

Horror Movie General Scare Tactics that Get Your Heart Pumpin’:

1. The Peek-A-Boo

This is a pretty standard jump scare employed often in the horror genre. The horrified victim is stalked by a predator: A knife-wielding psycho, a monstrous beast, a malicious demon, or anything else unsavory and horrific. They seek a hiding place and go quiet, the terrified breaths the only sounds to be heard. They try to get a handle on where the villain is and notice a window or crack or other small area they can look through. The coast seems to be clear when suddenly the killer's ugly mug comes into right into frame, scaring both the victim and the audience. Thankfully, this scare is easy to spot. If a victim is hiding and decides to take a look through any kind of window or hole, be prepared for the villain's entrance, because it's going to happen. It's a simple and effective tactic that gets audiences jumping quite frequently.

2. The Smash Cut

Of all the clever ways directors try to scare their audiences, the Smash Cut is one of the most nefarious tricks in the jump scare arsenal. In this tactic, the director resorts to sudden change of sound and scenery to jar the audience. There typically isn't a monster or killer involved in the Smash Cut. Instead, the audience will be watching a typically tense scene; perhaps the main characters are investigating a creepy shack in the middle of nowhere. Then suddenly the film transitions to a new, loud but generally un-scary scene. One moment the audience is in a creepy house and then without warning, they're in a city street, the silence shattered by the roar of a jack hammer. Unfortunately, there's no real way to get ready for a Smash Cut unless you know it's coming beforehand. Because of this, the Smash Cut will tend to get the audience every single time, making it an incredibly effective scare tactic.

3. The Inception Scare

This particular scare gets its effectiveness from the fact that it is not content to simply scare the audience and go away. The Inception Scare likes to come back for seconds. It's a scare within a scare. So the Inception Scare typically makes the audience jump from fright, lulls them into a sense of false security and then scares them again. For instance, a frightened sorority girl is investigating a noise while alone in her sorority house when all of a sudden, a cackling demon bursts out of a closet. The film then cuts to her waking up, screaming, only to realize it was all a dream. The audience chuckles at being scared and then the sorority girl rolls over in bed and the demon is lying right next to her, scaring the audience a second time. This scare can be easy to spot or impossible, depending on how the director chooses to go about it. Generally, you can spot an Inception Scare by taking a look at the character right after the scare. If the character seems overly relieved, be prepared for an immediate scare. Also, it is important to see how the shot is framed after the first scare. If the shot is similar to those used by a different scare tactic, be prepared to see it used. Other times, just know that there's nothing you can do to prepare yourself and just enjoy the rush of getting scared out of your seat.

10 Horror Movie Tactics That Are Repeated Hundreds of Times:

Victim running from killer ALWAYS falls

PATTERN: Almost without exception, if a girl is running from an axe wielding psycho you can bet she trips over something and falls down. Often you'll notice she trips over thin air, amazing how the survivor girls are so uncoordinated yet still, you know, survive!

The current love interest of the protagonist is already dating a total jerk-face

PATTERN: You've seen this one. The lead of the film loves a girl, but the girl has a boyfriend. Already you know there is a 99% chance that this boyfriend will end up being a complete jerk. He screams at her, demeans her, doesn't respect her. You can't see why she's with him in the first place. However, whatever the reason it doesn't matter because you know she's going to end up with the main character in the end anyway when she finally sees the dude for what he is, and leaves him for the protagonist.

The survivor can magically go toe to toe with the killer during the film's finale

PATTERN: The hero is quiet and reserved throughout the majority of the movie while being eclipsed by their much more outgoing friends. As their friends meet their maker one by one the survivor begins to change. We finally reach the showdown between the sheltered protagonist and brain eating ghoul. Before the film's climax, the killer had no prob dispatching countless victims with ease (most of which were more athletic and capable of defending themselves than the main character) but now the survivor's punches, kicks and pretty much everything else hurts and slows down the killer. The antagonist's time average per kill gets all screwed up in a horror movie climax.

REALITY: You run into the killer, YOU DIE!

Opening a door slowly means cheap scare soon to follow

PATTERN: The hero hears a noise coming from the closet. They slowly approach the door and then turn the handle ever so carefully. So close now, almost open and BAM! Or . . . Hero opens the door and nothing. Hero takes deep sigh of relief to turn around and BAM!

REALITY: You hear a noise and you get the crap out of the house, jump in the car and drive to Taco Bell (cause you worked up an appetite) all while calling 911. The same is applied for hearing noises upstairs.

Character is sitting in their car and BAM! Someone hits the car door window accompanied by a loud blast of music

PATTERN: There's a good chance you'll see one of these moments pop up in a horror movie made within the last decade. Funny, watch these scenes with the sound off and it's not scary at all. It has everything to do with the piercing sound of music that blasts for that split second just to get that cheap scare. Honestly, every time in a horror movie when I see a conversation being held in a parked car I immediately countdown for the old window trick (They haven't let me down yet).

REALITY: Who walks up to a car door window and slams on it to get somebody's attention? Or one step further, who just walks up and stares waiting to get the occupants' attentions? Psychopaths who are already in prison for doing much worse things, that's who!

The killer walks yet still keeps up with the victim

PATTERN: This is an 80's trend. Girl is running a marathon yet for completely unexplained reasons the nutcase is taking a midnight stroll and he's still right on her heels.

REALITY: Girl runs + Killer walks = Girl gets away, comes back with police and killer doesn't get out of jail free!

Once the film's cast has been introduced in the first act, you can pick out which ones are going to die immediately

PATTERN: Jerk-face Jock, hmmm Dead! Stoner, lets think, Dead! Best friend, oh they are really Dead. Other random character who has just enough screen time . . . just paint a bulls eye on their head.

REALITY: If a Psycho wants you dead they won't take the time to knock off everybody else you know first (or anybody you've made human contact with for that matter) . . . they just ring your door bell and BAM!

The black guy always dies first!

PATTERN: For some reason or another Hollywood thinks that any minority especially African Americans can only be cast in horror movies for easy early death scenes.

REALITY: If we did a random test and had 10 white guys and 10 black guys and set a psychopathic hockey masked killer loose chances are we would still have 10 black guys left. Probably laughing at us white guys for urinating on ourselves before taking a machete to the throat.

Possibly one of the most overused cheap scares: The mirror trick

PATTERN: So your washing your hands, minding your own business (keep in mind your friends have been dying off because there's a killer on the loose) you shut the water off and (wait for it) slowly look up and WHAMO! Said killer is staring at your half naked self in the mirror.

REALITY: Your friends are dying! Do you really have time to stand there and talk to yourself in the mirror, then lean down and scrub your hands for 60 seconds only to slowly look up, not hearing a killer right behind you letting himself in the room. USE HAND SANITIZER FOR THE LOVE OF EVERYTHING HOLY!

The killer, although can be hurt, can never seem to be put away for good

PATTERN: The Killer gets stabbed, shot, hacked, drowned, hung, almost decapitated but you ain't getting rid of them that easily, wait what? Why not? Because of the sequel of course!

REALITY: Shotgun blast to the head equals death! Sorry kids, that's just the way life is.