

SLASHER MANIA

THE PREVIEW

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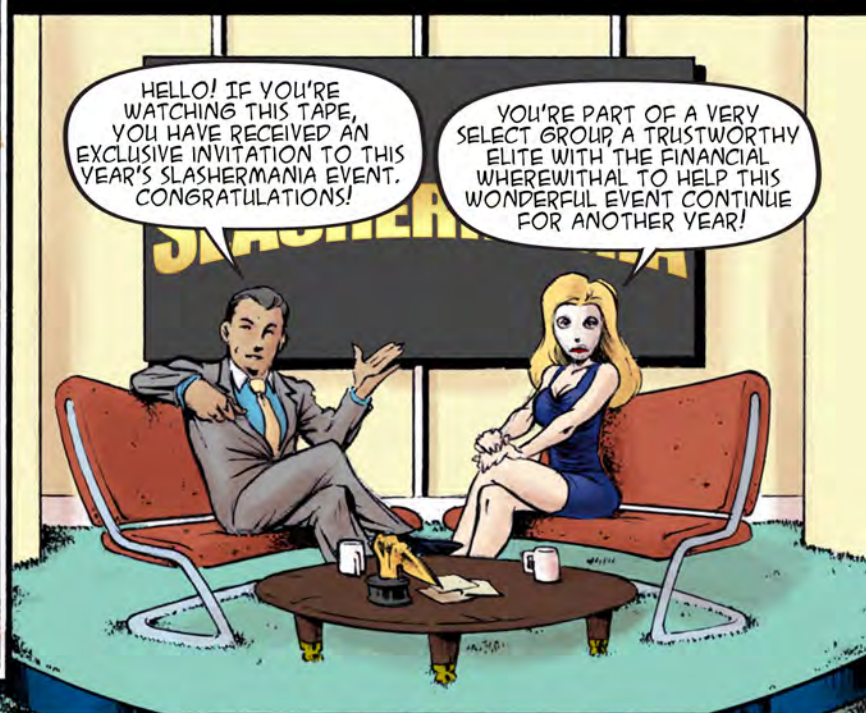
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SLASHERMANIA

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A FREAKTOWN COMICS PRODUCTION



HELLO! IF YOU'RE WATCHING THIS TAPE, YOU HAVE RECEIVED AN EXCLUSIVE INVITATION TO THIS YEAR'S SLASHERMANIA EVENT. CONGRATULATIONS!

YOU'RE PART OF A VERY SELECT GROUP, A TRUSTWORTHY ELITE WITH THE FINANCIAL WHEREWITHAL TO HELP THIS WONDERFUL EVENT CONTINUE FOR ANOTHER YEAR!



BUT JUST WHAT IS SLASHERMANIA? WHO IS BEHIND IT? HOW DID IT ALL GET STARTED? COME NOW WITH ME, TODD MORTON --

-- AND ME, SANGUINE SLAUGHTER, AS WE ANSWER THESE AND MANY OTHER QUESTIONS. WELCOME TO THE HISTORY OF SLASHERMANIA!

SLASHERMANIA BEGAN IN 1980, WHEN THE MAN YOU KNOW BEST AS "BLADE KILLINGTON" SAW NEWS FOOTAGE OF A RAMPAGE BY A SLASHER KILLER CALLING HIMSELF JUNKBLOOD.

USING HIS INCREDIBLE RESOURCES, "BLADE" MANAGED TO GET JUNKBLOOD RELEASED, AND ARRANGED A SPECIAL EVENT.



HE PURCHASED AN ABANDONED HOTEL AND FITTED IT OUT WITH THE LATEST IN SOUND RECORDING AND CCTV EQUIPMENT.



AND AN AUDIENCE OF HIS MOST TRUSTED FRIENDS, EACH PAYING ONE MILLION DOLLARS PER TICKET, WATCHED JUNKBLOOD HUNT DOWN AND KILL A DOZEN TEENAGE RUNAWAYS.



AFTER THE EVENT WAS OVER, HIS GUESTS HAD ONLY ONE QUESTION:

WITH A SHOW LIKE THAT, WHAT DO YOU DO FOR AN ENCORE?

CLEARLY, SOMETHING BIGGER AND BETTER WAS REQUIRED FOR 1981.

JUNKBLOOD WAS UNAVAILABLE, THAT YEAR, BUT SOME OF THE NATION'S FINEST SLASHERS WERE ASSEMBLED INSTEAD.

A WHO'S WHO OF 1981'S BIGGEST NAMES IN MULTIPLE MURDER - THE MATRON, THE MECHANIC, GOLD SKULL, PAIN/PLEASURE PRINCIPAL, THE LOST INGENUE, AND MOMMY DEAREST.

THE VENUE FOR 81 WAS A DISUSED HOSPITAL - TWENTY-FIVE RUNAWAYS AGAINST THE SIX OF US - AND, IF I MAY GET PERSONAL FOR A MOMENT, --

IT WAS A WONDERFUL TIME, A TRUE CELEBRATION OF OUR ART. I WAS SO PROUD.

IT MIGHT JUST HAVE BEEN THE BEST WEEKEND OF MY LIFE.

ANYWAY, IT WAS THAT YEAR THAT THE AWARDS CEREMONY ASPECT BEGAN, --

THAT'S RIGHT, TODD AS A RELATIVE NEWCOMER TO THE SCENE, TO BE TREATED AS AN EQUAL BY SOME OF THOSE GLIYS - YOURSELF INCLUDED - WAS JUST... MAGICAL.

LOOK AT MY HAIR, I LOOK TERRIBLE! YOU LOOKED SO GOOD IN YOUR LEATHER!

WITH AWARDS FOR BEST MALE AND FEMALE DEATH --

-- AND THE ALL-IMPORTANT SLASHER OF THE YEAR, WON BY A FORMER EDUCATOR SITTING NOT A MILLION MILES AWAY FROM ME.

IT WAS SO HOT IN THAT HOSPITAL!

SANGUINE AND I DECIDED TO QUIT WHEN WE WERE ON TOP AND JOINED THE BEHIND THE SCENES TEAM HERE INSTEAD.

1982 SAW THE FIRST SLASHERMANIA TO ACTUALLY USE THE NAME.

A LITTLE KNOWN FACT - OTHER NAMES CONSIDERED INCLUDED SLAUGHTERAMA, MASSACRE MADNESS AND DEAD TEEN FRENZY.

ANTICIPATION WAS RUNNING HIGH.

BLADE KILLINGTON HAD PROMISED SOMETHING BIGGER AND BETTER THAN WHAT HAD GONE BEFORE.

COULD HE DELIVER?

AND WE'VE BEEN HERE EVER SINCE.

THE FIRST BIG CHANGE FOR SLASHERMANIA WAS THE LOCATION. INSTEAD OF AN ABANDONED BUILDING, THE VENUE FOR EACH YEAR WOULD BE THE "HUNTING GROUNDS" OF THE PREVIOUS YEAR'S OVERALL WINNER.

AS TODD - SORRY, AS THE PAIN/PLEASURE PRINCIPAL - HAD WON THE PREVIOUS YEAR, THE CHOSEN VENUE WAS SHORTLANDS COLLEGE, PURCHASED BY BLADE KILLINGTON THROUGH UNTRACEABLE SHADOW CORPORATIONS, IT WAS FITTED WITH THE REQUIRED RECORDING DEVICES AND MADE KILL-READY.

BOTH THE NUMBER OF CONTESTANTS AND THE AVAILABLE VICTIMS WERE INCREASED - A TOTAL OF EIGHT SLASHERS, INCLUDING SOME FROM CANADA, HUNTED FORTY TEEN RUNAWAYS, UNDERPRIVILEGED KIDS AND JUVENILE OFFENDERS.



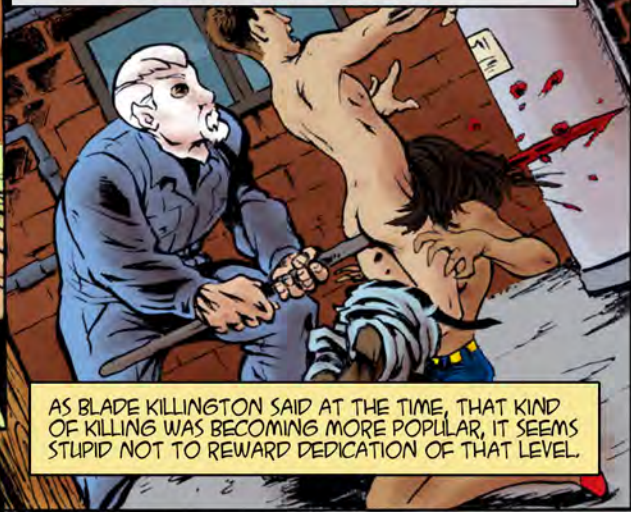
AGAIN, THE CREAM OF THAT YEAR'S ACTIVE SLASHERS WERE CHOSEN TO REPRESENT THE CRAFT - FRANKLIN FROST, THE HOUND, THE HARE, THE FOX, BIOHAZARD, CAPTAIN NIGHT, THE FAMILY BUTCHER AND MADAME TRAGEDY.

THIS WAS ALSO THE YEAR WHEN THE FIRST BLOOD AWARD WAS ADDED AS A SPECIAL HONOUR FOR THE QUICKEST OFF THE BLOCKS.

AWARDS WERE ALSO ADDED FOR KILLING A COUPLE DURING SEXUAL ACTIVITY - THE "COITUS INTERRUPTUS" CATEGORY - AND FOR "SIN PUNISHMENT" DEATHS, KILLING DRINKERS, JUNKIES, THAT SORT OF THING.



WON BY CAPTAIN NIGHT, SEEN HERE GETTING HIS FIRST KILL AT THE NINE MINUTE MARK.



AS BLADE KILLINGTON SAID AT THE TIME, THAT KIND OF KILLING WAS BECOMING MORE POPULAR, IT SEEMS STUPID NOT TO REWARD DEDICATION OF THAT LEVEL.

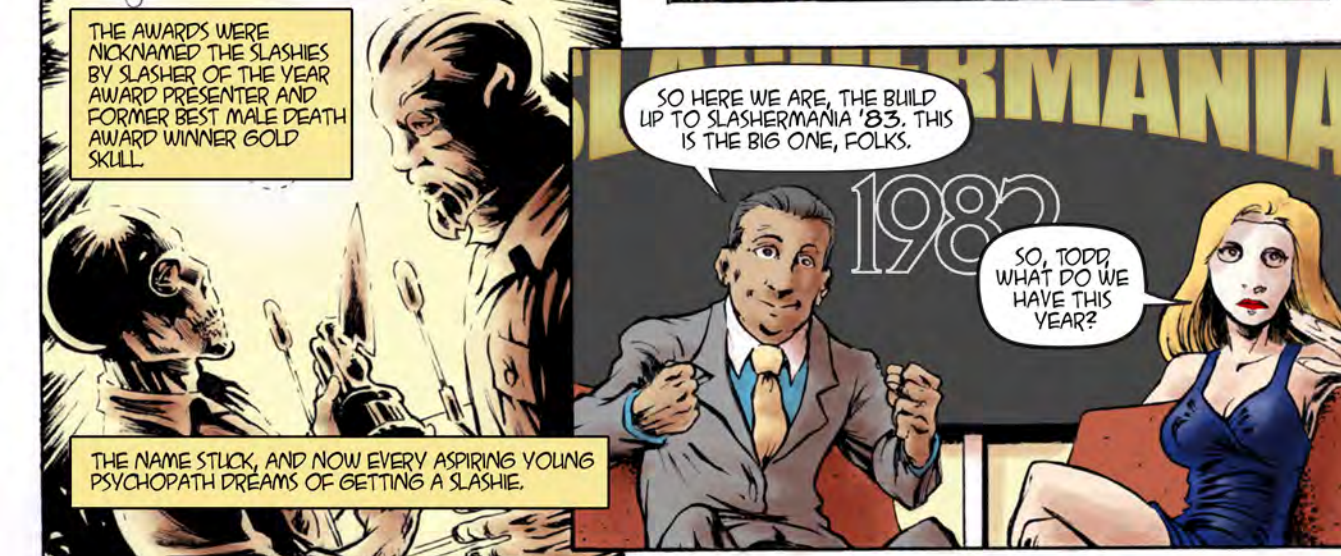
SLASHER OF THE YEAR WAS WON BY FIRST TIME ENTRANT FRANKLIN FROST, DEFINITELY ONE OF THE MOST IMPRESSIVE KILLERS I'VE EVER SEEN.

THE AWARDS WERE NICKNAMED THE SLASHIES BY SLASHER OF THE YEAR AWARD PRESENTER AND FORMER BEST MALE DEATH AWARD WINNER GOLD SKULL.

SO HERE WE ARE, THE BUILD UP TO SLASHERMANIA '83. THIS IS THE BIG ONE, FOLKS.

SO, TODD, WHAT DO WE HAVE THIS YEAR?

THE NAME STUCK, AND NOW EVERY ASPIRING YOUNG PSYCHOPATH DREAMS OF GETTING A SLASHIE.



WELL SANGUINE, THIS YEAR WE HAVE TEN SLASHERS, HUNTING FIFTY "TROUBLED TEENS".

THAT'S SURE TO BE A LOT OF DEATH - TELL US WHERE ALL THIS IS GOING TO BE TAKING PLACE.

THE ABANDONED SUMMER CAMP WHERE HE GREW UP IT'S BEEN REFURBISHED AND REDESIGNED TO HIS EXACT SPECIFICATIONS (AS DICTATED TO US BY HIS DOCTOR).

TODD, WE'RE ON THE HOME TURF OF LAST YEAR'S OVERALL WINNER, FRANKLIN FROST -

THIS YEAR IS ALSO OUR FIRST FULLY INTERNATIONAL EVENT, WITH SLASHERS FROM THE UK AND ITALY JOINING OUR US-AND-CANADA-BASED ROSTER.

SO, LET'S MEET THIS YEAR'S CONTENDERS...

WE HAVE LAST YEAR'S OVERALL WINNER, FRANKLIN FROST, THE HOMETOWN HERO.

AND ANOTHER OF LAST YEAR'S NEWCOMERS BACK FOR MORE, MADAME TRAGEDY.

RETURNING FROM LAST YEAR WE HAVE THE KILLER VIGILANTE CAPTAIN NIGHT.

AND THE FIRST OF OUR NEW INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS, VETERAN BRITISH SLASHER THE USHERETTE.

NEXT UP A LATE ENTRANT BUT ONE OF THIS YEAR'S MOST PROMISING NEW FACES, KNOWN ONLY AS SAMMY.



AND ALL THE WAY FROM ITALY, BRINGING WITH HIM SOME OF THE OLD WAYS, SIGNOR GIALLI.

RETURNING FROM LAST YEAR, THIS TIME AS A SOLO ARTIST THANKS TO THE TRAGIC LOSS OF HIS COMPANIONS, CANADA'S OWN MARCH HARE.

AND THE MECHANIC - HE MISSED OUT ON LAST YEAR'S EVENT BUT HE'S COME BACK FOR MORE.

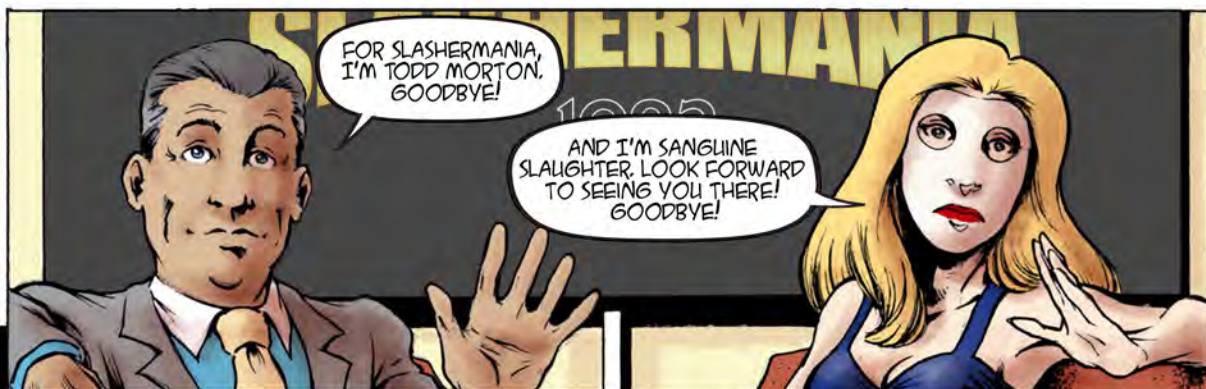
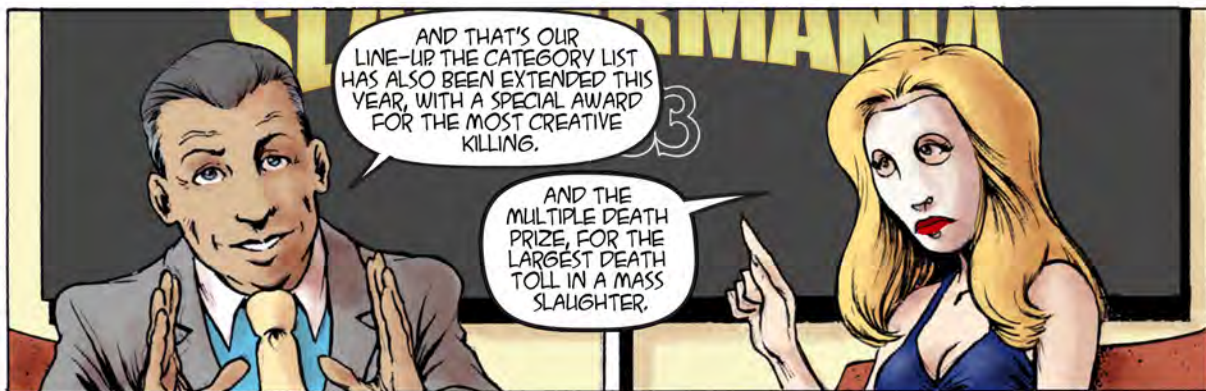
WE HAVE THE MAD MEDIC FROM ACROSS THE POND KNOWN ONLY AS THE UNKNOWN DOCTOR --

AND LAST BUT BY NO MEANS LEAST, OUR OLDEST CONTENDER AND MY FORMER MENTOR, --



ROUNDING OUT THE INTERNATIONAL SIDE OF THE COMPETITION.

THE VIRTUOSO. IT'S TAKEN A FEW YEARS, BUT WE'RE GLAD TO SAY WE'VE FINALLY GOT HIM!



SLASHERMANIA

1983

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SEVERAL ANIMALS WERE HARMED DURING THE MAKING OF THIS PROMOTIONAL VIDEOTAPE

I'M GOING TO GIVE IT TO YOU STRAIGHT ABOUT JASON

Just over 34 years ago, on May 9th 1980, Paramount Studios released a little film called *Friday the 13th*. It wasn't intended to be the first in a series, or to be the template for a cinematic sub-genre which had already had its greatest entry (much-imitated as Halloween is, I feel its influence on the slasher movies that followed is filtered through the first 2 *F13th* movies as much as it is direct, if not more), it was just a cheap little scary movie made by people who wanted to make money.

Actually, truth be told, it's not a great movie. It's played as a whodunit but we don't get to meet the killer until just before the reveal. The big jump scare at the end is an acknowledged rip-off from a better film, and there's the whole thing with the killing of a real snake on camera that's a little unpleasant. It's not a great movie – but it's an enjoyable one. The kids are watchable, the death scenes are entertaining, the score is effective and the jump scare being a big rip off doesn't make it any less jumpy or scary. It succeeds despite its flaws, because the good bits are so good that you forget about the rest of it. So, as was wanted, it made money. Enough money to make a sequel worth making – and making quickly. Trouble is, pretty much everyone was dead, including the killer. How do you make a sequel to that?

Simple - you bring on her son. Her son who was presumed drowned decades before the setting of the first movie, an action which was her primary motivation for all the murders. (One of many reasons why any attempt to assemble a coherent timeline for the *F13th* series is doomed to failure). You loosely remake the first movie, only you do it better. The watchable kids are more watchable (and more attractive), the death scenes are better, the score is just as good but that didn't need improving. Result being one of the better slasher sequels, and the beginning of one of the biggest name horror franchises ever. Jason Voorhees is what dragged me in, and the reason I became a *Friday the 13th* fan. Pamela Voorhees wouldn't have done that. When I saw the first movie I enjoyed it for what it was, but when I saw my first Jason movie I wanted to see more.

OK, I didn't grow up watching the *F13th* movies, and I definitely didn't see them in order - best guess at the order I saw them in would be 6-8-1-7-3-X-4-FvJ-Hell-2-5-remake, with a few repeats here and there. I didn't seek them out at first – comics and/or music took precedence, and most of my horror-liking friends over the years were bigger fans of the Elm Street series. They were Fred Heads, and so was I, until a few things came together and turned me around.

Now, first came *Jason X*. Yes, I know. Me too. But that opening section with David Cronenberg and the soldiers? Absolutely brilliant. Plus, it's Kane Hodder as Jason, and he's always better than the movie around him. More than the film itself, the DVD extras helped drag me in – there's a cool little documentary on there about the series which inspired me to go out and get a few of the earlier instalments too. Then came *FvJ*, and the pre-release hype caught me up as much as anyone else. I wanted to see these guys go up against each other, and I have to say I think they did about as good a job as possible with that one – in fact, having read a few of the unused scripts, I'm pretty much sure of it.

Very close to that time, I started talking online with a guy named Drew Edwards. We've worked together on his comic book *Halloween Man* for the last ten years, and have become incredibly good friends. He loves the *Friday the 13th* movies – utterly and absolutely loves them. He's not blind to their flaws, far from it, but he loves them just the same. Talking to Drew about them and exploring them again for myself, I became a fan too. I fell into the lake, and I drowned.

Once I had immersed myself into the movies, I started exploring. Over the next few years I picked up the rest of the films, I read *Making Friday the 13th*, *Crystal Lake Memories* and the comics series from Wildstorm/DC. I watched *His Name Was Jason*, and I put aside my Freddy fandom. Liking the *Friday the 13th* movies led to me exploring the rest of the slasher sub-genre, which I think is probably my favourite strand of horror. It eventually influenced my writing, to the point where I've actually written several slasher-oriented comics.

On to the big question, then: why Jason? Why not Michael Myers, or Chucky, or Freddy or Leatherface? Well, as I've said before, I did have a liking for the Springwood Slasher for a long time, and I'm far from alone in thinking that *Halloween* is one of the all-time horror greats. I think that Jason Voorhees and *Friday the 13th* saga just epitomise everything I like about the slasher subgenre. A silent masked killer stalking teenagers distracted by sex and drugs, and dispatching them in brutal and often innovative ways. The other series have elements of that formula, the *Halloween* movies especially, but when you're starting with the original *Halloween*, you can't really go many places other than down. One thing that the Friday movies definitely have over their siblings-in-slasherdom – a damn good remake.

Remake is a dirty word in horror fandom, and not without good reason. For a while now it has seemed like every name horror movie from the sixties to the nineties is being plucked for a remake, and while I'll be polite and say that they have varied in quality, there's precious few that feel necessary or even worthwhile. The 2009 *Friday the 13th* works in ways that the others didn't quite manage. For starters, it's not necessarily a remake. There's nothing to say that the flashback at the start isn't supposed to be the events of the first movie, slightly altered through years of retellings as a campfire tale. Jason's altered appearance? The last time we saw Jason before this was in the dreamworld at the end of FvJ, who know how he came back from that and what effect it had on him. Even down to the sack mask – his hockey mask had gone missing, he went with an alternative until he found it again. We had a good set of deaths (THIRTEEN! Finally!), a good look for Jason and a sequel hook. I disagree with people who say Jason shouldn't run (he's run before) and that the teens were unlikeable (some of them were, but less than most people have said). I think the only things I disliked about the remake were that the second group of teens weren't as interesting as the first, there was no Ki-Ki-Ki Ma-Ma-Ma, and they didn't really do anything with the summer camp location.

Here's a question for you – if you asked someone to describe the elements of a stereotypical *Friday the 13th* movie, what do you think they'd say? I'd assume you'd get most or all of the following mentioned: Killer in a hockey mask, machete, teenagers, summer camp setting, big bodycount. What they've just described doesn't actually fit with many films in the series – the only one that actually ticks all those boxes is Part VI. I adore part VI – from the Frankenstein-eque reanimation and Bond-referencing opening titles onwards, it's the most fun entry in the whole series. Think about the scene where Jason stands triumphant on the crashed RV, like a barbarian hero atop a slaughtered dragon. Or the multiple beheading of the paintballers. Tommy Jarvis is a more rounded character than his previous two appearances – if the character were to return in a future sequel, I'd want him to be more like this than the Feldman version. It's just a good fun movie.

Even with all that, it's not the best of the Friday movies. It took me a long time to actually see Part 2 (Sack-head Jason didn't appeal to me), but once I had, I realised just what I had been missing. I'd say it's the best made of all the Paramount movies, if not the whole series. It has some of the best looking teens in the series, and not just the girls, it has one of the best and most tragic deaths of any *Friday the 13th* movie (Mark, the guy in the wheelchair) and a reasonable quality script. The characters feel a lot more developed than those in the first movie, and Jason is so much better a villain than his mother ever was. Even in the sack mask, which I grew to love – though I think it looks better in the remake than it does here. It's just a shame that this one got slashed up by the MPAA, a little more gore would have been glorious. Oh, and I wish they hadn't killed off Crazy Ralph.

Enough looking at the past, what about the future? Last year ended with a 13, and no new movie came out on either of the Friday the 13ths. We did get the *Crystal Lake Memories* documentary, but that doesn't really count – amazing though it is, it's not a new movie. One is supposed to be on the way in the next few years, but who knows how long it will spend in development and what it will be like? Will it be set in the snow? Will it be found-footage? Will Corey Feldman come back as Tommy Jarvis? Right now, these and a million other things are all being rumoured.

So, that's my story. I still can't really articulate why I like the *Friday the 13th* movies more than other horror/slasher franchises, I guess they just hit the spot for me. Who needs a killer doll or a wisecracking dream stalker, a cannibal dressed in human skin or a sister-obsessed bogeyman in a Shatner mask? I'm happy with the mute brute in the hockey mask, forever stalking his forest with machete in hand, searching for teens shirking their responsibilities to indulge in life's greatest pleasures. And then killing them. Ki-Ki-Ki, Ma-Ma-Ma.

CAPTAIN NIGHT

Captain Night is proof that every villain is the hero of their own story. He started out as a vigilante in Detroit, beating up muggers and rapists. He was a media sensation - until he started using lethal force, and the tide started to turn. Then he switched his targets to sexually active courting couples, casual drug users and underage drinkers and eventually began just indiscriminately killing teenagers as a pre-emptive strike.



For a crook, being chased by Batman or Daredevil would probably feel like being hunted by a slasher. They appear suddenly from the shadows, striking without warning, they will follow you forever without needing to take a break, they wear masks and carry distinctive weapons. Captain Night is the logical end to that thought.

FRANKLIN FROST

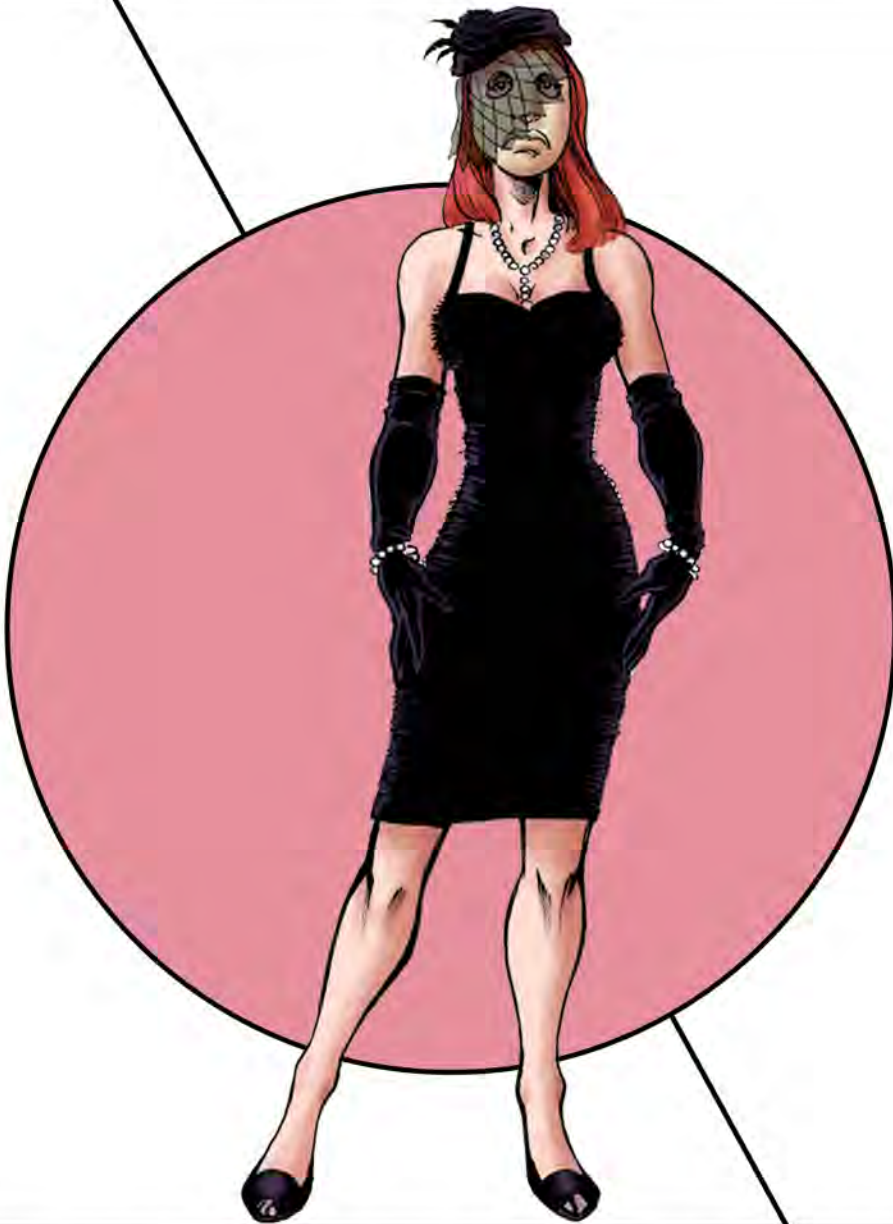
The son of a single mother senior camp counsellor, Franklin was regularly beaten or neglected while his mother tried desperately to cling on to her youth with drink and drugs and casual sex. Finally, ten-year-old Franklin snapped and killed his mother and her lover in their bed. He fled into the woods nearby, where he lived for many years, emerging occasionally to slaughter counsellors like the ones who tempted his mother to stray.



Franklin's inspirations should be completely obvious to anyone with even a passing interest in the genre – but as those two were the main inspiration for a lot of films of the era, it's only right to mix them. The merged origin makes at least as much sense as theirs do.

MADAME TRAGEDY

Killed her husband when he left her for the babysitter – then killed the babysitter when she found her in bed with her underage daughter. Kills babysitters who do anything besides looking after the children, and anyone who falls for her seductive black widow act.



There should be more female slashers – or, at least, there should be more big-name female slashers. Babysitters are a key target for slashers, but outside of the genre their onscreen activities tend to veer towards seduction/infidelity. Combining the two for a slasher who targeted "that kind" of babysitter seemed an obvious choice.

THE MARCH HARE

Recruited a pair of imbeciles into being his “gang”, manipulated them into believing that their kidnapping had “unfortunately” become a murder, then swayed them into killing the children of the rich – and then just anyone he felt like killing. A genius one minute, a babbling lunatic the next. Probably the most dangerous, yet curiously the easiest to have an actual conversation with. That’s probably not advised



The March Hare is an example of the “wisecracking” style of slasher, the most famous examples probably being Freddy and Chucky, but with the madness implied by the name. Plus, people in realistic animal masks = creepy.

THE MECHANIC

Fired from his job at a garage after a rich teen customer's brakes failed (when he was drink driving at double the speed limit in the daytime). Now he takes his revenge on irresponsible drivers – and those that cause the life distractions that hinder their driving. Teens, basically.



The Mechanic started out as the “everyday mask” type of slasher, wearing clothes that a person might wear in real life but which just happen to also conceal identity – think of the miner’s outfit from My Bloody Valentine, the fisherman’s rainslicks from I Know What You Did Last Summer, arguably even Jason’s hockey mask (though Jason doesn’t really use mask-appropriate weaponry, unlike the others). Then Ron and I worked out the awesome mask, and that kind of fell away a little. Oh well.

SAMMY

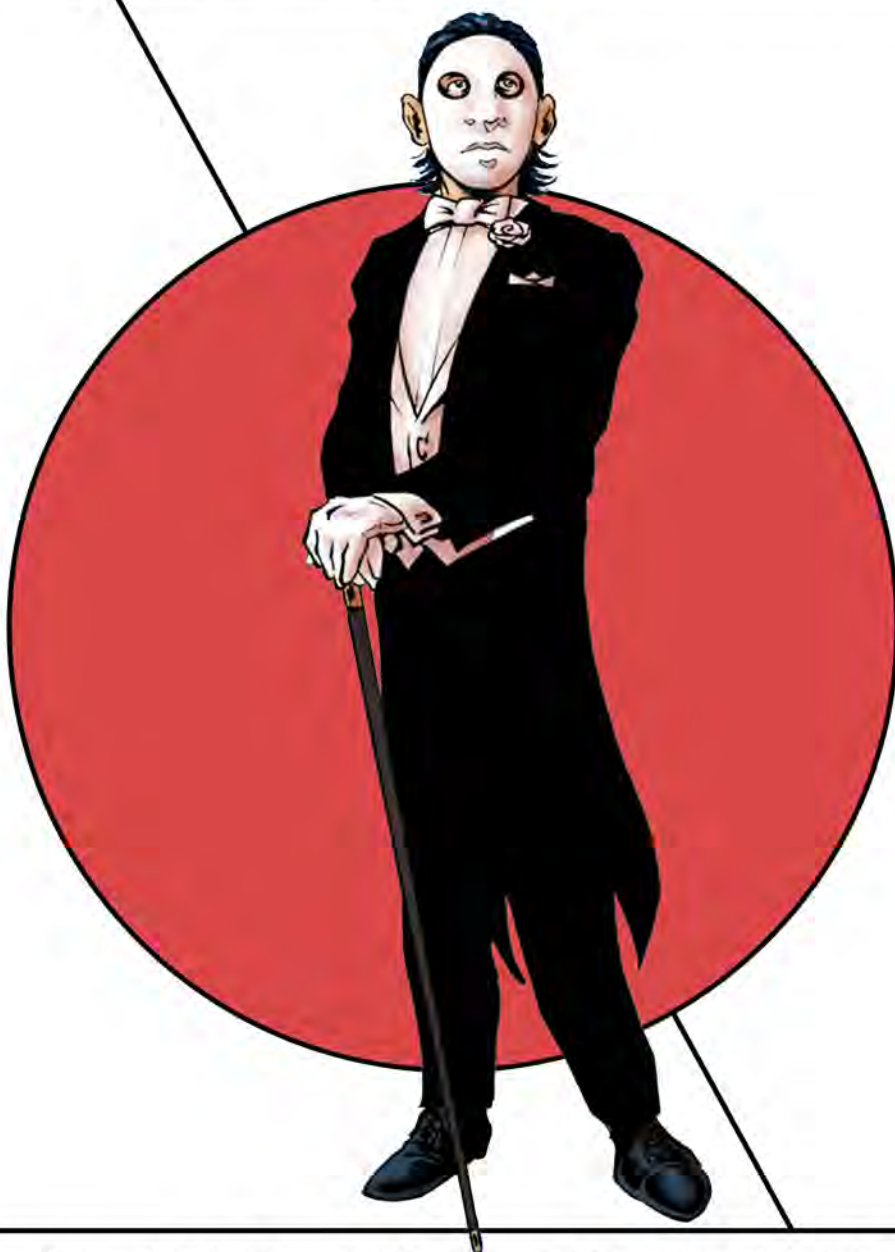
A child of divorce, forever shuttled between a misandrist lesbian mother and a homophobic cross-dressing father would grow up confused about their own sexuality, especially if they're never told that it's OK to just be themselves. This is what happened to Sammy. Sammy grew to hate all those capable of acting on their sexual urges, especially as LGBT figures become more prominent. Unable to handle a growing libido, Sammy's sexual frustration is channelled into murderous rages.



Sammy's inspirations may not be as obvious as Franklin or The Mechanic, but think of films like Psycho, Dressed to Kill, Sleepaway Camp and Terror Train and you're halfway there. Then look at some of the art of Patrick Nagel, or even the rise of Boy George. Sammy is very much a product of the times.

THE VIRTUOSO

A multi-instrumentalist and meticulous perfectionist, his life was utterly ruined by a deep shaving cut that left a tiny scar. The traumatic aftershock of this blow to his mindset left him almost entirely unable to speak, only to scream or to sing (which he could still do perfectly). He has nobody but himself to blame for his current state, he kills simply because it brings him pleasure.



There's a touch of the Phantom of the Opera in his look, but the man behind the outfit is just a freaky sadist. I know exactly what his scream sounds like, by the way – I had to hear it first so I knew how to spell it!

THE USHERETTE

A teenage bride left at the altar, she threw herself into her work to help with the pain. Unfortunately, unruly teens shouting at the screen, eating noisily and making out instead of watching the movie drove her to a furious rage, and she beat a young couple to death with her torch. Now she takes her revenge on those who misbehave in cinemas – or those that she thinks would misbehave if they had the chance. She also has a great appreciation for classic cinema, and has on occasion killed someone for disagreeing with received wisdom on a particular movie.



The Usherette came to me fully- formed, trick torches and everything. A killer who stalks cinemas, enforcing good filmgoer behaviour? Works for me!

SIGNOR GIALLI

Little is known about Signor Gialli, although he is known to be behind the deaths of at least five women in Rome earlier this year. He favours strangulation and the straight razor as methods of killing, though he is not averse to more complex means.



I've absorbed a lot of the Giallo clichés without actually seeing that many Gialli. I would like to see more. Signor Gialli's first kill in Slashermania is definitely one of my favourites – and he's got the coolest look. For a very brief period I actually wrote in a cameo for myself as Signor Gialli.

THE UNKNOWN DOCTOR

Thrown out of medical school for cheating in an exam by killing off the top five students in the class, he now treats what he feels are medical emergencies in his own unique way – setting fire to a man to cure his hiccups, that sort of thing.



Mad doctors are scary. They have scalpels and drugs and know how your body works and where all the off switches are. The bandaged face look is generally for invisible characters and hideously scarred people. The Unknown Doctor is neither – he just likes the look.

MORE THAN ONE GOOD SCARE

I've made a few references to the original *Halloween* being one of the greatest horror films ever made. This is mainly because it is. I'm not a big fan of the entire series – I've seen 4 and 5 twice, 6 maybe once, and never seen 8. As such, today's entry will be about the films I've seen the most – the loose "trilogy" of the original *Halloween*, *Halloween II* and *H20*.

I don't know when I first saw *Halloween*, but I know when I picked up a video copy – it was not too long after seeing *Scream* in the cinema. The video was second-hand, had a very grainy picture and was in completely the wrong aspect ratio. Didn't care, loved it.

You can't write a piece about the *Halloween* films without mentioning how good John Carpenter's score is. John Carpenter's score is amazingly good.

The characterisation is so strong, you really feel like you know Laurie, Annie and Lynda (Totally). The cast is kept to an absolute minimum – there are only three main teen characters, and less than twenty speaking characters in total – giving a greater focus on them all. On the whole, it's Laurie's movie, and while Jamie Lee Curtis gives a great performance she's not the ultimate final girl she's often painted as. That said, it's unfair to judge her by those that came after, and the great final girls of slasherdom all build on her example. While we're busting misconceptions, let's put pure innocent Laurie to one side too – she's less sexually active than her friends because she has trouble attracting men, but she has her eye on a guy so the thoughts are definitely there. Also, while she coughs on the joint she doesn't seem surprised at the offer or unwilling to accept it.

If we're talking about great performances, we have to talk about Donald Pleasence. Bluntly, some of the dialogue he's got to recite here would floor lesser actors, but he manages to make it sound glorious. His delivery of lines like "Death has come to your little town, Sheriff." make Dr Loomis one of my favourite characters in horror. He is the template for what is referred to in *Behind the Mask: The Rise of Leslie Vernon* as the Ahab*, and is absolutely the inspiration for Robert Englund's performance in that film.

*(Excluding the actual Captain Ahab from *Moby Dick*, obviously.)

Then there's Michael – or, more correctly, The Shape. I like him best as he is here – patient, curious and a little playful. While he has a lot in common with the boy from Crystal Lake, Michael's style of pursuit is completely different to Jason's. Jason will follow you and catch you. Michael has no need to follow you, he knows he'll catch you soon enough – he'll even let you go if he thinks it'll lull you into a false sense of security. He'll even taunt you a little – remember his daytime appearances in front of Laurie? That extends into the playfulness too – can you imagine Jason with a sheet over his head?

Moving on to *Halloween II*, and while Rick Rosenthal is a more than competent director, it's still clear we're in lesser hands here. Carpenter the writer is also not firing on all cylinders – Loomis' dialogue is not as sharp here as in the original, for instance, and there are moments where it shows in Pleasence's performance (though overall he's still brilliant). Despite this, and a few other minor concerns, it's still the best of all the sequels.

The death of Ben Tramer seems a little overdone, and also brings to mind the question of what kind of mask Michael is supposed to be wearing. In the real world, it's a Shatner mask painted white with enlarged eye holes – but the presence of another person in the same mask shows that's not what it was in the movie reality, so what was it? I'm going with the idea that it was a bad batch of Shatner masks made with the wrong coloured plastic, packaged up as generic "Scary Face" masks and sent out as cheap peg-filler to convenience stores instead of being thrown out.

On the other hand, there are some brilliant murder set pieces, with Michael managing to kill off most of the introduced hospital staff – though, given how empty the place is (like a lot of movie hospitals), they're probably overstaffed anyway. The swift silent death behind glass of Budd the ambulance driver and the subsequent drowning of Nurse Karen is particularly good (though one wonders why the water didn't do the same to Michael's hand as it did to her face). I'm also impressed by the death of Nurse Jill, partly because Michael manages to lift up an entire adult woman on a small scalpel, but mostly by the way her clogs pop off as she pops her clogs.

The revelation of Laurie as Michael's younger sister undermines a lot of the power of the first film – the idea of a killer who fixates on a group of girls at random and hunts down the one that got away simply because she got away is a lot stronger than the idea of him hunting her because of an unmentioned family connection. It also raises the question of where Laurie was on the opening Halloween night, and why, if she was put up for adoption for her protection, she ended up being adopted by parents only a few streets away who actually deal with the sale of her old family home – surely, if the authorities want to keep her safe, she'd be sent far away?

In the end, it's just a good slasher movie. Not a step up from the original like *Friday the 13th Part II* was from the first, nor as big a step down as something like *Freddy's Revenge* or even Michael's next three big screen outings. I don't really rate them, or the Jamie/Thorn storyline(s), so I'm going to skip ahead to *H20*.

Halloween H20: 20 Years Later (terrible title) was directed by Steve Miner, the man behind the aforementioned *Friday the 13th Part II*. I first saw this one in a sneak preview screening at the Prince Charles Cinema in London, and loved it. My enjoyment has faded a little since then, but I still think it's pretty good.

Curtis' performance as Keri Tate/Laurie Strode convinces, her full medicine cabinet and her alcoholism a believable outgrowth of the traumatic events of the first two films. Pleasence's absence is clearly felt, though I'm still not sure whether it would have been better to bring in someone else as in a similar role to replace him – possibly his daughter Angela as a daughter, Samantha Loomis? The opening pan around Nurse Chambers' office would have worked so much better if they'd actually used Pleasence's dialogue from the first film instead of giving it to another actor to read.

An early movie appearance by Joseph Gordon-Levitt (then probably best known for *3rd Rock from the Sun*) shows his screen presence – I'd have like to see him and Josh Hartnett swap roles. There's nothing wrong with Hartnett's performance as such, but he smirks where Gordon-Levitt would've smiled. The importance of Curtis' character to the plot means that the adult characters are given something approaching equal screentime with the teens, with good performances from both Adam Arkin and LL Cool J.

Whilst not quite up to Carpenter levels, the spooky stalking appearances of Michael Myers are effective. Like the original, the bodycount is low but the death scenes work well, with the kitchen sequence a particular standout – they get some good use from the dumbwaiter, and Michael's knife is almost comically oversized. The lifting up of Arkin's character on the enormous knife is a little closer to believable than the similar moment with the scalpel from *Halloween II*.

Then there's the end sequence. Laurie and Michael's chase through the school is possibly the best part of the film, though Laurie's theft of the coroner's van certainly comes close. By the way, Laurie has looked into those eyes many times, and had there been anyone else in the mask they would've tried to take it off rather than just feeling to see that it was still on. That was Michael in that mask. He's dead.

Except, he's not, of course – after all, you can't kill the boogeyman.

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SLASHERMANIA

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PREVIEW PAGE

ALEX!
WAIT UP!

1982

C'MON,
JOSH!

EVERYONE'S
DEAD! WE'VE
GOT TO GET
OUT OF HERE!

THEY WON'T STOP
UNTIL WE'RE DEAD
TOO! C'MON!



PREVIEW PAGE



SLASHERMANIA

FINAL GIRLS ON FILM

Let's start with one of the best - Amy Steel as Ginny in *Friday the 13th Part II*. When I think of final girls, the image of her holding out the pitchfork is what comes to mind: A defiant woman standing alone against the monster (human or otherwise) that has killed all her friends - that's a final girl to me. All that stuff about virginity/innocence and names that aren't gender-specific is irrelevant and muddies the issue. Ginny certainly isn't an innocent in the way final girls are usually categorized - she's got a boyfriend and doesn't appear to be a virgin, she heads off to the bar with the others - and her name is pretty damn feminine. She outlives the others through intelligence, courage and responsibility.

So, what does all that virginity and innocence stuff actually mean? A lot less than the mythic weight it has accrued through repetition and misunderstanding. To understand it, we need to look at the final girl archetype, as embodied by Laurie Strode.

Laurie has a gender-neutral name, but she's not a tomboy - she's very maternal with the kids, wears skirts and is definitely interested in boys. As I noted back in my *Halloween* entry:

She's less sexually active than her friends because she has trouble attracting men, but she has her eye on a guy so the thoughts are definitely there. Also, while she coughs on the joint she doesn't seem surprised at the offer or unwilling to accept it.

Is Laurie a virgin? Probably, but I don't think that's necessarily through choice. If she'd had the chance, she'd probably go for it. She's not opposed to a sly spliff with the girls, which would suggest she holds a similar attitude to alcohol.

So, why the reputation which has passed on through slasherdom? Because she doesn't do that much "sin" on-screen, and, most importantly, after the killings have started.

That's what usually ends up saving final girls. It's not that they don't drink or have sex, it's just that they don't do it while the loony is about. Jess, the final girl in *Black Christmas*, wants an abortion - not something virgins tend to do. Annie in *Halloween* has packed off her charge to go have fun with Paul, and dies in her car as a result. She's not doing what she is supposed to, and pays the price. The same totally applies to Lynda and Bob, who are having sex in somebody else's house. They stop paying attention to their surroundings and pay the price when Michael comes calling.

Laurie, on the other hand, is very attentive and observant - which is what ultimately saves her. That and a straightened-out coat hanger, showing that she's also very resourceful. As is our next heroine - Nancy Thompson.

Nancy's resourceful nature goes a long way toward saving her life at the end of the film - it's her boob traps that take Freddy down. She's got a girl's name, and considering she's dating Johnny Depp I'd assume that his death scene isn't the only time he's gone down whilst on that bed.

One of my favourite final girls is Taylor from *Behind the Mask*. Spoiler territory, but we're set up for the first 2/3 of the film to believe someone else is going to be the final girl before a brilliant reveal shows that she's not the person she's been played up as. Taylor's cliché credentials are all present and correct - she's quiet and withdrawn, has a genderless name, avoids the standard "sins" of slasher victims, and yet we're still expecting the final girl to be the one we're presented with.

But when thrust into the role, Taylor takes to it like a pro. She manages to bring Leslie Vernon down in true final girl style, and hopefully would have been front and centre to do so again had a sequel ever arisen. It's still not too late...

One of the reasons Ginny is so celebrated amongst slasher fans is that she's a far more interesting character throughout than many other final girls from the series. Let's raise a toast here to thingy from *Friday the 13th Part III*, wosname from *Friday the 13th Part VII*, her from *Freddy's Dead: The Final Nightmare* and that one from *Urban Legends: Final Cut*, you know, she was in *House*, Jennifer something.

For an interesting twist on final girliness, see Lauren McKnight as Skye Rotter in *My Super Psycho Sweet 16*. She's pretty standard right up to the end, when she walks away and leaves the main bully in the hands of the killer. That's cold.

So, in conclusion, what have we learned? Final girls are cool, they don't have to be drug-free teetotal virgins named Sam, and they're at their best when intelligent, resourceful, responsible and brave.

Oh, and there's the thing about phallic weapons too. Most commonly available hand weapons are phallic, either due to aerodynamics or a thrusting motion when in use. Not even worth mentioning.

FREAKTOWN
COMICS

EVERY TIME A TEENAGER DIES, A SLASHER GETS A PRIZE

SLASHERMANIA



**YOUR SUMMER CAMP HAD A MASKED SLASHER?
OURS HAS TEN.**

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