

Five New Horror Movies to Stream Now

From haunted houses to killer dolls, these frightful offerings will keep you entertained, or up all night.

By Erik Piepenburg

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“A Quiet Place Part II” and “Spiral: From the Book of Saw,” are hogging the horror movie spotlight in theaters at the moment. But on streaming, these five under-the-radar horror films should be elbowing their way onto your watch list.

‘Saint Maud’

Stream it on Amazon Prime and Hulu.



Maud (Morfydd Clark) is a hospice nurse in a seaside British town who’s caring for Amanda (Jennifer Ehle), a dancer dying of lymphoma. As Amanda’s condition worsens, Maud’s new Christian faith deepens, and she sanctimoniously endeavors to save Amanda’s soul. But as the women’s relationship becomes fraught, Maud morphs into less of a caregiver and more of a macabre prophetess in a church of her own making. Are Maud’s ecstatic visions from God? Or are they the product of a mind in free fall?

This feature debut from the writer-director Rose Glass is an unnerving take on one of my favorite horror character conventions: the religious true believer. As in “Carrie,” “Saint Maud” layers a story about belief with supernatural elements and sexual obsessions to macabre effect.

But the film also reminded me of the cult-themed thriller “The Sacrament,” in that sometimes the scariest thing about religious conviction isn’t holy spirits, it’s holy certainty. The final 10 minutes of “Saint Maud” make that terrifyingly clear.

‘Sator’

Stream it on Shudder.

SATOR (2021) | Official Trailer HD

There's not much dialogue in this spectacularly eerie film about an entity that haunts the psyches of a family living deep in the woods of Northern California. But who needs words when you have a writer-director-cinematographer-editor-composer as confident in creeping the bejesus out of you as Jordan Graham?

Adam (Gabriel Nicholson) is tormented by stories of Sator, a supernatural presence who communicates, or so he's been told, with members of his family. Adam's grandmother (June Peterson, Graham's own grandmother) has a benevolent relationship with the spirit. But his mother's encounters, as she documents in scribbled diaries, are more sinister. When Adam begins crossing paths with ominous creatures in the woods and in his home, it's clear Sator has Adam in his sights next.

"Sator" is subtle, slow-burn, creeping-dread horror that unfolds with spooky atmospherics and hallucinatory storytelling. Graham's use of saturated colors at night, especially in a stunning tableau that lights Adam brightly against menacing trees, is ambient and terrifying. The use of spectral black-and-white footage gives "Sator" the feel of a doomful documentary. So does the fact that Graham based his story on his grandmother's own tales of conversations with a being named, you guessed it, Sator.

The Best Movies of 2021

The Times's chief film critics, A.O. Scott and Manohla Dargis, selected their favorite movies of the year. Here are some of their picks:

- **'Summer of Soul'**: Stevie Wonder, Mahalia Jackson, Mavis Staples and others shine in Questlove's documentary about the Harlem Cultural Festival.
- **'Spencer'**: Kristen Stewart stars as an anguished, rebellious Princess Diana in Pablo Larraín's answer to "The Crown."
- **'Passing'**: Set in the 1920s, the movie centers on two African American women, friends from childhood, who can and do present as white.
- **'Drive My Car'**: In this quiet Japanese masterpiece, a widower travels to Hiroshima to direct an experimental version of Chekhov's "Uncle Vanya."

'The Vigil'

Stream it on Hulu.

The Vigil - Official Trailer | HD | IFC Midnight



It's a mystery why there aren't more horror films about the Jewish tradition of shomers, people who watch over a dead body in the time between death and burial. A scary movie genre about sitting with a corpse? Sign me up.

To the rescue comes this frightening, fascinating feature debut from the writer-director Keith Thomas. Yakov (Dave Davis) is an ex-Hasid struggling to live in a secular world. To help earn some cash, he agrees to take a job as a shomer for a Holocaust survivor.

But it turns out that Yakov and the deceased man's wife (Lynn Cohen, the veteran stage and screen actress who died last year) aren't the only ones staying the night in the couple's Brooklyn home. A Mazzik, a malicious spirit from Jewish folklore, is in the house and has intergenerational trauma in mind.

Besides being effectively creepy, "The Vigil" is a welcome addition to the rich but underappreciated Jewish horror movie tradition. It was a treat to hear much of the dialogue in Yiddish, a language I've not come across much in a horror movie. The film is set in the Orthodox community of Borough Park, Brooklyn, giving the story a powerfully authentic and specific Jewish sensibility.

'The Strange House'

Stream it on Netflix.

The Strange House | Official English Trailer 4K | En...



I don't have tweens or teens, but if I did, this Austrian chiller would be a great option for family horror movie night (providing your kids can handle mildly sinister situations).

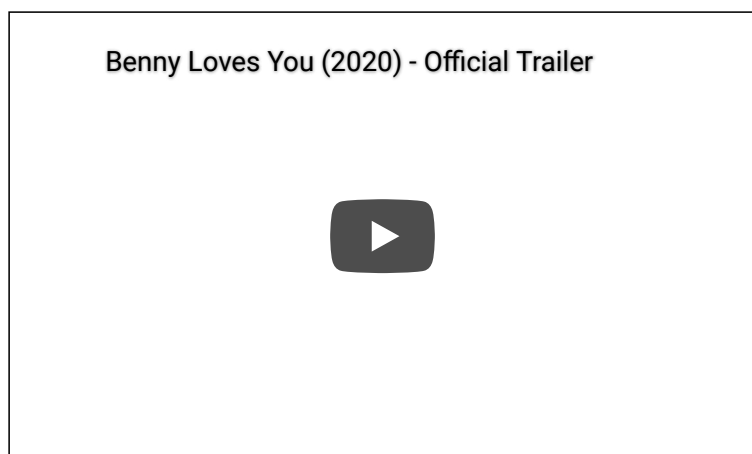
Sabine (Julia Koschitz) and her two sons, Hendrik (Leon Orlandiany) and Eddi (Benno Roszkopf), move from Germany to rural Austria, and soon creepy things start happening in their new house. Eddi scribbles on a wall while sleepwalking. A family photo is replaced by one of the prior occupants.

The boys soon figure out that the sinister events have something to do with a mom who poisoned her two sons in 1980. With help from new friends, the brothers set out to solve the supernatural mystery that keeps the ominous spirits on edge.

Daniel Prochaska's film is more "Stranger Things" sweet than genuinely scary, although there are plenty of intense chases, children in peril and haunted house shenanigans to keep young folks (and horror-averse parents) on edge. Orlandiany is especially good as the protective big brother.

'Benny Loves You'

Rent or buy on Vudu.



I'm just as antsy as any fan of killer doll movies for the new "Child's Play" series coming this fall. Until then, this low-budget British horror-comedy, directed with breakneck pacing by Karl Holt, was a giddy and super gory way to tide me over.

Jack (also Holt) is a 35-year-old toy designer who lives with his parents and hasn't yet put aside his childhood; he's the kind of man-child who investigates strange noises by carrying a lightsaber. Determined to leave loserdom, Jack throws away his stuffed animals, including a furry guy named Benny, who looks like Elmo's chubbier juvenile-delinquent brother.

But Benny is a jealous creature and a whiz with weaponry, and woe to anyone who tries to steal Jack's affections. And by woe I mean decapitation.

The joys of "Benny Loves You" are from watching Benny giggle and slash his way through rampages that turn Jack's home and office into farcical scenes of blood-soaked carnage. Holt, who also wrote the film, has a cutting, irreverent sense of humor that doesn't always land. But when it does, it shines, especially when it's paired with grisly violence, like death by baguette.

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