Last week, while trolling on *Entertainment Weekly*'s website, I happened upon an article about the most overrated films of all time. As I toggled through the list, I found myself agreeing with most of them. Yup, GONE WITH THE WIND was an OK movie, but had long been overbilled as the greatest epic known to man. And certainly, LOVE STORY may have caused some young 1970s ladies to shed tears and panties, but over time it has proven to be schmaltzy and trite, leaving the once guaranteed score material as an overhyped piece of cinematic foreplay. However, I was a pretty surprised to see a particular horror film on the list…THE EXORCIST.

Really? THE EXORCIST? I have to say I was a bit floored. For me, THE EXORCIST is one of the greatest horror films ever made. Though I was never personally scared by it, since I grew up in a very non-religious setting, I had devoted friends who were forever affected by this movie, in much the way JAWS has permanently made me scan all swimming pools for shark-shaped outlines before entering. Yeah, somewhere in my psyche, sharks can inhabit backyard pools.

I immediately turned to FANGORIA co-worker Dave and asked, "Do you think THE EXORCIST is overrated?" "Hell yeah!" he replied. "That has always been billed as being the best, and it is pretty good, but not the best of the genre by any means." We proceeded into a 30-minute debate about not only the merits and downfalls of THE EXORCIST, but other horror movies we considered to be overrated and why these films may have gained such potentially unwarranted acclaim.

Now my curiosity was piqued. So, I turned to ye olde Facebook and Twitter to post and "twat" (OK, maybe the correct term is "tweet," but the other is more fun) in an attempt to get some fan input about overrated horror films. After receiving literally hundreds of responses (over 400 and still coming in), I complied a David Letterman-ripoff list of the Top 10 as selected by Fangorians. Again, these are not all my personal picks; in fact, I would firmly disagree with several of them. But these are the titles that kept popping up over and over in the fan responses. So, behold: the Top Ten Most Overrated Horror Films, followed by discussion on why you may agree or disagree…

#10—SAW: While the franchise has owned the Halloween season for the past five or six years, many fans polled felt the original movie (and no doubt the subsequent Jigsaw adventures) deserved a spot on the list.

#9—THE RING: I was pretty surprised to see this title turn up repeatedly. But a lot of fans sounded off on how the THE RING (American version) did not live up to its rep or reviews.

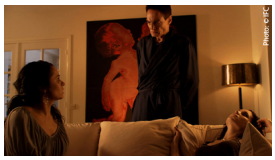
#8—28 DAYS LATER: When this movie first came out, many thought it reinvented the zombie genre and breathed new life into the slowly lumbering dead that had been stalking horror films for decades. So did the film's "rage" ghouls reboot the genre? A large chunk of responding buffs felt they did not, and that 28 DAYS LATER promised more than it delivered.

#7—SUSPIRIA: OK, this is where I really have to keep my personal feelings at bay, but they have to burst through a little in a brief rant. I could not believe it when dozens of people messaged me about SUSPRIA being overrated. I wanted to respond and tell them that they honestly know nothing about horror.

However, this pointed out to me how subjective and personal the "overrated" topic can be. Like pizza toppings and sex acts, everyone has their own personal preferences, and the simple inclusion of pineapple and hot wax can lead to joy for some and awkward explanations for others. So keep an open mind while reading these, and I'll try to do the same.

Anyway, back to SUSPIRIA. Though this film has long been touted as the magnum opus of its legendary director Dario Argento, numerous fans cited several problems that they feel prevent this film from achieving perfection. The most common complaint being the plot…really, a school full of ballerina witches?

#6—A SERBIAN FILM: For the past six months, the FANGORIA forums and comments have been ablaze about this one. After I got to see the movie, everyone suddenly wanted a detailed play-by-play of what it was like, as if I had just had my first kiss or gotten my first genital piercing. Was it as shocking as the hype had made out? Well, I was pretty disturbed, but many others apparently were not and felt the "disturbing" nature had been very overrated.



#5—THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE (FIRST SEQUENCE): The rationale for this flick's inclusion is very similar to the circumstances of the aforementioned A SERBIAN FILM. People approached the film expecting the most disturbing ass-to-mouth imagery imaginable. What they soon discovered was that the most disturbing scenes had been leaked onto the Internet months prior to stoke all the overdone hype.

#4—THE EXORCIST: Yup, many horror fans agreed with *EW* that William Friedkin's Oscar-winner is, in fact, overrated. Many wrote that it was mentally intense, but just not scary. Many also mentioned that, over time, its appeal has been played out and that the film is no longer a bastion of horror as much as a source for reference or even parody,
à la
SCARY MOVIE or even REPOSSESSED.

#3—HOSTEL: I remember when HOSTEL first started getting early leaks on the Internet. At the time, I was teaching film at a college, and I remember my students rushing in to show me the hanging-eyeball scene. They had determined that this was the most extreme thing ever made. Was it? No way. Check out GUINEA PIG, CANNIBAL HOLOCAUST or countless other flicks…giving HOSTEL the number-three spot.

#2—PARANORMAL ACTIVITY: I remember first watching this at the FANGORIA office. Sam, Tom, Marla and I gathered in one of the conference rooms to check out the movie months

before it became the blockbuster force of last fall. Gotta say, I was pretty freaked out, just not quite to the extreme that the commercials played it—and countless fans were equally disappointed.

#1—THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT: In 1999, this movie took the horror world by storm in a blur of shaky camerawork and grainy snot-filled close-ups. Made for a supposed $60,000, it went on to gross over $140 million. Somewhere in the endless running scenes, did the filmmakers reach a zenith of horror filmmaking? For the past several days, my e-mail, Facebook, and Twitter have been clogged with hundreds of notices ranting about how overrated BLAIR WITCH is, sending it to number one on the list.

Agree? Disagree? Think a film was left off? Can't believe a movie is on here? Sound off! Use the comments below to voice your thoughts on the most overrated horror films of all time.

{jcomments on}