



Philadelphia Terror Film Festival

by Ben Cantlupe, Temple '10
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The end of October is nearing fast and Halloween is on Philadelphia's mind.

As the holiday approaches, cheesy themed costumes, suggestive outfits and wearable puns are entertaining, but Halloween seems to have lost its edge. That's where the [Terror Film Festival](#) comes in.

This year, the festival ran from Oct. 20 to 24 and boasted selections from around the world.

The Terror Film Festival is held every October at the [Ethical Society Building of Philadelphia](#) in Rittenhouse Square and this year is the event's fourth anniversary.

True to its title, TFF strives to present the best in independent genre films including thriller, thrasher, horror, dark drama and sci-fi. Princess Horror, the undead royalty of the night and "genre fashionista" hosts the screenings: collections of shorts throughout the day and a feature film finale at the end of each night.

My first trip to TFF was on Wednesday, Oct. 21, for the feature film entitled *Murder Loves Killers, Too*. Attendance suffered because of the Phillies game, leaving many empty seats. When movie time arrived, Princess Horror went up on stage, introduced the film and cried, "Let the terror begin!"

The film's title gives the ending away but the fun is in getting there. It is a story of a group of ceds who are murdered by the anonymous owner of a mountain vacation home they rent for the weekend. As cliché as it seems, the movie was a unique tribute to the classic horror films of the 70s with plot twists and comedic relief intermingled with scenes of suspense and spine-tingling gore. There was some shoddy acting and poor dialogue, but that is to be expected in horror

films with smaller budgets. It seemed like the director actually envisioned those unconvincing moments to reference other similar genre films.

The murderer proved to be the most interesting character in the film. Every chase scene and subsequent murder is suspenseful then hilarious or vice-versa. Who doesn't enjoy a sexually frustrated serial killer articulating his discontent and intentions to his bound and gagged victim?

Despite the small crowd in the theatre, *Murder Loves Killers, Too* was received with vivacious applause.

That Friday, I had the opportunity to check out two sessions of shorts and the night's feature film. Some of the shorts were fantastic while others were mediocre in scripting, acting or both. Luckily, none of them were downright awful and all had something to offer the audience.

The Curse of Micah Rood, for example, was an educated interpretation of a long-standing Connecticut folk legend. Two other mentionable shorts, *Blackout* and *Take-Out*, used gruesome murder as a tool for humor and had the audience laughing continuously throughout the performances.

Plots included cannibalistic couples (*Take-Out*), star-crossed vampire love (*The Union*), a zombie-fighting insect exterminator (*Wade*) and a murderous imaginary friend (*Sarah's Friend*).

A lively Q&A session proceeded each block of shorts. The audience was mostly made up of filmmakers, which helped keep the forum discussion interesting and entertaining.

Scare Zone was Friday's feature film. It was one of the higher budgeted projects. It is the story of a Halloween horror house, run by a man named Oliver. A rather diverse group of characters make up the staff. Unfortunately, the relationships made while rehearsing and advertising for *Scare Zone III* don't last long as someone in the maze attraction begins picking off the staff members one-by-one.

The film does not lack cringe-worthy kill scenes and the focus is on suspense and mystery. It is guaranteed to keep you guessing until the conclusion. I found the practicality of the narrative to be refreshing; so few horror films bother to make sense.

For any avid horror film and sub-genre fans, I suggest looking out for TFF next October. They don't advertise, relying on word of mouth, but media outlets listing Philly events (like [Campus Philly](#)) are good places to check.

The Terror Film Festival renewed my interest in the darker side of Halloween. Next year perhaps it will do the same for you.

You can contact Ben Cantlupe at tua48171@temple.edu