

Horror and Extreme cinema course

TUTOR STATEMENT

What makes a good horror film?

Good horror films are tense and unnerving they explore the darkest recesses of our imagination; they challenge our assumptions about the world. Sometimes they are ferocious and brutal and unexplainable, but so is the world we live in.

I like the Texas chainsaw massacre and one of the major reasons is that Leather face has a character; he is not just a monster. He wears make up to dinner because he wants to look pretty and he is genuinely confused as to where all of these people that he keeps butchering are coming from. It is a very direct, violent and simple film but it is essentially Leather faces story and that is why the camera stays with him at the end of the film, giving us a glimpse into his mind and the frenzied child like world that he inhabits.

I love the Shining – Kubrick turned Steven Kings story into a modern fairytale that is as dark as they originally were.

Asian cinema is incredible - Extreme, beautiful, violent, compelling films and popular - Takashii Miike and Park Chan Wook have made some of the most interesting films I have ever seen.

George A Romero's films reflect and comment on society. The zombies are slow and stupid but it doesn't matter how many you kill there are more of them waiting to get you. This is the world of Richard Matheson's 'I am Legend' not to be confused with the pathetic screen version that has been released.

It is the world of the few against the mass of the individual Vs Society and of morality inverted. That is not to say that I think all films should be overtly moral. I like Predator, it is a great 'monster in the woods film', I love David Lynch I watch his films and I am scared and engaged even if I don't know why. The old Hammer films have an amazing feeling about them and the Wicker man is an absolute masterpiece. People have always told each other scary stories. Shakespeare lived in a world in which his work had to compete with Bear baiting and hangings so his first play 'Titus Andronicus' is a blood fest filled with murder, rape, mutilation and revenge but there is something about the detail of the story that separates it.

Peter Brook said of Samuel Becket's plays that they are dark plays but they show the contour of the light and this is for me the reason for extreme imagery – If you go down you also go up that is why great horror and tragedy can provoke such a revitalisation of life.

Monsters are important and always have been – I love Grendel in the Norse tale Beowulf because he just wants everyone to be quiet.

I am a working filmmaker and the techniques that I teach come directly from my own experience. I love teaching and one of the reasons is that I am always inspired and surprised by what students come up with.

The course is designed to get students to write and make films that will get noticed. My experience has shown me that you don't need a massive budget to make good films and it is often the decisions that you are forced to make because of the financial limitations that make the film what it is. The current cinematic climate is conservative and stiffening and getting a film made, short or feature that is in anyway interesting is really difficult. The idea behind the course is to get students to make films that stand out, provoke and that are of a potentially festival winning standard.

The courses major focus is on making a short film but the skills and techniques are designed to enable students to go on and develop their first feature.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sam Walker', with a large, stylized flourish at the end.

Sam Walker