

# Horror Movie Clichés that Need to Die

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Horror, as a genre, allows for an immense amount of creativity. The possibilities with the supernatural are only restricted by the limitations of imagination and means of inducing fear and pain range from psychological to physical torture. However, unfortunately, instead of displaying ingenuity, a large number of horror movies use repetitive elements. The following are just a few examples.

## COMMUTING AND COMMUNICATION MEANS DON'T EXIST

One truth about transportation (especially cars) in horror movies – vehicles will start acting up whenever needed the most, such as when a crazy killer is running directly at the person trying to escape from what could potentially be death.

Furthermore, it's not just the vehicles that mysteriously refuse to function at a moment of dire need. There is at least one thing that serial killers and supernatural evil have in common: both initially cause the location of attack to have no phone reception.

## OBLIVIOUS AND INCOMPETENT ADULTS

Just like useless cars, the adult figures in a horror movie are almost never going to take the initiative to help the situation.

I LOVE HOW IN SCARY MOVIES THE PERSON YELLS OUT 'HELLO?' AS IF THE KILLER IS GOING TO BE LIKE 'YEAH I'M IN THE KITCHEN, WANT A SANDWICH?'

Whenever someone goes up to an adult and hyperventilates the words "Someone/thing is trying to kill me!" the reply is most often a casual "Are you sure?" (perhaps with just a hint of concern). Even if there is, miraculously, an adult who is willing to believe in the incredulous circumstances, most of the times they still find themselves unable to provide much help.

## JUMP SCARES

Jump scares are the superlative equivalent of a friend sneaking up behind you and screaming "BOO!" in your ears. While that might surprise you, it definitely wouldn't horrify you. These scares are staple to nearly every horror movie, even in some of the better ones. While they might be effective to a certain degree, it's been so overdone which makes it almost

predictable and very underwhelming. Since it always starts off with eerie music followed by a loud explosion to startle the audience, the element of surprise disappears.

## DREAM SEQUENCES

Imagine watching a great narrative unfold with all the perfect hints that you were looking for in the movie to satisfy the theories you made at the beginning only to have it yanked away as a dream. "It was just a dream" has to be one of the most frustrating answers to a plotline.

## THE VILLAIN NEVER REALLY DIES

Towards the end of the movie, just when it looks like the danger has passed and all the issues have been resolved, there is almost unfailingly going to be a single shot of the source of evil, manic killer or otherwise, which is going to clearly show that whatever it may be is not over. Thus, indicating if the movie becomes a success (or even not these days), there will be a sequel, a sequel to the sequel and maybe even a prequel thrown in between with an origin story in the pipeline.

*With a keen eye and a broken brain to mouth filter, Mahejabeen Hossain Nidhi has a habit of throwing obscure insults from classic novels at random people who may or may not have done anything to warrant them. Drop her a line at mahejabeen.nidhi@gmail.com*

# On *Outcast*, the Darkness is Inside Us

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Horror is one of the trickier genres to get right and Cinemax did it with *Outcast*. No small feat on the TV.

Traditionally a story's frights come from reliance on a single element; at horror's most hackneyed you have the jump scare – the shock shot, the big *boo!* And then you have subtler works that create dread through a mounting sense of wrongness. Kubrick's *The Shining* is as fine as example as you can get.

*Outcast* is special in that it mixes in intelligent jump scares with the greater horror evoked by creating a pervasive sense of wrongness. The show also deals heavily with *Shining*'s other source of fear (which was more prominent in the original Stephen King novel): the fear of your own loved ones. The fear of them changing and turning to harm you.

The show (adapted from a comic of the same name by Robert Kirkman) is set in the small town of Rome, USA. Literal forces of darkness have wormed their way into the town's heart, and to the local preacher, Reverend Anderson (Philip Glenister), these are no less than a sign that the Devil is at work. Anderson has for years quietly been administering exorcisms to afflicted townsfolk with the tacit approval of the local police chief, played by the excellent Reg E. Cathey. During the course of a particularly difficult exorcism Anderson encounters the town's recently-returned black sheep: Kyle Barnes.

Barnes (Patrick Fugit) is presented as a quietly decent man who has been a victim of the darkness all his life. It follows and possesses those around him, and for mysterious reasons only his touch seems to be able to free them – though never without a price. And so it is he freed his own mother while still a child, when the darkness possessed her to torture him. Something similar appears to have happened with his wife and daughter – leading him to be charged with assault and legally restrained from seeing them again. Kyle Barnes is haunted by his actions

and cannot justify them to himself.

The Reverend enlists him in his exorcisms, seeing his power as a godly gift. The series tracks their battle to save Rome from the darkness – and as its nature is steadily revealed Anderson's faith is tested, as is his relationship with Kyle. After all, he gave up his entire life to fight the Devil's work; why should Kyle Barnes be gifted with the power to fight it and not himself?

If indeed the darkness is the Devil's work, and not something else entirely, which is a thought Anderson has understandable difficulty with.

Complex characters in difficult relationships and a steadily building plot that slowly answers intriguing questions – these are the reasons to start on *Outcast*. The excellent cinematography and acting reward you for every minute spent watching.

There are few shows that are quietly doing so much just right.

*Zoheb Mashiur is a prematurely balding man with bad facial hair and so does his best to avoid people. Ruin his efforts by writing to zoheb.mashiur@gmail.com*

