



# Nightmares in Red, White and Blue: The Evolution of the American Horror Film

*Joseph Maddrey*

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What's weighing on Americans? Look to horror movies for your answer - they're one of the best measures of the American consciousness. From an early fascination with the Gothic, to the mutant horrors of the Atomic Age and alien enemies of the Cold War, to the inner demons of the psyche and the American Dream turned nightmare, the history of American horror films is a reflection of changing American cultural attitudes and values - and the fears that accompany them. This survey of the pivotal horror films produced in America examines the history of the genre as a reflection of cultural changes in the United States. It begins with an exploration of the origins of the genre, and follows its development until the present, using various films to document the evolution of Hollywood horror flicks and illustrate their cultural significance. The second part focuses on eight pivotal directors whose personal visions helped shape the genre - from early pioneers like Tod Browning and Alfred Hitchcock, to modern masters like John Carpenter and Wes Craven. There are 35 photographs, and an appendix lists the titles, release date, and director of major productions from 1913 until 2002.

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