

TEENAGE FLICKS

Week 8: Super Dark Teens - The teenager in a post-Columbine world

Elephant (2003)

Gus Van Sant

- Directed by Gus Van Sant
 - Produced by Diane Keaton, Dany Wolf and J T Leroy
 - Written by Gus Van Sant
 - Cinematography by Harry Savides
 - Edited by Gus Van Sant
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- The title was a tribute to the earlier Alan Clarke film of the same name, about the troubles in Northern Ireland
 - The title also alludes to the idea of the 'elephant in the room' and also the parable about the blind men and the elephant

Nothing about this movie is dramatic in the slightest: the cinematic locution employed by Van Sant is disconcertingly un-violent. There is no tension, no exclamatory score, no acceleration of editing, even the gunshots themselves are not as piercingly loud as we are accustomed to in movie thrillers; we are not even invited to feel the difference between the tragic nightmare unleashed by the killings and the innocent world that existed until that point. The time frame and sense of place is constructed so that we cannot even be sure when and where the shootings have begun.'

Peter Bradshaw

Stations of the Cross

Dietrich Brüggemann

- Directed by Dietrich Brüggemann
 - Written by Dietrich Brüggemann and Anna Brüggemann
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- Centers on Maria, a 14-year-old girl who is being raised in religiously fanatical family in Southern Germany
 - They belong to the Society of St Paul, which rejects the modern rulings of the Second Vatican Council
 - Maria is preparing for confirmation
 - The scenes play out as 'Stations of the Cross' long take scenes.
 - Each scene utilizes still camera tableaux
 - Though the film is formally structured in the sense that it uses highly contrived composition it is also very naturalistic
 - The rigid structure reflects the unshakable beliefs of the family and its church
 - The idea of sacrifice and finding opportunities to commit sacrifice is introduced to us and young Maria at the beginning of the story
 - This leads to Maria's delusion that she can 'save' her brother via self-sacrifice
 - Anna and Dietrich Brüggemann saw the film not as an attack on just extreme forms of Catholicism but on all fundamental forms of religious dogma

"I'm telling you that thing upstairs is not my daughter," says Chris MacNeil in The Exorcist, a film that offered a reassuringly archaic portrait of good and evil during a time of secular uncertainty and strife. Here, that template is turned upon its head, the holy ghost (rather than the demon Pazuzu) wafting its unhealing wings over the body of a child, leaving adults to squabble about the definition of deity and audiences to decide whether or not they hear the voice of God.'

Mark Kermode

Super Dark Times (2017)

Kevin Phillips

- Directed by Kevin Phillips
- Produced by Edward Parks, Richard Peete and Jett Steiger
- Written by Ben Collins and Luke Piotrowski
- Cinematography by Eli Born
- Edited by Ed Yonaitis
- Music by Ben Frost

- It's 1996
- The film centres on a small group of school friends but our main focus is on Zach (Owen Campbell) and Josh (Charlie Tahan)
- The two boys are also acquaintances of deeply dislikeable Daryl and Charlie, another eighth grader
- The boys go back to Josh's house where they rifle through Josh's absent older brother's items
- They find some marijuana and a Katana sword
- The film takes a much darker turn at this point
- The boys are embroiled into a series of catastrophic events, their options narrowing and their lives becoming nightmarish and deeply uncertain
- The film weaves into a paranoid mystery
- Characters are revealed to have deeply disturbing alter egos
- It seems to be asking what we would do in that situation
- Questions, particularly about Josh and his brother's absence haunt us beyond the closing credits of the film
- It feels real
- The way in which the boys interact with each other is very believable, as is their reaction to the tragedy