

# RETRO SLASHERZINE

20 MARCH, 2012 | CREATED USING FIVEFILTERS.ORG

---

## Early 80's Vs. Late 80's Slashers

**Guest Writer Dustin Ferguson:** Let's face it, every slasher freak knows that the 1980's was the decade of the Slasher film. However, a decade is ten years, and ten years is a long time. Taking a look back over those years, a steady progression of evolving (perhaps for the worst) plot lines and stories can be seen.

Starting with 1980, we saw an estimated 26 Slasher films released that year. Many "now-considered-classics" were released that year. Titles such as "Friday The 13<sup>th</sup>", "Just Before Dawn", "Maniac", "Terror Train" and "The Boogeyman" became our new viewing pleasure. Most of these films had a very similar plot: a group of teenagers are stalked by an unknown maniac and brutally murdered in gory fashion.

In 1981, an additional 31 Slasher films were released. That's 5 more than year one. Already, it is obvious that the genre will be going places. There was now an established audience for these films. This year would see the releases of "My Bloody Valentine", "Nightmares In a Damaged Brain", "Halloween II", "The Burning", "The Funhouse" and "Friday The 13<sup>th</sup> Part 2". Again, plot lines remained about the same: a group of people stuck in a situation they can't escape while being systematically murdered.

But in 1982, 32 Slasher films hit the market, the most so far this decade. It had become a very popular type of film at the time. Most movie theaters were showing a Slasher movie, sometimes even more than one at the same time! This year is considered by many fans to be the best year for Slasher films. Cult classics like "Pieces", "The Slumber Party Massacre", "Madman", "Don't Go In The Woods (Alone)!", "Humongous" and "Unhinged" were all born this year.

By 1983, everyone was releasing a Slasher film. It was a guaranteed money maker, and with the additional 24 films that were released that year, it was continuing to prove that the audience loves horror and can't get enough. "Scalps", "Sleepaway Camp", "Curtains", "The Forest" and "Girls Nite Out" were released this year, will positive box office totals.

1984 is often considered to be the last good year for Slasher movies. A few last-minute classics saw the light of day, such as "Silent Night, Deadly Night", "The Deadly Intruder", "Splatter University", "Friday The 13<sup>th</sup> Part 4" and "Nail Gun Massacre". Many Slasher franchises had become established at this time as well. Studios were pumping out sequels, milking all they could from the ever popular sub genre. A mere 12 Slasher films hit the market this year, half the amount of releases from the prior year.

But by 1985, the home video market began to boom and technology became cheaper. With the release of consumer grade VCRs came VHS camcorders as well. Suddenly, any Joe Schmoe could grab a camera, point and shoot. And since the sub genre

was still fairing well at the box office, just about ANYBODY could have their completed film released, at least to video. Many "S.O.V." (that's "shot-on-video" for you newbies) titles appeared on video shelves that year. Titles like "Blood Cult", "The Mutilator" and "Horror House on Highway 5" became the gorehound's new entertainment. Some say Slasher films lost their seriousness and marketability that year. Tired of the original Slasher formula, many films pioneered new plot lines and even added comedy into the mix. Fans from the original boom were slowly beginning to loose interest. This was the worst year of the decade with only 8 Slasher titles released.

In '86 a good portion of Slasher films were debuting on home video. 28 Slasher titles were released that year, a noticeable increase over the last couple years. Also, the new sub genre "Comedy Horror" was birthed, with such films as "April Fool's Day", "Slaughter High" and "Dreamaniac".

In 1987 Slasher fans were dropping off like flies. About 29 Slasher films were put out that year, proving home video was the new market. Films could be both produced and distributed cheaply to video stores. However, this year people started to grow restless with horror as a whole, and the new comedic elements made it hard for the viewer to decide when to laugh and when to be scared. Movies like "Cheerleader Camp", "Silent Night, Deadly Night Part 2" and "Hide and Go Shriek" attempted to stir mixed emotions in the viewer.

1988 was a year of generic horror. Titles like "Memorial Valley Massacre", "Psycho Cop", "Cutting Class", "Iced" and "555" popped up on video shelves and old skool slasher fans had now moved onto Thrillers and discovering Italian giallos which began to hit the American market on video at about this time. American horror was dying, and fans had pretty much given up hope on the genre. 20 Slasher films were released this year, continuing a steady decline.

The final year 1989 saw very few Slasher titles released, around 17. At this point the films were no longer making money and the bigger studios were producing more family-friendly oriented films. Only a few decent titles like "Intruder", "Hell High" and "Halloween 5" came out and from that point on it remained a downward spiral throughout the 90's. Some believe us to be at the end of the twenty year cycle now. The early 80's saw some great Slasher films that died off throughout the decade. And the same can be said about the last ten years. In the early new millennium we had some great films like "House of 1,000 Corpses", "Cabin Fever" and the "Saw" series. Again, by the end of the decade many Slasher titles were shot on DV or HD and cheaply put out straight to DVD. Comedy re-entered the sub genre, once again tainting the emotional pureness of the Slasher film. One can only hope that in ten years the cycle can start over and the quality Slasher film will once again be reborn.

# Sleepaway Camp IV From Retro Slashers DVD

We're "soft launching" a Retro Slashers DVD label with lost sequel *Sleepaway Camp IV: The Survivor*, released in finished form for the first time ever next week after 20 years of uphill battle...

The spine serial number is **RS001** – but we're piggybacking on this project which initiated over at companion site Sleepaway Camp Films. We have a specific **#002** in mind which would be where *Retro Slashers* DVD would get a full launch but we're taking things one step at a time though – at most you'd probably get 1 or 2 releases per year of carefully chosen/acquired titles. It's not an attempt to compete with other companies or saturate the marketplace, more just a natural extension of the *Retro Slashers* website and brand. We want to give you cool things slasher, and sometimes we'll go outside of your computer screen to give them to you.

For more info, Fangoria published an article about the DVD release, and there's also an in-depth older piece they did on the resurrection and editing of the project. Both essential reading. More details to come but since we're focused on getting it released this week, most energy has been going into lifting the 20 year curse rather than the promotion machine. Once it's out (no specific day, purely a "when it's ready" scenario), then we'll have more time to actually talk about it.

---

## Comic Review: Slashers 101

Are you familiar with Stacie Ponder's website *Final Girl*? If not, it's my pleasure to introduce you to it, as it's one of the great places on the web for people like us. Stacie has a fondness for horror movies and golden era slasher flicks, and she writes about them with wit and insight (she's even made a few short films herself). As a bit of a Renaissance woman (she's also "a maker of comics, a writer, a video game player, a coffee drinker, and a kitten lover" as noted in her Blogger profile), Stacie has combined her pen and ink skills with her slasher chops to deliver *Slashers 101*, a thoroughly entertaining introduction to slasher movies.

On her blog, Stacie describes *Slashers 101* as "a 24-page, black and white mini-comic" and "sort of my love letter to slasher movies", and that's exactly what it is. Through her stylized 'toons, Stacie takes a brief look at the genre she loves and knows so well, starting with a quick history before getting into the specifics of what makes a slasher flick a slasher flick. Where else you going to find pieces on *Slasherfros* (genre characters with afros), *Heads in Toilets*, *Heads in Fish Tanks*, and *Dull Killers in Jeans*?

So, is it gross to say that as a slasher fan, I was *charmed* by *Slashers 101*? 'Cause that's what I was... *totally* \*. I enjoyed Stacie's bent take on the genre, and I loved that the info was presented in an entirely original way. If you're a slasher freak too (and you must be because you're on the *Retro Slashers* site), I'm willing to bet you'll get a kick out of *Slashers 101*, and if you've ever wanted to introduce somebody to the genre, I can't think of a more entertaining way to do it. Then you can hit 'em with

*Maniac*!

You know what else is great about *Slashers 101*? It's only \$5 (USD). For an extra \$5, Stacie will even create an original colour sketch for you, inked on the back of your copy. At my request, she did an awesome *Slugs* illustration on mine.

To get yer own copy or ten, visit <http://finalgirl.bigcartel.com>. *Slashers 101* may be small in girth, but it's behemoth in slashery goodness.

Final Girl

\* Thanks to Halloween's Lynda van der Klok for the loan of the adjective.

---

## Viva VHS: Body Count (1987)

During the heyday of slasher flicks in the early 1980's, countries around the world were eager to cash in on the boom. International production companies did everything within their power (and budget) to disguise their film's country of origin, sometimes actually doing the extra paperwork, hopping on a plane, and shooting on location in the good old USofA.

Though Italy's gialli had influenced the slasher, Italians weren't immune to the lure the potential box office its American cousin offered, and they jumped on the bandwagon with gusto. Taking advantage of the natural and dramatic scenery found in Colorado, Italian filmmaker Ruggero Deodato took the hop-on-the-plane option, and shot his 1987 slasher *Body Count* (aka *Camping del terrore*) in the U.S.

Deodato had made a name for himself in Italy with *poliziotti* (police thrillers like *Live Like a Cop*, *Die Like a Man*), cannibal gore epics (*Cannibal Holocaust*), and action films (*Cut and Run*). With this typically genre-diverse CV, it's no wonder that Deodato decided to try his hand at an American-style slasher, and so *Body Count* was born.

Its cast is a cult movie fan's dream; Mimsy (*The Perfume of the Lady in Black*, *Autopsy*) Farmer, David (*Last House on the Left*) Hess, Ivan (*All the Colors of the Dark*, *Spasmo*) Rassimov, Charles (*Supervixens*, *The Silence of the Lambs*) Napier, and John (*Tenebrae*, *Shock*, *Caligula*) Steiner lead a handful of lesser-known Italian and American twenty-somethings. Hess, Rassimov, Steiner and Farmer had all worked with Deodato before; Hess in *The House on the Edge of the Park*, Rassimov in *Jungle Holocaust* and *The Raiders of Atlantis*, Steiner in *Wave of Lust*, *Cut and Run*, and *The Lone Runner*, and Farmer in *The Concorde Affair*. Here, they're more or less underused support for the main action that goes something like this:

Hess and Farmer's son, who witnessed a double murder when he was a child, returns home after a stint in the military. En route he gets a lift from an RV full of obnoxious party-hungry campers and their accompanying SUV full of outdoorsy types whom he invites to stay at Mom and Dad's deserted campsite (also the site of the aforementioned murders). Mom and Dad aren't too thrilled with the arrival of the strangers, perhaps because they've got enough problems to deal with; Mom is having an affair with a local cop (Napier), and Dad is obsessively hunting for the

Shaman that he blames for the murders. Suddenly, someone starts slashing through the assembled campers. Could it be someone seeking revenge? The killer continuing the original killing spree? Or is it the Shaman, called into action because the camp is built on a Native American burial ground (seriously)?

Chances are that, even if you haven't seen *Body Count*, you may still be familiar with its iconic poster image. It's been used frequently on websites, book covers and in other slasher-related media such as J.A. Kerswell's essential resource book *Teenage Wasteland: The Slasher Movie Uncut*. This image and some negative reviews are really all I had to go by until I finally saw this MIA-on-DVD slasher. And you know what? I was entertained for its full 90-minute running time.

As a fan of slasher movies, I enjoyed its mostly annoying stock characters, its stalk-and-kill scenes, the killer's creepy mask, its 80's atmosphere, its attempts to play by Slasher conventions. As a fan of Euro-cult flicks, I enjoyed its cast of familiar and well-loved faces, its sometimes wonky re-recorded dialogue, its score by Dario Argento favourite Claudio Simonetti that really works about 50% of the time, its red herrings that go nowhere along with subplots that just disappear, and most of all, its Italian twist on the Slasher genre. What's not to love about a slasher movie that has its characters/victims-to-be clean up an out of use campground shower for the sole purpose of luring them there later to get naked and then dead, one by one? Pure slasher gold.

My only beef with *Body Count* is that, coming this late in the game, its effects are not nearly as ghastly as they should be. Seven years earlier, *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* raised the stakes in the effects department as soon as poor Annie's throat received the ear-to-ear treatment thanks to Tom Savini. Take a look at the faux American Slasher *Stage Fright* (aka *Deliria*) to see what Deodato's fellow countryman Michele Soavi was up to at the same time (both flicks were released in 1987).

While *Body Count* is an admittedly minor entry in the Slasher sub-genre, it's a diverting way to spend your horror movie minutes, depending of course, on how long you can stand the annoying campers. Rather than telling yourself "*It's only a movie*." *Only a movie.*", my advice is to keep repeating, "*It's only a matter of minutes before Loudmouth A gets the axe. Only a matter of minutes.*" Now that you're prepared, all those in favour of heading to Mom & Dad's deserted campground, the line forms behind me.

We have a few articles queued up, so I'll post those throughout the coming week. Beyond that, I'm uncertain what the future of the site will be.

I do know we have one cool thing coming up though. **Retro Slashers DVD**, anyone?

---

---

## John Will Never Eat Shish Kebab Again

What can I say? We got hacked. Ironical for a website about slasher movies to be on the receiving end of some death-dealing, no?

Anyway, the issue is resolved after painstaking editing of hundreds of files. I'm just glad all our contributors' articles have been rescued!

And no, this site does not have a virus. It will take a while for Google, Firefox etc. to stop reporting that information to your screen - we have to go through their review process to ensure the server is completely clean now. It is.