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# Scare me

*Do you like scary movies? There's a reason: The rush you get*

By **KONRAD MARSHALL**  
[kmarshall@poststar.com](mailto:kmarshall@poststar.com)

**I**t's not sick to like horror.  
It's normal.

We love being scared, whether the agent of fear is a movie or a kid jumping out from behind a door.

Paul Etu, a Glens Falls psychologist, loves waking up from

nightmares.

"It was like I got to watch a movie in my head," he said. "You know it wasn't real, but you were viscerally aroused."

Etu grew up in the 1950s, and he was scared as a child by a replay of Orson Welles' infamous "War of the Worlds" broadcast. In his adult nightmare, Martians chase him in

flying saucers.

Waking up scared, he said, is analogous to the rush you get at a tense moment in a scary movie.

Horror movies are popular because we like the jolt of excitement, while knowing, at the same time, that whatever



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T.L. HOOKER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: THOOKER@POSTSTAR.COM

# Fear can be cathartic, the experts say

## ◆ FEAR

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caused the fear isn't real.

We enjoy the comfort of returning to a normal state, Etu said.

"From a neuropsychological point of view, when you're in pain, and the pain goes away, it triggers this wonderful sense of relief," Etu said. "Fear is like that. Most filmmakers give us that fear, but then they bring us back to reality."

Or, as one person conversant with horror put it, being afraid is fun.

"A friend of ours, every time there's a new horror movie, she sees it, and she screams and goes nuts, but she still likes it," Justin Talariski said. "I think it's an adrenaline thing. Your heart beats really fast."

Talariski knows.

His Ridge Road home is a converted church featured on the Discovery Channel's "Ghost Hunters" program.

Talariski himself was once an embalmer. He has a fetish for horror movies.

The vestibule of his church/house is home to a fake rotting corpse in a real wooden casket and, inside, the walls are covered with shock of horror decorations, from "Evil Dead" posters and crime scene photos to framed mortician's equipment.

"I started watching Godzilla movies when I was old enough to be sat in front of the TV," he said.

"Godzilla," made in 1954, was the beginning of horror in Japan, a film movement that would eventually spawn a new genre: J-horror.

"J-horror" is characterized by silence, empty spaces and a sense of doom. It is exemplified by "Ringu," remade by Hollywood into "The Ring," starring Naomi Watts; and by "Ju-On," remade as "The Grudge," starring Sarah Michelle Gellar.

Those movies don't scare Talariski. None does.

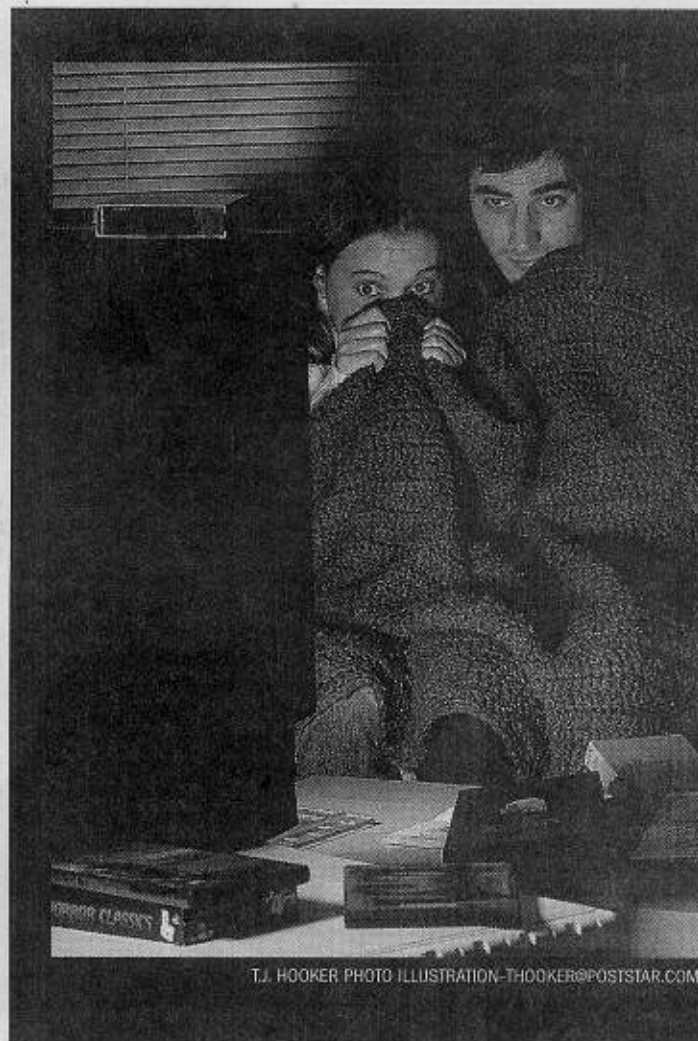
Not even "Texas Chain Saw Massacre" scares him.

Not even when he was 6.

"I just remember loving it," Talariski said. "I never really got scared, even then. But my sister couldn't watch it. She still can't, and she's in her mid 30s."

### 'Cathartic release'

Jeff Kirkendall of Latham, who has written and directed several horror movies, said horror is most effective when ordi-



T.J. HOOKER PHOTO ILLUSTRATION—THOOKER@POSTSTAR.COM

nary characters are caught in awful situations.

The unfortunate thing is that horrors such as those portrayed in "Texas Chain Saw Massacre" have taken place in real life.

Ed Gein, known as The Butcher of Plainfield, was a real-life serial killer from a small town in Wisconsin.

His gruesome crimes inspired several movie plots and characters, including Leatherface from "Texas Chain Saw Massacre," Buffalo Bill from "Silence of the Lambs" and Norman Bates from "Psycho."

Real-life horror really scares people.

"There's been some research to suggest that the closer the storyline is to reality, the closer the projection of it," Etu, the psychologist, said. "There's the fear that it actually could happen to me."

Still, horror movies can be not only fun, but cheesy fun.

Kirkendall, whose films include "Night Therapy" (about a psychiatrist who talks to patients who have had encounters with a talking severed head) and "The Temptress" (about a group of women who

battle an evil vampire cult in a suburban upstate New York town), understands the playful nature of horror.

"When people go to the movies, they want to have a thrill but also feel safe," he said. "It's kind of a cathartic release."

"The Exorcist" has the distinction of being the top-grossing (and, perhaps, the top grossing-out) horror movie of all time.

But even "The Exorcist" was ranked 61 on the all-time money-making list. Some people don't want to watch heads spin around and puke.

Kirkendall said he suspects films like "The Exorcist" have a profound effect on people because of their religious subject matter.

"Religious horror has that effect on some," he said. "It always seems to be in the realm of possibility."

## Top 10 horror movies, by poll:

1. Texas Chain Saw Massacre (1974)
2. Halloween (1978)
3. Suspiria (1977)
4. Dawn of the Dead (1978)
5. The Shining (1980)
6. Psycho (1960)
7. The Wicker Man (1973)
8. Rosemary's Baby (1968)
9. Don't Look Now (1973)
10. Cannibal Holocaust (1980)

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