



Ha!
Aaah!



The Painful Relationship Between Humor and Horror

with David Misch

From 1920's "Haunted Spooks" to "Zombieland," the genre of horror-comedy has never really, you should excuse the expression, died.

Yet humor and horror seem pretty different; one's a pie in the face, the other's an axe in the skull. It's obvious why watching someone being torn asunder would be horrible but why is the endless suffering of the Three Stooges funny? Could there be congruences between funny and fear, snickers and screams, gore and gags, slapstick and slaughter?

Yes.

This multimedia talk proposes – carefully, while remaining alert and well-armed – that the two genres are not mortal enemies.

For one thing, people in pain are a perennial part of every art; to be fascinated with human suffering is to be human. Both comedy and horror can show us how to live. (And, of course, die – from "Psycho" we learn that death can come at any time. Also, to always shower with a friend.)

We'll see that both genres love loss of control, anarchy – the beast within us set free. And both exploit our paradoxical feelings about helplessness; seeing someone out of control can be hilarious (a clumsy person falling) or horrifying (a clumsy person falling into a snake-pit suspended over a shark-pit next to a zombie zoo).

Using examples ranging from Freud & Kant to Abbott & Costello, David Misch explores how horror and humor share a mordant view of our relationship to pain; an obsession with the human body and its multifarious fluids; and a subtext of death and transcendence underlying the eviscerated flesh and fart jokes.

David Misch has written for the Emmy-nominated "Mork and Mindy," the Emmy-losing "Duckman," the Emmy-engorged "Saturday Night Live" and the Emmy-ineligible "The Muppets Take Manhattan." He's the author of "Funny: The Book" and is collected in "Horrific Humor: Sidesplitting sLaughter." David's also a playwright, songwriter, blogger, teacher and recovered stand-up comic, and has spoken at the Smithsonian, Yale, Columbia, Oxford, CineStudio Paris, University of Sydney (Australia), VIEW Cinema Conference (Torino, Italy), Raindance Film Festival (London), American Film Institute, Disney, Sony, Lucasfilm, USC and UCLA. Too much more at davidmisch.com and funnythebook.com.