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**Michael Giltz**  
Freelance writer and raconteur  
Posted: October 29, 2010 05:33 PM

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# Halloween DVDs: *The Exorcist*, *Psycho*, *Troll 2* and More

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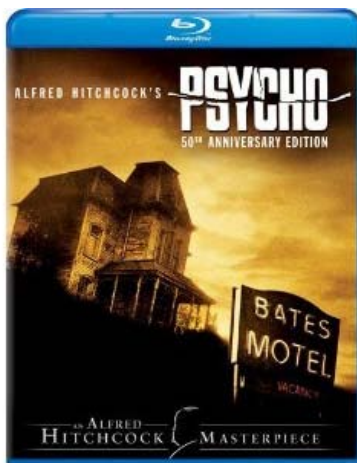
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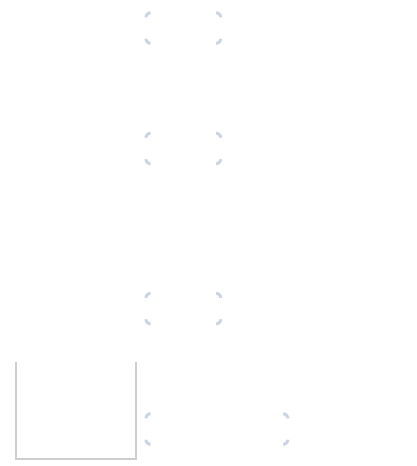
**THE EXORCIST ON BLURAY** (\$34.99; Warner Bros.) --This two-disc, compact but gratifyingly thorough set is a model of what classic movie releases should be. It's not crazily expensive (you can find it for \$24 on sale) and it's not in some bulky, annoying package that you immediately have to store in a closet. The set provides both the 2000 Extended Director's Cut and (this is most important) the original 1973 theatrical version. I don't care how much a director wants to improve their movie; you should always include the original version that proved such a success. Each disc contains trailers and ad spots for their edition of the film. You also get a very extensive new documentary that talks with everyone plus a 1998 British TV documentary about the making of the film. Director William Friedkin offers two commentaries and writer/producer William Peter Blatty does one as well.

Star Linda Blair suggested that only a child who was Catholic would have succeeded in the role because to her, the Devil was real, not some imaginary hobgoblin. Friedkin joked that with time he had become "somewhat less" egotistical and was generous with his praise for the cast and crew and Blatty. Needless to say, the film looks terrific as well.

Some people finger *Jaws* and *Star Wars* as the two movies that triggered a wholesale change in Hollywood towards blockbusters and massive releases. But you could just as easily pinpoint the change with *The Godfather* and *The Exorcist*, both of which were astonishingly popular. *The Exorcist* has grossed more than \$400 million worldwide to date and entered the popular consciousness as few films ever have. You can't see a head spinning around without thinking of Linda Blair. Just this week it was spoofed in the *Shrek* Halloween special in a segment called "The Shrekorcist." They boast that it's "the scariest movie of all time" without seeming to be bragging. Certainly, if you want to experience at home, this edition is the way to go. I first watched the film alone. On Halloween. In the dark. If you haven't seen it yet, isn't this the perfect time?



**PSYCHO** (\$26.98 BluRay; Universal) -- For a long time, *Psycho* was lower on my list of favorite Hitchcock films. *The Lady Vanishes*, *Rear Window*, *Notorious*, *North By Northwest* and the like all scored higher with me. I appreciated *Psycho* but found it too basic, too obvious and the ending too tricky to satisfy somehow. But it's Alfred Hitchcock so of course you cross paths with the film again. And each time I found it stranger, more interesting, more...odd than just the most sophisticated slasher film of them all. Then I went looking for a quote to use about the rain on my radio show at the time. Finally, I was able to see how bold and unconventional it is. Not just the disappearance of the "lead" in the early going. But that incredibly lengthy scene between Anthony Perkins and Janet Leigh where they talk and



PHOTOS: Raven-Symone's Dramatic Weight Loss

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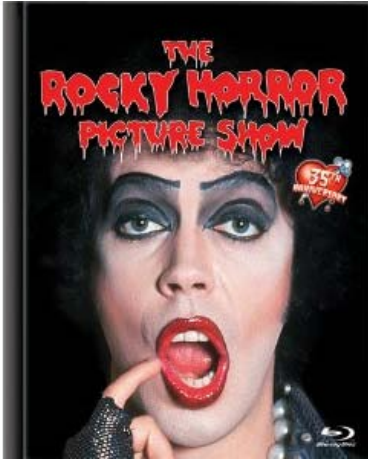
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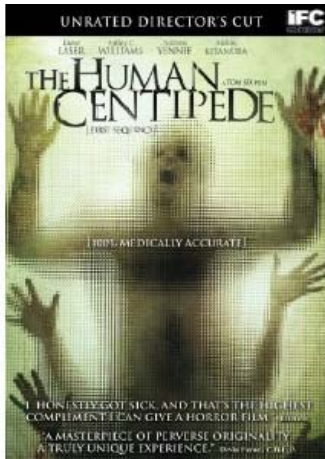


**William and Kate's Love Story**

talk and then share a bite and talk some more. Perkins is so good, so intriguing as Norman -- it's really quite moving. His character is so full and rich, the last thing you're doing is waiting for the violence to explode. And of course the film has so many innovative aspects, despite being shot in a down and dirty manner Hitchcock embraced for his TV anthology series. You get loads of extras including commentary by Stephen Rebello, the author of a book on the making of this film. You also get Truffaut's interview excerpts with Hitch, which is as close to a full commentary from him as we'll ever have. imagine what a treat that would be: Hitchcock holding forth in droll glory for nearly two hours. Who knows? Maybe *Shadow Of A Doubt* will grow on me too and I'll finally agree with Hitchcock that that's his greatest film.



**THE ROCKY HORROR PICTURE SHOW** (\$34.99; FOX) -- The most successful midnight movie of all time may not be suitable for a high school production (duh, Mr Schuester!). Heck, it may not even be suitable for home viewing. Truly, the movie is pretty awful unless you see it with a crowd in a theater OR bring friends over, switch to the version that let's you see and hear the audience respond to all the prompts and prepare a lot of toast. The usual fun extras including a sing-along, outtakes, an alternate opener and more.



**THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE** (\$24.98 IFC) -- Let me be absolutely clear. I have not watched *The Human Centipede*. I am not going to watch *The Human Centipede*. My friend Aaron tells me it's actually quite well done (and he's no horror fanatic) but I don't care. Just talking about the movie makes me squeamish. That's the sort of opener that will send some of you scurrying to add it to your Netflix. The setup is simple. A doctor who specializes in separating conjoined twins now wants to create a new being: he's kidnapped a Japanese businessman and now is going to surgically attach two women -- mouth to anus -- behind him to create...the human centipede. And then he does it. I'm out of here.



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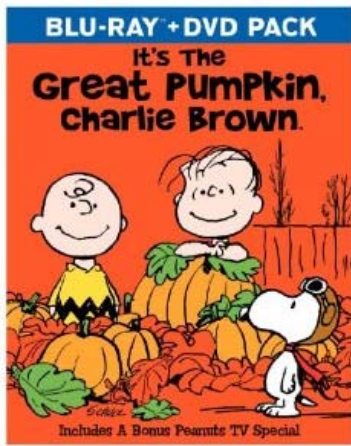


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HUFFPOST'S BIG NEWS PAGES



**IT'S THE GREAT PUMPKIN, CHARLIE BROWN** (\$24.98 on BluRay; Warner Bros.) -- What a relief to turn to something as decent and Norman Rockwell-ish as this Peanuts special. To me, it's easily the best of the bunch after *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. And as Linus endures the mockery of everyone in his lonely desire to spot the Great Pumpkin, it's rather pointed and touching on matters of faith. You also get *It's Magic, Charlie Brown* and a featurette. As a TV special, it's delightful. But at nearly \$20 even on sale, it's quite pricey. Here's hoping they do on BluRay what they did on DVD: collect all the specials for inexpensive sets.



**THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT** (\$19.99 BluRay; Lionsgate) -- More interesting as a phenomenon than a movie, *The Blair Witch Project* is the lo-fi clever stunt of a horror film put out on BluRay with the bells and whistles it deserves. Alternate endings, commentary, a look at the film's legacy in indie filmmaking and pop culture and the other usual suspects. Still, you have to admire the movie's refusal to explain it all or give a "satisfying" ending. Breaking the rules is always a smart move, especially on a no-budgeter hoping to gain attention.



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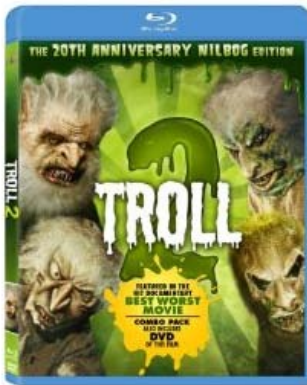
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**SPLICE** (\$35.99 BluRay and \$28.98 regular DVD; Warner Bros.)

**PREDATORS** (\$39.99 BluRay or \$29.98 regular; FOX) -- It may star Oscar winner Adrien Brody and the talented Sarah Polley but this is a B movie through and through, which is a good thing. Two scientists desperate to keep their project afloat genetically splice human DNA with a different animal to create an entirely new creature. Naturally, they keep it in the barn where the creature blossoms into a scary/sad beast with childlike feelings and a desire to please, really please, Brody at the expense of Polley. What I found fascinating about the film was the misogyny that runs through it: Polley is a harridan who keeps Brody in line and everyone comments on it. Then she pushes him to this godlike hubris. And whose DNA does she use? This from a woman who resists marriage and doesn't want children. No surer sign of a female character's evilness is his disinterest or refusal to reproduce. This isn't a strand of the film or a feminist interpretation: it IS the film and Brody must dominate and defeat Polley (i.e grow a pair, to use a caveman term) in order to survive. The tale itself is familiar and not spiced up in any new way so the misogyny angle is the only thing giving this film any interest. Brody also stars in the *Predators* sequel which most fans considered the best in the series since the original, which is faint praise but still praise nonetheless.

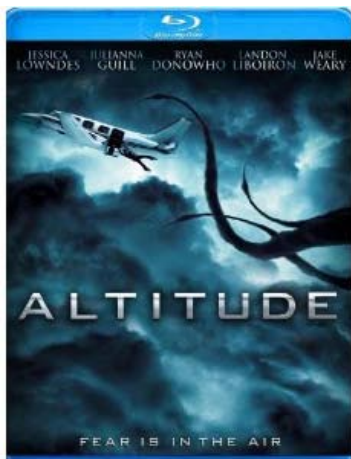


**TROLL 2** (\$19.99 BluRay; MGM) -- Should the worst film ever made even want to be on BluRay?

Shouldn't it stick to grainy VHS and midnight movie houses? All genuinely bad movies (which must be made with passion and a belief that they're good to be really bad) work far far better with a crowd. But if you must watch it at home, by all means invite your friends over. It's silly to laugh all by yourself.



**HAMMER HORROR: TCM GREATEST CLASSIC FILMS** (\$27.98; Warner Bros.) -- Before gore and sexual violence became the norm, horror was once a B movie genre with flair, and no one offered quality spookiness better than the British label Hammer. They tackled the classics with aplomb, and here you get two Draculas and two Frankensteins: *Horrors of Dracula*, *Dracula Has Risen From The Grave*, *The Curse Of Frankenstein* and *Frankenstein Must Be Destroyed*. (Even their titles are fun.) Peter Cushing stars in all four, with Christopher Lee in three of them as the vampire and the beast. Solid fun.



**ALTITUDE** (\$34.98 BluRay and \$26.97 regular; Anchor Bay) -- Small plane with passengers is menaced by a terrible storm and some sort of flying octopus-like creature. Reminds you, naturally, of the *Twilight Zone* episode with William Shatner, but with more comely young people and no suspense over whether they're imagining it or not. Directed by Canadian Kaare Andrews, who got his start as an award-winning comic book writer and illustrator.

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Thanks for reading. Michael Giltz is the cohost of *Showbiz Sandbox*, a weekly pop culture podcast that reveals the industry take on entertainment news of the day and features top journalists and opinion makers as guests. It's [available free on iTunes](#). Visit [Michael Giltz at his website](#) and his [daily blog](#). Download his podcast of celebrity interviews and his radio show, also called *Popsurfing* and also [available for free on iTunes](#). Link to him on [Netflix](#) and gain access to thousands of ratings and reviews.

*NOTE: Michael Giltz is provided with free copies of DVDs to consider for review. He typically does not guarantee coverage and invariably receives far more screeners and DVDs than he can cover each week. Also, Michael Giltz freelances as a writer of DVD copy (the text that appears on the back of DVDs) for some titles released by IFC and other subsidiaries of MPI. It helps pay the rent, but does not obligate him in any way to speak positively or negatively of their titles.*

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**FirstGame72** 12:32 PM on 11/01/2010

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Although of course the #1 classic here is "Psycho" I would not put "The Exorcist" that far behind. What makes Exorcist an "art film" as well as a pop classic is the way Frankenheimer stubbornly refuses not to take his subject matter completely seriously and presents it in the most natural and logical way possible. That's what makes it completely terrifying.

I also think "The Blair Witch Project" for similar reasons, is nearly a complete success. The filmmakers courageously break rules and refuse to compromise with conventions.

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**3fingerbrown** 05:41 PM on 10/31/2010

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As David's comment below illustrates, Hitchcock's work on Psycho will be analyzed by film buffs forever. And rightfully so: it's a virtual encyclopedia of film method. But it's a pity that too often in our enthusiasm to praise Hitchcock we forget to acknowledge that Perkins gives one of the very best performances in the history of American cinema, an achievement made even more impressive by the knowledge that Hitchcock gave his actors notoriously little direction.

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**David Durham** 10:04 AM on 10/31/2010

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What's so masterful about Hitchcock's approach to film-making is on textbook display in Psycho. It's all about thwarting audience expectations. You set them up and then knock 'em down. The scene where Norman and Marion chat has an undercurrent of tension, but it's ultimately fairly comforting. Marion has realized she's gone down the wrong path and she's going to right her wrong. Norman seems sad, but he's very amicable, Perkins plays this just right. Then, wham! The whole plot, carefully crafted for 40 minutes, is totally derailed. Audience expectation turns to the money Marion has stolen. The camera pans over it several times as it sits wrapped in a newspaper. Again, masterful craft here. And again our expectations get the smack-down. Throughout the rest of film what is anticipated is not what happens. This is more than just 'the twist', a popular plot device in Hollywood today since the success of The Sixth Sense, it's audience manipulation from the bottom up, not the top down. It begins with the very first scene which quotes the time as 2:43. 2:43? Why so precise? Well, precision is the name of the game here and it's about to work on your head with the camera as the surgeon's scalpel. Psycho is the horror masterpiece against which all other horror films bear comparison.

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**FirstGame72** 12:25 PM on 11/01/2010

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Nice assesment. It takes a truly great artist to have the courage and vision to go completely outside of the convetnions of a medium and make it work completely. It is no accident that Mr. Hitchcock is pretty much the undisputed greatest english language film director pre 1960's.

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**Puller58** 05:23 AM on 10/31/2010

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Psycho without the music wouldn't be anywhere near the classic it is. Watching it with the sound off will prove that.

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**HUFFPOST SUPER USER**  
**drxcreatures** 06:12 AM on 12/27/2010  
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The music helped but, Perkins had a good hand in it as well.

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