

Culture celebrates 'Day of Dead'

By SANDRA MEDINA
Special to The Battalion

While our Western culture mourns the death of loved ones, in the Mexican culture death is a cause for celebration on Dia De Los Muertos, The Day of The Dead.

Most Westerners see death as a sad and tragic event, while Mexicans accept death and see it as a journey to a better place.

They see life, death and resurrection as stages in a cosmic process. Death is not the natural end of life, but rather a phase of an infinite cycle.

For Mexicans, death is a mirror that reflects one's life. If their death lacks sentiment or meaning, their life lacked it too.

These beliefs are why Mexicans and Mexican Americans celebrate "Dia De Los Muertos."

On October 31, the eve of "All Souls Day," Mexicans and Mexican Americans will take time to celebrate the death of loved ones.

In Mexico, the celebration is very important. Entire cities close down. Nobody goes to work or school so they can pay tribute to the dead. Families get together and go to the cemetery to visit the graves of loved ones. They spend the day decorating and cleaning the graves.

Family picnics are commonplace in the cemeteries. Food is served to each member of the family and a plate is also served for the deceased.

Although Dia De Los Muertos is not celebrated as extensively in the United States, Mexican Americans do remember their loved ones by visiting and taking flowers to their graves.

In order for Texas A&M students to understand the tradition behind Dia De Los Muertos, The Committee for Awareness of Mexican-American Culture will be sponsoring their own celebration.

Richard Garza, CAMAC member and organizer, says this event will be an evening full of fun for everyone.

Activities will include a local priest speaking to the audience about the religious aspect behind the holiday. Robert Villarreal, CAMAC member, will speak about the folklore and tradition of this celebration. The traditional Dia De Los Muertos dances will be performed by the Ballet Folklorico group of CAMAC. Traditional food will also be served.

The celebration will be Oct. 31 at 7 p.m. in 224 MSC. Everyone is invited to attend. For more information contact Richard Garza or Georgette Lopez-Aguado at 845-1515.

Sandra Medina is a senior journalism major and member of the Hispanic Journalists Association.

Stockpile videos, candy corn, fear for spirited night

By DON ATKINSON JR.

Renting horror movies on Halloween night is becoming as much a tradition of the holiday as carving a jack-o'-lantern.

What follows is my list of scariest films available on videocassette. In compiling this list, I have avoided many of the so-called "slasher flicks" because they are rarely scary, just gory.

Happy screaming!
• "The Exorcist" (1973) — In my opinion, one of the most frightening films ever made.

On the surface, "The Exorcist" is a simple tale of good versus evil, a little girl (Linda Blair) possessed by a demon. But what the film really deals with is how scared we are of fate and how we try to fend it off by placing our faith in technology.

When the possession first occurs, medical science tries everything possible to help but with no results. The sight of a small girl being subjected to a hospital is horrifying on a more subliminal level.

• "Psycho" (1960) — The passage of time has done little to diminish the impact of this Alfred Hitchcock masterpiece.

Probably the most amazing thing about "Psycho" is that it shows very little blood and gore during the killings. The violence is mostly implied, leaving the viewer's imagination to fill in the rest.

The film ends with one of the most famous plot-twists in cinema history. Just in case you haven't seen the film before, I won't reveal it here.

• "Halloween" (1978) — Director John Carpenter meant this film to be a tribute to "Psycho" in more ways than just the violent theme. "Halloween" stars Jamie Lee Curtis, the daughter of Janet Leigh (she played the shower-scene victim in "Psycho"). Also, both films feature a character named Sam Loomis.

However, what Carpenter didn't count on was that "Halloween" would be one of the most imitated horror films made. After "Halloween" was released, subsequent horror films were filled with horny teenagers, lurching camera angles and seemingly indestructible villains. Fortunately, most of the imitators faded away into obscurity. Even by current standards, "Halloween" remains a truly chilling tale of horror.

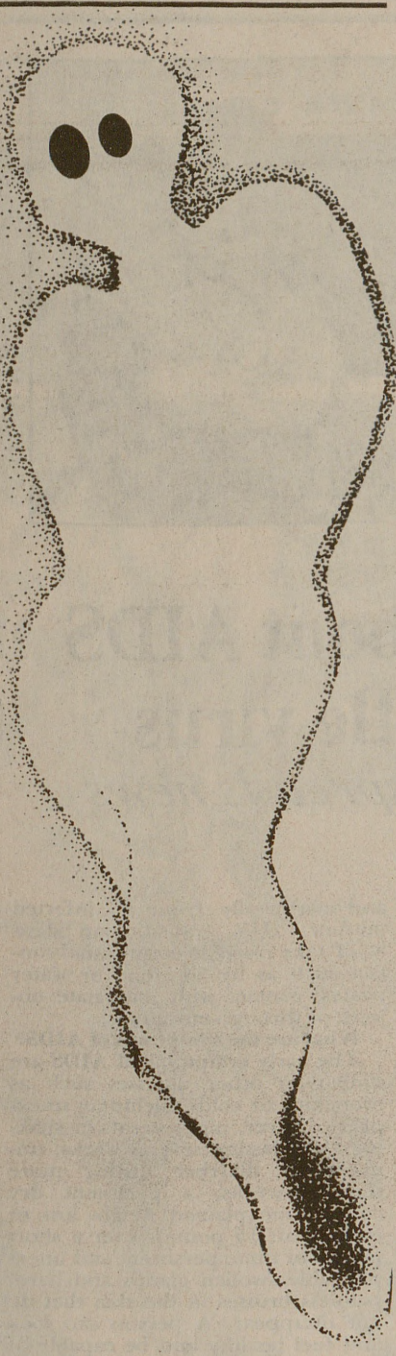
• "The Shining" (1980) — Jack Nicholson achieved immortality in this Stanley Kubrick film with two words: "Heeeeere's Johnny!!!"

The film follows the crack-up of Jack Torrance, a reforming alcoholic locked in for the winter with his family in a mountain hotel. As the evil spirits begin to possess him, viewers may find themselves laughing more than being scared, but "The Shining" manages to sneak in a few shocks along the way.

• "Phantasm" (1979) — Most of the budget of this film was obviously spent on special effects, but who cares? The end result is a nightmarish trip through some of our worst fears.

The film deals with a ghostly mortuary where strange things seem to happen to dead bodies. Angus Scrimm turns in a fantastic performance as The Tall Man, an odd mortician with a booming voice.

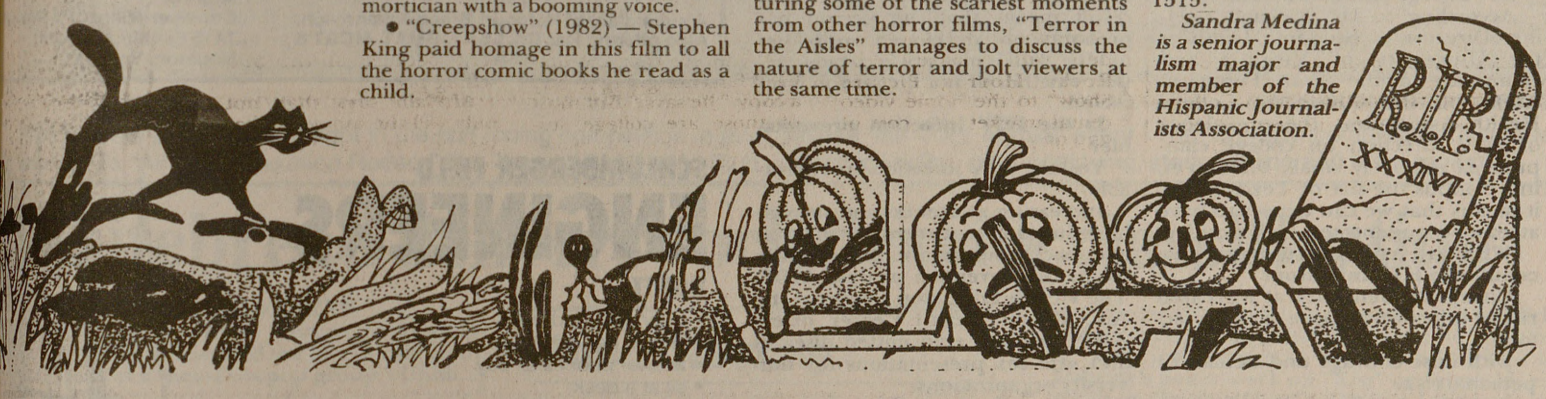
• "Creepshow" (1982) — Stephen King paid homage in this film to all the horror comic books he read as a child.



While "Creepshow" provides a good many jolts, the overall effect is that of cornball comedy. King himself turns in a performance as a goofy farmer beset by greenery from another world.

Directed by George Romero ("Night of the Living Dead"), "Creepshow" is definitely worth renting.

• "Terror in the Aisles" (1984) — The perfect Halloween movie! Featuring some of the scariest moments from other horror films, "Terror in the Aisles" manages to discuss the nature of terror and jolt viewers at the same time.



Youth creates sonic boom in Houston

By JOHN RIGHTER

HOUSTON — Sonic Youth concerts have been always cast in a legendary, illuminating light. Long considered the ultimate New York group, the band is revered for its chaotic stage shows and thundering walls of feedback and noise, punctuated by the "anything in reach is a rock" (including screwdrivers, drums, beer bottles, and other guitars) style of guitarists Lee Renaldo and Thurston Moore.

Frenetic was an understatement of Sonic Youth terminology. At least was before the group signed on to Reffen Records this year. The tour-circuit word for "Goo" was the band had gotten soft, mellowed out. Sonic Youth's name and pride were taken in vain as the horrid tag "conservative" crept into early reviews.

Enough of that elitism, already. I went. I saw. And Sonic Youth still conquers a crowd.

Playing to a jam-packed Numbers in Houston, the Sonic gang stormed through a short, but powerful 14-song set that focused heavily on its latest release, *Goo*. The band must be reading its own reviews, because conservative doesn't fit the tag when bodies are flyin', drumsticks are weakin' (on instruments they aren't meant to be tweakin'), and mayhem is arising the way the Sonic's chaotic boom did this weekend.

Scrambling between feedback crushers such as "Silver Rocket" and "Mary Christ," and trippier psychedelia such as "Tunic" and "Eric's Trip," the Sonics ripped with the opening "Tom Violent" and never stopped.

Other gems included the *Goo* single, "Kool Thing," "Catholic Block" from '87's *Sister* and "The Bedroom," a scorchin' new instrumental. Moore acted as spokesperson for the band, directing some fun sargasm to the front row and club (he found the Halloween decorations interesting). Meanwhile, wife, bassist and singer Kim Gordon stood aloof, barely recognizing the audience, but performing her sultry, angry vocal parts wonderfully.

A great attribute of the Sonics is that despite the noise and extracur-

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ricular activity that surfaces on their albums, it's all reproducible on stage. The band's recorded mayhem sounds even cooler sped up, encompassed in a peripheral layer of distortion and graced with the group's caustic miming.

It's also wonderful to be able to stumble across a group before the show at a record store (Houston's Sound Exchange) and again several times during the opening bands' sets and never once sense the pretension of major label status and sold-out ve-

nues (even if it is only clubs). In contrast to my East Coast critiquing brethren, the calls of "sold out" sound like baseless whining.

Opening act, Laughing Hyenas, is another matter. Actually, N.Y.'s Gumball opened the night with a pretty decent set, displaying a Youth-inspired psychedelic grunge. The Laughing Hyenas, though, raise the term "screamers" to a new level.

Maybe I am getting old, but I was totally confused by the audience's warm reaction to this repulsing group of delinquents. The lead throat and bass player (who looked like Red Sovine on acid) popped pills

together between songs and the throat nuzzled a beer the entire set.

The ugly side is the band just plain sucked, even joking about the total incomprehension of the throat's lyrics (which were constant screams, not even an occasional howl). The bright side is that I find some sadistic pleasure in seeing an occasional bad band and in this regard the Hyenas were a bonanza of entertainment.

But, I'm perplexed by the overall reaction (which was a sustained, moderate applause), and even more distressed by the Hyenas' critical praise. I don't know, maybe I'm losing touch.

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