A new year has begun, but before we really immerse ourselves in all that 2011 will have to offer, we have one more look back at all that was 2010. Rising genre star and excellent actor all around, special guest AJ Bowen (THE SIGNAL, HOUSE OF THE DEVIL, A HORRIBLE WAY TO DIE) has a neat little list of his favorites of the past year amidst questioning the interesting place horror and all it encompasses, finds itself in at the moment. Hit the jump to read on, and enjoy!

It was (I think), for a lot of us that love and live in the world of genre storytelling, a tough year to define. Some people would say that it was a shit year for horror, that they couldn't think of ten movies that they felt were worth a crap. As I sat down to think about the year that just passed, I found myself having a hard time, not just with coming up with a 'best of' list, but also trying to figure out just what defines 'genre' storytelling these days. In the conversations I've had with friends—some filmmakers, some journalists, some ardent supporters of cinema—one common issue that kept coming up was the argument over whether or not something was 'genre'. As with all enduring forms of storytelling, some years are better than others, and I feel like this year, while not as in your face as years past, was all over the map when it came to different types of stories—stories that shared elements of our beloved genre, yet seemed to transcend the contemporary niche. So, to that end, here are a few of my favorites from 2010.

1. FROZEN

I know that Adam Green is a good friend of mine, but to deny my honest feelings about, what I think, is far and away his strongest work would be unfair to him and also unfair to me as someone who loves good old-fashioned filmmaking. Leave it to Adam to come up with a premise that would automatically paint himself into a corner, literally and figuratively, as he had to try and figure out a way to shoot a movie in a practical location that takes place in the winter, on a ski lift, almost entirely at night. I'm not usually a fan of these types of movies because there usually ends up being a large degree of nihilism to them, and I find nothing I can get behind in nihilism. However, FROZEN is the opposite, a story that ultimately is a hopeful one, and scary,

without having a guy in a mask chopping people up for 90 minutes. It's old-school, ratcheted up human drama with some really strong performances and left me with a viscerally charged feeling. Some might not consider this horror, but again, it scared the hell out of me, and if this genre is capable of tapping into basic human emotions and personal fears, then FROZEN fits in nicely. Kudos to Adam, Ariescope and the cast and crew for telling an awesome story.

2. BLACK SWAN

This, more than any other film I saw this year shows the dichotomy of the central struggle I was talking about. I kept hearing people call it frightening, the best horror film since SILENCE OF THE LAMBS, and I didn't think it was even remotely close to being a scary movie. I couldn't figure out why it would be considered a horror film. As I debated this with friends I trust, I realized that genre filmmaking, the genre movie-going experience, is a highly personal one, and I could never come up with a good reason why I didn't find BLACK SWAN to be anything but a horror film. It was the most breathtaking experience I've had in a movie this year (other than the underwater ballet scene in PIRANHA 3D), had some of the best acting of the year, insane photography, and might end up being the best directed, best picture of the year. Stories about personal sanity/reality/perception always get in my head. It touched on so many personal issues for me (I'm no good with toes) that I'm honestly surprised it was hard to wrap my mind around what makes this a horror film. Again, it was visceral, and very scary for many of you. Call it what you will, it's one of the best movies I've seen in years.

BEYOND PALE
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The Grandfather
TRAWLER