



HALLOWEEN SPECIAL SCREENINGS

Halloween

Halloween

Directed by: John Carpenter
©/Production Company:
Falcon International Productions
Moustapha Akkad presents
a Compass International Pictures release
Executive Producer: Irwin Yablans
Produced by: Debra Hill
Associate Producer: Kool Lusby
Production Manager: Don Behrns
Production Assistants: Barry Bernardi, Paul Fox
Director of Photography: Dean Cundey
2nd Assistant Director: Jack De Wolf
Script Supervisor: Louise Jaffe
Screenplay by: John Carpenter, Debra Hill
Director of Photography: Dean Cundey
Camera Operator: Ray Stella
Assistant Cameraman: Fred Victor
2nd Assistant Cameraman: Krishna Rao
Key Grip: Dylan Shepard
Best Boy: Steve Mathis
Grip: Walt Hill
Panaglide: Ray Stella
Gaffer: Mark Walthour
Best Boy: Josh Miller
Electrician: Reed Freeman
Stills: Kim Gottlieb
Editors: Tommy Wallace, Charles Bornstein
Production Designer: Tommy Wallace
Assistant Art Director: Randy Moore
Set Decorator: Craig Stearns
Property Master: Craig Stearns
Set Painter: Richard Girod
Wardrobe: Beth Rodgers
Makeup: Erica Ulland
Titles and Opticals: MGM
Filmed in: Panavision
Colour by: Metrocolor
Music by: John Carpenter
Music Performed by:
The Bowling Green Philharmonic Orchestra
Orchestration: Dan Wyman
Music Co-ordinator: Bob Walters
Music Recording: Sound Arts
Music Recordist and Mixer: Peter Bergren
Sound Mixer: Tommy Causey
Boom Man: Joe Brennan
Re-recording: Samuel Goldwyn Studios
Supervising Sound Editor: William Stevenson
Stunts: Jim Winburn
Cast:
Donald Pleasence (*Dr Sam Loomis*)
Jamie Lee Curtis (*Laurie Strode*)
Nancy Loomis (*Annie*)
P.J. Soles (*Lynda*)
Charles Cyphers (*Brackett*)
Kyle Richards (*Lindsey*)
Brian Andrews (*Tommy*)
John Michael Graham (*Bob*)
Nancy Stephens (*Marion*)
Arthur Malet (*graveyard keeper*)
Mickey Yablans (*Richie*)
Brent Le Page (*Lonnie*)
Adam Hollander (*Keith*)
Robert Phalen (*Dr Wynn*)
Tony Moran (*Michael Myers age 23*)
Will Sandin (*Michael Myers age 6*)
Sandy Johnson (*Judith Myers*)
David Kyle (*boyfriend*)
Peter Griffith (*Laurie's father*)
Nick Castle (*The Shape*)
USA 1978© 91 mins
Digital 4K

In 1978 *Halloween* was a break with the then-dominant mode of American horror as represented by the likes of George A. Romero, early Wes Craven, Larry Cohen and *Shivers*-era David Cronenberg. In the 10 years since Romero's *Night of the Living Dead*, horror filmmakers had been committed to social involvement and extreme, transgressive content. Theirs was the horror of Vietnam and Watergate, of an America turned monstrous from within, of twisted sexualities within a society at the edge of perhaps deserved collapse.

Halloween, though by no means unsophisticated, was just fun. Its small town (Haddonfield, Illinois) may have produced a mass murderer in young Michael Myers, but there is no sense that Michael (like the Texas Chain Saw family or Romero's ghouls) indicates anything's really wrong with America. He's just turned into the Bogey Man and come home to give the kids a good fright. Dr Sam Loomis (Donald Pleasence) explains that 20 years of working with Michael has led him past any belief that he's a case open to psychiatric healing – he's 'pure evil' with the 'Devil's eyes'.

If director John Carpenter and producer Debra Hill, who collaborated on the script after executive producer Irwin Yablans suggested taking their pre-sold horror idea (*The Babysitter Murders*) and setting it on Halloween, were working in any horror tradition, it wasn't that of the post-Romero New Wave. Nor even (despite such feints as the character name Sam Loomis and casting Janet Leigh's daughter) the Hitchcock of *Psycho*, where it's possible to understand Norman Bates. Their film was more along the lines of the old-school make-'em-jump ballyhoo of cigar-brandishing William Castle, the gimmick-happy mogul behind the original *House on Haunted Hill* and *The Tingler*. Castle's 1965 *I Saw What You Did* is a draft for *Halloween*, with a bored teenage babysitter playing a silly phone prank (calling up a number at random and giggling 'I know who you are and I saw what you did') on precisely the wrong person, a psycho (John Ireland) who has just inverted a Hitchcock moment by exploding out of the shower to strangle the special guest star (Joan Crawford).

Halloween begat *Friday the 13th*, *Prom Night*, *He Knows You're Alone* and a wave of imitations in the early 80s including the Carpenter-Hill-produced *Halloween II*. The so-called slasher genre has died out several times, only to be revived by Wes Craven hits *A Nightmare on Elm Street* and *Scream* – both of which prompted Moustapha Akkad, owner of the franchise, to put out further *Halloween* instalments. Indeed, there have been so many imitations and derivatives that it's strange to watch *Halloween* again and be reminded that it was an 'original'.

From the credits – a slow pan in the dark towards a jack o'lantern as Carpenter's simple but effective theme jangles – *Halloween* sets out to be an American fable, informed by the ambiguous small-town magic of Ray Bradbury which had just resurfaced in the early works of Stephen King (third female lead P.J. Soles was cast from Brian De Palma's King adaptation *Carrie*). Hill's contribution, sorely missed in almost all subsequent teen-horror films, was the affectionate, realistic, archetypal depiction of American teenage life. *Halloween's* high school is a snake pit of sociopaths, but the three contrasted heroines are all credible, likeable and funny – when Nancy Loomis and Soles are killed, you miss them. Most later slasher films suggest their killers are the punitive wrath of God on sinful kids, but here the actual murders (shot bloodless) are unimportant – behind his blank mask the Shape is less interested in knifing than in scaring. So the most frightening moments aren't the killings but the sudden lurches into frame or gradual loomings of the Shape.

Kim Newman, *Sight and Sound*, November 2001

IN PERSON & PREVIEWS

Halloween Special Screenings: Halloween

Sat 26 Oct 18:20; Sun 27 Oct 16:20;

Wed 30 Oct 20:40; Thu 31 Oct 21:05

The Pilger Effect

Mon 28 Oct 18:15

Armenian Shorts + live electric cello accompaniment by Artyom Manukyan

Tue 29 Oct 18:30

Save the Green Planet! Jigureul jikyeora!

Wed 30 Oct 17:50 (+ Q&A with director Jang

Joon-hwan); Sat 30 Nov 20:30

Preview: No Other Land

Wed 30 Oct 21:05

Film Africa Closing Night:

Black Tea + intro and Q&A

Sun 3 Nov 17:50

Vera: End of an Era + Q&A with Brenda Blethyn,

Ann Cleaves and guests

Tue 5 Nov 18:10

London Korean Film Festival Opening Gala:

Victory bik-to-ri + Q&A with director Park

Beom-su

Wed 6 Nov 18:45

Art of Action: The Train + intro with Christopher

McQuarrie and Eddie Hamilton, presented by

London Action Festival

Fri 8 Nov 20:30

London Korean Film Festival Closing Night Gala:

Love in the Big City Dae-dosi-ui Sarang-beop

+ Q&A with director E.oni

Wed 13 Nov 18:45

Bonzo Dog Doo-Dah Band: Still Barking – Colour

Me Pop + Q&A with band members and special

guests, hosted by Samira Ahmed

Thu 14 Nov 18:15

Mark Kermode Live in 3D at the BFI

Mon 18 Nov 18:30

Preview: Moana 2 + Q&A with David Derrick Jr,

Jason Hand, Dana Ledoux Miller, Christina Chen

and Jared Bush

Sun 24 Nov 10:30

Art of Action – Special TV Preview: SAS Rogue

Heroes + Q&A with writer Steven Knight and

cast members (tbc)

Tue 26 Nov 18:15

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**SIGHT
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A contemporary review

What is most admirable, first of all, about *Halloween* is what it is not: despite its setting in the sort of snug, small midwestern town which has been host of late to many a rampaging Z-feature mutant (and prompted some equally misbegotten critical theses on the Family), it cannot really be described at all in terms sociological or psychological. It is one of the cinema's most perfectly engineered devices for saying 'Boo!'; it is also a good illustration of director John Carpenter's philosophy of film and audience involvement: '... movies are not intellectual, they are not ideas ... Movies are emotional, an audience should cry or laugh or get scared' (*Sight and Sound*, Spring 1978).

Responses to *Halloween* will depend not on audience recognition that its indestructible psychopath is a threat to their own quiet lives – despite Donald Pleasence's gnomic warning, 'Death has come to your little town' – but on their susceptibility to Carpenter's virtuoso manipulation, which is itself the 'subject' of the movie. There is a contradiction, and a fine line, here – and one which Carpenter treads with unerring skill: the first tenet of classic Hollywood storytelling, which Carpenter takes as his model, is its invisibility; yet in order to touch the nerves of an audience which has seen it all so many times before, Carpenter must employ the style in a manner which allows them to recognise the manipulation and still willingly submit to its spell. His reservations on this score about the opening of *Assault on Precinct 13* – a long hand-held tracking shot, which he felt was necessary as an audience hook but also a 'bit self-conscious' – have been elaborated here into a style that is both elementary and as self-consciously wrought as possible.

Halloween begins with a similar sequence – a subjective, hand-held camera indicating the unknown maniac stalking his first victim – but one lasting considerably longer, as the killer follows a girl round and through a house, climbs some stairs, dons a Halloween mask, commits the bloody crime then hurries back outside, where the first cut to a retreating crane shot outrageously reveals his identity. Thereafter, Carpenter uses similarly elaborate tracking movements not merely to indicate when the killer is back on the scene, but to point up how easily the audience can be made to respond as if he were. The trick is carried over in an elegant sense of composition, in which dark spaces suddenly opening up behind characters' shoulders become charged with our eager anticipation. That the victims are all youngsters caught in, before or just after *flagrante delicto* also complies with the sexual hang-ups of movie monsters but is not, the film is careful to establish, part of any psychological theme.

Interestingly, the Carpenter-scripted *Eyes of Laura Mars* failed because of the attempt to suggest that a similar perceptual/formal trick, the heroine's 'second sight', did have psychological significance. To pursue the subject here would lead down as false a trail as the psychiatrist's thoughts on Norman Bates' role switch in *Psycho* – and more pertinent, given Carpenter's general allusiveness, is the fact that Jamie Lee Curtis, admirably playing the heroine who finally escapes the monster's clutches and whose purity is repeatedly stressed, is the daughter of Janet Leigh. Just to make sure his intentions are not misconstrued, Carpenter includes a psychiatrist (with the same name as *Psycho*'s hero) whose role is to deepen not elucidate the mystery, and whose predictions of his patient's intentions owe nothing to Freud and everything to Jeremiah.

Such delighted self-awareness, of course, is characteristic of new-Hollywood directors in general – although it's interesting that Robert Wise coolly deploys similar perceptual devices in *Audrey Rose* to develop a hocus-pocus plot in intellectual rather than visceral terms. But, as in *Precinct 13*, Carpenter manages to avoid the excesses of Bogdanovich and De Palma-ism – even if he comes close with repeated glimpses of *The Thing* and *Forbidden Planet* on TV – and steers *Halloween* safely between indulgence and useful recreation of his sources. Now that he has proved in two films that he can pull off this difficult balancing act with consummate ease, one just hopes that Carpenter doesn't get stuck in an aesthetic high-wire routine.

Richard Combs, *Monthly Film Bulletin*, February 1979

Programme notes and credits compiled by Sight and Sound and the BFI Documentation Unit

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