

21st CENTURY TERROR

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Week 4: Fear and Found Footage

The Found Footage Phenomenon

- One of the key motifs of 21st Century horror is the 'found footage' film
- The changing face of technology gave rise to this particular sub-genre
- Everyone has a TV studio/camera in their pocket
- However, the sub-genre has its roots in 20th century cinema
- *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980)
- *The Last Broadcast* (1998)

The Blair Witch Project (1999)

Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez

The Plot

- Three young people decided to make a documentary about the Blair Witch legend
- They interview locals and then set off into the woods to try and capture new material
- The film begins with an introduction which states that the film makers have disappeared and their 'found footage' is the only remaining clue to their disappearance

Production

- Principal photography lasted eight days
- Though there was a 35 page 'script' the action was improvised, the actors receiving basic instructions about their motivations
- They were given instructions as to where to go via hidden messages in milk crates that were left for them to find
- Many of the other participants were real locals but some of them were studio plants that the film makers had thrown into the mix, without the actors knowing
- Apparently, Gregg Hale used his military training recollections to exhaust and harass the cast
- He made sure they covered long distances during filming, received little food and were 'disturbed' during the night.
- Each main cast member was given a camera to capture the footage

Post Production

- The film premiered at the 1998 Sundance Festival
- A press release tried to persuade cinema goers that the film was a 'record of real events'
- The film had a limited release but wasn't released properly till a year later

- In the meantime, Artisan, the film's distribution company encouraged an innovative marketing campaign utilizing the then (fairly new) technology the internet
- The film's official website featured faux police reports as well as "newsreel-style" interviews
- It was the first example of viral marketing and it was ground breaking
- Originally the film cost \$60,000
- Box office was \$248.6 million

The Found Footage Sub Genre

The Pros

- The shaky camera, documentary style can add to the heightened tension
- The 'real' look can help us to forget we are watching a drama giving rise to a more visceral experience
- The style creates a level of confusion helping to fuse our feelings of unease with those of the protagonists on screen

The Problems

- The technique allows limited shifts in tone
- The pacing can be an exhausting experience – shorter projects are usually the best
- Protagonists can lack proper development, they appear as little more than 'video game' characters
- The style can force us to stretch our 'willing suspension of disbelief'

Rec (2007)

Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza

- Directed by Jaume Balagueró and Paco Plaza
- Produced by Jaume Balagueró
- Written by Jaume Balagueró, Paco Plaza and Luis A. Berdejo
- Cinematography by Pablo Rosso
- Edited David Gallart
- It's a fast paced, juggernaut of a film
- The TV camera crew set up adds an authenticity to the found footage technique – its more believable that media team would document the action as much as possible in an effort to gain awards/credibility
- The directors had previously worked on actual documentaries, so the presentation feels real and assured
- The mix of night vision and ordinary film footage plunges us into uncertain territory, creating a knife edge tension
- The film combines different styles and genre tropes
- Found footage
- Documentary
- TV show within a film
- Siege
- Zombie

- Haunted house
- Exorcism
- Demonic possession
- Its 78-minute run time works perfectly within its chosen sub-genre
- It's well executed, well-paced and the action expertly handled
- However, as with other found footage pieces, the characters are fairly one dimensional, given little time to develop
- Though put together nicely and being a more than adequate entry into the found footage genre, it also feels slightly unnecessary

Borderlands (2013)

Elliot Goldner

- Directed by Elliot Goldner
- Produced by Jennifer Handorf and Jez Vernon
- Written by Elliot Goldner
- Cinematography by Eben Bolter
- Edited by Will Gilbey, Jacob Proctor and Mark Towns

British Horror

- British horror very much does its own thing
- At its best, it shrugs off more American influences and recognizes its own idiosyncrasies, failures and unique qualities
- There is something undefinable about this rainy island culture which permeates its film product particularly comedy and horror

"There's an inherent sensibility in Britishness that does not fear its own weirdness and revels in its own low status. That was one of the instincts behind Sightseers, to make something that is essentially an American genre, but without any glamour whatsoever. The small, the negligible, tiny nuances, intonations, gestures, petty habituations, fondnesses, trinkets, and grudges. It's the stuff of Britishness, isn't it? We're kind of a nation of emotional hoarders..."

Alice Lowe

Borderlands (2013)

Elliot Goldner

- *Wicker Man* like allusions to folk horror – isolated village, hostile inhabitants
- Burning sacrifices
- Mundane humour/banter
- Cynicism
- Found footage
- Gut wrenching ending
- A team (two members of the church and one audio visual media expert) are sent to film and investigate reports of demonic/poltergeist activity in an isolated church in the Devon countryside.
- There is an existing CCTV video of so called apparitions
- The three (filming constantly) try to get to the bottom of the mystery

- Unusually it is the two religious members who are the most cynical, the one non-religious member of the team begins to think the events are real
- The longer the three stay, the more difficult and unpleasant things get
- A sheep is burned alive
- The team discover links to ancient pagan sites beneath the church
- Evidence of child sacrifice is found
- Suicide
- Eventually, of team are led to a labyrinth like passage way
- The mix of head cam shots and CCTV footage mean the 'found footage' elements are not too jarring and our sense of disbelief is suspended
- The climax of the film is incredibly dark and effective
- Though many elements have been played out in other films, they are always handled very well, but the last part of the film is truly shocking

Creep (2014)

Patrick Brice

- Directed by Patrick Brice
 - Produced by Mark Duplass and Blum
 - Story by Patrick Brice and Mark Duplass
 - Edited by Christopher Donlon
 - Music by Kyle Field and Eric Andrew Kuhn
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- Aaron, a videographer answers an ad requesting a filmmaker at \$1000 a day
 - He drives out to the client's secluded house
 - The client turns out to be Josef
 - Brice and Duplass built the movie from a series of conversations they had with one another and decided to refine *Creep* while they were filming, which enabled them to film and screen portions of the film to see what would or wouldn't work on camera.
 - As a result, the film had multiple alternate end scenarios and Duplass stated that there were "*10 to 12 permutations of each scene*".

"We were interested in the psychological profile of this very, very strange person. We were very interested in how you meet people and don't quite understand what's up, but you start to get signs. For us that was intense eye contact, lack of personal space, oversharing, maybe a little bit too much love here and there. But, for me, there's something wrong with both of these guys. Deeply. This concept of, 'who is the creep in this scenario?'"

Mark Duplass