The horror genre has always been unique. Mainstream horror films tend to draw large audiences on their opening weekends, then nose-dive in the following week. This phenomenon seems to indicate that the genre has a core group of fans (while everyone else flees in terror).

Before we unleash our selections of the best (and worst) that the horror genre has to offer, you might be advised to consider these instructions on how to read this issue.

Most important is where to read the issue. Location is essential to get into the horror mood. If you have a car, head on up to Bangor, Maine, home of Stephen King. Sit yourself down on his front lawn (editor's note: Viewfinder does not condone trespassing) and start reading. If you are without transportation, walk over to Gifford Annex lounge. Turn off all the lights (well, leave enough to read your issue of Viewfinder) and have a friend repeatedly hit the lowest key on the piano while you are reading.

Our last suggestion would be to go to Pizza Cellar, and politely ask the person at the counter, "Hi, how are you, can I read something in your freezer?"

Now on to how to read the issue. We suggest left-to-right. More specifically, after you finish reading each page of the issue, frantically rip that page to shreds with a Proctor butter knife. Then run across campus, shrieking and repeating the words "Oh, those darn carrots."

And lastly, we feel it might be useful to chop off your right arm and use it as a bookmark in case you are not able to read the whole issue at once.

We hope we have been helpful in your preparation. Now let the ride begin.

—Scott L. Goldman, Editor-in-Pieces
—Marshall Levin, Product Slasher
By Chris Hawkins
Staff Frighter

Horror movies. Why the hell do we watch them? Is it for the same reason that we go to theme parks and make sure we go on the scariest, biggest and most daunting of all the roller coasters? Is it for the same reason that we bungee jump or free fall from planes? It has to be for the adrenaline rush. The pure sensation of being scared out of your mind, the thrill of not knowing what will happen next is an unbeatable feeling, isn’t it?

Is this sadism? Not quite. Pretty damn close, though. Here’s how to survive the most horrific of those Halloween-type movies in your own front room—those movies that you just want your little sister to have to watch so that you can feel good about yourself every time she screams….

Place a large photograph of your grandmother, either before or after she died, on top of the TV set. The optimal photo would be one of her grinning in that “Come on Johnny, give your favorite Grandma a kiss” pose. If she is wearing thick, red lipstick, with her eyes staring straight at you, so much the better.

Have a stress ball on hand. Not just a conventional stress ball—one as big as your own head and equally as hard (using your little sister’s/brother’s head is permissible). This will help you to prove to yourself that however much you grip it, the movie cannot possibly be that scary because the aforementioned ball/head has not yet turned into sand.

Do not have a drink or popcorn with you. A drink may well end up decorating the lounge when it leaves the glass as Freddy “Gets You.” Popcorn will only add to the problem by spraying from its packet like lava from a volcano.

Be sure that your mum is in the same building or at least only a phone call away so that you can request her to comfort you to sleep and convince you that those “nasty, ugly aliens” will not drag you from your bed as you sleep and that daddy is not, in fact, an axe-murderer.

As the trailers start rolling on the video, reach for the remote control and adjust the contrast and brightness so that anything that resembles the color of blood becomes a more viewable gray and ghosts become invisible as the whiteness is eliminated.

At all costs, avoid watching horror movies on Halloween, Friday the thirteenth at midnight when there is a full moon, after Home Improvement or immediately before lighting the candle in your pumpkin.

When watching a horror movie with a loved one who it’s important you impress, ensure that you do not sit together. This is vital for the Walkman Viewing Technique. The newly developed concept of Walkman viewing is simple, cheap and extremely effective. Prior to watching the movie, tell your loved one that you need to pay a visit to the bathroom. Discreetly take your Walkman with you and place it down the side of the chair you intend to sit on during the movie. As you take your seats in front of the TV, explain that you must sit in your favorite chair—“I always sit here. I guess it’s kind of superstitious.” If superstitious is said eerily enough then there should be no problem. As the movie begins, place the right ear piece of your headphones in your ear and have your Greatest Hits of Michael Bolton tape playing loudly enough to distract you from the pictures on the screen, and so that you can sit through the entire movie with a scowl on your face, appearing not to be remotely moved when heads are wrenched from bodies and skeletons attack innocent youths.

Note the movie’s most horrific scenes so that you can later express to friends who have already seen the movie how poor you thought the special effects were. For example, “The blood looked more like ketchup,” “I was more scared when I took my third grade math exam” and “Kate’s dad looks more evil than Hellraiser when he’s had a couple of pints.” Kate may not take too kindly to that remark, but it is, nevertheless, imperative that you do not say that you had to make frequent visits to the bathroom during the movie and that you’ve had locks put on the windows and door of your bedroom and that you called a priest to arrange an exorcism.

If you’re watching the movie with friends, drink three gallons of water beforehand and make sure they notice how much you drank. You then have every reason to leave the room at regular intervals.

Lastly, if watching the film alone, on the recommendation of a friend, you should:
- Drink several, if not a handful, of sleeping pills.
- Drink a mug of hot chocolate before you actually press “play.”
- Find out as much about the film as possible (the ending would be ideal) and carefully read the synopsis on the back of the video box.
- Make sure that a member of your family knows that you have rented the movie and knows that you are in the lounge “watching” it so that he/she can vouch for you in front of your friends when they ask you if you saw it.

If all goes as planned, you will sleep through the whole thing, but you can still prove to your friends that you “watched” it; you can still discuss the “whys and wherefores” of the movie and, unlike when they watched it, you will also have a had a great night’s sleep.
Alien, directed by Ridley Scott. Starring Sigourney Weaver.

In 1977, the cinematic masterpiece *Alien* emerged from the mind and energies of director Ridley Scott and Swiss artist H.R. Giger, changing the landscape of the horror/sci-fi movie genre for generations to come. Director James Cameron, famous today for such films as *T2* and *True Lies*, picked up on the classic film in 1986 and made its sequel, *Aliens*, into a box office smash as well as a career catapult for its starring female warrior, Sigourney Weaver.

Both movies had a profound impact on moviegoers, despite the unpleasant subsequent film, *Alien³*, that abused the genius evident in the first two and generally ruined what could have been a trilogy as brilliant as *Star Wars*.

Disregarding the third disaster, the first two films that dealt with the alien theme each possessed a power of presentation that gripped many audiences’ attention into bug-eyed, slack-jawed silence. At the same time, the two films maintained their own style, clearly distinct from one another. A great deal of the differences grew from the personal preferences of their respective directors; while Ridley Scott favored a dark and enigmatic element of chilling mystery, James Cameron’s tastes ran more toward the bang-em-up thrills and shocks that gave his film a campy texture. Since the approaches to the same material are so differently conceived, the films end up complementing one another. The film that deserves critique, however, is the one that started it all.

In *Alien*, director Ridley Scott introduces us to the alien creature itself, but not until almost a third of the way into the movie. We as the audience are seeing things through the naive and uninformed eyes of the *Nostromo* crew; that is, nobody, including us, knows anything about the monster. jobs. They have no eye towards a future of trouble. They are as unconsidered as we college students might be going about the business of researching something in the library, not even remotely imagining tragic death somewhere in the book stacks. That is how ordinary their lives are; that is how “business as usual” the attitude is within the ship.

The element of comedy throws us off balance as well; a beginning scene shows the two technical systems operators in an argument with Ripley about overtime pay that eventually descends into good-humored big brother type teasing. In no way do any of the initial scenes tell us that this is a horror/sci-fi movie, and that is what makes the later action unsettling and terrifying; we have come to know the ordinary routine of the characters’ lives and the personalities behind the people’s faces. When the alien bursts from crew member Cain’s chest during the most memorable dinner scene in sci-fi history, it truly feels the way one would feel upon hearing that a friend has been in a bad accident. They are ordinary, and what has just happened is terribly extraordinary in the worst sense of the word. This sense of surreal nightmare reality continues throughout the film, intensified through the creative genius of H.R. Giger’s magnificent puppets and stage-set ups. To truly appreciate what can heights can be achieved within the horror/sci-fi genre, *Alien* is the pinnacle.

In this film, Robert Englund reprises his award-winning role (there are so many awards now a days, maybe he won a Grammy?) of Freddy Kruger. Highbrow, pseudo-intellectual critics have long bemoaned his merits as an actor, but in this film he once again exhibits the ability to flatly deliver one-liners in a monotone which rivals that of a big action star whose name sounds like “swarmin’ kegger.” Now I am not going to give you any more hints, and if you were able to decipher that riddle you probably missed the subtle hint concerning Freddy’s ultimate fate, thrown in the title, by those kooky studio execs. Freddy Dead? Wait a second, I thought that was how this sexology began. No it has nothing to do with sex, although I thought that was how this sexology began. Anyway, the ending is not a surprise, although the ending is not a surprise, although the ending is not a surprise, although the ending is not a surprise, although the ending is not a surprise, although the ending is not a surprise, although the ending is not a surprise. In this film alone he has been much more horrifying than anything Hollywood can dream up. Well amazementingly, they find out that it was a bad move to return to Springwood, because Freddy has not lost that originality of killing people that we all know and love. In this country; maybe next movie we can have a killer who only attacks blind people in the county…

...and I am calling upon Voktar the Destructor to devour anyone who feels differently. At the end of this movie flaming skulls fly out of Freddy’s head and presumably Hollywood can dream up. Well amazementingly, they find out that it was a bad move to return to Springwood, because Freddy has not lost that originality of killing people that we all know and love. In this film alone he kills someone in a video game, drops them on spikes, and my personal favorite makes Carlos’s head explode by rubbing his claws on a blackboard to the fifth flute’s part in Henrich Holz’s Concerto #57 in D Major for Piano. OK so maybe he wasn’t, but I would like to think that he was. Anyway, the movie is not without it’s surprises as John learns that he is in fact not Freddy’s son, but his psychiatrist is Freddy’s daughter. Talk about your repressed memories, I mean I would think you just might remember that one as a sort of important part of your life. Well she does not, but it is amazing how quickly she becomes a weapons expert and how Freddy suddenly becomes a wuss. I mean can you imagine Alice Cooper playing a mean, drunk, dirty old man? He always see and understand why he became such a poor misguided soul. It turns out he was a real fun kid, as evinced by his love to kill little mice with sledgehammers, and with a touching scene of Freddy slicing up his chest with a razor blade, this may be a precursor to his future shaving problems. This particular scene is livened up by a brilliant performance by a man who was robbed of the Oscar that year, Alice Cooper, who plays Freddy’s dad. I mean can you imagine Alice Cooper playing a mean, drunk, dirty old man? He always surprises me with the range of characters he can play.

...and I am calling upon Voktar the Destructor to devour anyone who feels differently.
Dawn of the Dead, directed by George A. Romero. Starring David Emge, Ken Foree and Rod Stouffer as "Young Officer on Roof."

"There is no more room in hell," Peter, our hero, says when referring to what the creatures want with them.

The movie begins on the set of a TV talk show—the two leads debating whether it was morally right to kill the "living dead." We meet our leading lady—whose name I don't think we ever find out—and thus are soon swept away into the films mystique and promise.

The entire movie is filmed in a dark, grainy manner most often reserved for home movies and late shows that run past all the infomercials on Vermont TV. But, surprisingly, the risk works and the writer and director, George A. Romero, comes off with a movie that will affect generations to come.

On the TV set, we are also introduced to Steven (AKA Flyboy), who says simply (to that girl I mentioned earlier) and in the most dramatic of ways: "We have to survive." From there we are transported over to an apartment building where another one of the leads—whose name I completely forgot—is waiting to seize a building overrun by zombies. We move into the building to find the walking dead—in which one soldier is bitten (this means he will eventually become a zombie). This soldier, in a movie history making moment, shoots the zombie and protects him from the military's execution-style killings. But the woman, meaning nothing to the zombie, is soon bitten piece by piece by her dead, yet walking, husband. In one simple scene, the audience realizes what a hellish world it would be if there really were dead people walking around trying to eat the rest of us.

The next transition is to the helicopter—where our four main characters (Peter, Flyboy, woman, and nameless guy) are escaping the city (which is Philadelphia: obviously a statement on what the creators of this movie think about the city of brotherly love). How the four got in the same helicopter was probably left on the editing room floor—I doubt it would have been interesting anyway.

To make a summary of this movie a little quicker, eventually our band of zombie killers gets to a shopping mall, which is infested with hundreds of our bad guys. (But who are the bad guys, really?) Nameless asks why they came to the shopping mall and Peter, in his Biblical wisdom, responds: "Because they remember coming here." Which may be a statement saying that every person who goes to shopping malls is going to hell. (Of course those that hate shopping malls might think that shopping malls are really a hell on earth.)

It is here, at the transitional roads of the mall, that we find out are leading woman is pregnant with Flyboy's baby. Which brings in the moral dilemma of whether or not to bring a child into a world so ugly. (This is probably another social message.) Well, eventually our heroes kill all the zombies in the shopping mall and block the entrances so no more can come in (but not without paying the tragic price of Nameless getting bitten). Another social message may be the bright, neon colored red the producers of Dawn of the Dead chose to use for blood—is this saying that we all have neon blood? (Very interesting if you think about it.) Breaking up the peace of the empty mall is a band of road warriors looking to loot and pillage. And we are forced to ask—if a world was being run over by zombies, wouldn't you go to the shopping mall and get tons of things for free? This, of course, brings conflict to the scene as our heroes and the road warriors fight over the mall while the zombies try to eat them both. So who are the bad guys? You don't see the zombies eating each other? (This is definitely a social message.)

Well, I refuse to ruin the ending of this 1979 horror classic, but I will leave you with the final lines of the movie.

"How much fuel do we have?" Peter confidently asks.

"Not much." Francine says (it says her name in the credits).

Peter looks away, smiling, knowing the odds are against them once again but also knowing they will eventually win. He quietly says, "all right" and the helicopter fades away in the sunset.

Yes Peter, there is no more room in hell. That's a message we all could listen to.
In 1978, John Carpenter came out with the first *Halloween*. It remains a classic horror film and is still one of the highest grossing independent films ever. The film is definitely scary, however you might find it cliche as so many subsequent horror films have taken from it.

The setting is Haddonfield, Illinois. Michael Myers, as a young boy (in his trademark and haunting clown suit) kills his sister on, of course, Halloween. The young Myers is put in a mental hospital. Melodramatic, aging Dr. Loomis (Donald Pleasance) becomes his psychiatrist. He becomes the most knowledgable about Myers and his “pure evil.” In each film, the obsessive Loomis is at the forefront of the fight against Myers. On Halloween, after many years in the hospital, Myers escapes. Now he wears a dark jump suit and a simple but effective white mask. He returns to Haddonfield to kill remaining family members. Jamie Lee Curtis (in her first screen role) is that family member.

The *Halloween* series has always been a favorite of mine. I became a big fan in high school when the radio station I always listened to kept playing the ad for *Halloween 4*. I never went out of my way to see a horror movie, especially in the movie theater. But I tell you now, this ad was great; with the pounding John Carpenter theme music and the wonderfully, solemn voice of Donald Pleasance claiming something to the effect that Michael Myers may not be able to be stopped this time. I did see it at the theater and it remains one of my favorite horror films.

In the fourth, when Haddonfield citizens find out that Myers has returned, they are not like usual horror film people who take half the movie to believe that the killer actually has returned. The second the words “Michael Myers” escapes Loomis’s mouth, Haddonfield calls for every cop in the state. Now that is realistic. And in the first *Halloween*, Carpenter played the theme music, though great, just on a piano. In *Halloween 4*, the makers have enough money to put full orchestration behind the theme. By the way, wait until you see the ending.

You are probably grasping the motif that, in all the sequels, Myers returns to Haddonfield, on Halloween, after some relative. Not to give away anything from the first, but Myers is still after Jamie Lee Curtis in the second *Halloween*. (I have not seen the third, but it really has nothing to do with the others.) In the fourth and fifth, Myers is after his young niece. The sixth just came out, and this time, Myers is after the newborn child of the niece. It is an entertaining addition to the series, but nothing more. A special note: Pleasance is in it also, but he passed away during or after production. The film is dedicated in his memory.
**STEPHEN KING: A MOVIE ANTHOLOGY**

1976 Carrie—novelist
1979 Salem’s Lot (TV)—from novel
1980 The Shining—novelist
1981 Nightshift—performer
1982 Creepshow—performer, screenwriter, (from the story “The Crate”)
1983 Christine—novelist
1983 Cujo—novelist

1983 The Dead Zone—novelist
1984 Children of the Corn—novelist
1984 Firestarter—novelist
1985 Cat’s Eye/Stephen King’s Cat’s Eye—screenwriter (from stories “Quitters Inc.” “The Ledge”)
1985 Silver Bullet/Stephen King’s Silver Bullet—screenwriter (from novelette “Cycle of the Werewolf”)
1986 Maximum Overdrive—director, screenwriter (from short story “Trucks” in anthology “Night Shift”)
1986 Stand by Me—novelist
1987 Creepshow 2 (from stories “Old Chief Wood’n Head,” “The Hitchhiker,” “The Raft”)—performer
1987 A Return to Salem’s Lot (from characters) creative consultant
1987 The Running Man—novelist
1989 Pet Semetary—performer, screenwriter, novelist
1990 Graveyard Shift—novelist
1990 It (TV)—based on novel
1990 Misery—novelist
1990 Tales From the Darkside: The Movie—screenwriter, screenplay
1992 Pet Semetary 2—based on the novel
1993 Children of the Corn II: The Final Sacrifice—(not King related)
1993 The Tommyknockers (TV)—from novel
1993 The Dark Half—from novel
1993 Needful Things—from novel
1994 The Stand (TV)—performer, screenwriter, novelist
1994 The Shawshank Redemption—novelist
1995 The Mangler— from short story
1995 Dolores Claiborne— novelist

Stephen King is surely a name that most people immediately associate with horror, both in books and films. There are not many people who have never read or watched something to come out of the genius/twisted mind of the master of horror (you choose how you view him) and many know and love his work. However, for those of you who aren’t familiar with him, here is a brief guide to the man himself, and our views on some of his films.

Stephen King was born in Portland, Maine on September 21, 1947. After his father left them when he was two, his family moved around, before finally settling in Durham, Maine in 1958. He developed an interest in science-fiction and horror after discovering some books in an Aunt’s house eighteen years before he actually published his first novel.

He attended the University of Maine at Oregan, where he met Tabitha Spruce, whom he married in 1971, after graduating with a degree in English and Speech. He then taught English at Hampdon Academy, living in a trailer and writing for magazines, before becoming a full-time writer in 1978, following the publication of Carrie, his first novel. Carrie also became his first film, bringing him fame of a dubious nature with “that shower scene.” However once started, King went on to write many books, more than half of which became films.

Some of the films King adapted from his stories himself, such as Pet Semetary and The Stand. They show his touch by being convincing and faithful adaptations of his work. That is not to say that any of the films not done by King cannot be good adaptations. Misery perhaps the best indication of this. It is undoubtedly one of the best adaptations, with a brilliant performance by Kathy Bates as the psychotic nurse Annie Wilkes, overshadowing the moderate performance of James Caan as the writer Paul Sheldon. The ending doesn’t quite follow the book, but this can be forgiven since the film is generally a success.

IT, a film done for television, also tries to follow the original storyline. However, IT sadly falls short, simply because the novel’s content and complexity is so vast that it cannot be recreated on film, even in two long sections. It ends up leaving out and missing much of what makes the novel so great and gruesome.

From bad to worse, the sequels! The original films such as Pet Semetary and Children of the Corn, having some of the King charm, were watchable if mediocre films; do not, under any circumstances, be fooled into thinking that the sequels will be as good. They are neither written or produced by King; they are simply his ideas taken a step further by people with far less skill and imagination, and it shows!

While you may not be as keen on Stephen King as “number one fan” Annie Wilkes was on Paul Sheldon, many of his books and the films based on them are worth a look. If you want a spinechiller this Halloween, check out a bit of King, but make sure you have the hints on how to survive a horror film handy (see page 3).