

Jeff Kirkendall's Thoughts For The Month Column

Thoughts, Opinions, Reviews, Commentary & More!

Hello and Welcome! My name is Jeff Kirkendall and I'm an independent filmmaker and actor from the Upstate New York area. This is the section of the Very Scary Productions website where I write about topics related to independent filmmaking, digital video production, acting, movies in general, horror movies in particular, my own indie movies, as well as anything and everything related or in between.

I decided to create this commentary page because I find that I often come across things that either interest me, excite me, intrigue me, or maybe just bug me. Any topic related to movies and cinema is fair game, from the most mainstream to the most controversial. For example I'll often read about movie projects that I have a strong interest in or opinion on, for one reason or another. This page gives me a forum to discuss these things. It's all about discussion and furthering understanding of our pop culture. Anyone who has feedback concerning what I have to say here, feel free to contact me (see the contact link at <http://www.veryscaryproductions.com/>).

I'd also like to point out that the following is just my opinion, and everyone is free to agree or disagree with what I have to say. Enjoy, and to all the Indies out there: Keep on Filming!

SUBJECT: Halloween Reminiscences - November 2004

For me Halloween has always been one of the more entertaining and unique times of the year.* Considering the fact that I'm an independent filmmaker specializing in the horror genre, this makes perfect sense. But back when I was a kid, before I was even interested in the horror genre, Halloween was enjoyable because it promised a night of fun and adventure. It was always a personal challenge to put together a unique and memorable costume that friends would talk about days later. This challenge was amplified by the fact that our school always had some sort of party or event where everyone got to show off their costumes in either the school's auditorium or in the classrooms. Even at a young age I understood the value (and challenge) of trying to personalize costumes, whether they were store-bought, hand-made, or some combination of both. What was even more exciting however was Halloween night. My friends and I would get together and venture out trick-or-treating in our costumes, traveling from house to house on our street, and then over to other nearby streets. When I was really young my parents or someone else's parents would walk with us or drive down the road in front of each house to watch over us. Then when I was a bit older we would be allowed to head out on our own, as long as we promised not to go too far from home. One thing I remember is that more often than not Halloween night would turn out to be a cold, rainy and dreary evening, which I think bothered the adults more than us. I never cared that much about the weather (or about getting sick from it) because I was always so immersed in the excitement of the trick-or-treating. A bag full of candy at the end of the night was well worth the prospect of coming home tired and wet.

It's amazing how things have changed over the years. Nowadays Halloween is really much more of an adult's celebration in many respects. Halloween parties (both public and private) have become very popular with adults. Costume contests have become a

yearly staple at bars, clubs and other establishments. At the same time, because of increased safety concerns, kids are more likely to trick-or-treat inside a mall rather than on a dark suburban street. Daytime Halloween parties in school are still common, but that adventurous journey out into the cold night air is less prevalent. However Halloween costumes have remained a huge business, partly because of popularity with adults. Besides traditional Halloween characters such as ghosts, witches, zombies and various classic movie monsters like Frankenstein, Dracula and The Wolf Man, modern-day boogeyman characters have remained incredibly popular throughout the 1980's, 1990's and today. The 80's gave us the likes of Michael Myers**, Freddy Krueger and Jason Voorhees, from the **Halloween**, **A Nightmare On Elm Street**, and **Friday the 13th** horror movie series respectively, just to name a few. For many years in fact Freddy Krueger was consistently the top-selling costume. The 90's continued the trend with the addition of the Ghost Face character from the highly successful **Scream** movie franchise. Today this trend is alive and well with the continued resurgence and popularity of the horror genre and scary movies in general. And for comic book fans movie versions of superheroes such as Batman, Spiderman and Catwoman have popularized other costume choices. It's also worth noting the Halloween theme parks across the country continue to feature creepy characters, providing still more entertainment choices each October.

For my own part, I have been lucky enough to attend some great private Halloween parties in recent years. Being friends with many independent filmmakers, actors and film fans has its perks. This past Halloween I attended a small get-together with some friends where we simply watched movies late into the night. However even in years when I didn't go to a Halloween party, I've tried to make it a point to watch a creepy horror film like the 1968 favorite **Night of the Living Dead**, or the cult classic **Carnival of Souls**. Watching these types of films around Halloween always seems to get me in the spirit of the season. It's certainly become a yearly tradition for me. So next year pull up a chair, get together with some good friends, run some creepy films, and enjoy this unique and special time of the year!

* While Halloween isn't an official holiday it definitely has a long and rich history. From various readings I've learned that Halloween was originally called All Hallows Eve - the evening before All Saints Day celebrated by the Roman Catholics. October 31st was also the eve of the ancient Celtic Festival of Samhain (pronounced sow-en), a celebration that marked the death of the old year and the birth of a new one.¹ Below are some web pages that offer an in-depth discussion on the origins and history of Halloween

¹ <http://nightmareonelmstreetfilms.com/halloween.html>
<http://www.illusions.com/halloween/hallows.htm>
<http://www.witchway.net/halloween.html>

** The original **Halloween** was actually released in 1978. However Michael Myers is commonly grouped with popular 80's slasher icons Freddy Krueger and Jason Voorhees primarily because of the fact that the **Halloween** movie series continued on throughout the 1980's.