

FIVE MOVIES THAT INSPIRED *STRANGER THINGS 2* AND THAT YOU NEED TO WATCH AGAIN

December has arrived. A few weeks, and it will be Christmas. People are decorating their houses; many have already bought all their presents. Soon, school classes will stop until next year. And with the end of the school, Winter Proms are coming too. Winter Proms... a particular occasion, in which you've just defeated an entire army of Demo-dogs. You cannot even enjoy a few romantic hours on the dance floor, that the outline of the Shadow Monster appears behind the structure of your simple, ordinary school in Indiana.

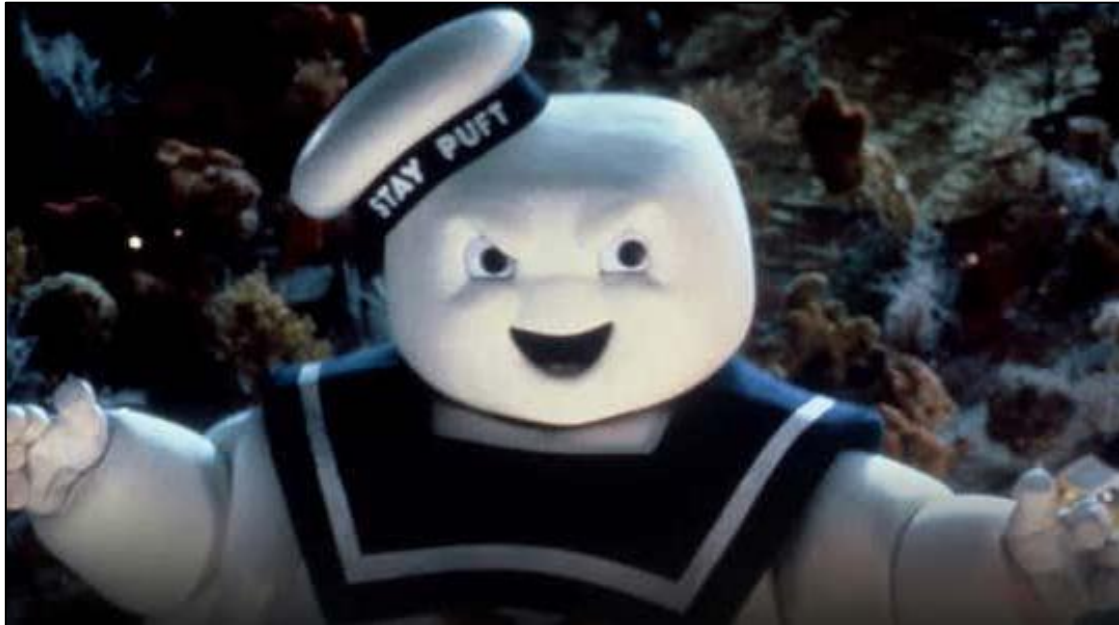
It's December already. And the second season of *Stranger Things 2* finished approximately five weeks ago. One entire year now separates us from the next one. Netflix recently announced to have signed for a third season, which will expand the series' universe, but it won't be released before December 1st, 2018.

One year is long to pass – especially when you're waiting for the next episodes of your favorite show. And if you are a fan of *Stranger Things*, if you cannot really stay away from the atmosphere of the 80's, then you won't be able to wait that long to get back to it.

Most likely, you'll want to get the feeling of that glorious decade at least once again, before next winter. And most likely, you'll want to do so by following a path made of movies. Movies that will bring you to discover – or rediscover – what inspired the settings, the characters and the plot of one of your most loved series.

We thought about you (because we feel like you), and that's why we prepared this list, which surely won't leave you disappointed. Now, go through the list, and then please, take your VHS's, insert the first one in the videorecorder and press the "Play" button. Turn the light off, lay down on the sofa. Listen to the noise of magnetically recorded silence. Be captured by the first notes of the movie's opening track. Watch the screen turning from cathodic black to the washed-out colors of 35mm films.

Ghostbusters (1984)



Summary. What if New York City was invaded by ghosts? By loud, disrespectful, horrific ghosts that haunt libraries, apartments and even entire skyscrapers?

Three parapsychologists of Columbia University find themselves in front of one of these ghosts and start researching about it, but lose their jobs due to lack of results. It's at this precise moment that the Ghostbusters are created.

Led by doc Peter Venkman (Bill Murray), the three scientists establish their headquarters in an abandoned firehouse and build the tools that will help them chasing the ghosts: the proton packs.

The Ghostbusters' activity will be considered a scam until the day they receive a call from a young woman, Dana (Sigourney Weaver). Dana's apartment is haunted by a semi-god named Zuul, who will possess her body and tries to take its Master, Gozer the Lord of Destruction, into this realm of existence. It will be on the Ghostbusters to save New York City, during an epic showdown in the center of Manhattan.

How does it relate to *Stranger Things*, and why watch it again? The one to *Ghostbusters* is the most evident reference to a movie of the entire series. The four boys – four, now that Will is back with them – wear the costumes of the movie heroes; they sing the movie's theme song while running on their bicycles; they use the phrase that made the *Ghostbusters* franchise famous as a way to greet each other.

Ghostbusters is one of the most iconic movies of the 80's. It marked one of Bill Murray's most famous performances, and has created characters that everybody is able to recognize still nowadays, like the *Stay Puft Marshmallow Man*.

The Duffer brothers, the creators of the *Stranger Things*, declared that the movie had a huge influence on them, and to honor it, they decided the second season of their show to take place in 1984. One year after the end of the first one, but also the same year the movie was released.

Before including the reference to *Ghostbusters*, they had to ask the permission to Ivan Reitman, the director and producer of the movie. Luckily, Reitman is a big fan of the series!

***Alien* (1979)**



Summary. When an encrypted signal reaches the spaceship *Nostromo*, its crew is awaked from cryostasis. Forced by a policy stipulated with The Company, the interplanetary firm they work for, the crew members have to check the origin of the signal and reach it, if not completely sure of why XX was sent.

The *Nostromo* crew members land on a rocky planetoid, which is identified as the source. They discover that the signal comes from a second spaceship, abandoned since long.

They decide to explore it, and after remaining isolated, one of astronauts finds hundreds of thick, rough eggs inside of a storage area. As he touches one of the eggs, a slimy creature breaks the shell, attaches to the facemask of his suit and stuns him.

When the rest of the crew finds him, they bring the astronaut back to the *Nostromo* and reanimate him. The thing contained in the egg seems to be gone – but it's because it is already growing. Inside of him. It won't take long before the creature tears him apart, reaches its monstrous adult stage, and starts hunting for all the crew members, now trapped inside the *Nostromo*, in the depths of space.

How does it relate to *Stranger Things*, and why watch it again? Like the Demo-dogs of *Stranger Things* 2, the Alien represents the threat of an unstoppable, hungry and merciless beast-like creature.

When Will, thrown in the Upside Down, tries to drive away the Shadow Monster, the latter enters inside of him. It takes over his body and his mind, like a parasite. Like an Alien in its initial stage of growth.

The *Nostromo's* claustrophobic corridors are a place from which it's impossible to escape. Where the dark is only rarely interrupted by the scarce lights of the ceiling. It is a place where the fear of being killed, of being devoured, never really leaves you. And they closely resemble the tunnels that spread under the town of Hawking.

Alien has some of the best frightening scenes and jumpscars ever seen in a horror movie; it's able to keep tension always alive, and its original trilogy, the one from the 70's and the 80's, has an ending that can truly be considered as epic. "In space, no one can hear you scream." Nor can they underground, in the maze of the Shadow Monster.

Gremlins (1984)



Summary. Late with the Christmas presents, a man reaches Chinatown hoping to find something for his son. In a mysterious shop, lit only by candle light, he comes across a strange creature: a small, fluffy critter that the half-blind owner calls a “mogwai.” The owner refuses to sell the mogwai to the man, but his grandson won’t be as strict. He only tells the man to follow a few rules: don’t expose the critter to light, don’t get it wet, and never – *never* – feed him after midnight.

The man’s son, Billy (Zach Galligan), becomes the new owner of the critter, but he forgets to stick to the rules. After he and his family break all of them, the mogwai changes shape, transforms, and unleashes a small-scale hell around the quiet town the boy lives in.

How does it relate to *Stranger Things*, and why watch it again? Who didn’t love the mogwai’s cute face, before it started to multiply? And who didn’t laugh to all the dirty tricks the Gremlins conceived, once they started to spread? These small, little monsters are the perfect representation of a cute, little animal that can accidentally turn into something slick and mischievous. Dart, the small demo-dog that Dustin keeps in his terrarium, is the *Stranger Things* version of a Gremlin. The reference to Joe Dante’s black comedy is one of the keystones of this second season, and by watching the movie again, fun is guaranteed!

The Exorcist (1973)



Summary. “You’re gonna die up there”. Then, she starts urinating on the stairs.

Her bed shaking heavily; her nanny found dead two floors below her window; objects flying in her room; her voice getting unnaturally deep and going backwards; her flesh stripping off, with the words “*Help me*” appearing on her stomach. It’s only after having acknowledged all these signs of possession that father Karras and father Merrin decide to perform an exorcism on Regan, a 12-year-old girl who lives in Washington, D.C.

The evil the two priests will find themselves to face is thousands of years old. Much older than the Bible. Old as civilization itself. It’s what the Akkadians used to call Pazuzu, the source of Sorrow. While fighting this dreadful demon, the priests too will be tempted by its malicious power. And to save Regan, they’ll have to embrace an enormous sacrifice.

How does it relate to *Stranger Things*, and why watch it again? If we inserted in this page the jingle that accompanied father Merrin to Regan’s house, many people would have start feeling uneasy. Many others would have thought: “I heard it, somewhere.”

Considered by many the scariest movie in the history of cinema, *The Exorcist* is still able to frighten whoever watches it – even after almost 45 years. Everyone who claims to be passionate about horrors should see it at least once, and who never experienced it on VHS can now do so with its HD remastered version, enjoying top video quality.

The Shadow Monster’s possession of Will is very similar to the one Pazuzu operates on Regan. When Will shakes on the grass, when he tries to get free once tied to the bed, when his voice changes and his body is crossed by black, thick veins, he clearly resembles the young girl father Merrin and father Karras try to cleanse.

The Exorcist is another movie the series clearly refers to. And it cannot be left behind, for whatever reason, if one wants to live two hours of pure and healthy terror.

Carrie (1976)



Summary. Carrie White (Sissy Spacek) is an unpopular 16-year-old girl who discovers to have telekinetic powers. These powers trigger when she reaches conditions of deep stress and is not able to control herself anymore.

Carrie is bullied and abused – still, not everyone hates her. One of Carrie’s peers, Sue (Amy Irving), is moved by compassion and convinces her boyfriend to take Carrie to the Proms.

Accompanied by him, wearing her most beautiful dress, Carrie is elected Prom Queen. But once on the stage, Christine (Nancy Allen), the girl who hates Carrie the most, dumps a bucket full of pig blood over her head. Carrie sees everyone in the gym laughing at her, making fun of her pitiful condition. Completely blood-soaked, unable to hold her rage back, she’s overwhelmed by her powers, and proceeds on a massacre that will end only when she will have had her revenge.

How does it relate to *Stranger Things*, and why watch it again? In this second season, Eleven’s powers are even stronger than before. And besides finding other test subjects like she was, one of the purposes that will bring her from Indiana to Illinois will be learning how to master them properly. Still, until the very end, Eleven will appear unable to hold the powers back, when overwhelmed by deep emotions or exposed to suffering. Just like Carrie couldn’t. If we want to build a parallel between a movie character and the angry Eleven, the one who crashes the windows of Hopper’s house or finds the brutality to kill her oppressors by breaking their necks, the only one we can think about is Carrie.

This movie doesn’t only boast a perfect formula for a horror: it is also the first motion picture based on a book by Stephen King, which will give it a special place in the heart of his fans.

BONUS MOVIE:

Stand by me (1986)



Summary. During the summer of 1959, four 12-year-old kids leave their small town in Oregon for a few days. They take their sleeping bags, a few pennies, and depart for a “20, maybe 30-miles-long walk” that will bring them to see a boy’s dead body.

Vern (Jerry O’Connel), one of the members of the group, came to know about the position of the body while casually hearing a conversation between his brother and a friend, both members of gang of bullies, who discovered it while driving a stolen car.

The body hasn’t been found by the authorities yet, and the boy figures as missing. The fame that would derive from revealing its position is therefore very appealing for the kids.

While heading to the body, they’ll find themselves to face many different obstacles, from a train that chases them on a bridge to the leeches that stick to their skin when they swim through a swamp. But during their journey, they’ll also have to fight their anxieties, the things that make them suffer, and will experience the underlying differences that already separate them.

Their absence from the town won’t be long, but enough to put them on the truck to exit from childhood and, step by step, become men.

How does it relate to *Stranger Things*, and why watch it again? *Stand by me* doesn’t include any supernatural aspect in its plot. Still, it’s a movie that ends up being very close to *Stranger Things*, on the characters’ side. Its protagonists are four, like in the series. And both the groups, in the movie and in the show, are composed by kids who are not like the rest. Sometimes they get called “freaks”; some others, “weirdos”. In any case, they have something that makes them different from the others. That emarginates them. Both the groups are harassed by older boys: in *Stranger Things*, by the bullies who threat Dustin with a knife (first season) and scare Will on Halloween night (second season); In *Stand by me*, by the gang led by Ace Merrill (Kiefer Sutherland). In a way similar to *Stand by me*, during the second season of *Stranger Things*, the protagonists have to deal with their doubts, their suffering, and the factors that start creating a distance between them.

Stand by me, which sees a young but already talented River Phoenix playing the role of Chris Chambers, is however just one of the many works of Stephen King the series refers to. From *IT*, to *The Dark Tower*, to the already mentioned *Carrie*, the references are so abundant that it would be even difficult to list them all.

It’s love what the Duffer brothers feel for King’s production. And in this case, such love is totally mutual: the writer has praised both the first and the second season plenty of times, and two of his sons even made a short appearance in the Winter Proms scene, as students invited to the party.