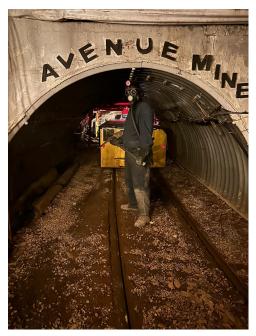# Horror is good for us, just ask Jack

Over the years, horror has invited itself into the lives of many Americans. Horror movies, games and books now occupy the shelves of numerous households.

But why do people like horror so much and what is the effect of this genre on them?

Why people (actually) like horror

When fiction stops being enough, and when thrill seekers wish to go one step beyond, they turn to the places where horror pierces the veil and invites itself into reality : haunted houses.

Some of those horror seeking fans might even get the chance to meet with Harry Warden from the movie My Sweet Valentine. Warden, or rather Jack Hrivnak, is a 22 year old college student from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who embodies the former during his part time job, in the very mine where the movie was shot.

Jack Hrivnak as Harry Warden at work

"I was first introduced to horror by my father and it quickly became a common passion," Hrivnak explains.

While talking to Hrivnak, we addressed the reasons that push people to go to "haunts" as he calls them. "I think people go for the adrenaline rush and to experience something unique especially when it comes to the haunted mine specifically," he tells us.

On the flip side, *Fast Company* explains to us in a web article ([link](#)) that what makes the haunts so scary are a couple of human psychological behaviors :
- the *not-knowing* ("is it a real threat ? what if something *did* happen ?")
- self-preservation ("I need to escape")
- self-presentation ("I can't humiliate myself and run off screaming").

As for horror movies, what makes people keen on them depends on their taste and what they want to see. Because horror is a genre, there exist as many as 10 different subgenres such as movies focused on psychology, blood and gory, supernatural and monsters, serial killers, and so on…

As for Hrivnak, although he is particularly fond of *Scream*, he doesn't have a favorite subgenre :
"Blood aside, I like to see the creativity of the producers, I'm always curious to see how people create different ways to shock the viewers how far they are willing to go to scare us" he says.

So, is horror good for us or not ?

The answer is : it depends on who you are and where you put your boundaries.

To summarize the numbers of articles we can find on the internet on this subject, horror (movies) can have one of two effects on people : a positive one and a negative one, depending on the state of mind, health and age of the viewer.

Indeed, horror movies can sometimes induce sleeplessness, anxiety and create or reveal traumas and phobias. But as long as people respect trigger warnings and age limits, horror movies and activities can actually have a positive effect on people's mind, body and brain.

This is because our brain, while stimulated by horror movies, creates and spreads various kinds of hormones in our bodies.
- neurotransmitters : that speed up metabolism (and make us lose weight faster)
- endorphins (that reduce our pain)
- dopamine (the hormone responsible for our happiness and pleasure).

Some studies show that this "hormone cocktail" can also help in certain cases of depression and anxiety. Sometimes, horror movies even help people overcome their phobias or escape the problems of their daily life.

"For me it's impacted my creativity both inside the haunted house life and in my photography and videography," says Hrivnak. "I like to take pictures of things that are less appealing to people but bring out the beauty in them. The idea behind that is everything has a story to it and it's often overlooked."

Photo taken by Hrivnak

But can't horror affect people's daily lives ?

For those who might still get worried that horror has a bad impact on people's mind, Hrivnak already has an answer :
"It's like video games, people who play them don't go attacking or shooting randomly just because they got influenced by their game. As long as you know how to make a difference between what's real and what's not, you are fine"

So as both Halloween and finals creep closer and closer, you know what you have left to do : get comfortable on your favorite sofa and start a horror movie marathon.

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