

## Fango Flashback: "HOME SWEET HOME" (1981)

Written by Caryn Coleman

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HOME SWEET HOME (playing Brooklyn's [Nitehawk Cinema](#) as part of VHS Vault) is what happens when a maniacal muscle man escapes from an insane asylum and decides to kill some of the most annoying characters ever shown onscreen.

Lovingly low-budget and certainly "inspired" by HALLOWEEN, HOME SWEET HOME occurs around what we can only gather is a Thanksgiving celebration at a failed music producer's country home. It brings together all sorts of ambiguous relationships (who, exactly, is with whom?) that includes a small child named Angel (played by future EYES WIDE SHUT and THE HILLS HAVE EYES reboot star Vinessa Shaw), a wailing Latina, a mime/magician/guitarist, two over-sexed friends, a horny couple and the aforementioned producer. And all, save the two obligatory final girls, will perish in fairly comical ways by the ridiculously beefy unmasked version of "The Shape."

HOME SWEET HOME is part of the pervasive "cabin in the woods" horror subgenre (and part the early 1980s craze to capitalize on holiday-related horror films). The Southern California ranch-style home is the hideout for failed business ventures, a place to hang out, gamble, get laid, and a weekend getaway for a young couple. But its isolation proves to be troublesome; it takes ages to get gas, wine, or power. It's easy to get lost and difficult to get help. People venture out on his/her own but, typically, don't return while the others blissfully carry on until it's their turn to die. However, unlike most cabin films, HOME SWEET HOME doesn't offer the morality arch in which we can make sense out of the madness. Certainly the characters' personalities leave little to be desired, like everyone's seething hatred for the homeowner's guitar-riff loving son, but no one death can be considered punishment.

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Horror has indeed come home, but why? We don't get much explanation as to why the Killer is crazy or why he kills but, judging by his cackling giggle fit each time he takes someone out, let's just assume that he really enjoys it. (You'll no doubt recognize the Killer as Jake Steinfeld, the "Body by Jake" guy). From hitting an old lady with his car to strangling and electrocuting a young man, he just appears to be a big ol' hunk of demented meat. In his only utterance of real words, he does mention something about women being more trouble than they're worth. Still, he isn't very particular to either gender when it comes to death. Just chalk it up to some Freudian/Oedipal complex happening.

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Considered the first Thanksgiving horror movie (Eli Roth's long awaited THANKSGIVING will bring things full circle) HOME SWEET HOME, despite its turkey status, is unbelievably fun to watch. Let's be real, the holidays are pretty traumatic even without an escaped psychopath on the loose, so it's a pleasure to guiltlessly indulge in a bit of Thanksgiving catharsis. Plus, marveling at Jake Steinfeld's body alone is reason enough to watch!