.

"We even see resources being depleted from something like a digestion system, because when you're running it doesn't matter. You just need to get away and you need energy to do that."

SWEET RELIEF

Horror might be so addicting because of the relief you feel once it's over. It's known as "excitation transfer theory" – you become physiologically aroused due to fear, which translates to relief once it's done and dusted. The bigger the climb, the higher the fall.

Even your sense of smell increases, she says. The body pumps as much energy into the systems needed to detect threats and subsequently get away from them – which is why people in fear studies have reported being able to smell bad odors.

This is where Lynch's research comes in: playing a horror game evokes the same type of fear and reaction that would occur in real life. As far as the mind is concerned, what you're looking at isn't fake – it's the real deal.

"I had a person in one of my studies who said they actually picked up their console after an intense situation and threw it," she says. "Those reactions can be incredibly intense."

"And these reactions can stick with you beyond just an initial jump scare. And then you can even end up in the opposite direction – what happens when you get so overloaded that you simply stop experiencing fear?"

“FEAR IS DIFFERENT. FEAR SENDS ELECTRICAL SIGNALS THROUGH YOUR ORGANS

"Maybe you reach a point where you aren't having a fear experience – you're just chopping down characters in your way."

Grip says this is actually a significant problem. If you're mowing down enemies in a game like *Devil May Cry*, for instance, horror themes are hard to break through. This is one of the criticisms many players have of *Dead Space* – at some points the enemies are too many to be afraid of.

"Because a player can be so expectant of an enemy, the experience has had its potential fear reduced," he says.

ARTIFICIAL FEAR >> If lack of agency is the cause of horror, then video games have a problem. Holding a controller provides an inherent level of control.

But Thomas Grip says there's an even bigger issue. In any successful survival horror game, there are usually fewer enemies to build tension. It isn't like *Super Mario*, in which a player jumps on enemies' heads constantly and receives immediate feedback.

Without that constant

motivation to keep going, Grip says horror games can turn boring, really fast.

"You want the player to be performing gameplay, and also with a closed feedback loop. It's problematic, because the horror they're experiencing can actually stop them from doing that."

"That's why the build-up sections where nothing happens are so important in video games...we tried to do this in *Amnesia* by creating that anticipation constantly through the darkness mechanic. You're constantly moving from light to light."

Amnesia carries a specific twist on the horror genre by never allowing the player to look at the monster chasing them. It's simply psychology, Grip says – the player is running because what they imagine is whatever they've come up with in their mind. It could even be something from within their past.

Lynch agrees. "Although I've never tested it, perhaps the experience is partially more frightening because you're reminded of a moment in your past," she says.

"I think that memory plays an active part in our fear experiences."

Of course, variations in the horror genre rely on different tropes to create fear.

Survival horror is perhaps where the most well-known games are found. Games such as *Silent Hill* or the upcoming *Evil Within* – made by Resident Evil creator Shinji Mikami – emphasise that lack of control which isolates the player.

Players are forced to make their way through scary situations with little help. Bullets are scarce and other resources are hard to come by. It makes the terrifying situation worse by making you stay quiet and bypass conflict as often as possible.

But scarcity isn't enough. Grip says horror games tend to use puzzles as they have an integral role in horror.

"You can use them to create scenarios where the player chooses to do things that go against common sense," he says.

For instance, a developer might force the player to go through a dark hallway which they would never choose to go down. That creates a situation where the developer

TOTAL CONTROL

Jamie Madigan, who holds a PhD in psychology and writes the Psychology in Video Games website, cites a study in which some people watching a horror film were given a remote control. Those who had the control, whether they used it or not, were less scared than those who didn't.

Think about that the next time you run out of bullets.





is able to build tension appropriately, unlike a film, where the tension comes from watching a character do something you would normally choose not to do.

"You can mess with them. You can make a player walk past a hallway where they see a disgusting creature. They pass, and have relief. But then they find the elevator isn't working and they need to go back into that room."

Grip says the most successful developers are able to use those environments to their advantage, making the player feel uneasy without having to do any heavy lifting. And as much as players hate text and audio logs – at least, when done poorly – Grip says this is where they can come in handy.

"Take a game like *Slenderman*," he says. "Playing that game, you're being prepared for something scary by being in that spooky environment."

In *Slenderman*, players have to locate eight pieces of paper while avoiding Slender – a humanoid figure dressed in a suit. Grip says by simply creating a dark atmosphere the player practically scares themselves.

"You know it's a horror game, so all the scares and sounds are going to be interpreted in that way. You're going into that game being prepared to be scared."

THE HORROR OF THE UNKNOWN >>

It's one thing to scare the player with creaking floorboards, or even a disgusting monster. It's another thing entirely to get inside their brain.

That's where Jason Graves comes in. He's a composer, having most notably worked on the *Dead Space* series. His combination of sound effects and mutated instruments helped create the iconic and unconventional score.

"You can take *Dead Space* and practically ride the game on the expectation of what's around the corner," he says. "Musically speaking, that's a huge challenge."

Rubbing on single violin strings or bashing against percussion instruments creates a mess of sound, says Graves. It's definitely not melodic – and that's exactly the point. High pitched sounds swirl around

“SOUND EFFECTS AND MUTATED INSTRUMENTS HELPED CREATE THE ICONIC AND UNCONVENTIONAL SCORE.”



HARD ATMOSPHERE

Environments play a large part in establishing a horror setting. BioShock plays as a horror game in part due to its dark and brooding atmosphere, with threats not only lurking inside, but outside as well – the creaking groans of glass that seems sure to crack.

with low-pitched groans, which almost sound like imaginary machines struggling to stay put together.

While developers rely on the fear of the unknown when it comes to monsters and what's around the corner, Graves acted as a supplement to that. By doing so, he says, he was able to subvert the player's subconscious, making them feel increasingly uneasy without knowing why.

"In the game you have necromorphs, where are basically people affected by this virus, so I thought it'd be interesting to take an orchestra

and mutate it as well."

The same type of tactic is used in games such as Silent Hill 2. Pyramid Head has scared many a child due to its sheer other-worldliness. It's not able to be categorised into anything a player would know of – the creature being a threat only intensifies the terror.

"I used regular instruments, they're not being manipulated electronically," says Graves. "But they're playing out of time, and any musical rule you might use is thrown out the window. No melody, tapping on things, and so on."

"There's no central key, either, so you have this musical unknown in being able to identify a tonal centre of the score. Combine that with crazy rhythms, and you're trying to pull the rug out from everybody as much as you can."

Graves' use of music is hardly conventional, but he isn't the only person in the development process to think outside the box to create fear in the player. Even outside the horror genre, developers have used audio logs and X to create unease.

Metal Gear Solid has become well known for the Psychomantis battle in which

players must switch controllers to win. The thought that somehow, a video game villain is breaking the fourth wall is far scarier than any necromorph. While hardly a horror title, a similar event happens in Batman: Arkham Asylum, in which an encounter with the villain Scarecrow causes a fake reset of the game. The player is dragged through a

sequence that turns out to be an hallucination caused by Scarecrow.

Creepy. But why? It harks back to what Teresa mentioned about feeling as though you're in a real-life situation. There's always a part of the subconscious which knows the media is an illusion – having that safety net cut, if only for a second, is terrifying.

There are plenty of ingredients that go into making a perfect fear experience. With the recent uptick in horror games such as Amnesia and Slenderman, perhaps the industry is learning again how powerful they can be.

For Lynch, however, it isn't the game that's the most frightening part – if a developer manages to get something stuck in your mind, as far as she's concerned, the game is a success.

"I think that's one of the things that makes horror so powerful. When it sticks with you, and you're reflecting on it," she says. "That concept of presence after the fact."

"You're still present in your environment – but you think a zombie or necromorph might be coming out of the bushes."

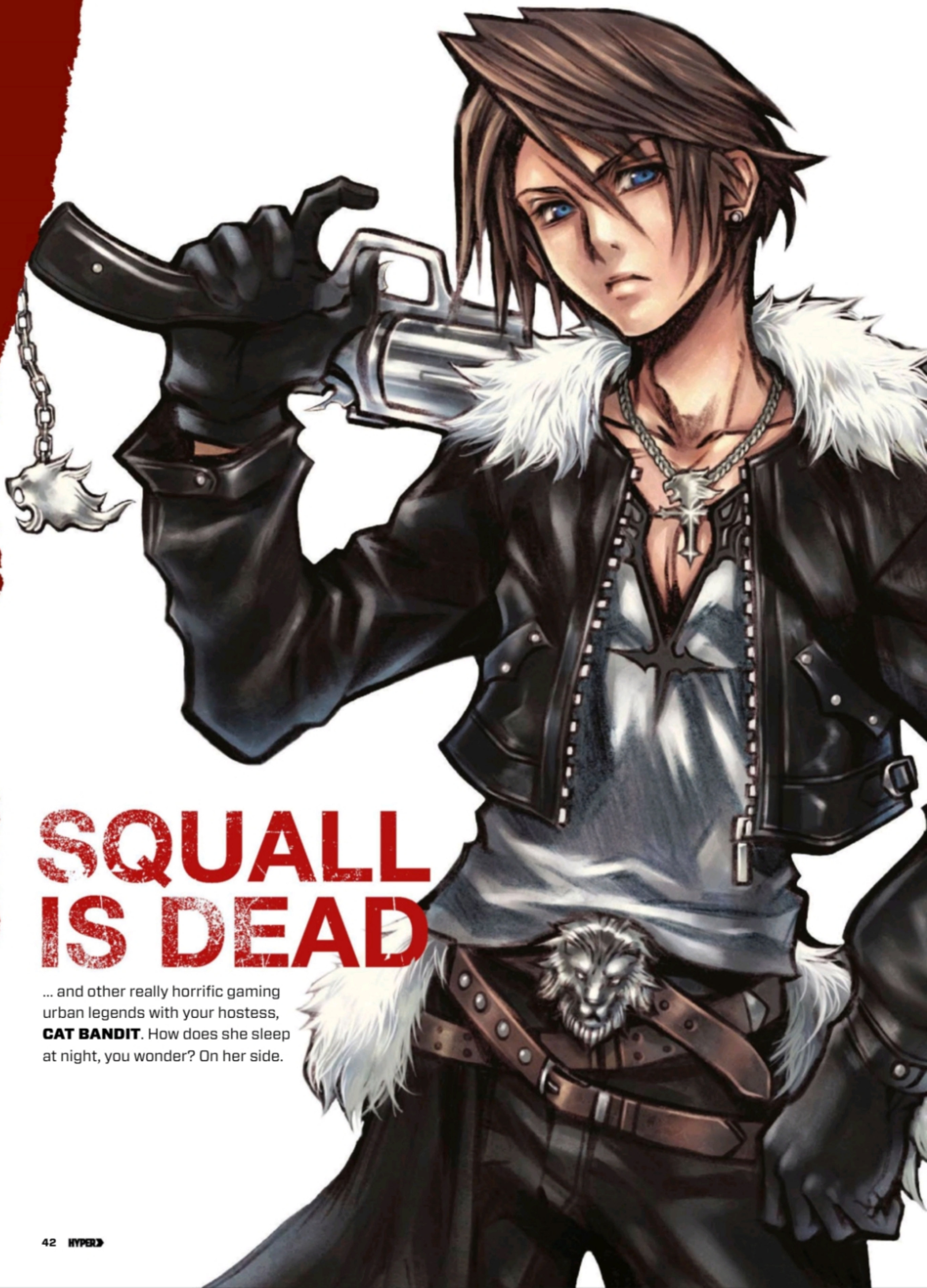
Sleep with one eye open. **H**

PRIMAL SCREAM

Jason Graves says he tried to emulate unnatural sounds in his music – even things like screaming.

"The highest layer is like violins screaming. Psychologically it evokes animals or babies, who scream at that higher register. Because it sounds like people screaming, you associate with that happening."

"As a result, your automatic thought process is that something is wrong."



SQUALL IS DEAD

... and other really horrific gaming urban legends with your hostess, **CAT BANDIT**. How does she sleep at night, you wonder? On her side.

They say money makes the world go around but I think when they say that - whoever they are, possibly the Illuminati I guess - the Illuminati are referring to the real world. Being that IRL is boring and gross and you must speak with people on the telephone machine sometimes, let us instead parlay in the realk of Game World, the best of all worlds. It is not money that makes this world go around, but disquieting strangeness in 1's and 0's that has since passed into digital legend. Think of these as bone-chilling campfire stories except the campfire is the internet and the stories are games you thought you knew and loved.

So Like I Said, Squall Is Dead

Final Fantasy VIII is the best of all Final Fantasies. This is fact according to my vandalism of Wikipedia. Ostensibly, it's a romance: Brooding, detached Squall and spirited, reactive Rinoa are impossible, but they happen. From Balamb Garden to Ultimecia's castle, this is their love story. All's well that ends well, and they celebrate with a ballroom dance.

Except they don't. At least, not according to an internet person by the name of duckroll they don't. A hard-hitting and actually completely plausible theory expanded on at length by Rahul Choudhury and Diedra Rater via squallsdead.com, duckroll posits that after the events of disc 1,

Squall is dead. Edea's big ol' blizzara spike to the

Nightmare Before Christmas? Maybe. Except when Squall inexplicably wakes up after being nailed by a motherfreaking demon stalactite and wonders aloud why he doesn't even have a mark to show for it.

(...Where am I? I... challenged Edea... My wound...? No wound...? How...? The Galbadian soldiers... ..We were surrounded. He was there... Seifer, leering down at me.) "Damn you, Seifer!"

The incident at Deling City and the fact Squall seemingly wakes up after it in perfect health is never mentioned again, by anyone. Interestingly, the game's more fantastic and sudden elements only happen after disc 1: the conspicuously lion-esque Moombas (the lion being of

heart kills him. The rest of the game's three other discs are subsequently a time-compressed life-before-eyes thing devoted to the existential longings of his subconscious mind.

There is no direct proof of this, and Square have always refrained from answering any questions about it, weirdly. There is, however, a whole lot of narrative idiosyncrasies that only seem to make sense after this theory is applied. Is it a bit like getting blazed and swearing up and down that every Tool album synchs perfectly with The

particular symbolic importance to Squall), the giant yellow sloth monster secretly ruling Balamb Garden (who you end up killing, and then no one says anything about it, not even Cid), and the fact Cid is inexplicably married to Edea. Could all this be the dream-like projections of a young man's imagination entertaining the blanks of his confusion?

Most importantly (and tragically) of all is this: Prior to the end of disc 1, Rinoa had very little interest in Squall whatsoever, especially romantically. She was always pining for Seifer. Seifer, Squall's eternal rival. Need some ice for that bur...



The Haunting in Majora's Mask



A blogger by the name of 'Jadusable' went off to college, and one of his friends gave him a Nintendo 64 to help with the downtime of moving to a new city and starting a new school. One day he drove around the neighbourhood looking for games at garage sales. He eventually cruised past an old guy sitting on his lawn with a table full of junk. Despite his gut instincts, Jadusable stopped and checked out the old dude's wares. It's just a whole load of weird paintings that looked like Rorschach tests, one of which reminded Jadusable of Majora's Mask. So he asked if the old guy had any video games. The old guy produced a blank grey N64 cartridge. On the back of it, someone had written 'Majora' in black marker. "It used to belong to a kid who was about your age that doesn't live here anymore," he said, giving it to Jadusable for free.

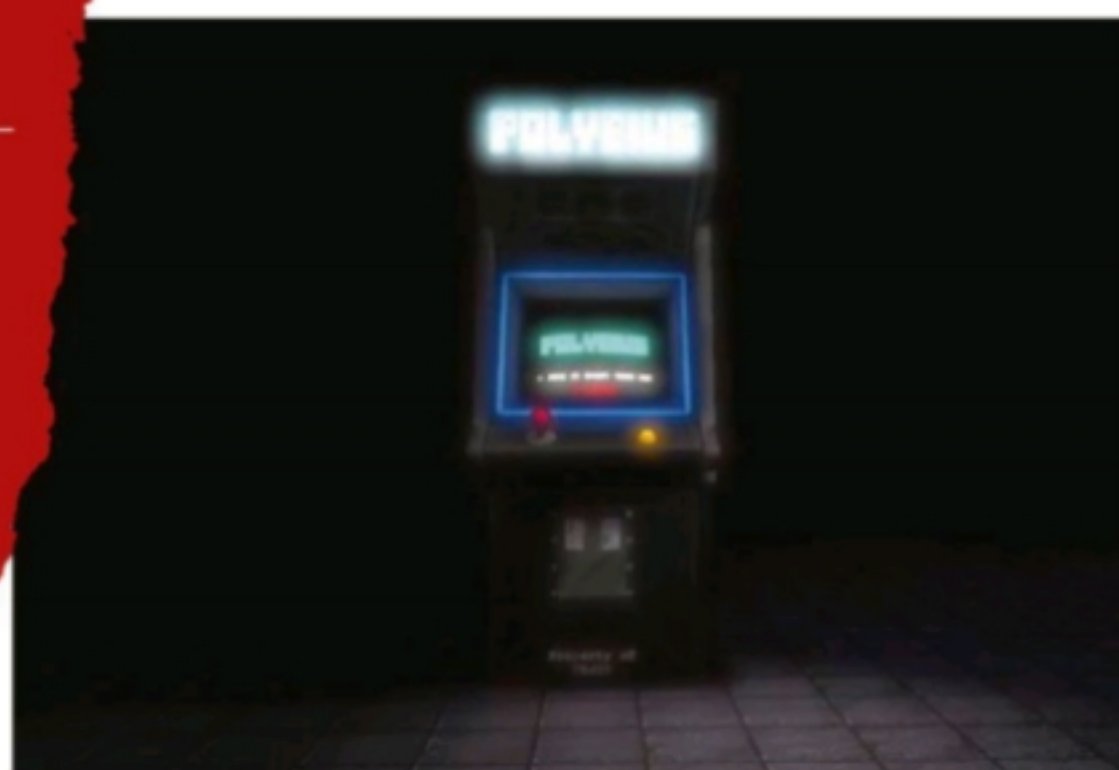
After he got home, Jadusable chucked the game into his N64 and it actually worked. There was one save file still on it, simply called 'BEN.' Whoever had been playing has almost finished the game but not quite: Day 3 by the Stone Tower Temple with almost all the masks, barely an hour left before the moon comes crashing. Our kid Jadusable started his own new file, calling it 'Link.'

The game worked OK for such a piece of crap old cartridge, except that every now and again an NPC would call Jadusable 'BEN' instead of 'Link.' After a while it got to him and he went in and deleted the BEN save file. It sort of solved the problem: now the NPCs didn't call him anything, there was just a blank space. After trying to exploit the 4th Day glitch, Jadusable swore the game went insane, seemingly trying to communicate with him while smiling statues of Link pursued him relentlessly. He was eventually led straight to the final boss where the Song of Healing would play in reverse, and then into a hellish version of Clock Town. After being immolated by Skull Kid (who... has no moves), Jadusable was kicked back to the title screen with the message, "You've met with a terrible fate, haven't you?"

He tried to load up his game again. It was gone. Instead of his 'Link' file, there was a new file called 'YOUR TURN.' Three hearts, no masks, no items. It put him right back in Clock Town where he was repeatedly burnt to death and drowned, and all the NPCs would talk about was "BEN" and "BEN Drowned." Brave, brave Ser Jadusable freaked out and tried to load up again. There was a new save file next to his now: 'BEN.'

One popular theory argues that Majora's Mask alludes to the five stages of grief as Link parts ways with Navi, with Clock Town representing denial. You know, that "defensive mechanism against ill circumstance typified by an inability to rationally acknowledge that something has happened or is happening." Who was Ben? Some say a 12-year-old boy sacrificed by the Moon Children cult.

And that is enough Zelda for the next ten years.



Ghost in the Polybius Machine

The first major game-spook tale to become a legit urban legend was that of Polybius. It's since featured in everything from The Simpsons to Batman Inc. #1 to a bunch of American sitcoms you don't ever want to see. Polybius was a mysterious arcade cabinet that started appearing in really limited numbers throughout the early '80s. Even though this was still an uncommon thing for the times, no one thought much of it, even though Polybius only appeared in a few suburban areas of Portland, Oregon in the US. Instead of just being another investment machine that returned dividends in frustration, it turned out the kids weren't just coining for

known as Sinneslöschchen, German for 'erasure of senses') testing responses to psychoactive gaming machines. Ironically and to this day, no one seems sure what kind of game Polybius actually was, and though someone posting to coinop.org in '98 claimed he or she had a ROM image, no ROM image has ever surfaced. Hmmm. All's weird that ends weird?

A wild twist appears! Sort of: In March, 2006 a guy called Steven Roach posted a 'confession' to coinop.org, alleging his involvement in the making of the Polybius machines. He himself claimed to have been hired as a subcontractor by a South

66 TO THIS DAY, NO ONE SEEMS SURE WHAT KIND OF GAME POLYBIUS ACTUALLY WAS

short-lived kicks.

They were paying... for DEATH.

OK, that's a little dramatic. Reportedly though, anyone who played Polybius then went home to suffer through litany of craziness including amnesia, insomnia, vivid night terrors and suicidal tendencies. Not the cool band from the '90s, actual suicidal tendencies. And a lot of people played it. It was apparently so addictive lines went 'round the block, and impatient fights broke out. Then the men in black showed up. On the surface they were 'company men' collecting marketing data, but really? Really? A shadowy underground cabal (baselessly

American company (that he refused to name) in 1980. This company wanted to promote a "new approach" to computer graphics, and in attempting to do so designed an aesthetic that prompted epileptic fits. Polybius was then recalled, everyone's contract terminated, and all trace of the program curiously deleted. The following month, gamepulse.co.uk (now bitparade.co.uk) interviewed Roach. A number of weird inconsistencies came up during the chat, including the fact he didn't actually seem able to name his alleged South American employer, also hailed from far-removed Rhyl, Wales, and generally appeared to be making shit up as he went along.

Notch's Dead Brother Says Hi

As the story goes, Minecraft man Markus 'Notch' Persson's brother, Herobrine, died young. Not to worry though, Herobrine's eyeless blockhead specter lives on inside Minecraft itself. One day, a dude started a new world in single-player and got to craftin'. His PC wasn't that great, so there was loads of Silent Hill fog around to make him feel better about his short draw-distance. From that fog emerged another player. He looked just like Default Steve, except for one difference: His eyes shone with bright emptiness. He had no name, and multiplayer mode was definitely not on. The eyeless Steve ran back into the fog, and the dude playing gave chase... to no avail. He had disappeared. As the dude kept doing his thing, he noticed some peculiarities not really given to random maps: 2x2 rock tunnels, pyramids (of sand) in the middle of the ocean, and whole groves of trees with no leaves. Every now and again, he would catch glimpses of No-Eyes Eco-Terrorist Steve, but could never actually catch him. So he

saved the map and posted his concerns to the Minecraft forums.

The post was deleted in five minutes. He tried again, and it was deleted in less than five minutes. He then received a PM from a forum user called 'Herobrine,' and that PM said:

"Stop."

He clicked on Herobrine's profile. It 404'd. Later, he'd get an email from another Minecraft forumite. This guy claimed the mods could read their PMs, and then went on to claim he'd also seen the mysterious fog man. Not only that, but he'd been busy making a list of all the other players who'd seen him. All of them reported weird player-made things in their single-player worlds, and all of them described the mysterious fog man the same way.

A month passed and much research (furious Googling) was

carried out. 'Herobrine' turned out to be a name frequently used by a Swedish gamer - with fraternal links to Notch himself. The dude who started this whole thing emailed Notch, asking if he had a brother. After the longest time, Notch emailed back:

"I did, but he is no longer with us."

If Notch did actually reply, he was trolling hard: He never had a brother, and there is nothing in Minecraft's code to account for Herobrine even though Mojang regularly list the 'removal of Herobrine' in their updates. Any 'sightings' are total Photoshops, and he is almost 100% absolutely inspired by none other than...



Slender Man

“SLENDER
MAN IS
NOW BIGGER THAN
THE BEATLES AND
BY EXTENSION
ALSO JESUS

Something Awful is appropriately awful, but it is home to some kind of unhinged genius seemingly specific to the internet. You shouldn't Google 'SWAP.avi' right now at all. You don't even need to Google 'Slender Man' – he has passed into mainstream myth and legend by this point. One cultist even made a titular free game, Slender, all about slowly walking next to trees and picking up eight pieces of important litter.

Slender Man or Slenderman or Mr.

Slenderman-is-no-home was the product of SA peeps editing various photographs to include supernatural creatures, because the internet was not designed for anything less than visual subterfuge. One such artisan of deceit calling himself 'Victor Surge' (actual name: Eric Knudsen) added a super-tall, rail-thin faceless thing in a black suit to two monotone pictures of huddled children. Mr. Surge went on to compliment his uncomfortable images with a story of sorts told via supposed eye-witness accounts. This one in particular is what breathed chilling unlife into Slender Man's mythos:

One of two recovered photographs from the Stirling City Library blaze. Notable for being taken the day which fourteen children vanished and for what is referred to as "The Slender Man". Deformities cited as film defects by officials. Fire at library occurred one week later. Actual photograph confiscated as evidence.

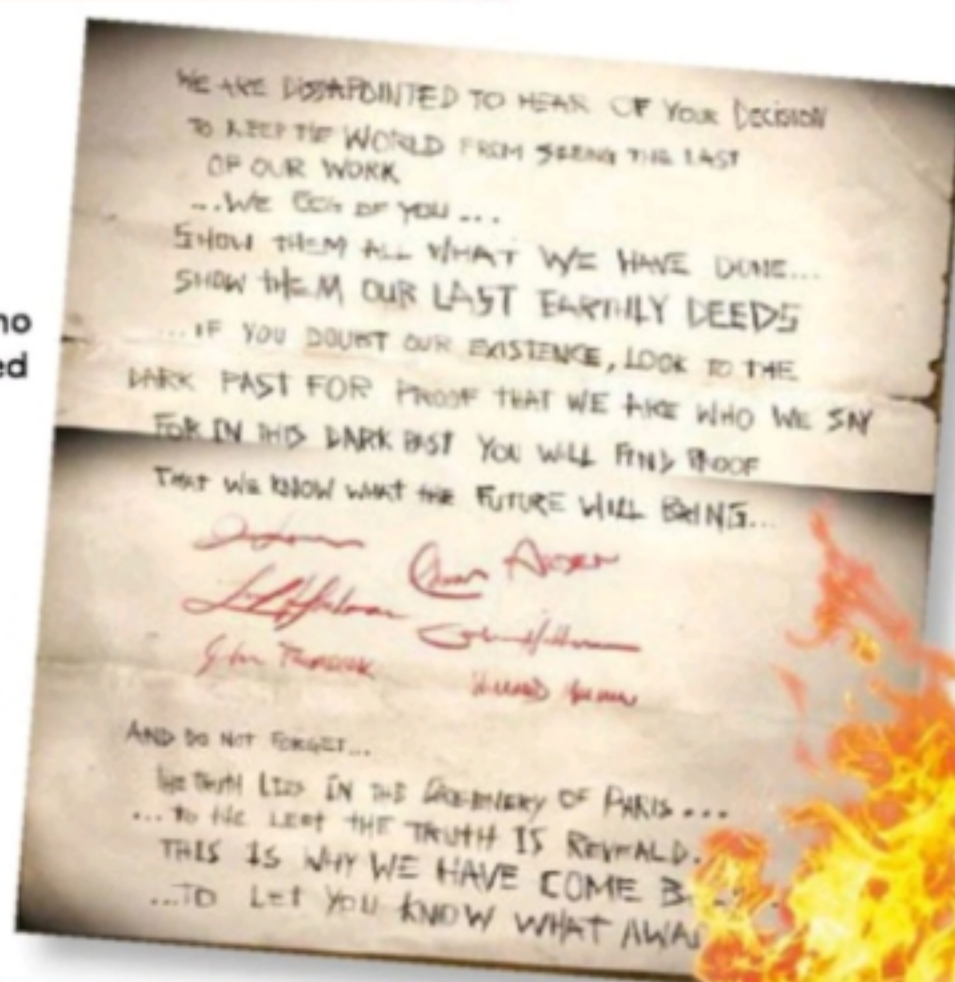
From there, everyone already immersed in the thread went haywire, expanding on The Slender Man with more pics and words until the whole diabolical deal went viral. Superb snatches of creepypasta started popping up all over as did Slenderman-inspired cosplay. Circa 2009, the first of many Slender Man YouTube video series, Marble Hornets, happened. It has over 60 million views by this point, probably meaning Slender Man is now bigger than The Beatles and by extension also Jesus.

"Slender Man is now bigger than The Beatles and by extension also Jesus."



The Note Sent to Sony

Twisted Metal: Black was radsticles and so there was going to be a sequel, Twisted Metal: Harbor City. Development was well underway before it was inexplicably cancelled and no one knew way - until Twisted Metal: Head-On: Extra Twisted Edition came out circa 2008. Twisted Metal: Lost was part of its deal, and is the unfinished beta of Harbor City. It only had four levels, one new charrie (12-Pak), no endings, and was obviously what it said it was. During its mini-doc preamble Twisted Metal: The Dark Past, various studio peeps claim this sequel never happened because six members of the development team died in a fucking plane crash. Two years later on the anniversary of the alleged accident, a note apropos of no one but signed by all six dead devs also allegedly landed on Sony's doorstep. It went like this:



This turned out to be bullshit. There was no crash, and the note was a stunt (you got to see it after finishing Lost on hard, and... just look at it) working in tandem with The Dark Past to help drum up publicity for the release of Twisted Metal on the PS3. Series director David Jaffe would bafflingly go on to deny ever trying to pimp anything on the back of six people maybe-but-not really dying:

"We never used- and I never would- a tragedy (real or fake) to promote ANYTHING. The story of the developers dying in the plane crash (totally fake) was never used to promote that game. That was simply the story OF the game that was only every discussed OUTSIDE of the game when a reported asked me about it being true or not."

That guy is kind of a dickhead and you can quote me on that to a major metropolitan newspaper. «

WTF, NINTENDO?

The spooky saga of Majora's Mask is definitely the highlight, but seriously, PG-insistent Nintendo boasts more unsettling urban legends than any other publisher and/or dev: Luigi hung himself and Luigi's Mansion is his purgatory; Luigi's shitty girlfriend Daisy is actually a deformed mutant disguised as a shitty girlfriend (zoom in under her trophy's hair in Super Smash Bros. Melee); EarthBound is one giant allegory for abortion (isn't it called Mother 2 in Japan...?); stop and stare at the horizon in Super Mario Galaxy 2's Shiverburn Galaxy and note the unmoving human silhouettes of a sky pattern the game's files label as "BeyondHellValley"; Lavender Town in Pokémon Red and Green supposedly fueled a mass of real-life child suicides. It was the music, mostly.





RELIVING SHATTERED MEMORIES

A look inside the game that
reimagined a franchise and
birthed a new kind of interactive
horror, with your host **JAMES
O'CONNOR.**

The 'survival horror' genre has changed. The Resident Evil franchise has started to collapse under the weight of its own bombast; Alone in the Dark has failed to reinvent itself; the newly sired Dead Space series no longer seems to want you sweating over ammo reserves. Moving away from the era of the first two Playstations, where these sorts of experiences thrived, the high fidelity of modern gaming has taken away much of what made those grimy, foggy, clumsy old horror games work. A monster with a tangible face is always going to be less creepy than a jumbled mash of polygons and textures. Modern horror games work around this by emptying the player's virtual hands of weapons and hiding their enemies in the dark.

Silent Hill: Shattered Memories is a bit different from its predecessors. The series' staple fog is there, but there's little chance of getting lost in it. It's a directed experience, extremely focused on telling a story, a game that strips out combat entirely and focuses its efforts on getting into your head. Shattered Memories presents a version of Silent Hill specific to each player, as conjured up by the game's brilliantly invasive psychological profiling system. Climax Studios recognised that most people's nightmares aren't about monsters, or spring-loaded cats, or rocking chairs that won't stop rocking - they're about being anxious, embarrassed, alone and powerless.

SHATTERED HEARTS >> The original pitch document for what would become Shattered Memories told a story far removed from the eventual release's rejigging of the first Silent Hill. In Silent Hill: Cold Heart, the player was the control Jessica Chambers, an "athletic college student" whose emotional issues had started to get the better of her. Jessica was to be forced to tail an ambulance during a snow storm, and would end up in the eponymous town. Eventually this plan was thrown out, and Harry Mason's search for his daughter following a car crash, as seen in the original 1999 Silent Hill, was slotted in. "At some point along the road to

development, our producer at Konami decided to make use of the fact that a remake of Silent Hill 1 had previously been approved as a concept, which became the springboard for the game's storyline and setup" says Sam Barlow, director of Shattered Memories. "Of course, having done Silent Hill Origins and having seen the movie, we all agreed that a 'straight' remake would be stretching things. So what could have been a way of steering the project into less interesting waters became something very exciting creatively -- how to reimagine Silent Hill 1?" Reimagining Silent Hill meant a rather extensive overhaul, changing the gameplay mechanics and plot completely. The puzzles are entirely original, and monsters no longer freely roam the streets. The emphasis is placed squarely on exploring the town of Silent Hill, seeking out Harry's lost daughter, and ultimately discovering why it is you're there. The Silent Hill of Shattered Memories, in many ways, resembles any small American town during a harsh winter...but this version of Silent Hill warps to better match the player navigating it.

INSIDE YOUR HEAD >> At numerous intervals throughout Shattered Memories, the player is transported to the office of psychiatrist Michael Kaufmann. Here they are confronted with surprisingly invasive questionnaires, their answers to which shape the game experience. While horror games have featured 'sanity' systems before, Shattered Memories is unique in the way it specifically tailors the experience based on your actions. It's extremely eerie when you realise that the game has a sense of who you are simply because of how you've played. The creepiest example: if you let the camera linger on the butt or breasts of female characters encountered early on, women in the game begin to wear more revealing clothing and act more flirtatious. This doesn't feel like a reward, rather making everything seem more unreal and creepy, as though your character is being judged.

WII CONNECT



Perhaps the most interesting idea mentioned in the original pitch document that didn't make it to the full game were Climax's plans for Wii Connect24 integration. The team wanted to stick real world news and weather reports into the game to 'spook' players, and use Mii data to drive the game's psychological profiling.

Ultimately, the ending of the game is influenced by your actions and choices - getting a happy ending feels not just like a validation of how you played, but of who you are.

"When Shattered Memories was coming out we spoke very little about its storytelling -- you tend to take that for granted, and it's also the kind of thing that's hard to promise", says Barlow. "But that's what's persisted most strongly. We went more real, more authentic, more psychological, more honest and human -- we told a story that might have made you sad, but it made you feel more human." The developers were also inspired by the occasional hints throughout Silent Hill 3 that a lot of what was happening may have been part

THE EMPHASIS IS PLACED SQUARELY ON EXPLORING THE TOWN OF SILENT HILL



SCAVENGER MODE

The original concept for the game involved a lot of item collecting. Players would need to find food and drinks to replenish health, and would collect new clothes throughout the game that would better protect them from Silent Hill's icy conditions. The game ultimately went in a different direction though, and these ideas were scrapped.

of a psychotic break that the game's protagonist, Heather, was suffering from. "We wondered: what if Silent Hill was a seven year old girl's best way of telling a story to explain the bad things happening around her? What if Silent Hill 3's bad ending was just a troubled teenager stabbing a store detective, rationalizing it as best she could?" By tackling the game this way, and working in the psychological profiling, the team created a horror game that targets a common human fear - the loss of sanity and rationale.

SPOOK-WII >> Shattered Memories was originally pitched and designed as a Wii exclusive, with PS2 and

PSP ports emerging during development when the team started to notice that third-party Wii exclusives weren't selling anywhere near as well as Nintendo's own releases. "A focus of many of our initial ideas was the Wii itself and how best to use its features to support our innovating the survival horror adventure game", says Barlow. "Those ideas were the common spine throughout our different story ideas -- the use of the flashlight to create an intuitive, smooth interface -- and making use of that for our psychology system's gaze tracking; the idea of the phone as a way of keeping all the UI in game and as a wrapper for any ambient story pieces, and so on." Shattered Memories was clearly designed by a team that really 'got' the Wii -- using the remote for the flashlight was extremely intuitive, and it remains one of the few games that ever found a really good use for the remote's in-built

GONE INDIE

In our final e-mail exchange, Sam Barlow informed me that it was his last week at Climax, and that he was "heading off for the blue skies and high risk world of Indie development". It seemed that he wants to try and capture the same reception Shattered Memories garnered again: "it's better to have some people love what you do than have a lot of people kinda like it".



speaker, thanks to the creepy phone calls and radio static it would occasionally cough out. Nintendo's technology has its share of detractors, but Barlow loved the controller: "it's kind of a shame that the Wiimote has been side-lined and we're back to more standard controllers as the norm."

RUN AND HIDE >> One of the things that really made Shattered Memories stand out at release, before going on to be quite standard in modern horror games, was its complete lack of combat. Fighting was originally going to be a part of the game according to the original pitch documents, much as it was in Climax's PSP title Silent Hill Origins. Weapons would degrade with use, and the Wii's motion controls

THE END

There are two different parts of the ending that change depending on player actions -- one of three initial scenes (to get specific would spoil them), and then one of four 'videotapes' filmed before the events of the game. There's also a special UFO ending, as is customary for Silent Hill, unlockable on a second playthrough.

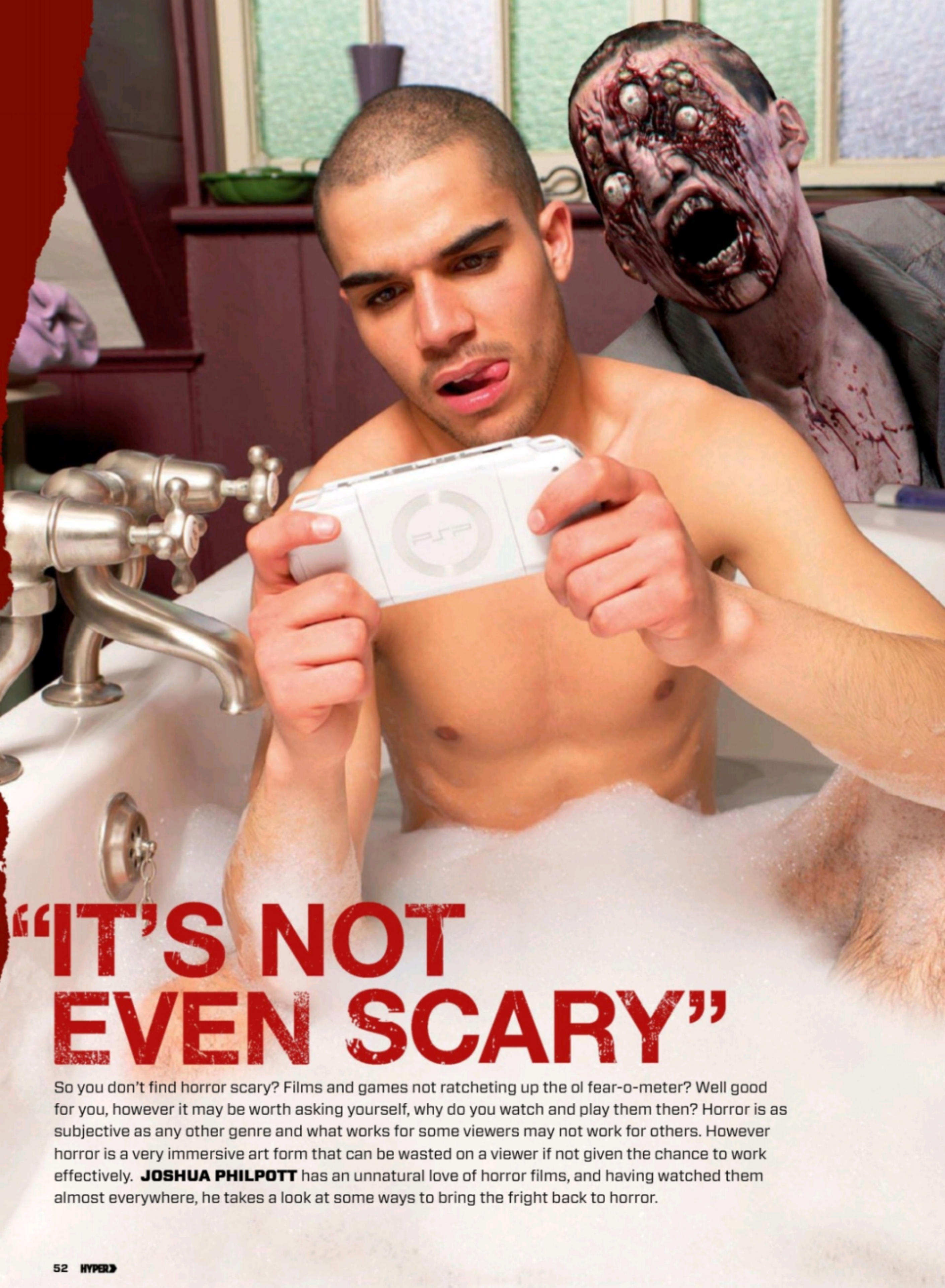
would allow for "desperate, realistic melee attacks". In the final game, enemy encounters occur during very specific sequences -- you're free to wander around and explore, but when the world froze over you had little recourse but to flee from the enemies that assaulted you, occasionally picking out hiding spots or shaking the Wii remote to fend off enemies that grabbed you. These moments stand out as the game's weakest sections -- they're creepy, but a little awkward, and lack the strong sense of plot and psychological horror evident in the scenes where you're not being attacked. Barlow says that the team considered a Shattered Memories 2 "with no direct monster encounters, or no monsters at all"...which is an obvious enough route to take a sequel, but their scrapped sequel concept was heading in a different direction. "At one point we were working on a follow up concept and we went the other way -- we had a town where at night murder is sanctioned and you had a gun with a single bullet. So the restriction on direct confrontation was there, but it was kind of the player's choice."

SELECTIVE MEMORY >> Shattered Memories stands

out as an amazing horror experience because it put the writing and story first and foremost, and gave the player a great deal of agency in how it all unfolds. It was a game just slightly ahead of its time at release, one that established the path that many games have since followed, including the ones that deal with more subtle fears. "Games like Gone Home and Dear Esther have shown how a streamlined story/exploration experience can touch people", says Barlow. "I think this is the space that Silent Hill pretty much invented, and I would love to see it return to prominence there. As the saying goes: 'It's about the characters, dummy'. Focus on the characters, their stories, and ways to make spending time with them memorable. It's so important to me that videogames communicate on a deeper level, give players experiences that actually stay with them, reflect and enrich their own lives -- I'll always be indebted to Silent Hill for letting me make a game that did that." It may not have been the series' highest selling or best reviewed game, but Shattered Memories led a new wave of horror gaming -- one that was more accessible, but no less terrifying, than what came before. **II**



“IN THE FINAL GAME, ENEMY ENCOUNTERS OCCUR DURING VERY SPECIFIC SEQUENCES



“IT’S NOT EVEN SCARY”

So you don't find horror scary? Films and games not ratcheting up the ol fear-o-meter? Well good for you, however it may be worth asking yourself, why do you watch and play them then? Horror is as subjective as any other genre and what works for some viewers may not work for others. However horror is a very immersive art form that can be wasted on a viewer if not given the chance to work effectively. **JOSHUA PHILPOTT** has an unnatural love of horror films, and having watched them almost everywhere, he takes a look at some ways to bring the fright back to horror.

Enjoying horror can be hard for some people to admit. Generally speaking gore and violence is not something society openly supports. Enjoying the genre challenges us to explore the darker parts of our psyches. As it continues to have more of a presence in mainstream media (particularly with the growing popularity of TV programs like *Hannibal* or *American Horror Story* and games like *The Last of Us*) some consumers have decided that the purpose of enjoying horror is to compare the media on some kind of a

enjoying a horror. Sitting down during the middle of the day with the lights on or at a crowded gathering can be counter productive because you can't connect with the character's fear if you can't empathise with their situation. The idea is to put yourself in a personal space without distraction from other viewers. For example watching an atmospheric horror films like the remake of *The Grudge* (Ju-on), *The Conjuring* or the original *REC* at the cinema can be a bad idea as people may disrupt your experience

IT'S GOOD FOR YOU!

Though the effects are minimal, there are many studies out there that link increased blood flow to effective horror watching. The studies show a significant increase in the number of circulating leukocytes (white blood cells), used to help fight infection. So you can get healthy while you jump!



66 THINK ABOUT THE MOOD YOU NEED TO CREATE AND THE BEST WAY TO ENJOY IT

scale, ranking film, games and TV programs by their ability to scare or shock you. This is really a moot point as there so many things to take into consideration and what may work for one person may not work for another.

So let's look at some tips and ideas on how to better appreciate and enjoy this often underappreciated genre.

ENVIRONMENT >> Often completely ignored by people as a way to create a more immersive horror experience, one should always consider their environment when

by heckling or uncontrollably screaming at any and every jump scare. Or trying to enjoy a game like *Silent Hill* in a room full of rowdy friends generally won't result in a rewarding experience. You get the idea. This type of horror is best watched in a private bedroom or in the lounge, with a small group of like minded individuals, a decent sound system and minimal lighting. The same applies to gaming, titles like *Outlast* or the first *Dead Space* will end up frustrating if attempted under these conditions. The experience is designed to be

played solo or with maybe one or two other people.

Keep in mind however, though this is a good general rule it does depend on the type of horror you're watching. Heading to the cinema for action-horror flicks like *Alien vs Predator* or the *Final Destination* films can be an awesome experience when accompanied by some enthusiastic crowd support from fellow fans of the franchise. Others, depending on the right crew, can also be enjoyed when marathoned somewhere comfortable with a large group. This works particularly well with classic series' like *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, *Friday the 13th* and *The Evil Dead*. This approach also applies for action horror games like *Left 4 Dead* or *F.E.A.R 3* (F.3.A.R), the multiplayer aspect of which makes the group experience all the more enjoyable.

Consider the sub-genre of the film you're watching or the game you're playing. Think about the mood you need to create and the best way to enjoy it.

SOUND >> Good sound can change everything about the horror experience. Never forget that whole teams of horror and sound artisans are put to task during the production of games and films to make the sound experience much more immersive and rewarding. When our protagonist is hiding mere meters away from the killer, every crushed leaf, rustling branch or muffled breath is what makes a scene truly terrifying. Our minds connect better when we cut out possible distractions.

It may seem obvious, but horror with the sound turned down is really wasting the experience entirely, the lack of audio stimulation will tend to lead to you losing interest. Horror is best enjoyed with the most optimum sound equipment you can muster. If you have access to it, a 5.1 or 7.1 surround sound system is by far the best way to enjoy and feel the effects of horror, and having the sound come from different directions works wonders for the immersion. This is not only due to better quality and more engrossing level of sound output but also helps to throw you off

DO THE EVOLUTION

From a psychological point of view, some scientists believe that the reason we fear classic horror tropes is due to primal instincts. It is a basic human trait to stay clear of creatures with sharp teeth and feel aversion to rotting meat (aka Zombies).



guard by putting sound effects like a creaking door or footsteps outside your viewing area, catching even the most collected of people off guard and may even cause a jump or two in the hardest of horror veterans.

If you're enjoying a game and surround sound isn't an option, sometimes a quality pair of earphones can take your experience to the next level of dread. Removing external sound makes the simulation of a videogame feel far more real and the isolation of the experience can make you tread a little more carefully. If you use sound to its best possible ability, you'll find that your enemies snarls and screams a lot more terrifying.

PEOPLE >> Horror fans may be an odd bunch, but they do enjoy the genre a lot. Horror nights are always best done with lovers of the medium. However, horror is always more tense and surprising when there are a few people that find it hard to watch horror. A "jumper" can make the room feel effects of the film more

KEEP YOUR COOL

Not good at handling horror? Some behavioral science professors believe that if it gets too scary, the remedy is to remind yourself that they are just actors and that the gore is only special effects. Think about other films you have seen the actors in or how they would achieve the effect they are using. It can help you overcome your fear.



intensely. Avoid bringing loud-mouthed people that can't sit still, constantly play with their phones and feel it necessary to bag out any and everything about the experience. The idea is to grab others that are actually interested in enjoying what you want to watch.

Here are some people to avoid:

The over-enthusiastic horror fan

No one likes a know-it-all. Also, no one really wants to hear the entire history of a film while you watch it. These

people are a great resource for finding interesting and overlooked horror films or games, but be careful about watching horror with them as they can often find the idea of showing it to you more exciting than sitting through the media, often pausing it at annoying moments to show off a blurry cameo or explain the importance of a poster on a wall.

Your mum

Unless your mum is one of those "cool mums", trying to immerse yourself in a horror



with your mum around can come with an unnecessary amount of commentary on the state of the world at the moment, why these films are destroying the minds of the youth and questions about the plot due to talking over most of the affair. Though everyone needs to bond with their family, horror is not really a good medium to do this.

66 DON'T JUST GO FOR BLOOD AND VIOLENCE, THOUGH THESE THINGS ARE FUN

The "not scared" scared guy/girl

It is not cool to make fun of people for being scared about horror, but it's also not ok to try and pretend that you don't find horror scary if you do. This friend will often get up to go to the bathroom at bizarrely well timed moments before a scare or begin talking about something off topic when someone is about to get taken out. Another favorite move of the "not scared" guy/girl offender is to yell "boo"

before a scare while people are focused on the film. Avoid these people at all costs.

The overly critical film watcher

It may come as a surprise to some people, but horror fans are aware that often there can be imperfections to the genre. The best moments of some horror films can be hidden

amongst a lot of predictable dialog and an average script. So it's a good idea not to bring someone that is easily angered by films that don't meet Oscar award criteria. If you do, expect to hear a lot about how the film stole its idea from a 1960 classic and why the director is utterly useless. You have been warned.

CHOOSE WISELY >> Now that you have the right location, people and setup, the only thing to do is to pick your

A FEEL-GOOD MOVIE

Did you know that watching horror can actually make you feel calmer? It's true! While watching scary movies, the brain will often release chemicals like dopamine, serotonin and glutamate, which can help with stress and anxiety.

horror experiences. Horror is not going to work well if the viewers are not interested. If you go out hunting for horror, try to pick subject material you will all find scary. There are some great choices out there covering almost every rational and irrational fear you can think of and if you're looking for something to scare you aim for a synopsis that you think feels good for the group you're with. Don't just go for blood and violence, though these things are fun, try and find something everyone will enjoy. Watching horror that is too full on can cause people to turn off the genre altogether, which is unnecessary if you match your choice to the audience. This is an intimate and intense type of experience and people can open up to it more if you avoid throwing them in the deep end of the blood pool.

Horror is an amazing genre with a lot to offer anyone willing to treat it with respect and there are some unforgettable surprises out there for even the strongest of stomachs. Now get out there and get scared! **||**

BODY HORROR

ZOYA STREET investigates the most personal horror of all



“The idea of having a body is a repulsive concept,” said famed interactive fiction writer Porpentine at last year’s GaymerX, an LGBT games event held in San Francisco. “Everything is ultimately centred on the body. Everything is informed by the body. It is the lens. When the lens is damaged, it distorts things. What is it like, having a body that is failing you, that has betrayed you, or that is going through change?”

The rise of Twine, a tool that allows people to create text-based games and share them as webpages, has given voice to pains that are usually forced into silence. These pains are often expressed through themes of body horror. When it comes to the body, text has an advantage over the shiny graphics of typical video games. Just as in a novel, text puts you inside a stream of consciousness, rather than outside of a body looking at an avatar, or behind a pair of eyes looking out at a world. Unlike in a novel,

criticised for not offering enough meaningful choices. For some people, this means that they are not games, just linear stories that demand you click to progress. What these criticisms miss is the significance of the constrained choices that you do have.

In the narrative of *Pestilence*, your choices are limited because obsessive compulsive disorder doesn’t offer you choices. You are compelled to act against your best interests. Sometimes it’s not the illness that’s forcing you to behave a certain way, but the need to fit in with society. At times, they’re one and the same thing: the protagonist’s illness comes from childhood trauma, parents teaching the protagonist a warped view of what is appropriate and sensible.

“We dress ourselves in so many layers of social meaning that when you strip all that away it doesn’t take long before you encounter things that seem completely alien, but have always been as much a part of you as, say, your

“TEXT HAS AN ADVANTAGE OVER THE SHINY GRAPHICS OF TYPICAL VIDEO GAMES

you have the ability to be an active participant in the story, pushing the body to learn about its capabilities and its weaknesses. The game worlds of Twine are internal and embodied, and the drama of the body plays out as anguish and revulsion.

PESTILENCE >> “You can remember when you were just a little girl and your mother first told you about germs.”

Whisperbat started creating interactive fiction games “to vent the body-disgust and suicidal urges that had been swimming around my mind.” *Pestilence* is a game that represents an inner battle with obsessive compulsive disorder. Childhood fears about vampires and monsters are contrasted with enduring adult fears of germs. Sickness is the real-world monster that frightens every one of us.

Interactive fiction, particularly hypertext fiction built using Twine, is often

face or your hands.” Mused Whisperbat. “We identify with some parts of ourselves much more than others. Messing with those parts is one of the fundamental tools of body horror, I think.”

Whisperbat mentioned images like those created by painter Suzzan Blac, in which parts of the face have been stripped away to reveal the uncanny thing-ness beneath the surface appearance of personhood. Under the soft, warm cheeks is the permanently smiling grin of hard, white teeth, unmoving and slowly decomposing. “I paint to give a tangible voice and resonance to other victims and survivors who cannot express their own atrocities, who have suffered at the hands of others,” reads the front page of Suzzan Blac’s website, highlighting how sexual abuse makes our bodies alien to us.

Eventually, the player is presented with a choice in *Pestilence*: how will you act

STOP ME

Kaitlin Tremblay did a live reading of a scene from *Stop Me* at a social event in October 2013. “A friend of mine, who was pregnant at the time, almost threw up. I think that’s my proudest moment as a body horror writer.”



out the violence of sexuality? The human feelings that manage the animal drives are stripped away, leaving nothing but hunger and rage.

You roll languidly on top of him, and he seems encouraged by this. You let your hand caress his cheek, coating your fingertips with a fine layer of sweat and grease. You can see them blooming across his skin. You could taste them dancing in the air. You finally understand. You become one with him, and with the monstrous family that has blossomed in the brief period of your coupling.

You watch your family dancing over your forearms.

>You dig your nails into his cheeks.
>You push your thumbs into his eyes.
>You ram your fist into his mouth.

Whisperbat explained that in *Pestilence*, a deep-seated fear was being expressed: not just a fear of germs, but a fear of having to strip away essential parts of the self in order to survive. “On one hand that innate revulsion and fear of germs seemed so fundamental to my personality; I didn’t want to be a person who just accepted all this horrifying stuff, y’know? That wasn’t me. But at the same time, it was becoming obvious that I couldn’t live in the state of constant fear I was in at the time.”

HER POUND OF FLESH >>

“She’s dead. You remind yourself that every day since she died. But her scent still lingers in the carpets, the blankets, the very walls of your apartment. Her clothes lie scattered on the floor, reminding you.”

Liz England, AAA game designer at Insomniac Games, used Twine to create horror interactive fiction in her spare time. When she made *Her Pound of Flesh*, “I was right around the halfway mark in a body horror interactive fiction

LIGHTS OUT

Kaitlin Tremblay’s next project is another Twine horror game, called *Lights Out, Please*. Like *Stop Me*, it explores feminist issues, “such as violence against women, since the type of terror and fear in horror is a very real and palpable fear for a lot of women I know”.

game I had been making, one much larger and more ambitious, with puzzles, an environment to explore, and many meaningful paths. But I was overwhelmed by the size of it and how long it would be before I could finish it. I decided to take a break and just make a small project where I could concentrate on writing. I had, from that other project, already been thinking a lot about body horror, so the writing went smoothly."

In *Her Pound of Flesh*, the protagonist creates a life form from a combination of special-purpose mould and the vaginal discharge from her dead lover's worn underpants. The life is nurtured from its first cell divisions in a petri dish until its growth overwhelms the tiny bathroom of the protagonist's cheap apartment. "I was very intent on creating subtle, enticing elements that made you care for or empathize with the object while being simultaneously repulsed by it," says England. The choices made available to the player reflect this tension: wash it with soap or with bleach, in hot water or warm. Treat it with love, or treat it with fear. Think of it as a pet, or think of it as a monster.

England lists a number of influences from cinema and literature, including classics such as *The Thing* and *Naked Lunch*. "When I look to horror, I am not looking for something that terrifies me. I am looking for something that challenges me and disturbs me on a deeper, more thoughtful and psychological level." That's the level on which body horror fiction operates: a deeply disturbing set of images, shocking but eerily familiar. Images that seem to reveal the visceral fears that were already deeply inscribed onto your psyche.

"Cronenberg does great work in film by combining visually disturbing imagery with sexual elements, both enticing and disgusting his viewers. It creates this push-pull dynamic that fascinates my mind and makes me uncomfortable in my own skin." England creates her own push-pull dynamics in *Her Pound of Flesh*:

You sit up in bed and rub your temples.



You love her. You miss her. You can smell her and, now, you can touch her soft skin and move your fingers through her curly hair like you always did.

Thump.

You curl up in the fetal position. It's not... quite right. You don't know what went wrong.

> You love her too much to hurt her

> You fear what she is, and what she will become

It's this tension between intimacy and abjection that makes *Her Pound of Flesh* work so well. It's a tension that's also clearly present in *Pestilence*'s climactic sex scene. Body horror suggests that the most dangerous things in life are those that we treasure the most. "I don't want a supernatural monster or a cartoonish Nazi villain. An antagonist I can understand and care for while they do unspeakable crimes is so much more interesting," says England. "The horror games I've made put the player in a position of power over a vulnerable creature, and then give the player the option to exert that power. Even if you choose not to take that option, the presentation of it allows your imagination to explore that possibility space."

STOP ME IF YOU'VE HEARD THIS ONE BEFORE >>

"Puppets, strung from the ceiling, hang down from pieces of twine, floating wooden and woolen bodies with leering faces and bulging eyes. The wall opposite the stairs is covered with puppet theatres, ranging from the typical wooden panel with a giant cut out for the stage, to elaborate gilded brass and metallic theatres."

Stop Me If You've Heard This One Before is another Twine game, by writer Kaitlin Tremblay. "Stop Me is about what it felt like living with disordered eating and depression for me," she explains in our interview. "[It] is effectively a metaphor that isn't really a metaphor. It uses comparisons and imagery





the way metaphor does, but the images and actions, while never physically occurring, all happened mentally. It was a pain that was very real."

With a background in creative writing, specialising in gender and genre, Tremblay is accustomed to writing in traditional prose. Twine allowed her to tell a story about inner anguish by taking away the sense of one true narrative that you get from linear text. "With hypertext, you can make deeper connections between concepts and words than a traditional short story would allow, so the medium really let me open and explore what I wanted to say in *Stop Me*."

Letting the player make choices in the narrative allowed Tremblay to make a statement about where eating disorders come from. The more linear parts of the game tell a story about how society harms women. The opening scenes of the game put the player through a series of sexist microaggressions which

in *Stop Me* definitely affect her state, they're not the main driving force), but rather it's how she reacts and interprets the events."

Elizabeth turns the taps, filling her bathtub with boiling water. Elizabeth turns off the the tap, sinking into the steam, the water turning her flesh into a bright red splotch, a disinfecting rash. The water burns through layer after layer of pink skin, the peeled ribbons disintegrating in the water. Through skin and muscle, a cleansing acid, removing all tangible evidence. Clear water blooming with blossoms of blood as the last of the skin and muscle drops away.

Despite this application of branching narratives in terms of how the final scene plays out, it still feels inevitable.

“THE MORE LINEAR PARTS OF THE GAME TELL A STORY ABOUT HOW SOCIETY HARMS WOMEN

suggest that in a patriarchal society, a woman's body is a contradiction that always needs to be managed. The body is a fierce animal with its own drives, alive with the need to consume others for pleasure, and decomposing as it ages. Yet there's a constant pressure to show the female body as graceful, forever young, a pure symbol, uncannily undead as its beauty is preserved against the forces of time.

This suggests that perhaps mental illness is entirely a product of a sexist society, but to Tremblay, the divergent player choices in the ending resolve the narrative differently. "When you enter the bathroom, you're given the option of turning off or on the light, and depending what choice you make, the events will happen in a different order. It's the same events, just structured differently to show that the problem isn't the external world (while the interpersonal issues Elizabeth encounters

The force that drives the protagonist to self-harm seems unstoppable. To anyone who has experienced self-harm, this might be familiar: intellectually, you know that you have a choice and you are choosing to do this to yourself, but somehow the self-destructive energy has its own momentum. Recreating those feelings in *Stop Me* was painful for Tremblay, "not just because it was scary, but because it reminded me of...how good it felt. Because that's the thing with the violence in *Stop Me*. It's a very bad self-harm absolutely, but it was also a self-harm that was the only thing keeping me going at a certain point in my life."

SURVIVAL >> In many body horror games, violence against the flesh is presented as unavoidable, the product of a darkness that operates in all of us as tangibly as the muscles that propel us through space. Play enough body horror and it starts to seem like a miracle that self-harm and

TRAUMA

Liz England is working on another, "more ambitious" project that covers similar themes of body horror and psychological trauma, "with an ending that never quite satisfies you but - hopefully - leaves you with a lasting impression."

suicide aren't more common in the world. How do we avoid destroying ourselves?

"For me, it was a hard-earned respect for myself, something along the lines of I fought to be here and to be this person, and that's worth hanging onto," says Tremblay. "There's a reason people often go for more subtle, less guaranteed methods... It's distancing yourself from the finality of the act," reflects Whisperbat.

At the same time, our relationships with our bodies are creative. They're ours to shape into whatever allows us to thrive. We're living in an era where marginalised people have an easier time finding common cause with others whose bodies are similarly repudiated, says England.

"You see this in all kinds of communities - not just queer and trans* communities that have connected together and brought awareness to the difference between gender and sex. There's also body modification communities, and various fetish communities, and eating disorder communities or extreme athletic/bodybuilding communities, or communities for people with body integrity disorder, or transhumanism communities plotting to abandon their bodies entirely to live as a computer."

Whisperbat cautions against the idea that this is anything peculiarly modern. "A lot of people look to modern and future technology either as a pollutant to the body or as a savior from it, but I don't think that's as recent a dialogue as it seems. There have often been expressions of this fundamental discontentment with our bodies, way back through history. Draping them in garments, altering them into new shapes, both physical and theoretical."

If there's a hopeful aspect to body horror games, it is that sense that the body is interacted with, that there's scope for intervention and change. The monologue of traditional prose is interrupted in the dialogue of interactive fiction, reminding you always that no matter how painful society's inscriptions upon the body can be, you do have agency within your own skin. ■

PAIN

"As a woman I get horror. Women know fear. We aren't protected. And I get body horror. We're taught to internalize pain until it mutates and tears us apart. I envision physical metaphors of violence commensurate to the emotional violence done to me."

- Porpentine, January 2014, The Hairpin

A woman is standing in a doorway, completely covered by a white sheet except for her face. She is looking directly at the camera. The room behind her is dark, with light coming from a window with shutters and from the doorway she is standing in. The overall mood is eerie and suspenseful.

A BESTIARY OF MODERN(ISH) MYTH

Compiled and Curated by **DAN STAINES**

Myths have been a constant in human society since the dawn of time. Myths make a hostile indifferent world tolerable, comforting and instructing, explaining and enshrining. Myths answer eternal questions like "What is the meaning of life?" and "What is my role in the universe?" They embody the best and worst elements of our species: our hopes, knowledge, aspirations, and – of course – our deepest, darkest fears.

Thus we shouldn't be surprised to discover that, even in these "enlightened" times of ours, nowhere is the human psyche's extreme fucked-upedness more evident than in mythology. There are mythical monsters out there that make horror legends like Freddy and Jason look like extras in a carnival ghost house, monsters that are the coalesced essence of an entire culture's collective nightmares. Perhaps you'd like to make their acquaintance...?

PONTIANAK (Malaysia/Indonesia)

The name "pontianak" is a corruption of the Malay phrase "perempuan mati beranak" – "woman who died in childbirth". Pontianaks are said to be the vampiric ghosts of such women who, unable to accept their demise, are doomed to wander the Earth in a state of baleful bloodlust, seeking succor from their torment in the form of grisly homicide.

Visually, pontianaks are a variation of the familiar "woman in white" archetype so popular in Japanese horror films, typically presenting with deathly pale, almost translucent skin and long black hair that obscures their (often quite beautiful) facial features. They announce their presence by mimicking the choked cries of the infants to whom their lives were sacrificed, and for whom they still pine in purgatory. The softer the cry, the

closer the pontianak.

In his 1977 short story collection, *The Consul's Wife*, author Paul Theroux theorises that pontianaks are the invention of Malay housewives keen to discourage their partners from engaging in sexual congress with strange women. This explains why pontianaks tend to prey on men, using their long, talon-like fingernails to tear out the innards of their victims and mutilate their sex organs. If you're unlucky enough to keep your eyes open in the vicinity of pontianak, they will be promptly sucked from your skull and eaten like olives.

To fend off a pontianak, one must hammer a nail into the nape of her neck, thus transforming her into a beautiful woman and obedient wife. Removing the nail reverses the process.



MANANANGGAL (Philippines)

The distinguishing characteristic of a manananggal – whose name is derived from the Tagalog verb for "separate" – is its ability to neatly disconnect its torso from its lower body and take to the skies on the enormous bat wings that sprout from its back. Typically female, these monsters haunt the Philippines' Visayan Islands, most notably the western provinces of Capiz, Iloilo, and Antique.

Hostile to humans, manananggals prefer to prey on sleeping pregnant women, using their long proboscis-like tongue to pierce bulging maternal bellies and suck out the hearts of gestating fetuses. Particularly powerful manananggals are also known to cause apocalyptic hurricanes by whipping their long white hair in a

headbangerish frenzy.

The origin of manananggals varies from region to region. One of the more popular explanations is that their power derives from the black chicks (i.e. baby chickens) stuck in their throats. Another popular theory is that is that "manananggalism" is a kind of disease spread by consuming the flesh of another human being or of the manananggal itself. Another posits that consuming human sputum is the trigger.

Like vampires, manananggals are vulnerable to sunlight, garlic, and salt. It's said the best way to kill one is to find its vulnerable lower half and smear it with crushed ash. Failing that, one can fend off the monster with a dagger or whip fashioned from a stingray's tail.

BLACK ANNIS (England)

Black Annis, aka Black Agnes, is one of the more enduring boogeyman figures in English folklore. A blue-skinned crone with one eye and iron claws for hands, she is reputed to haunt the countryside in Leicestershire, making her home in a cave decorated with the tanned skins of her victims.

An inveterate cannibal, Annis is partial to the flesh of children, who she likes to ambush from atop a ruined oak, swooping down hawk-like and eviscerating her prey with razor-sharp teeth and claws. In a letter to the editor published in the Leicester Chronicle in 1874, it was claimed that "little children who went to play on the Dane Hills were assured that she lay in wait there, to snatch them away ... and that

many like themselves she had scratched to death with her claws, sucked their blood, and hung up their skins to dry."

Up until the early 18th Century, an annual mock hunt was held in Leicester Town with the aim of capturing Annis. A dead cat would be soaked in anniseed and dragged through the streets to lure the witch from her cave - always unsuccessfully. Perhaps honey-roasted street urchin w/ baked potatoes would've made better bait. These days, the tradition has been replaced by the much more family-friendly Black Annis Dancers, who perform every midsummer's eve as part of the annual Dane Hills Fair. Adults \$6.66, children free.



DULLAHAN (Ireland)

Thought to be a corrupt permutation of the ancient Celtic fertility god Crom Dubh - aka Black Crom - the dullahan is a headless horseman and grim harbinger of death. Wielding a whip made of human vertebrae, the dullahan uses its leering phosphorescent head to light the way as it gallops across the Irish countryside atop its sable steed, leaving a trail of flames and despair in its wake.

The dullahan exists to deliver death, not unlike the Grim Reaper. Drawing to a halt outside a target's home, the

dullahan calls for them in an unearthly baritone, drawing the victim's soul from its fleshy vessel and killing them instantly. According to the legend there is no way to hinder

a dullahan on this morbid mission. Locked gates and doors fly open at its approach and anyone silly enough to get in its way either has their eyes whipped out or is drenched with a basin of blood kept for exactly that purpose.

But while there is no way to stop a dullahan, it is terrified of gold and can be driven away with something as small as a pin, provided it's packing 14 carat or more. Beyond that, all one can do is stay inside, keep the curtains drawn, and hope to avoid its wretched gaze.



PALESMURT (Russia)

Native to the tiny Udmurt Republic in the western half of the Russian Federation, palesmurts are enormous humanoids who wander the snowy forests in search of people to torment and kill. Appearance-wise, they are similar to regular humans except much larger and split vertically down the middle. According to Udmurt folklore, this is because palesmurts exist in two worlds simultaneously: our material world and the supernatural Otherworld. Thus a palesmurt has only one eye, one leg, and one arm, and when viewed from the side its interior organs and viscera are plainly visible.

Palesmurts are reputed to be incredibly strong and almost entirely resistant to pain. They delight in making cruel sport of the unwary, leading travellers astray and leaving them to die cold and alone in the dense Udmurt woodland. That's the little ones. Larger, less restrained palesmurts tend to simply rip their victims in half or beat them to death or (and this is not a joke) tickle them to death with their long bony fingers.

Attacking a palesmurt is not advisable. As well as being immensely strong and durable, every drop of blood shed by the creature births yet another. In the event that one encounters the monster, it can reportedly be dissuaded from its natural, violent inclinations by shouting "shur allan!" – meaning "down the river!" Stripping naked and running for one's life is also said to work, but this is only encouraged in the warmer months, for obvious reasons.

WENDIGO (North America)

According to Algonquian folklore, wendigos are the undead cannibal remains of once regular humans ravaged by gluttony and greed. Tortured by a Hellenistically ironic condition, Wendigos grow in exact proportion to whatever they consume, leaving them unstated no matter how many people they kill and eat. Basil Johnston, a native American teacher and scholar from Ontario, describes them as "gaunt to the point of emaciation" with grey "desiccated" skin pulled tautly over bone, like a "skeleton recently disinterred from the grave."

The messages are clear, familiar: selfishness is corrosive; greed is self-perpetuating and unfulfilling; don't eat people, goddamn it. Here in our rich 21st century sub-tropical utopia, that last one usually goes without saying, but in pre 20th-C Northern USA/ Southern Canada – where the winters are long and cold and blizzardy and can leave tribes/families cut off from one

another for weeks at a time – the Algonquians thought it bore repeating.

Arguably more interesting than the legend of the wendigo is the real mental disorder that allegedly inspired it. "Wendigo psychosis" refers to a condition in which a person who consumes human flesh (out of necessity or otherwise) is thereafter wracked by uncontrollable urges to do it again. And again. Though apparently a genuine, albeit culturally specific, disorder, cases of wendigo psychosis were/are rare, with almost no reported cases past from 1900 onward. (Luis Suarez doesn't count, apparently.)



YARA-MA-YHA-WHO (Australia)

A product of indigenous folklore, the yara-ma-yha-who is a species of goblinish humanoids, like a cross between a frog and organ grinder's monkey. With its wobbling hydrocephalic head, cocktail wiener coloured skin, and octopus sucker fingers, it cuts an odd, almost comical figure. "But don't let that fool you," tribal elders would remind their pre-adolescent listeners, "because the yara-ma-yha-who will chew you up and spit you back out. Literally."

Making its home in the generous foliage of fig trees, the yara-ma-yha-who lies in wait for a lazy little boy or girl (or man or woman) to come and take a load off in the shade, whereupon it descends like a spider and leeches the victim's blood with its octopus suckers. Then the victim, unconscious from blood loss, is left to bake in the sun for a few hours, after which the yara-ma-yha-who returns and opens its big froggy mouth and swallows

them whole.

But that's not the end of it. Its hunger sated, the yara-ma-yha-who makes its way to the nearest river, drinks its fill, and falls promptly asleep, taking what most legends refer to as a "long nap". When it awakes however many hours/days/weeks later, its first order of business is to regurgitate the victim, who emerges from a pool of bubbling gastric juices an inch shorter and with a new reddish tinge to their skin but is otherwise unharmed. Those foolish enough to have been swallowed multiple times develop an increasingly hard-to-ignore appetite for blood.

Nobody can say exactly how many times the yara-ma-yha-who has to consume a person before the transformation is complete. You'd figure one life-diminishing trip down a monster's gullet would be sufficient incentive to swear off sleeping and fig-trees forever, but some people just never learn.



KUCHISAKE-ONNA (Japan)



Kuchisake-Onna is one of the many monsters to survive the transition from Japanese mythology to Japanese urban legend, thanks in part to her presence in innumerable manga and horror movies. Her name translates to "slit-mouth woman" - which, if you've looked

at the picture already, you'll see is about as literal and bluntly descriptive as names get. She is the mutilated ghost of a once beautiful woman killed by her jealous husband, condemned by her vanity to roam Tokyo's backstreets in search of living victims.

Garbed in a surgeon's mask - which, for Japan, is not that unusual - her standard MO is

to find solitary travelers and ask "Am I beautiful?" and then either slay or mutilate them depending on their response. Anyone that replies in the negative is killed straight away. Replying in the affirmative causes Kuchisake-Onna to remove her mask and ask again: "Am I beautiful?" Replying no, again, gets you killed; saying yes can have varying results. Sometimes she'll go ahead and kill you anyway because why not. Other times, when she's in a good mood, she'll just mess your face up a bunch and leave you in a bleeding heap on the side of the road.

According to the legend, the only way to escape Kuchisake-Onna is to tell her she's average. A six or seven at the most. Because nothing takes the wind out of a vengeful ghost's sails more than confronting her own mediocrity.





CHERUFE (Chile)

Made of living obsidian and veined with glowing lava, cherufe are a species of magma golem native to the bubbling innards of Chile's many active volcanoes. Said to be responsible for earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, the moody beasts must be regularly placated with human flesh, preferably tossed fresh and screaming into a smoking crevice.

Creepily – though not unusually, it must be said – a cherufe's preferred source of Vitamin-P is virginal maidens, whose decapitated head it likes to set alight and toss out of the volcano's mouth so that it (the head) bounces back down the mountain and right into the generous bosom of a mortified mourner, who is then herself set alight. The cherufe feel this is a very funny thing to do and frankly it's hard to disagree.


There is some evidence to suggest that the cherufe myth was inspired by an actual living organism. Cryptozoologists contend that although the real cherufe was probably not a hateful rock monster with a taste for maidens chaste and true, it's not impossible, in this world where hardy organisms thrive in superheated vents on the ocean floor, that something weird and horrible might live in a volcano. Which, again, hard to disagree.

POPOBAWA (East Africa)

Thought to have originated on the Tanzanian island of Pemba, the Popobawa is an evil shapeshifting spirit with a fondness for breaking into sleeping households and sodomising their occupants. Its name means "bat wing" in Swahili and refers to the chiropter shadow the monster casts as it stalks the moonlit night in search of buggery.

Exactly why the Popobawa does what it does is a matter of vigorous speculation. The fact that the monster tends to appear on Zimbabwean election years has not gone unnoticed, though it's unclear what significance the correlation has, if any. Even though the Popobawa is reputed to be apolitical, the fact remains that he doesn't have to leave behind bumper stickers to serve the interests of certain powers-that-be. Whether he knows it or not, the Popobawa embodies a very powerful kind of fear: the fear of invasion,

of violation. And once that fear's aroused, it doesn't take a political genius to harness its potential at the polls.

Popobawa sightings only go back forty years or so, with the first recorded sighting made on Pemba in 1965, just a few weeks – would you believe it – after the conclusion of a political revolution. What a coinkydink! Appearances increased in frequency as the years went on, reaching critical mass in 1995 and dropping off dramatically since. His last widely documented appearance was in 2007. 



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TOP 5 HORROR CHARACTERS



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SEVEREN

FIRST APPEARANCE: Near Dark (1987)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

Before they became sparkly, Severen showed us what monsters vampires truly were. A redneck shitkicker blood-sucker prowling the West for victims, Severen stands out from the rest of the vampire posse of Near Dark by not being driven by hunger or need, but by the fact that he's casually psychotic and willfully immoral, killing for the joy of it more than for the need of sustenance. Each of the other vampires in Near Dark – Caleb, Mae, Jesse, Diamondback and Homer – elicit some form of sympathy from the audience, for being an old man trapped inside the body of a young teen or, a newly turned vamp who refuses to kill to feed, or what have you, but not Severen. He relishes being apart from humanity, being a predator and being functionally immortal. He kills without fear or remorse and revels in the slaughter, the very model of id released from humanity. He also slits a barman's throat with his spurs, and that's pretty damn awesome.



BUB

FIRST APPEARANCE: Day of the Dead (1985)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

Paradoxically one of the most sympathetic and human of characters in the third film in the Dead series (Night of the living Dead, Dawn of the Dead, Day of the Dead, et al.), Bub is a domesticated zombie. Chained in a cell and trained by resident scientist Dr. Logan, Bub recognises and can interact with some objects from his former, most probably military, life and can even repeat simple words and phrases said to him. Of course, Bub is still a monster and is fed on the corpses of dead soldiers, something that doesn't sit well with Rhodes, the ranking military commander in the base. When Bub eventually manages to free himself from his chains, he doesn't go on a rampage – he goes looking for Dr. Logan so he can show the doctor his new trick. Even when he discovers that Dr. Logan has been murdered he doesn't revert to a shambling brain eater, instead picking up a gun and hunting down the true villain of the piece, Rhodes.



DAVID WONG

FIRST APPEARANCE: John Dies at the End (2007)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: John Dies at the End (2012) This Book is Full of Spiders: Seriously, Dude, Don't Touch It! (2012)

The pseudonym of Jason Pargin, an American comedy writer and also the pseudonym of the otherwise unnamed protagonist of John Dies at the End, a comedic horror novel written by David Wong (Jason Pargin), David Wong (the character) is an enigma wrapped in a puzzle wrapped in a dick joke. After being infected by the sentient drug "Soy Sauce", David Wong (the character, not the writer), along with his partner John Cheese (the one that dies at the end and also the pseudonym of fellow comedy writer, Mack Lighty) become a pair of supernatural troubleshooters. The perpetual slightly befuddled straight man, David Wong serves as narrator, and anchor for John Dies at the End and This Book is Full of Spiders, simultaneously trying to relate stories of pan-dimensional invasions or how you might have a giant invisible spider living in your head controlling your actions, whilst trying to remain sane and grounded.



JACK TORRANCE

FIRST APPEARANCE: *The Shining* (1977) • **SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES:** *The Shining* (1980), *The Shining* (1997)

I kind of like Jack Torrance. Always have. And if you're familiar with Jack you'll understand why that freaks me out a little bit.

For the uninitiated: John Daniel "Jack" Torrance is the protagonist of *The Shining*, a novel by Stephen King published in 1977 and subsequently adapted into a limelight stealing, culture defining film by Stanley Kubrick in 1980. The plot is broadly consistent between versions: Jack, his wife Wendy, and their psychic son Danny spend the winter alone in an isolated hotel in the Colorado Rockies; some real spooky shit happens; Jack goes mental and tries to murder his family; fails, dies.

Where Kubrick's version differs radically from King's, much to the latter's publically exclaimed chagrin, is in its portrayal of the Torrances, especially Jack. Book Jack is a flawed but sympathetic former alcoholic with a keen intellect, quick wit, and violent temper. He's a likeable guy, which is why his futile quest for moral/spiritual redemption is so poignant. Movie Jack, meanwhile, played with lupine relish by Jack Nicholson, is a fizzing caustic time-bomb of repressed rage looking for an excuse to explode.

When Book Jack gets bludgeoned with a roque mallet, it's clear that the sinister

psychic energies of the Overlook are to blame; Movie Jack's motivations, on the other hand, are much more opaque. Movie Jack hates Movie Wendy – just fucking *despises* her. You can see it right from the beginning, even before they arrive at the hotel. You get the sense, watching the two exchange frigid pleasantries as they drive unknowingly toward their doom, that Jack might have murdered Wendy even if he'd never stepped foot into the Overlook. (His feelings on Movie Danny are a little more complex: my impression is that he loves his son but also believes him hopelessly corrupted by his mother.)

The unsettling thing is that you can kinda see where he's coming from, and I don't think that's accidental on Kubrick's part. Played by Shelley "Olive Oyl" Duvall – who was reputedly worked so hard on set that she had a nervous breakdown – Movie Wendy acts like wounded prey around her husband long before he hops aboard the Crazy Train to Homicide Town. Eyes moist and quivering, voice wavering, blinking spasmodically, it seems as though she's permanently on the verge of a complete emotional breakdown. And as viewers, this offends us, it *annoys* us,

because horror movies have conditioned us to expect unwavering resolve from endangered heroines. In this genre, weakness is death, and as much as she annoys us, we don't want Wendy to die. We don't want evil to triumph, even when we can identify with it.

And I can. I can identify with Jack, not because we share a great deal in common, but because I kinda do wish Wendy would shut the hell up and that Danny would stop being such a little weirdo. But then I also know that I can't blame Wendy and Danny for Jack's behaviour, and I know that ultimately he gets what he deserves. The dissonance between how I know I should feel, intellectually, and how I actually feel on a gut level makes me profoundly uncomfortable, and – again – I don't think that's an accident.

The really great thing about Kubrick's take on *The Shining* – the main reason it's one of the best horror films ever made – is that it uses Jack to show you what's horrible about yourself. It dredges up the dark bits of your personality and holds them up to the light. You don't get much scarier than that. **DAN STAINES**

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PATRICK BATEMAN

FIRST APPEARANCE: American Psycho (1991)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: American Psycho (2000), American Psycho II: All American Girl (2002)

An eccentric study in the maddening nature of corporate America, Patrick Bateman is as superficial as they come. Obsessed with maintaining a fit and healthy exterior, whether it be his physical body, his immaculately pressed suit or his bone coloured business card (with cillian rail lettering), Bateman loves to flaunt his well constructed persona.

The trouble is, inside he could not be more rotten. Cutting off nipples, misusing nail guns and an unmentionable moment involving a rat and a lady's private place is but a taste of the darkness that lurks inside this apparently normal businessman. But forget all that. Do you like Huey Lewis & The News? Their early work was a little too "new wave" for my tastes, but when sports came out in '83 I think they really came into their own, commercially and artistically. What's that? Why yes this is a rain coat...



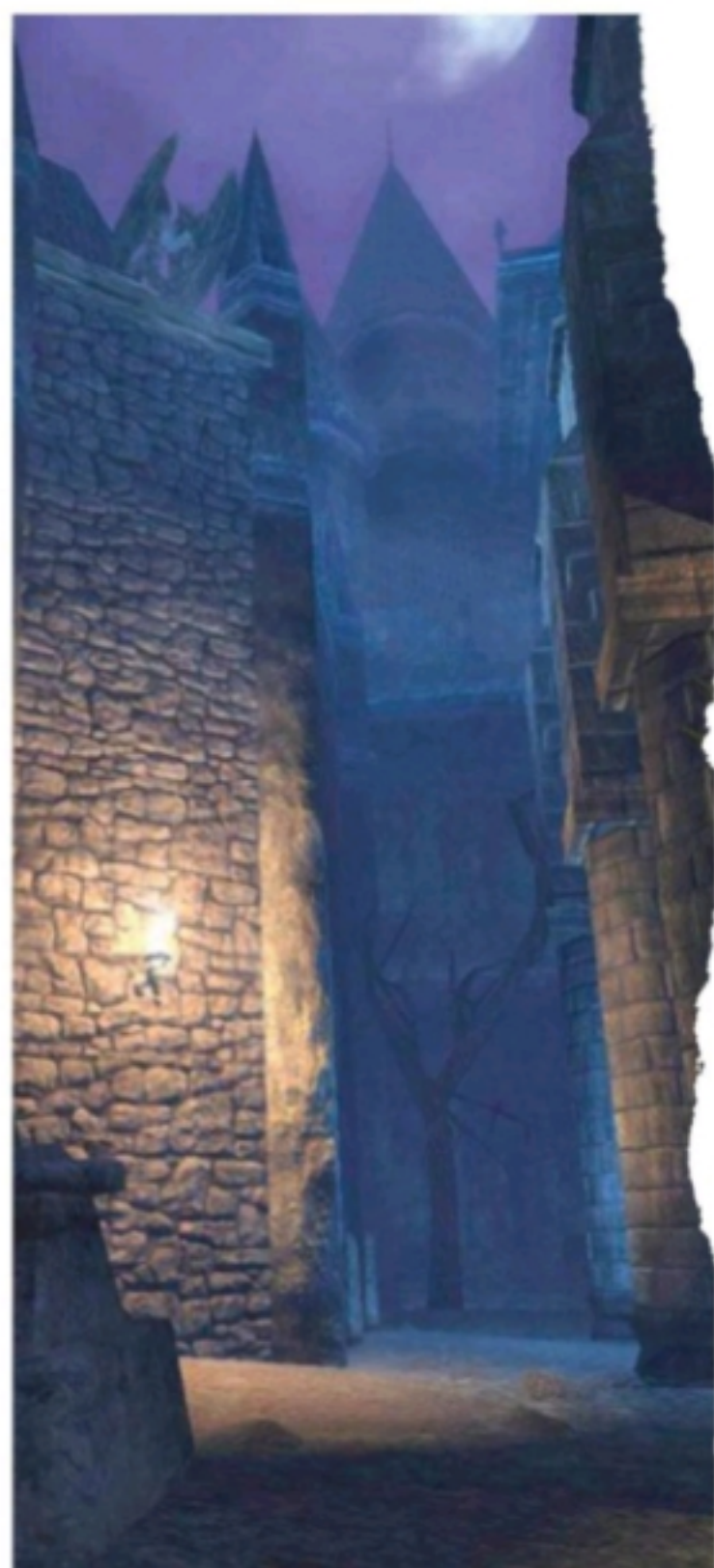
THE PALE MAN

FIRST APPEARANCE: Pan's Labyrinth (2006)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

From a design standpoint, there are few horror characters that can match the frightening nature of the Pale Man. As if ripped from some twisted fairy tale, he sits unmoving at the head of a table laden with delicious food. The plate at his chest plays host to two pale eyeballs, which lie as motionless as the body behind. The walls surrounding are lined with portraits of the creature devouring naughty children, and those foolish enough to pass them off as fantasy need only to look to the stack of children's shoes on the floor. But a motionless threat only goes so far, it's when the Pale Man's table is disturbed and he slowly comes to life that the horror truly takes form. Slipping the eyeballs into the palms of his heavily clawed hands, spreading his fingers in front of his face, and locking his frightening gaze upon his prey, oh yes, the Pale Man comes.





THE SHALEBRIDGE CRADLE

FIRST APPEARANCE: Thief: Deadly Shadows
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

The Shalebridge Cradle has something of a colourful history. Once a combination orphanage/insane asylum (like PB&J, right?), it was destroyed in a mysterious and deadly conflagration and is now haunted by the twitching, screeching ghosts of its former inmates.

While the Cradle isn't alive or sentient in the usual sense of the term, it's more than a mere location. It's an entity, a character in its own right, with personality, preferences, an agenda. And even though it's not quite as overtly malicious as The Shining's Overlook Hotel, there's absolutely no doubt that it wants you dead, and only partly because you're there to free one of its spectral prisoners. No, the main reason the Cradle's out to get you is simply that it has a hate-boner for anything with a heartbeat.

Our advice? Close the door and never look back.



GINGER AND BRIGITTE

FIRST APPEARANCE: Ginger Snaps (2000)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Ginger Snaps 2: Unleashed (2004), Ginger Snaps Back: The Beginning (2004)

Two teenage sisters enamoured by death refuse to grow up. One night, when sneaking to the school bully's house to steal her dog, the sisters are attacked by a large animal. Ginger is mauled but the two manage to escape and the animal is killed when it is struck by a van driven by the local dealer. After the attack things change. Ginger starts to grow hair where she didn't have any before, becomes moody and starts showing an interest in boys.

Using lycanthrope as a metaphor for puberty isn't anything particularly new, with Neil Jordan already having trodden a similar path in his brilliant The Company of Wolves (1984), but Ginger and Brigitte have a realness not seen in Jordan's fairytale. The sisters aren't simply metaphors but wonderful and rounded characters in their own right, as strong, frail, brave and pitiful as teenagers usually are.



FRANKENSTEIN'S MONSTER

FIRST APPEARANCE: Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus (1818)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Frankenstein (1931), The Bride of Frankenstein (1935), Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man (1943), House of Frankenstein (1944), House of Dracula (1945), The Curse of Frankenstein (1957), The Revenge of Frankenstein (1958), Frankenstein Unbound (1990), Frankenstein series (1994), Van Helsing (2004), I, Frankenstein (2014) and pretty much every Castlevania game ever made (1986 - 2013).

This misunderstood monster has appeared in countless films and videogames as a threatening force (understandable considering he's largely comprised of corpses stitched together) but the real horror of Mary Shelley's creation lies in his mistreatment above anything else. In recent times, the monster has taken on the name of his creator, Victor Frankenstein, but Frankenstein's Monster began as a harmless, innocent soul lost in a world that rejected him from the start. Since then the character has held many a name: Evan, Adam, Franken and even The Creature, but whatever his title, Frankenstein's Monster always brings to mind one of the most prolific lines in horror film history... "It's Alive! It's Alive!"



REGGIE

FIRST APPEARANCE: Phantasm (1979) • **SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES:** Phantasm II (1988), Phantasm III (1994), Phantasm IV (1998)

► Come on. Let's go kick some ass. Lots of films claim to have an everyman hero – some guy who is normal in nearly every way but rises to the occasion when necessity demands. When necessity is simply doing the right thing by a family, or testifying in court, an everyman character is easy to pull off. An everyman action hero, on the other hand is difficult. Far too often, "everyman" becomes synonymous with someone with extraordinary skill with the type of personality that makes you want to have a beer with them. Die Hard's John McClane is a perfect example of this style of everyman character. He's a blue collar Joe with a twinkle in his eye who just happens to be a preternaturally gifted cop with an uncanny eye for detail, a sharpshooter's aim and, later in the series, Holmesian detective abilities.

Reggie is different. He's a blue collar Joe with no special skills aside from determination and confidence, a former ice cream man thrust into the role of confidant, protector and action hero by the machinations of The Tall Man, an extradimensional undertaker compressing the dead to use as slave labour on another planet.

I should probably go back to the start because that last paragraph sounded

rather ridiculous. In 1979, writer/director Don Coscarelli (otherwise known for Beastmaster, John Dies at the End and Bubba Ho-Tep) released Phantasm, also known as The Never Dead in some territories, a willfully strange horror movie about alien undertakers, psychics, undead dwarfs and slave labour. One of the key roles in the film was written for, and based on a long time friend of Coscarelli, Reggie Bannister. Named after his inspiration, Reggie started life as a second fiddle character, a friend of the protagonist's brother but come Phantasm II, Reggie graduated from tagalong to protector, not due to his skill with arms but because somebody had to. As the series continued with Phantasm III: Lord of the Dead and Phantasm IV: Oblivion, Reggie transitioned to main character, but even though he carried around a faintly ridiculous but ridiculously cool MacGuyvered quad barreled shotgun, Reggie remained a deeply human character, a pattern balding, middle-aged man with a raging libido and an unflattering ponytail.

Although Reggie works as something of a comic foil to the supernatural evil of The Tall Man (inimitably played by Angus Scrimm), the character is not a joke.

Bannister took inspiration from classic physical comedians like Harold Lloyd, Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, not in their physical approach to gags but rather the fact that none of them seemed capable of grasping the humour of the situations in which they find themselves. Bannister plays Reggie straight, no matter if he's trying to score with a woman who just tried to karate the shit out of a deadly silver ball, or if he's reacting to a zombie trying to give him some oral pleasure. This deadpan approach prevents a concept that has gradually transitioned from straight horror to oddball sci-fi/fantasy from descending to camp.

The final tent-pole that makes Reggie such an indelible character is his loyalty. He's a man who will do anything for his friends and give them the benefit of the doubt even when they sound insane. In Phantasm, Reggie doesn't believe in the stories of The Tall Man etc. but helps his friends, Jody and Mike, because that's what friends do. It's not until Reggie's family comes into the supernatural crossfire that he actively starts his own crusade against The Tall Man, but even then he never lets his personal vendetta get in the way of his loyalty and duty to his friends. **DANIEL WILKS**

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL PURVIS

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THE EVENT HORIZON

FIRST APPEARANCE: Event Horizon (1997)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

Both a place and a character, the Event Horizon is an experimental starship fitted with a gravity drive intended to use a miniature black hole to bridge two points in space to make interstellar travel possible. In the film, the drive works but there are some unintended consequences. The Event Horizon did bridge two points in space, but in doing so it entered another universe, one of "pure chaos, pure evil", and now it wants to go back. A horror of mind tricks and non-Euclidean geometry, the Event Horizon is agenda formed into a location. Everything it does to and shows the rescue crew that discover it drifting in space has a single purpose - to get it back to the other place. Why it wants to go back to Hell is never entirely clear. Is the ship possessed by something it picked up in the other dimension or was is gifted life there? It doesn't really matter. It wants to take you on a trip and there is little you can do to stop it.



THE EXECUTIONER

FIRST APPEARANCE: Resident Evil 5 (2009)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Resident Evil: Afterlife (2010), Resident Evil: Retribution (2012)

A hulking beast of a man covered in nails, the Executioner stands a full two heads above your average foe. First seen executing your only contact in Resident Evil 5, it's clear from the start the hooded butcher is built for doing exactly what his name suggests. He wields a vicious axe with a saw-like edge, and is practiced in chopping heads off with a single swing. The weapon can also be reversed to form a giant hammer, becoming even more frightening when he decides to set it on fire. The two giant nails that pierce the skin of his back suggests a high pain tolerance, which make him a tough enemy to take down with conventional bullets alone. It's not quite clear if the scars that litter his skin are stitched up wounds or part of experiments with the Uroboros virus, but whatever the case, they indicate that this is one bad dude who you do not want to mess with. We recommend grenades. Lots of grenades.





PELOQUIN

FIRST APPEARANCE: Nightbreed (1990)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Nightbreed (comic)

"Everything is true. God's an astronaut. Oz is over the rainbow, and Midian is where the monsters live".

One of the more primal of the Tribes of the Moon, as the monsters of Midian call themselves, Peloquin is a warrior and part time philosopher, resigned to the fact that he is prophesied to be the harbinger of the doom of the Nightbreed. It is Peloquin's bite that infects and transforms Boone into Cabal, and it is Cabal that brings the wrath of serial killer/psychiatrist Dr. Philip K. Decker, Police Captain Eigerman and a posse of rednecks down upon the otherwise peaceful necropolis of Midian. In a story that shows the humans to be bigger monsters than the actual monsters, Peloquin is still something of an animal. He is willing to obey the law when someone is looking, but when he is hunting alone, or in the company of his friend Kinski, Peloquin is rage and hunger and anything that gets in his way is meat for the beast.



DR. CHANNARD

FIRST APPEARANCE: Hellbound: Hellraiser II (1988)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

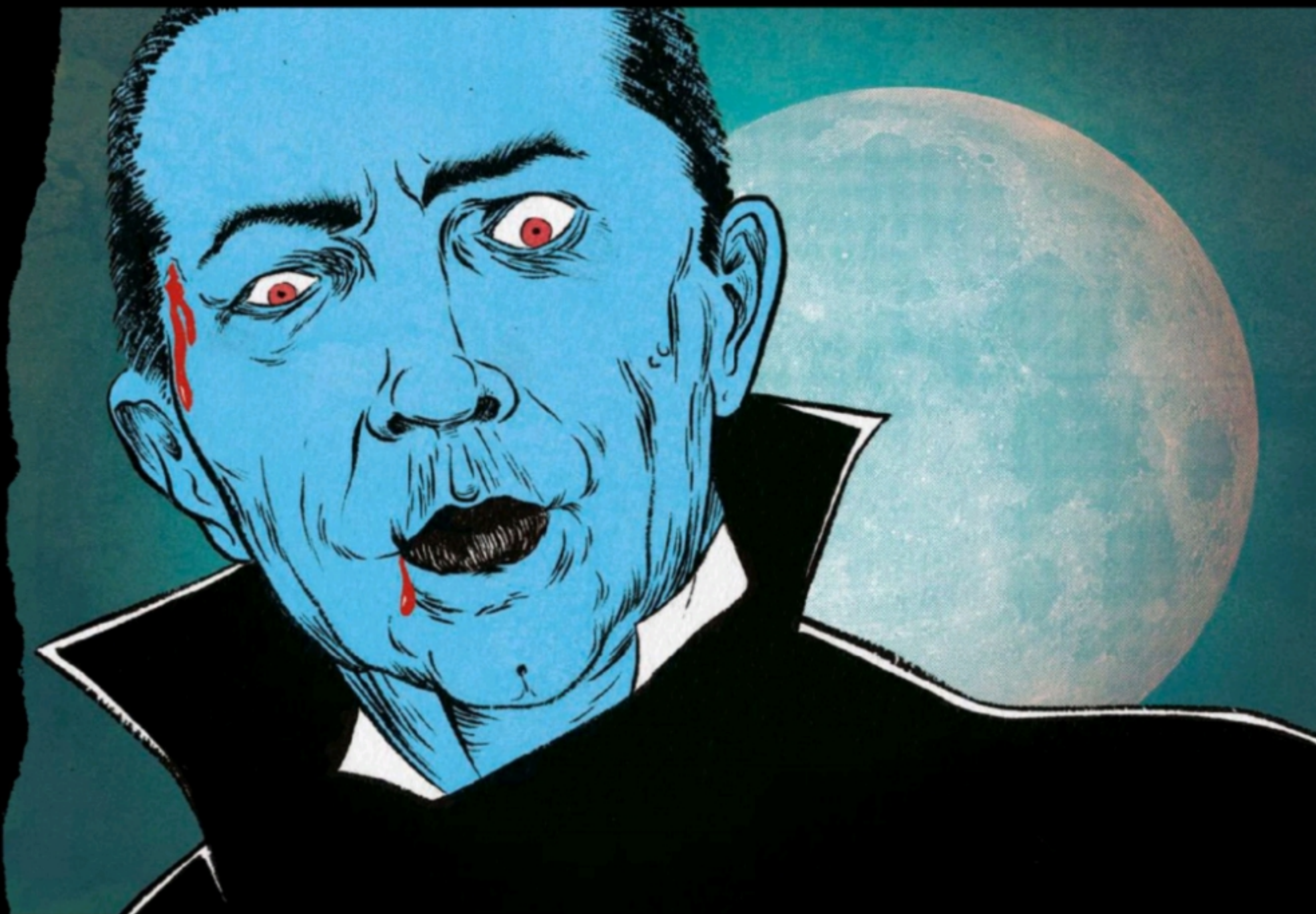
Another example of humans being the worst monsters of all, Dr. Channard brings the already disreputable profession of horror movie psychiatrist into even further ill repute. Obsessed with stories of Cenobites, the Lament Configuration and Julia, Channard uses the patients under his care to unlock the doors to the Cenobite realm. He goads a patient convinced he has insects crawling under his skin to mutilate himself with a straight razor to bring Julia back to life, and uses another patient's obsession with puzzles to open the Lament Configuration. Of course, as Pinhead says, "It is not hands that summon us, it is desire". Channard's desire for forbidden knowledge and experience is unsurpassed, making him beloved of the god of the Labyrinth, Leviathan and the most powerful of Cenobites. Even after his transformation, Channard remains the most human of the Cenobites - his desires and petty hatreds set him apart from Pinhead, Butterball, the Chatterer and Deepthroat. Whereas he has plans, they have nothing but a job.



BILL PARDY

FIRST APPEARANCE: Slither (2006)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

Played deliciously straight by genre film favourite Nathan Fillion, Bill Pardy is a pastiche of a number of police characters from a number of horror films made during the 70s and 80s, including, notably, Detective Ray Casmeron from Night of the Creeps (1985), a film that greatly influenced Slither. Bill Pardy doesn't quip so much as he points out the folly of other character's assumptions. When the Mayor, Jack MacReady, uses Lyme disease to explain why Grant Grant, the tough, rich guy married to Bill Pardy's childhood sweetheart, has been transformed into a tentacled monstrosity killing people and cattle around town, Pardy's only response is to point out the inanity of the comment, saying, "And that makes you look like a squid?"



DRACULA

FIRST APPEARANCE: *Dracula* (1897) • **SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES:** Far too many to list

When it comes to creatures that stalk the night, of all the men, beasts, demons, monsters and devils that come to mind, Dracula walks tallest amongst them. He first entered our collective awareness in Bram Stoker's 1897 novel of the same name, a dark Count residing in his gothic Transylvanian castle. He appears human, but a closer study reveals peculiarities that only become more and more apparent the deeper one delves.

At first, his pale complexion, dark eyes and disconcerting gaze are the only sign of something amiss, but further observation reveals an odd tendency to sleep during the day and rise at night, as well as a penchant to take his dinners alone, never eating in the company of guests. He is incredibly graceful, with movements so fluid he almost glides across the floor, and his dark eyes seemingly flash red when a great passion takes hold of him. Stranger still, the locals draw crosses across their bodies at the mention of his name, the wolves that skulk through the surrounding forests part in his wake, ghostly women respond to his every whim and, most disturbing of all, a mirror grants him no reflection when he stands before it.

And so, by peeling away each layer

of shadow one by one Bram Stoker so expertly reveals Count Dracula's true nature as a vampire. It is speculated that Dracula's human origins source back to Vlad III, the once mighty Prince of Wallachia, a man more commonly known to the masses as Vlad the Impaler. His father, Vlad II, was dubbed "Dracul" when he entered the Order of the Dragon, a fraternity of knights hell bent on protecting Christianity in Eastern Europe, thus leaving young Vlad to inherit the loaded title "Dracula" or "Son of the Dragon". How he found his immortality and became reliant on blood to survive is unknown, but what we can say is that the Prince of Darkness is a malevolent force, preying upon humanity with unnatural power.

Having sunk his teeth into contemporary folklore, literature, film and even our beloved videogames, the father of all vampires has taken many forms since Stokers' envisioning, even being bastardised to sell children's cereal. Bela Lugosi redefined the character in 1931 with his performance in the first film to sport Dracula's name, creating the famous voice that has been adopted countless times by imitators baring plastic fangs. Funnily enough,

the phrase "I want to suck your blood!" while instantly associated with Lugosi's Dracula, is famously misquoted.

But for the gamers among us, Dracula is most prominently featured in the long running Castlevania series, which makes sense considering he appears in almost every title to date, as well as the original Japanese title *Akumaj Dorakyura* translates to Devil's Castle Dracula. In these games, Dracula's name is taken very literally, imbuing him with the fierce power to transform into an actual dragon to set the stage for some of gaming's more memorable boss fights. In this universe, the castle itself is intrinsically linked to Dracula with its mysterious appearance tying in with the Lord of Shadow's awakening, crumbling to the ground or being sucked into the sky upon his defeat. The Count's abode plays host to a huge array of frightful creatures from gothic folklore, but no matter where they rate on the horror scale, or how much power they may wield, all those who reside in Dracula's castle bow down before the might of the Dragon who walks in the skin of man, for he has tamed even Death itself. **ALEX MANN**

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL PURVIS



LESLIE VERNON

FIRST APPEARANCE: Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon (2006)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

At once a love letter to slasher films and a great slasher villain in his own right, Leslie Vernon, the eponymous character in the mockumentary Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon is both a tool to skewer slasher convention and an examination of idol worship. Set in a reality in which all the great film slashers, mortal and supernatural alike – Jason Voorhees, Michael Myers, Freddie Krueger, et al – actually exist, Leslie Vernon demonstrates how a normal man can be just as evil and terrifying as the supernatural killers he so admires. All it takes is careful planning when setting up your killzone, creating your own mythology, complete with fatal weakness/iconic death, choosing the right final girl and having good enough cardio that you can keep up with anyone who tries to flee.



SHODAN

FIRST APPEARANCE: System Shock (1994)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: System Shock 2 (1998)

Created by the TriOptimum Corporation, the Sentient Hyper Optimised Data Access Network – SHODAN – was an advanced artificial intelligence designed to administer the deep space mining and research installation, Citadel Station. Then some stuff happened, mistakes were made, blah blah blah, SHODAN went crazy and began killing everything with a pulse. So far, so predictable. We've all seen homicidal AIs before, but the thing that makes SHODAN such a memorable character, and a particularly memorable antagonist, is her personality. Voiced with chilling conviction by Terri Brosius, her calculating megalomania and unshakeable certainty in her gruesome mission (basically: kill all meatbags) is evident in every single one of her glitchy, discordant monologues. That's why when SHODAN tells you that you'll never beat her – the "perfect, immortal machine" – it's hard not to agree.



NEMESIS

FIRST APPEARANCE: Resident Evil 3: Nemesis (1999)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Resident Evil Survivor 2 Code: Veronica (2001), Under the Skin (2004), Resident Evil: Apocalypse (2004), Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles (2007), Ultimate Marvel vs. Capcom 3 (2011), Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City (2012), Project X Zone (2013)

What's more frightening than an oversized, highly weaponised monster that hounds your every step? An intelligent, oversized, highly weaponised monster that hounds your every step. Named after the Goddess of Vengeance from Greek mythology, this rocket launcher wielding monstrosity is the result of an infected Tyrant, a biological weapon that has only a one in ten million chance of being created when a specimen is given the T-virus. He bears a face that even a mother couldn't love, having swollen with mutation to the point of covering his right eye, creating a facial expression that is constantly set to "snarl". Let's just say he's the kind of guy you'd run away from on sight, but the fact that RE3 makes him practically invincible doesn't hurt either.

THE SHADOW

FIRST APPEARANCE: AMNESIA: THE DARK DESCENT (2010)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

The Shadow cannot be stopped, reasoned or bargained with. It can only be outrun. It is not evil, though its actions in *Amnesia: The Dark Descent* are certainly antagonistic. It's a guardian, but it's not a protector. It exists to protect the Orbs, mysterious objects of power that could have control over the universe. One theory suggests that The Shadow is the will of the universe, hunting down anyone who tries to use or study the Orbs. If the Shadow is at one with the universe, the fact that it leaves a trail of flesh wherever it goes raises some interesting questions as to the nature of life. Another theory says that it is simply a mindless manifestation of the power of the Orbs themselves, which is why some of the people who interact with the Orbs are left unharmed whilst others are killed. We may never know the truth, but if we ever come in contact with an Orb we know what to do. Run. Never stop running.



HANNIBAL LECTER

FIRST APPEARANCE: Red Dragon (1981)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Manhunter (1986), The Silence of the Lambs (1988/1991), Hannibal (1999/2001), Hannibal Rising (2006/2007), Hannibal (2013 -)

Hannibal Lecter is smarter than you. He is always a step ahead. He has plans within plans and isn't saddled by the kind of inconvenient morality that others may find a hindrance. He is capable of untold brutality but also stunning acts of kindness. Hannibal Lecter has been portrayed by three different adult actors and each of them has a different take on the cannibal psychiatrist. Brian Cox is all cold calculation sound in the knowledge that he is smarter than Will Graham. Anthony Hopkins is a showoff, happy to use his intelligence to torment his captors and pursuers, dangling information as currency. Mads Mikkelsen is a monster in a human suit, capable of appearing to be a human being whilst being something entirely separate. No matter the portrayal, Hannibal Lecter is terrifying. He's better than you and he knows it.





ANDREI

FIRST APPEARANCE: Vampire the Masquerade: Bloodlines (2004)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

An acolyte of the Tzmisce vampire clan, Andrei combines aristocratic refinement and eloquence with inhuman brutality and sadism. Looking somewhat like a cross between a xenomorph and fire-eyed reptile, Andrei plays a pivotal role in the World of Darkness's apocalyptic Final Nights, crafting abominations from the flesh of his victims and setting them loose in the Los Angeles sewer system, hoping to drive the Nosferatu from their "pestilent nests" and "gouge out the eyes" of the hated Camarilla. Thanks to the intervention of the Neonate, his plan doesn't quite work out the way he'd anticipated, but hey - full marks for ingenuity. Oh, and let's not neglect to mention his... unique take on interior decoration. Blood spattered walls and dismembered torsos are SO chic right now.



ALMA WADE

FIRST APPEARANCE: F.E.A.R. (2005)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: F.E.A.R. 2: Project Origin (2009), F.E.A.R. 3 (2011)

The gaming world's answer to The Ring, Alma Wade is a little girl with psychokinetic abilities who capitalises on being pretty damn creepy. At the age of three she was inducted into Project Paragon, where she was forced to endure psychic testing and electroshock therapy. At the age of five she deliberately started to fail those tests, psychologically attacking some of her testers by manipulating their dreams. By the age of seven she was moved to Project Origin, being put into a coma and locked away in a top secret vault. But hey, when did that ever stop anyone? Since then, the severely disturbed eight year old has been seen in a plain red dress, her dark hair hanging in front of her white, mask-like face and her legs splattered with blood. If she flits in and out of the corner of one's vision, it's a sure sign things are going to get messy.



ALBERT WESKER

FIRST APPEARANCE: Resident Evil (1996)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Resident Evil: Code Veronica (2000), Resident Evil Zero (2002), Resident Evil 4 (2005), Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles (2007), Resident Evil: Extinction (2007), Resident Evil 5 (2009), Resident Evil: Afterlife (2010), Marvel vs Capcom: Fate of Two Worlds (2011), Resident Evil: Retribution (2012).

Albert Wesker has been antagonising Resident Evil fans from day one. Despite a fashion sense that has eternally remained in the 90s, Wesker has somehow managed to be at the forefront of almost every bioterrorist attack Resident Evil fans have been caught in. Originally the commanding officer of S.T.A.R.S Alpha Team, Wesker's true colours were slowly unraveled when he was exposed as a double agent, secretly working for Umbrella to lure his team into the Spencer Mansion. The fact he was responsible for all the frights in RE1 alone should be enough to bring him into this list, but he takes things a step further when he injects himself with a variant of the T-virus, essentially transforming him from puppet master to monster in a single trope spanning bound.



PYRAMID HEAD

FIRST APPEARANCE: *Silent Hill 2* (2001) • **SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES:** *Silent Hill* (2006), *Silent Hill: Homecoming* (2008)

▶ The first time we meet Pyramid Head is in *Silent Hill 2*. He is just standing there, watching you with eyes he might not even have. The second time we meet Pyramid Head, he makes his first impression by showing some shambling mannequins a good time via raping them in half.

Back up it up one sec: Inter-monsterial forced intercourse in a relatively mainstream PS2 game circa 2001. Why this scene never erupted into a big controversial deal is a mystery on par with what's under the 'mid – though originally, Pyramid Head looked a little different. There was no pyramid on his head. Instead, he was just a masked dude. Designer Masahiro Ito wanted to create "a monster with a hidden face," but ultimately disliked how human a simple mask made his monster. He tried a triangle, and his work-in-progress became Sankaku Atama ('Triangle Head'), and then finished. He liked how those sharp acute angles suggested inescapable corridors of personal agony. Anyone who's suffered beautifully through *Silent Hill 2* knows just how much sense this seemingly senseless cesspit of butcher's apparel and geometry actually ends up making.

In directing the *Silent Hill* film, Christophe Gans would go on to say that he feels Pyramid Head "was one of the executioners in the original history of the town." This is typical of more Western interpretations of the *Silent Hill* mythos at large, and it may help to explain why Gans' movie sucked ass: that's way too literal. To explain *Silent Hill* is to rob it of its meaning, which at its best is more felt than understood. As the antithesis to *Resident Evil*'s obnoxious camp, *Silent Hill* is abstract and rife with symbolism. Never is this more true in the curious case of James Sunderland. Pyramid Head is not a creature, per se. At least, he was not intended as the franchise mascot he became. When James asks Eddie about Pyramid Head, Eddie has no idea what the fuck he's talking about. Pyramid Head is an element of James' broken-up psyche. A big element. Maybe the biggest. He's what James runs from throughout the whole game. Pyramid Head never runs after him, though. He is just there.

Silent Hill 2 is about a man trying to deal with things he's done that are heavier than heaven. Those things literally haunt him, as well they should

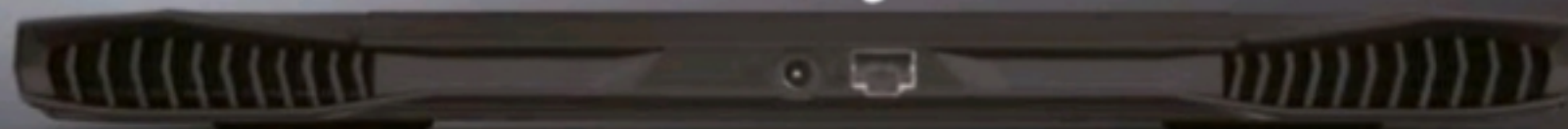
because they're terrible. Pyramid Head is both his crime and his punishment. Very rarely is Pyramid Head outwardly aggressive to James. Only when he gets too close. Most of the time, Pyramid Head is doing some messed up thing and James can only watch in 'horror,' limply firing a few bullets at his own pretense to what he should be feeling. The truth of Pyramid Head is what is really going on inside James. The narrow view of a right-angle cage for the mind, the denial on all sides. The fact James can later find and use Pyramid Head's Great Knife tells you everything. Killer be killed. Pyramid Head is no iconic villain. That'd be you.

Pyramid Head's elevation to the faceless face of *Silent Hill* was a nice fan-made accident, but also a damaging one. He has come to represent the series as a whole, and just by doing so, he is misrepresented. Pyramid Head is not *Silent Hill*. He is what *Silent Hill* once meant, though that meaning could be obscure and deeply personal. That was the point; the lancing point at the far end of three rusted triangles hammered into headwear for damnable human things hiding from the lights and sounds of life's bad times. **CAT BANDIT**

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL PURVIS



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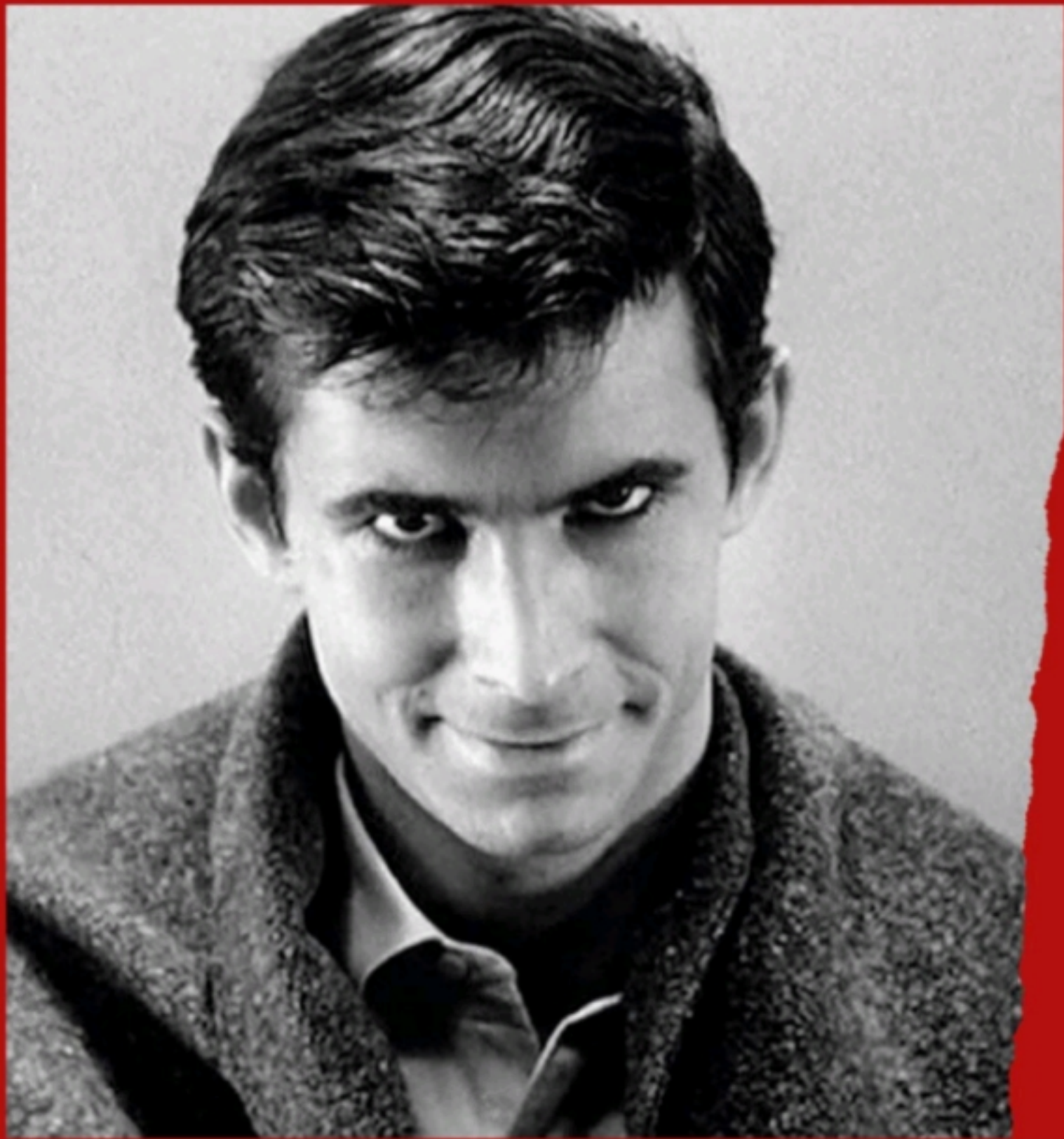
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NORMAN BATES

FIRST APPEARANCE: Psycho (1959)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Psycho (1960), Psycho II (1983), Psycho III (1986), Psycho IV: The Beginning (1999), Psycho (1998)

The reason why "mummy issues" are so damn frightening, Norman Bates took Freud's Oedipus complex to a whole new level. Having suffered extreme emotional abuse as a child, Norman and his out of the way motel have left more than a few skeletons in his closet. Still living under the iron fist of his overbearing mother, Bates is diagnosed with dissociative identity disorder, a product of his suppressive nature. Despite being originally created by Robert Bloch, it's Anthony Perkins' portrayal in Hitchcock's 1960 film that is etched in our collective consciousness, staring calculatingly into the camera through dark eyes roofed by a dark brow, even darker thoughts running through his mind. Equal parts the innocent and the insane, Norman Bates is the definition of a wolf in sheep's clothing.



THE THING

FIRST APPEARANCE: The Thing from Another World (1951)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: The Thing (1982), The Thing (2011)

In its first incarnation, the Thing was an alien vegetable organism that needed blood to survive. The Thing from Another World is considered one of the true classics of 1950s sci-fi, but it wasn't until the 1982 John Carpenter remake that the creature became both iconic and terrifying. Transformed from a blood drinking vegetable to a regenerative, highly adaptive organism capable of infecting and duplicating any other organic being or even creating entirely new forms to deal with any circumstance. Instead of being a monster lovingly known as the "Super Carrot", the Thing became the very incarnation of paranoia. It can be anyone or anything. It could even be in you.





THE WITCH

FIRST APPEARANCE: Left 4 Dead (2008)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Left 4 Dead 2 (2009)

Left 4 Dead is packed full of classic horror tropes, but by far one of the scariest is the Exorcist inspired Witch. Heralded by a gentle woman's sobs, the Witch is the one character that consistently stops players in their tracks. Torches and guns are instantly holstered as a wave of "Shhhh! A Witch!" make the headset rounds and players instantly shift from "Gung Ho" to "oh no". A ghastly acapella chorus rises and falls, and the team is forced to creep by the sobbing monstrosity – for to "Leeroy Jenkins" a Witch is to invite certain death. In the videogame world, the threat of a one hit kill is about as scary as it gets.



ASAMI YAMAZAKI

FIRST APPEARANCE: Audition (1999)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

Asami Yamazaki is both villain and victim, the product of systematic and sustained sexual and psychological abuse. She appears sweet and reserved, the very image of a demure, "proper" Japanese woman, but clues as to her fragile mental state are in the offing. Her room has nothing in it but a phone, by which she obsessively waits, and a burlap sack. Occasionally the sack twitches. Outwardly the very image of docile servility, Asami Yamazaki is not at all what she seems. Deeply wounded, obsessive and terrified of abandonment, she will do anything to keep what she considers hers and to punish those who try to take advantage. Her sweet voice girlishly sawing "kiri, kiri, kiri" will haunt you, and you'll never look at a wire saw the same way again.



CHUCKY/ CHARLES LEE RAY

FIRST APPEARANCE: Child's Play (1988)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Child's Play franchise

Charles Lee Ray, better known to Chicago police as voodoo serial killer, The Lakeshore Strangler, is mortally wounded in a shootout and transfers his soul into the body of a Good Guy doll. The plan is that he will possess the first child that sees him and continue his murderous exploits. Things, of course, don't go to plan, and Charles spends at least 25 years (and six films so far) trapped in the body of a doll, trying to transfer his soul into the bodies of a succession of victims, killing anyone who gets in his way. Dolls are creepy to begin with, with their dead eyes and rictus grins, but when you fill one with the soul of a serial killer who is obsessed with playing "hide the soul" with a young child, things get iconic.



JASON VOORHEES

FIRST APPEARANCE: Friday the 13th (1980) • **SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES:** Fridays the 13th series and spin-offs

► The hockey mask. The "ki-ki-ki-ki" music accompanying his every looming step. The legacy that follows him even through chintzy battles between him and other greats of the horror genre. These all make him one of the most memorable set pieces of the world of nightmares, a tour-de-force who's quite literally unstoppable. Even in death he lumbers on, staggering toward his next victim. I'm talking Jason Voorhees, everyone's favorite machete-clad supernatural serial killer. All he wants to do is please his mommy, who happens to be one of the only people who ever loved him the way he's always desired. And he certainly deserves a spot on any top list of horror characters due to his tenure, his appeal, and how downright awesome he truly is.

I love Jason, too – just not in the same way he loves his psychopathic mother or stalking his prey on a dark and stormy night through hallowed campgrounds. My love for the killer is based on my passion for horror films as a whole. He's my childhood, everything I saw in the classic monster movies and slasher flicks growing up as a little girl, quintessentially '80s and yet able to transition seamlessly into modern remakes and TV spin-offs at

the same time. There's something so traditional about Mr. Voorhees and yet so innovative at the same time, and with every new piece of media released to tie in with Jason and his legacy, I am glued to the screen to keep up with his antics.

It's all in his style, right down to the swift, silent kills and creative measures he employs to make sure all those he wants gone are dead before they even know it. Whether it's a machete to the skull or being bound together in sleeping bags and bashed to death, he's a master of the comedic kill, with a twinkle in his eye on his deformed face behind that iconic mask. If we could get into his head, we might be treated to strange visions of him making his mother proud as he cleaves through the skulls of "demonic" beachgoers and teenagers having premarital sex, or he might be plagued with visions of bloodlust that can only be sated by killing everyone in sight.

There's something inherently terrifying about a mask being the last thing you see before you die, especially if the unseen presence behind said mask is an evil spirit that simply can't be quelled and that insists on puttering about

somewhere that should be safe, like a campground or the big city or a deep space cloning station. In stark contrast to Freddy Krueger, who is all about the slapsticky sight gags, Jason is no-nonsense and has zero time for witty puns and zingers between grisly murders. His violence is driven by purpose, and because of that he's so much scarier than any scarred-up pedophile could ever be. And while I like Freddy and his comedic antics, Jason is much more akin to a real-life killer, à la Michael Myers. Except, also like Michael Myers, he's an immortal zombie. (Myers had the better theme music, though.)

And even though he's come back to life time and time again, there's a very real fear attached to him and all that he's capable of. Being disemboweled, dismembered, or taking a machete to the chest is a very real fear that I think we can all relate to. Just like poor Jason wants to make his mother happy in the end. All he wants is love. And if that's his motivation, I think we have a little more in common with Mr. Voorhees than we may have originally thought. **BRITTANY VINCENT**

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL PURVIS



WEEPING ANGELS

FIRST APPEARANCE: Dr. Who: S3 Blink (2007)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Who: S5 The Time of Angels/Flesh and Stone (2010), Dr Who: S6: The God Complex (2011), Dr Who: S7 The Angels Take Manhattan (2012), Dr Who: The Time Doctor (2013)

Doctor Who is no stranger to horror, having dealt with daemons, cybermen and even werewolves in its time, yet none have come close to matching the Weeping Angels. A race as old as the universe itself, the Weeping Angels are quick and deadly, but can only move when unobserved. To the common eye, they are merely angel statues weeping into their hands, but the more learned will know the monstrous faces they hide beneath. The Angels are capable of moving at such immense speeds taking your eyes off them for a second, even to simply blink, is to sign your life away. As for their origins, not even the Doctor himself knows where they come from, but not even he takes them lightly, labelling them "the deadliest, most powerful, most malevolent life-form evolution has ever produced." Don't look away, don't turn your back and, whatever you do, don't blink.



ASHLEY "ASH" WILLIAMS

FIRST APPEARANCE: Evil Dead (1981)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Evil Dead 2: Dead by Dawn (1987), Army of Darkness (1992), multiple comics and games

Initially something of a coward unable to hold his ground against his possessed friends, Ashley J. Williams transforms into something more than human over the course of the three Evil Dead films. His experiences transform him from a normal man to a larger than life, most probably batshit insane anti-hero cartoon character, capable of sustaining and dishing out superhuman levels of punishment. He amputates his own hand with a chainsaw and then, rather than falling to blood loss and shock, manages to wage war against his own severed appendage. He's a poor long term planner but a brilliant improviser, managing to replace his hand with a chainsaw, create gunpowder from some chemistry notes and transform his Oldsmobile into a steam powered battle wagon. He does this because he is Ash. He is the man for the job, as long as that job is selling goods at S-Mart or killing Deadites that is.



DANNY TORRANCE

FIRST APPEARANCE: The Shining (1977)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: The Shining (1980), Stephen King's The Shining: TV Series (1997), Doctor Sleep (2013)

A clever boy marked with the gift of the shining, Danny constantly lives in the shadow of his father. At a young age he is taken to the Overlook Hotel, where his psychic powers allow him to interact with ghosts from the past and future. As he watches Jack fall prey to the Hotel's sinister influence, Danny takes comfort in his invisible friend Tony, a personification of his hidden psyche. When things get too much, Danny allows Tony to take over his mind, giving him visions he doesn't quite understand. This is the catalyst for the famous "redrum" scene, delivered with a frog-like croak by Danny Lloyd in Kubrick's film adaptation, continuing in a drum like rhythm which builds to a panicked shout. Kubrick largely uses Danny as an avatar for the audience, allowing us to see the world through his eyes, making scenes such as Danny's tricycle rounds so much more terrifying.



JAMES LEE EVERETT

FIRST APPEARANCE: The Walking Dead Season 1 (2012) • SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

At the end of issue 24 of The Walking Dead comic, a battered Rick Grimes addresses his people. He is bandaged and bloodied after fighting with another survivor. He admits that he was naïve to believe that non-violence was an option in the new world: "We're living on borrowed time here. Every minute of our life is a minute we steal from them". Across a two-page splash, Rick declares "We ARE the walking dead!". It's a turning point for the character, but also rather on-the-nose. The central theme of zombie narratives is almost always that the surviving humans are the real monsters, an idea that felt fresh when Romero released Night of the Living Dead in 1968, but has since been played out a bit.

Near the end of the fourth episode of Telltale's The Walking Dead game, the player is asked to make their most important decision yet. Lee Everett clutches the hand of Ben Paul, a young man who has failed to pull his weight several times throughout the season. If you let go of him in this moment, he will fall to the bottom of the bell tower you're currently fleeing to the top of and die. Pulling him up is a strain on Lee, and Ben is asking to be dropped so that the others may make an easier escape.

In this moment, Lee Everett – and the player, of course – aren't just deciding whether to let one person live or die. They're deciding what society should look like now that civility is no longer required. They're deciding whether the weak should be left by the wayside, whether the goal of your survivor group should be to preserve as much life as possible, or to give the strongest among them the best fighting chance. Lee's decision is a symbolic declaration of whether compassion is still important or not.

The game has been guiding you towards this decision the whole time. Lee starts the game on his way to prison for the murder of the senator his wife was sleeping with, a murder that he has said was an accident. Lee frequently expresses remorse, but we never really get the full details of what happened – everyone remembers everything he does from episode 1 onwards, but a significant portion of the slate has been swept clean.

Clementine, of course, is the heart of the game, and the central redemptive figure: Lee can prove his worth to the new world by ushering a sweet young child through it as unspoiled as possible.

At the core of The Walking Dead is the idea that Lee is a protector of people: while Clementine may start as a cute, well-behaved, likable child, over the course of both seasons she is fleshed out until she becomes a symbol of hope: if Lee can be a good surrogate father, Clementine may be able to survive in this world.

And if Clementine can survive, damaged but uncorrupted, perhaps this is a world still worth living in.

66% of players had Lee pull Ben up. 66% decided that Lee wasn't going to betray the weak, or embrace self-interest at the expense of another man's life. That's not quite a large enough number to give one hope that the Inevitable Zombie Apocalypse will bring people closer together rather than pushing them apart, but it shows that most players decided to make Lee a man who cared about the individual in a society that didn't demand it.

The Walking Dead comes back to the hackneyed idea that humans are the real monsters a few times, but in Lee, we're given a hero who makes a broken world seem worth fighting for. **JAMES O'CONNOR**

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL PURVIS

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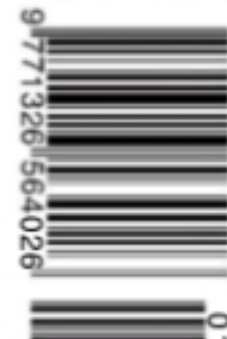
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HERBERT WEST

FIRST APPEARANCE: Herbert West - Reanimator (1922)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Re-Animator (1985), Bride of Re-Animator (1990), Beyond Re-Animator (2003)

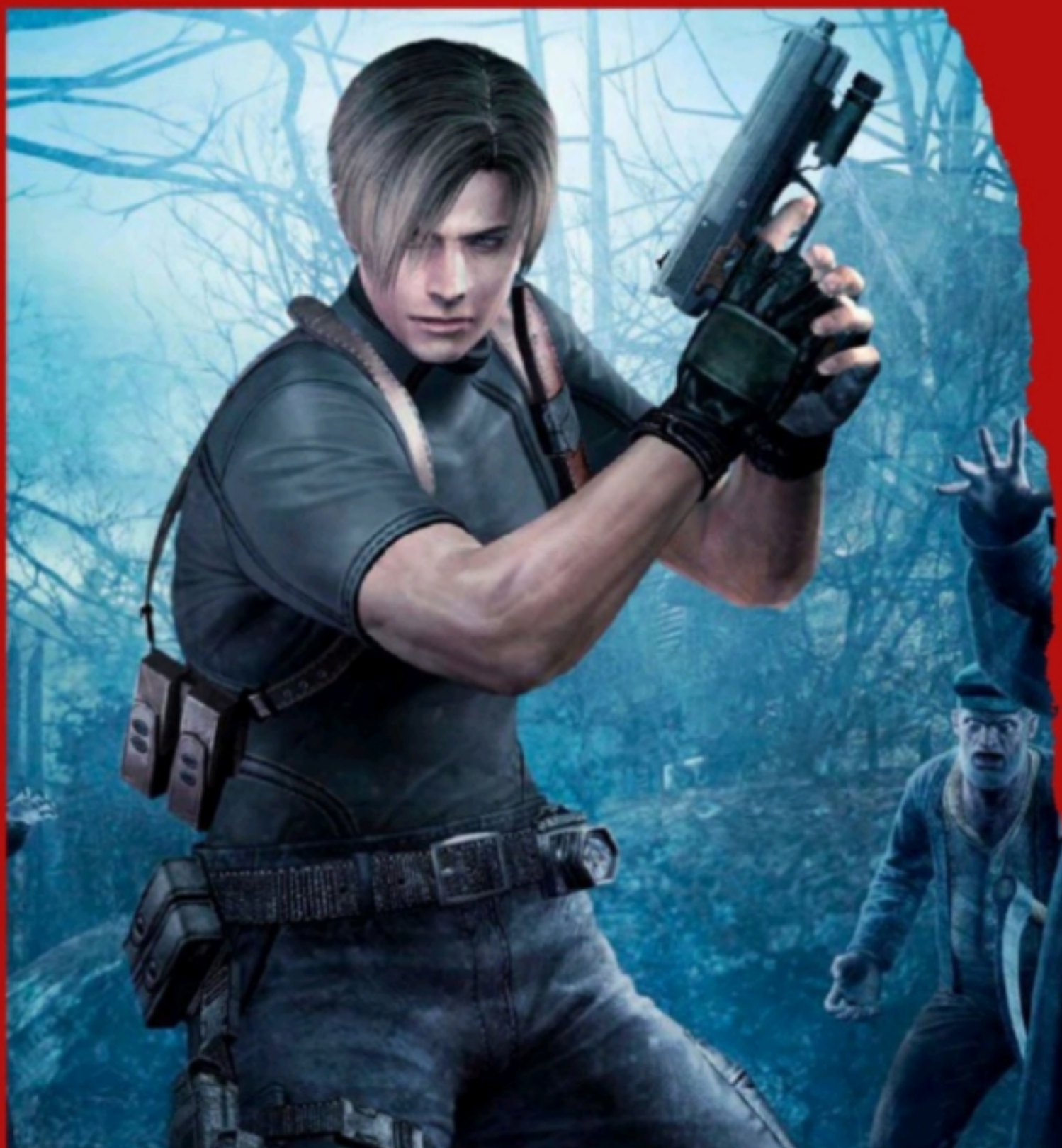
H.P. Lovecraft hated his Herbert West - Reanimator stories and they're widely regarded as the worst of his many works. Why is Herbert West on this list then? When Brian Yuzna and Stuart Gordon cast Jeffrey Combs as the doctor obsessed with animating the dead in the 1985 splatter comedy, Re-Animator, they took the character from being a twitchy Frankenstein parody to being an acid tongued, twitchy genius with a malfunctioning moral compass. He's a brittle savant, constantly questioning everything aside from his own motivations. He'll murder to protect his serum and his solitary friend but he's not a villain. He's not a hero either. He is simply Herbert West, a force of nature that creates chaos in the name of advancement, leaving devastation in his wake.



LEON S KENNEDY

FIRST APPEARANCE: Resident Evil 2 (1998)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Resident Evil 3: Nemesis (1999), Resident Evil: Code Veronica (2000), Resident Evil Gaiden (2001), Resident Evil 4 (2005), Resident Evil Degeneration (2008), Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles (2009), Resident Evil: Operation Raccoon City (2012), Resident Evil 6 (2012), Resident Evil: Damnation (2012), Resident Evil: Retribution (2012)

Leon S Kennedy is ever the optimist. He's naive, loyal, and a sucker for the ladies, a combination that make him an ideal Labrador, and subsequently the ideal horror protagonist. The horror genre revolves around making bad decisions: too often will a character enter a dark, ominous cellar for no reason, but if there's narrative purpose for doing so like, say, a gullible optimism, then these actions make perfect sense. The best part is Leon S Kennedy never learns, laying down the groundwork for a vast array of scares. As far as rival Chris Redfield is concerned, a dark room isn't that frightening for a guy capable of punching giant boulders to bits, but Kennedy is more indicative of the everyman, allowing the unknown to retain its original threat... even if that threat may have lost its way in recent years.



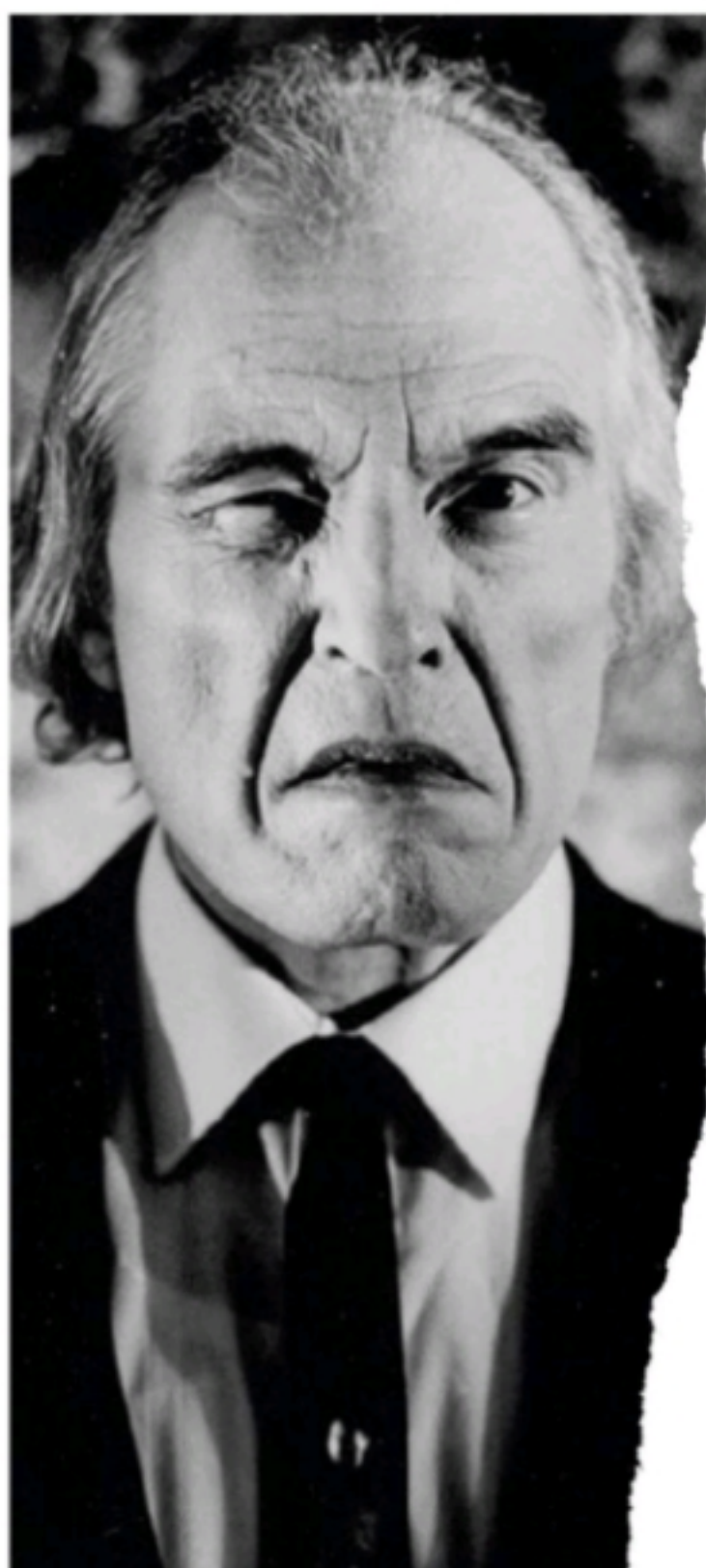


BOB

FIRST APPEARANCE: Twin Peaks (1990-1991)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Twin Peaks: Fire Walk With Me (1992)

The mysterious and elusive Bob, a being who feeds on fear and pleasure, rendering those he controls helpless in his grasp. Heralding from the Black Lodge, that confusing and ominous plane of reality where evil things reside, he stalks the Earth in the guise of an owl. Whether he really exists or is merely a creation of the mind is uncertain, but after a long debate, Agent Cooper and Sheriff Truman come to an agreement that, at the very least, Bob is the embodiment of the evil that lurks within man, acting as a way of justifying the evil that men do.



THE TALL MAN

FIRST APPEARANCE: Phantasm (1979)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Phantasm II (1988), Phantasm III: Lord of the Dead (1994), Phantasm IV: Oblivion (1998), Phantasm V: Ravager (2014)

Originally a mild mannered, if somewhat cadaverously unsettling 19th century mortician, Jebediah Morningside, The Tall Man came into being when Morningside's obsession with breaching the boundaries between the worlds of the living and the dead prompted him to create a machine that allowed him access to the other side. Changed by his experience, the Tall Man, along with his cohort of mutants, flying killer balls and human servants scoured the backroads of the US in search of corpses to use as slave labour. Preferring to communicate through facial expressions rather than words – a raised eyebrow being one of his signature expressions – the Tall Man is a superhuman enigma. He's unbelievably strong, telekinetic, capable of creating illusions and changing his shape and is seemingly immortal. He's evil, sure, but his motives are his own. What does he want? Why is he obsessed with Mike?



MICHAEL MYERS

FIRST APPEARANCE: Halloween (1978)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Way too many Halloween movies (aside from Halloween 3)

"I met this six year old child with this blank, pale, emotionless face, and the blackest eyes; the devil's eyes... I realized what was living behind that boy's eyes was purely and simply...evil."

Loomis' description of Michael Myers sums up both his impact and his greatness as a villain. Myers, or "The Shape" as he is referred to in the credits of Halloween (or "Old Shatner Face" as we like to call him), is pure, implacable evil. He is raw aggression and anger tempered by just enough intelligence and cunning to make him much more dangerous than a feral animal. The nature of the beast has never been fully explained, so it's never clear if he's a supernatural menace, an unbelievably durable human or a possessing force. This makes him unknowable and eternal. Michael Myers is evil. He kills. The end.



ERIN

FIRST APPEARANCE: *You're Next* (2011) • SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

Horror has a reputation for creating strong female leads, and Erin (played by our very own Aussie actress Sharni Vinson) from the 2011 film, *You're Next* is no exception. Known mostly for her time on *Home and Away* and the 3D gimmick film *Step Up 3D*, Sharni takes a very different role in this low budget splatterfest, using her natural Australian accent to play a young college student meeting her boyfriend Crispian's (AJ Bowen) family for the first time. Little does she know, they are a rich family of brats and psychopaths that are far from the friendly cast of *Family Matters*.

As the story develops Erin seems a tad understated as the heroine, her polite presence and demeanor is stamped by the crazy antics of Crispian's overbearing and unstable family who seem to have a lot of unresolved issues. Everything is going fine (albeit a bit tense) until during a dinner the family is set upon by a masked gang of armed thugs who begin to pick off the guests, mercilessly slaughtering their victims one by one, using an elaborate array of traps and weapons.

Moments after the blood begins to fly, the seemingly shy Erin springs into action. Almost instantly becoming the only level headed human in the room as she stays

calm amidst the chaos and takes control of the situation. Erin is locking down the house in seconds and boldly takes charge to help save the family from the affronting siege. As the film progresses and things begin to get really messy, Erin is forced to deal with several of her attackers head on, using makeshift weapons and without help from any of the other characters (including her boyfriend). This small (previously unassuming) Australian dynamo takes on the intimidating killers and dispatches them in a number of hardcore grizzly ways, each time throwing a big spanner into the middle of the intended plan of the unknown assailants. She eventually takes down the entire crew single handedly by outwitting them and using their own tactics against them.

Throughout the whole film the characters are constantly underestimating her abilities and it is amusing to watch the reactions of both the family members and attackers as she manages to get back up again and again when set upon. Erin manages to take a good deal of damage and completely foils a carefully set up plan which had not factored in the possibility that this tiny college student would be able to take

down a team of bad guys with what for all intents and purposes seemed to be an insurmountable advantage. The film twists and turns revealing more villains and as the odds begin to stack up against her, she pulls out all stops, turning to all out war making the house into a death trap using some pretty impressive ingenuity, managing to cross the finish line as a battered and bruised victor.

Right up to the film's ending Erin never shows a break in her resolution to escape even as her companions begin to unravel, fall apart and die. Erin is still trying to keep the family safe right up until the end, fearlessly fighting against an unknown number of attackers. What makes Erin such an interesting character is that instead of the horror trope of having a female leads slowly developing the strength to face the attacker after overcoming fear, Erin is already lethally strong, smart and ready for anything. When all hell breaks loose she just acts rationally and manages to survive on will and instincts alone, turning her into an unstoppable juggernaut and surprising not only the people around her but also the films audience, like a boss. **JOSH PHILPOTT**

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL PURVIS



CANDYMAN

FIRST APPEARANCE: The Forbidden (1986)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Candyman (1992), Candyman: Farewell to the Flesh (1995), Candyman: Day of the Dead (1999)

A take on the "Bloody Mary" urban myth, Candyman is a vengeful spirit that can be summoned by saying his name five times whilst looking in a mirror. His story is a sad one. The man who was to become the monster started life as the son of a slave. He grew up in "civilised" society and became quite well known for his skill as a painter, but when he fell in love with and impregnated a young white woman, old prejudices arose and he was captured by a lynch mob. They cut off his painting hand and rammed a hook into the bleeding stump and smeared his body with honey, laughing while angry bees stung him to death. The Candyman exists to inspire fear. He invites you to be his victim. When he talks with the voice of veteran character actor, Tony Todd, who could refuse?



PINHEAD

FIRST APPEARANCE: The Hellbound Heart (1986)

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Hellraiser series (1988 -), multiple pop-culture references

The being commonly known as Pinhead was only referred to by that name once in the franchise, and then it was used as an insult. Officially known as "Lead Cenobite", Pinhead is the leader of a small cohort of extraplanar torturers, tasked with administering the ultimate experience of pleasure and pain to anyone who opens the Lament Configuration, a puzzle box that opens a gateway to hell. According to Doug Bradley, the actor who portrayed Pinhead in eight Hellraiser films, author Clive Barker described the character as being a "cross between an administrator and a surgeon who's responsible for running a hospital where there are no wards, only operating theatres. As well as being the man who wields the knife, he's the man who has to keep the timetable going." This is the perfect summation of Pinhead. He is both a worker and administrator. A monster, sure, but one who is only doing his job.



DAMIEN THORN

FIRST APPEARANCE: The Omen

SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: The Omen Part 2, The Omen 3

Perfectly mixing the innocence of a child with a force for pure evil, Damien acts as the ideal vessel for the antichrist. While his dark hair and eyes are textbook sinister, his rosy cheeks and cherubic baby fat speak only of innocence. This juxtaposition is best seen during the original Omen, in which Damien enjoys a carousel ride with his peers at his birthday celebrations, laughing joyfully as any child would. Meanwhile, his nurse calls to him from the top of the Thorn mansion "Look at me Damien, it's all for you!" before taking a life shattering leap to the horror of those gathered below. From that day forward, actor Harvey Stephens' angel face could only ever conjure thoughts of malicious intent.

XENOMORPH

FIRST APPEARANCE: Alien (1979)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Alien franchise,
Prometheus (2012)

Unlike most aliens portrayed in science fiction films, the alien xenomorph is not a technologically advanced species. The xenomorph has no science, no technology and no desire outside of propagating the species. The eusocial brood is made up of a breeding queen and a cadre of warriors who both protect the queen and bring her hosts for her parasitic offspring. Their life cycle is a vicious parody of human sexuality and reproduction. Essentially terrifying insects on a macro scale, the xenomorphs are an awkwardly sexualised terror in their own right as a species, but with the hints given in Prometheus that the xenomorphs are actually a genetically engineered soldier/contagion used by the Engineers to destroy biological entities on planets make them even more insidious.



ISAAC CLARK

FIRST APPEARANCE: Dead Space (2008)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Dead Space 2 (2011),
Dead Space 3 (2013)

Isaac Clarke is memorable for two key reasons, the first being his tenuous grip on sanity and the second being the way that the character's avatar serves as a visual indicator of everything that the player needs to know in the game. Silent in the first game and fully voiced in the subsequent two, Isaac is a man broken by his experiences with the Necromorphs and the death of his great love, Nicole. He becomes his own unreliable narrator, first due to the influence of the alien "Markers" causing him to hallucinate and later through the guilt he feels for "letting" Nicole die. He can't trust his own senses, so the player can never be entirely sure what is real, what is alien hallucination and what is Isaac's tortured psyche.





FREDDY KRUEGER

FIRST APPEARANCE: A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: A whole shitload of movies

The undead serial killer of Elm Street is as iconic as they come, always sporting a striped sweater, brown fedora and big ol' metal claws. A supposed child molester and murderer, Freddy's corporeal being was destroyed in a vicious fire, but his vengeful spirit lives on in the dreams of the children of Elm Street. Here, he has the power to transform even the most pleasant of snoozes into terrifying nightmares, for to die by Freddy's hand in the dreamworld is to simultaneously die in the real world. It is said the only way to stop the hellbound spectre is to pull him into reality, forcing him to play by our rules. Yet this may prove to be tougher than it sounds, for when was the last time you were able to so easily control a dream?



SAMARA MORGAN / SADAKO YAMAMURA

FIRST APPEARANCE: The Ring (2002)/Ringu (1998)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: Ring 0: Birthday (2000), Ring 2 (1999), Risen (1998), Sadako 3D (2012), Sadako 3D 2 (2013)

Little girls hiding behind their dark hair will never not be scary thanks to these two characters. Her Japanese name combines the words chaste (sada) and child (ko), but don't be fooled, the horror in a white dress is as malicious as she is scary. Thrown into a well and left to die, Sadako's soul found its way into a deadly video tape. After watching the tape, it's said the viewer receives a phone call that simply whispers "seven days" before hanging up. That unfortunate soul then has exactly that time to pass the tape on to someone else, as not doing so will spell their doom. A stone well, standing in an open field. A little girl, soaked right through. She approaches. Her dark hair fills the frame. She flits in and out of view. In and out of the TV set. Cue screams.



R. J. MACREADY

FIRST APPEARANCE: The Thing (1982)
SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: The Thing - The Videogame (2002)

Thanks to his experiences as a chopper pilot in the Vietnam War, MacReady is a somewhat broken man. The horrors he's seen or been subjected to are never clearly defined but they have left him angry and antisocial - two traits that make him suitable for working at the isolated American Arctic research station Outpost 31. He's secluded from humanity, content to play games against his computer (and kill it when he loses), performing the tasks required of him but little more... until the horror begins. MacReady shows himself to be something of a dichotomy. He's a pessimist and fatalist but also a survivor more than willing to look death in the face and give it the finger. His final act - dying in the snow with Childs - highlights both sides of his nature. He gives up the fight and any hope of survival, but he's still in the fight, his slow death in isolation his last middle finger to the thing.



SONIC'S REANIMATED CORPSE

FIRST APPEARANCE: N/A • SUBSEQUENT APPEARANCES: N/A

When the Sega Dreamcast released with no games, the powers at Sega needed to do something drastic. They'd fought a never-ending war with their enemies at Nintendo, and their powerplay – ushering in the next generation of hardware just two years after the Big N had finally caught up to the current – would be negated if it fell over at the starting line.

On a dark evening in the year 1998, while a maelstrom of thunder and lightning swirled around Sega's head office Japan, Yu Suzuki, Yuji Naka and Takashi Iizuka performed a dark ceremony. As the Sonic Team watched, these key elements of Sega beseeched Old Gods to take Sonic's lifeforce in return for something, anything, else.

After the ceremony they quickly performed another, where they traded a decrepit Alex Kidd's soul for Sonic's. In their shrewdness they'd devised a way to bring Sonic back from the dead. For a time it worked, and Sonic Adventure was hailed as a success (although history wouldn't be so kind to it), and when their ancient rivals Nintendo launched the GameCube, the Sonic Team took their undead Sonic back to the ceremonial table.

This time however, they got greedy. Instead of an Ecco or a Toejam, the Sonic

Team brought in the almost unknown Teddy Boy as their bait-and-switch. And this time, those Old Gods – whose attention is both infinite and whose attention span is infinitesimal – noticed the trick the humans played.

And those ancient gods played their own trick on the humans, swapping out Teddy Boy for the lifeforce of Sega itself. Shortly after the release of Sonic Adventure 2 Sega collapsed in on itself.

Out of options and out of hardware, Sega saw just one option left to them. With lowered eyes, the heads of clan Sega sought audience with the powerful clan Nintendo and begged for shelter. Their gift for this sanctuary? The apparently still virile Sonic the Hedgehog.

Nintendo accepted, but they noticed something was wrong with the former Celebrity of Celerity almost instantly. The games he featured in were all shambles. Sonic Battle, Sonic Pinball and Sonic Advance launched on the Game Boy Advance and were so obvious in their corruption that firm questions were asked and Nintendo retired the Hedgehog from use.

And then the GameCube began to fail, and Nintendo realised they needed a miracle. They were out of choices, out

of time, and they asked those within their halls if they knew what they might do.

From the shadows emerged Yu Suzuki, and he had a plan. If Nintendo sacrificed one of their heroes to the Old Gods, they might come away with a solution. And while what comes back might not be quite the same, Suzuki knew a way to get that hero back regardless.

Nintendo accompanied the Sonic Team to where the ruins of Sega's temple still stood, and there they placed both Mario and Link upon the dais. A double sacrifice was needed if they wanted a full-blown console, claimed Suzuki. The Old Gods accepted Nintendo's generous donation and gave them the Wii in return. And when the human's played their trick again, the Old Gods smiled and gave them the Wii U.

The curse of the reanimated corpse of Sonic the Hedgehog can be seen everywhere. In rehashed Mario and Zelda games, in collaborative efforts like the Olympic Games games. Sonic is out there, perverting your favourite franchises as we speak. And because these ceremonies happen in secret, we'll never know who might be next. Maybe Crash Bandicoot. Maybe Master Chief. Maybe even... YOU!

JOAB GILROY

ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL PURVIS



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