

## Terrifyingly Gnarly: Dancing With Yourself

Written by Samuel Zimmerman  
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I strongly dislike having to watch “party scenes” in films. Also, my brother once told me he hates seeing other people have fun. And to a degree, I think we all do. When you’re banging on a downstairs neighbors’ door, yelling for him (her) and his (her) stoner (skanky) friends to keep their party to a low roar, it’s not that it’s keeping you up. You can’t sleep because really, you long to be downstairs shotgunning a beer too, but you weren’t invited. And there are very few party scenes in movies that have made me feel like I was invited.

What makes this a problem is that a good deal of horror is built around youth and facing mortality far too early in life. And as we all know, youth often parties. But lately, these characters don’t feel real, especially when they party. When friends get together to high-five and drink, it might be the most honest they ever are (unless, of course, they’re trying to impress a lady). But when we don’t feel real, we can’t connect, and when we can’t connect, we all just end up rooting for whoever donned a mask and grabbed a knife. That’s all well and good, but sometimes I’d like to feel for my protagonists, feel for a person.

So when I see party scenes that are nothing like the way I’ve (and I imagine many of you) have spent nights, it just bores me. Last year, *SORORITY ROW* opened with a massive trash session that included bubbles (fine), synchronized dancing (just lame) and a trampoline (what the shit?). As much as I would love to see a trampoline in a living room, it really only exists in that universe of movie life which, as I keep trying to get across, is thoroughly coated in bullshit. And before your mind wanders to the area where you begin to tell me movies are movies, just know that I agree. I am an impassioned hater of the phrase ‘That could never really happen,’ because that’s often what I love so much about film.

But here’s the difference: The celluloid party I just described isn’t so incredibly far-fetched that it’s completely impossible or fantastical. There are no orcs or hobbits or pegasi doing keg stands and backflips on the trampoline (as totally wizard as that might be). No, this party, and many others just like it, exist in this middle ground of wanting to be relatable and exciting to its audience of 14-15-year-old boys who will now think they can expect every college/high-school weekend to be full of girls making out and the constant utterance of the words “best night ever, bro,” when it’s just daft.

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Now take a look at the climactic party in the original MY BLOODY VALENTINE. What a sweet bunch of dudes and birds, huh? They had beer, pool and interpersonal drama; and while the idea of thrashing in a mine isn't an everyday occurrence, when presented with something equally dangerous and stupid myself, I would do it. Authenticity!

What I'm getting at is: No, I really don't hate watching other people have fun. In fact, I love it, but I love it when it's (here's that word again) honest. And I just wanted an excuse to highlight two of my favorite horror-film scenes—which don't involve parties or mass gatherings, just two separate characters and the idea that when they're alone, they strap on some headphones and thrash to their own tune, which is something I think we can all relate to, definitely more than plastic Hollywood parties.

The scenes in question come from two flicks I seriously enjoy, for better or worse. Ti West's THE HOUSE OF THE DEVIL was just about my favorite horror film of last year, and while I understand those who've cried out against its deliberate pacing, it had me completely tense the entire time, making every mundane thing heroine Samantha (Jocelin Donahue) did seem as if something terrible was right behind it. That is, of course, so much of why I loved her solo dance through the (apparently) empty house the first time I saw it, terrified of what would happen to the completely un-self-aware Sam as she so thoroughly enjoys The Fixx. Upon repeat viewings, the scene just gets better, because it's a small smile-inducing tangent that lets us in on the character, and though Donahue may be just trying to emulate any average young woman of the '80s setting, it does an awesome job of putting a likable face and personality on that idea. Plus, "One Thing Leads to Another" is the best.

Now, say what you will about the Stephen King/Mick Garris collab SLEEPWALKERS—I won't take any offense to heart—but there's some cool stuff to like in there, especially the whole "early '90s meets small town in the '50s" Lynchian vibe. That combo provides us with a very classic movie theater where the gorgeous Tanya Robertson (Madchen Amick) works, and when no one's around as she sweeps up the carpet, the girl gets down. To the classic "Do You Love Me?", no less. Her moves are gold.

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Almost as gold as mine.

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