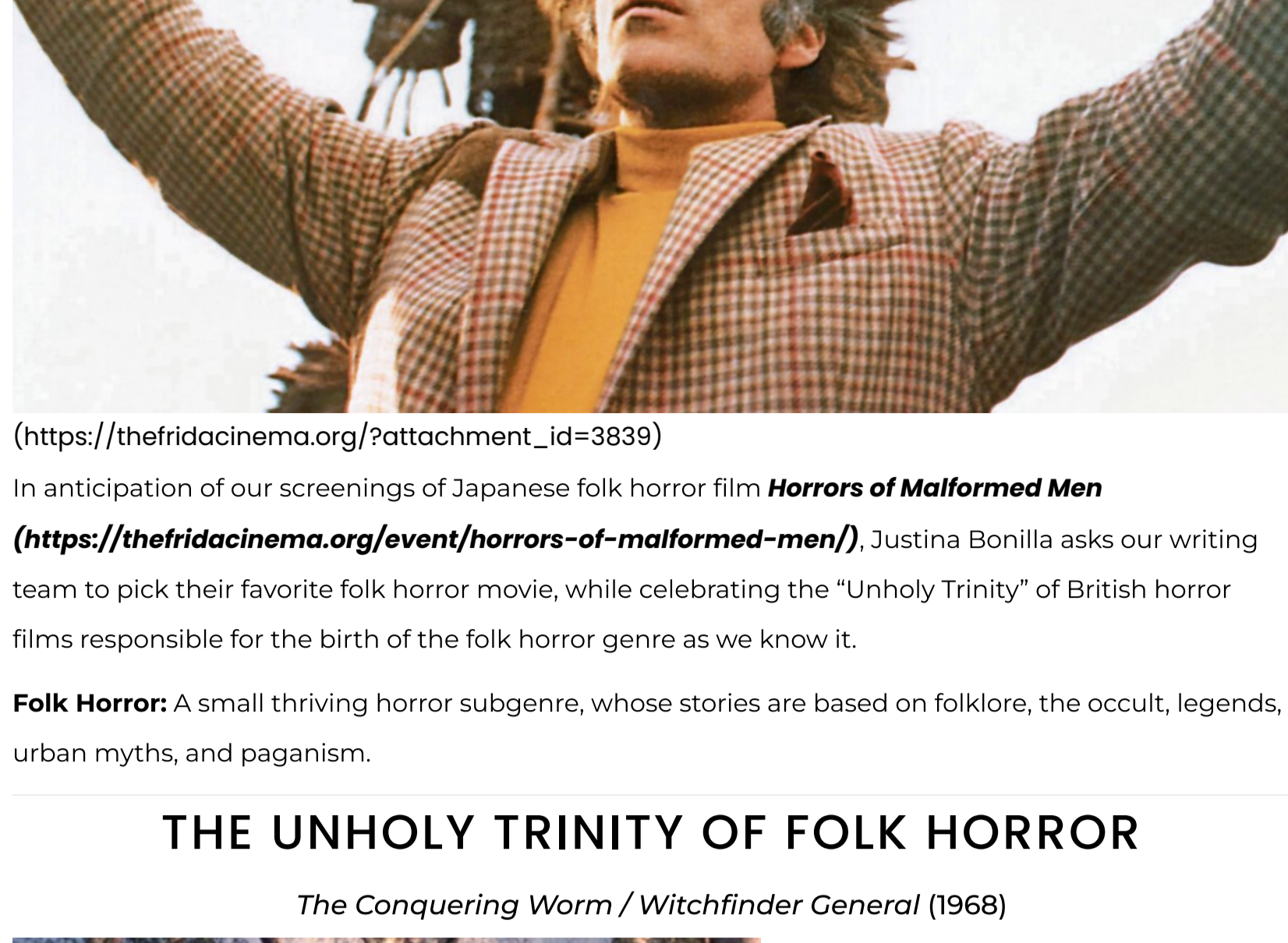


The Frida's Top Folk Horror Picks

https://thefridacinema.org/author/justina_bonilla/
Justina Bonilla
https://thefridacinema.org/author/justina_bonilla/
A film enthusiast, with a passion for classic, musical, cult, and horror films. Justina is also a freelance writer and blogger.



https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3839
In anticipation of our screenings of Japanese folk horror film **Horrors of Malformed Men** (<https://thefridacinema.org/event/horrors-of-malformed-men/>), Justina Bonilla asks our writing team to pick their favorite folk horror movie, while celebrating the "Unholy Trinity" of British horror films responsible for the birth of the folk horror genre as we know it.

Folk Horror: A small thriving horror subgenre, whose stories are based on folklore, the occult, legends, urban myths, and paganism.

THE UNHOLY TRINITY OF FOLK HORROR

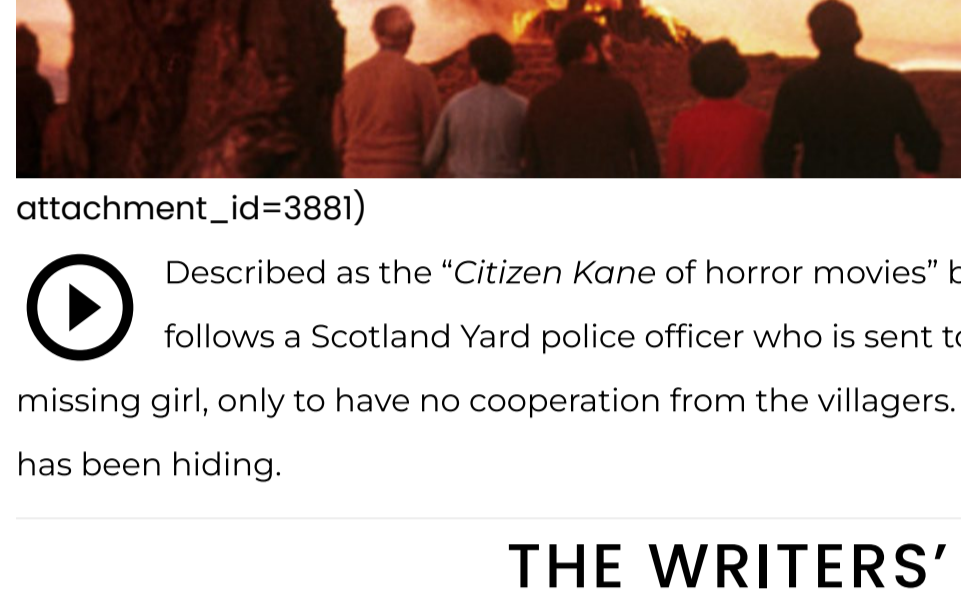
The Conquering Worm / Witchfinder General (1968)



https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3863

Witch hunter Matthew Hopkins (Vincent Price) goes on a campaign of terror in East Anglia, sadistically torturing and killing over 300 suspected witches, until a young soldier tries to stop his killing spree.

Blood on Satan's Claw (1971)



https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3870

After the skeleton of a demonic creature are accidentally unearthed, a group of teenagers in a small 17th century farming village become a satanic cult, performing blood sacrifices to bring the demon to life.

The Wicker Man (1973)



https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3881

Described as the "Citizen Kane of horror movies" by *Cinefantastique*, **The Wicker Man** follows a Scotland Yard police officer who is sent to an isolated Scottish island village to find a missing girl, only to have no cooperation from the villagers. He soon learns the deadly secret everyone has been hiding.

THE WRITERS' PICKS

November (2017)

Logan Crow: I first learned about director Rainer Sarnet's fantastic Estonian film **November** when its dreamy black-and-white poster caught my eye at a film conference. And after the team at https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3884



Oscilloscope described it as a "dark Estonian black-and-white folk tale involving love, monsters, and the devil", I was sold and booked it at the Frida, sight unseen. After our audiences had nothing but positive things to say about it, I finally checked it out, and was completely blown away. It's just one of those films that has a singular mood to it. It looks like a beautiful monochromatic nightmare, complete with shadows, eerie characters, and some very dark dealings. But, seems to have its tongue firmly in its cheek throughout, self-aware enough to add an extra level of surrealism to the proceedings, and not enough to make the whole thing feel hokey or farcical. It's surprisingly engaging, and often quite humorous, for what is essentially the very sad tale of star-crossed lovers who make an ill-advised go of using dark magic to live happily ever after. (Don't these kids ever learn!?)

The Blair Witch Project (1998)

Trevor Dillon: My favorite folk horror film of all time is 1999's genre game-changer **The Blair Witch Project**. To say that it totally revolutionized Horror as a whole is an understatement. For better or worse, it took



https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3888

effective folk horror and mixed it with a new thing (at the time) called "found footage". I put it up in the ranks with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (<https://thefridacinema.org/event/the-texas-chainsaw-massacre/>) and *Night of the Living Dead* in terms of pure ingenuity. Twenty years later, it still manages to scare me, and I know I'm not alone on that. Also, how many other films on this list have folklore so strong that audiences actually thought the movie was real?

Trollhunter (2010)

Adrienne Reese: In André Øvredal's 2010 film **Trollhunter**, one of the hunters pretends early on that "fairytales don't usually match reality". But, the subsequent events in this found-



https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3892

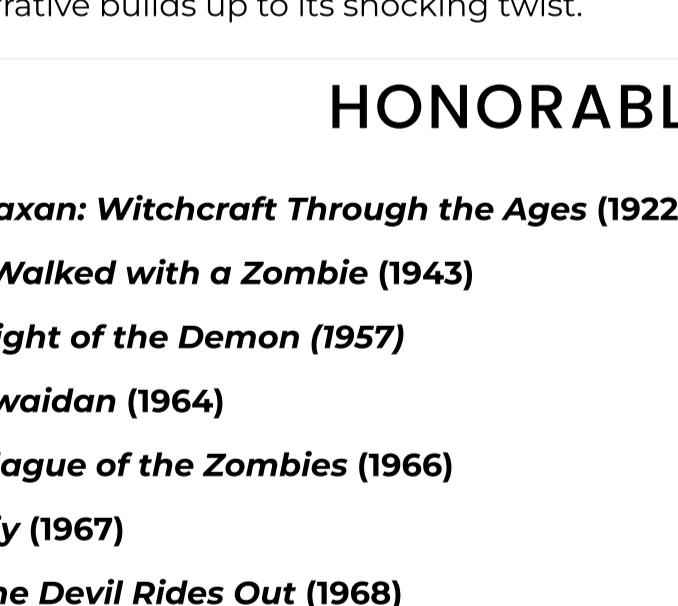
footage-style movie would beg to differ, as it does headfirst into Norwegian folklore and pulls out a surprisingly stunning, yet dark action/adventure. In the film, a trio of college students go in search of the truth behind some peculiar events that the government is blaming on bothersome bears. However, they instead find an ex-navy ranger turned badass troll-hunter who has been tasked with tracking and researching these creatures, thought to only belong to storybooks. Fairytale is blurred with reality, in this thriller that teeters on horror, full of violent and giant trolls, unlikely heroes, and suspense and mystery that has mythology collide with modern times in order to produce a pseudo-documentary. You may feel like you are being trolled yourself with a plot-line based around Norwegian trolls and government control, but you will find out pretty early on that this is a heart-racing film. I wondered myself if it was real or not. But of course, trolls aren't real... right?

The Wicker Man (1973)

Reggie Peralta: There's a long-running debate about whether Robin Hardy's **The Wicker Man** can be classified as a horror movie or not, yet somehow it manages to be scarier than many other titles in the genre. Everything from the haunting soundtrack, to the creepily-off behavior of the islanders, conspires to disturb the viewer on a much deeper level than jump scares and wanton gore might. Some argue that it's hard to sympathize with Sgt. Howie on account of his Bible-thumping ways. But, they may do well to consider that he's a paragon of reason compared to the movie's villains. Add in an iconic performance by Christopher Lee and you have a most literal cult classic!

Cat People (1942)

Justina Bonilla: This is a hauntingly captivating and influential film by Val Lewton, one of the godfathers of early Horror. He was mostly known for his heavy use of shadows and the

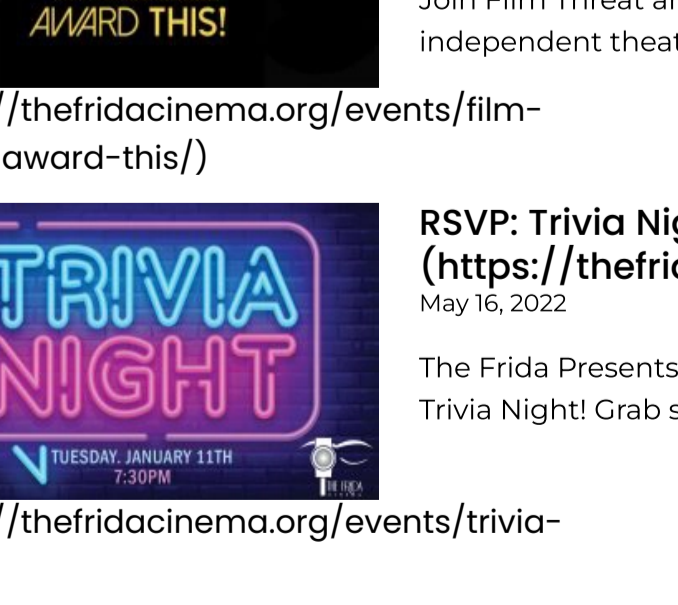


https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3899

creation of the modern jump scare. **Cat People** follows Irena, a young Serbian woman, in modern New York City who falls in love and marries Oliver, an American man. However, the marriage is doomed from the beginning, because Irena believes a family legend that she is cursed to turn into a panther and kill if she is angered or aroused... sexually. Oliver confides in Alice, his assistant, and the two begin a relationship which spirals the three down a path of death and destruction. This psychological horror and its atmosphere of impending doom and tragedy intertwines the legends of the old world with our modern society—a movie that, no matter how many times I see it, still sends shivers down my spine.

The Babadook (2014)

Isa Bulnes-Shaw: Every culture has its own unique version of "the boogeyman." **The Babadook** gives a specific name, face, and even a top hat to this elusive figure. It's through this story that we realize the monster truly haunting us all is the inescapable darkness and grief left to fester within ourselves. Since watching it in 2014 (and thereby discovering The Frida Cinema through it), the film remains one of my all-time favorites. By establishing its lore through a pop-up book, Jennifer Kent crafts a gorgeous combination of realism and German Expressionist fairy tale to express a mother's torment and loss that resonates with me to my core. Everyone meets Mr. Babadook at some point in their lives—some of us sooner than others. One thing's for sure: once you see what's underneath, you won't be able to forget.



https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3902

Don't Be Afraid of the Dark (2011)

Martin Angelo: An often-overlooked little gem from 2010 that should be required viewing for any die-hard Guillermo Del Toro fan. **Don't Be Afraid of the Dark** fits perfectly into that



https://thefridacinema.org/?attachment_id=3905

twisted, black forest fairy tale sensibility we know and love. The superb creature design of the tooth fairies, (not the benevolent dollar-giving kind, but more so the ravenous tooth-eating monstrous kind), have to be owed to Del Toro's influence as a producer. It's an atmospheric, albeit traditional movie that's equal parts creepy and entrancing, with some good performances from some solid actors. This one deserves a second look.

The VVitch (2015)

Mina Rhee: My favorite folk horror film is **The VVitch**. Set in 1630, it's about a Puritan family that faces the terror foretold by their religious zeal when they are cast out to live in isolation at the edge of the woods. As their crops die and children go missing, the family must reckon with the questions of both physical and spiritual survival, as paranoia about manifestations of sin both outside and inside the home set in. Subtitled "A New England Folk tale", the movie explores how religion can make the horror of the outside unknown intensely personal, especially when it deals with female sexuality. The film inks on historical realism, complete with dialogue taken from historical documents, and sparse direction that make the supernatural elements more unnerving when they creep in. Marking an impressive film debut from writer and director Robert Eggers, **The VVitch** is an assured and haunting vision of religious devotion curdling into hysteria.

The Other (1972)

Sean Woodard: Set in a sleepy Connecticut farming community in 1935, **The Other** follows two twins, Niles and Holland, who learn something called "the great game" from their Russian grandmother. But, their idyllic summer is shaken when people begin dying in mysterious accidents. While primarily known as a psychological horror film, I'd argue **The Other** also qualifies as folk horror, because its elements of superstition and pastoral setting add to the overall atmosphere as the narrative builds up to its shocking twist.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

- *Haxan: Witchcraft Through the Ages* (1922)
- *I Walked with a Zombie* (1943)
- *Night of the Demon* (1957)
- *Kwaidan* (1964)
- *Plague of the Zombies* (1966)
- *Viy* (1967)
- *The Devil Rides Out* (1968)
- *Valerie and Her Week of Wonders* (1970)
- *Kuroneko* (1971)
- *Let's Scare Jessica to Death* (1971)
- *Children of the Corn* (1984)
- *Pumpkinhead* (1988)
- *Candyman* (1992)
- *A Field in England* (2013)
- *Lords of Salem* (2013)
- *Krampus* (2015)
- *Apostle* (2018)
- *Midsommar* (2019)

[Like](#) Sign Up to see what your friends like.

More to explore

Film Threat Award This!
<https://thefridacinema.org/events/film-threat-award-this/>
May 17, 2022
Join Film Threat and the Frida Cinema for a fundraiser supporting independent theaters! Film Threat's Award This! is an event with a

RSVP: Trivia Night at The Frida Cinema
<https://thefridacinema.org/events/trivia-night/>
May 16, 2022
The Frida Presents Film Club Trivia Night Join us for The Frida Cinema's next Trivia Night! Grab some of your fellow trivia

A Little Night Music: SUSPIRIA, A Goblin Amongst Men
<https://thefridacinema.org/featured-highlight/a-little-night-music-suspiria-a-goblin-amongst-men/>
May 16, 2022
Frida writing team member Josh Green talks about Goblin's prog-rock score for Suspiria, the supernatural horror thriller from Dario Argento.

big shout out to

OUR PARTNERS

<https://www.ogoc.com/mg>

