

QLH-S03E9M: The Tingler

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SPEAKERS

Jessi Chartier, Jen Myers

J Jessi Chartier 00:04

Welcome to Quiet Little Horrors. Here we talk about the films that creep under your skin and take up residence in the dark. Let's talk about The Tingler.

J Jen Myers 00:21

We talk about movies. So we're going to talk about parts of movies. That may be spoilers. If that doesn't bother you, you can keep on listening. Or you can hit the pause button and go watch the films that we're talking about before you continue here. Consider yourself warned.

J Jessi Chartier 00:40

I don't even remember, we came to this movie because you recommended it at some point in time.

J Jen Myers 00:44

Yes, I mean, I've probably recommended it more than once because I'm very fond of this movie. And then kind of just set the context here, we can talk a little bit about our theme for this month, we're doing something a little different. And in our in our next full length episode, we did this thing where each of us brought a favorite movie, well not like an ultimate favorite, but a movie we like a lot for one reason or another. And we didn't tell the other one what it is. And so we're going to kind of talk about it. So the other one there. And so for our mini, I suggested doing The Tingler. Because I it kind of again, it fit for me, it fits that same category of like, this is a movie I really like, it's not my ultimate favorite, because it's goofy, but I really love it anyway. And I also think that this, you know, in its way has its own meta commentary on horror movies and fear and why we watch this sort of thing and what kind of benefit it can bring to us and things like that. So also, it's just really fun. And has Vincent Price in it?

J

Jessi Chartier 01:46

Yeah, you can't go wrong with Vincent Price. But yeah, I do. I didn't know this movie beforehand. And when I started to watch it, I was like, Oh, this is just so delightful. Like, you're exactly. It's very meta. So the the narrative for those of you who have not seen it is that Vincent Price plays a doctor who is studying fear and the effects of fear on people. And his whole premise is he believes that fear manifests itself in some way, shape, or form within the human body. And he's determined to find it. Through his adventures, what he discovers is that fear. So there's this parasite that lives in all humans along the spine, that feeds off of fear. And he refers to it as the Tingler. And so he discovers in his experiments that if you are fearful if you have fear, and you don't release that fear, in the most common way of like screaming, then this parasite will grow larger and larger and larger and ultimately kill you. And so it sets up this whole premise of like, this is why you need to scream. And so that's, that's the premise of the movie. Very straightforward. Not very, it's not even a metaphor. It's like, kind of a metaphor, but it's just so crystal clear, like hitting you over the head with a two by four. And but I think what I loved about this movie, Jen, is that this was a very early exploration film of how do we interact between the movie in the audience and so the director, when he released the film would go into theaters, and wire the seats with little like buzzers like vibration buzzers. And there's a spot in the narrative of the film, where the Tingler this parasite, they've removed it from somebody's body, and it has now escaped and it's like, crawling around trying to find a host again. And it crawls into a movie theater that is showing a film. And so then there's kind of becomes this almost like, back and forth playfulness between the movie and the live audience where the screen will go blank, or black and Vincent Price will come on and say it's loose in the theater. If you feel a sensation scream, otherwise, it's going to burrow into and die. And so and then the buzzers would go off at different points in the theater. And I mean, there's just that would have been first off that would have been so much fun to participate in because it's like an interactive movie, which I find hilarious and love, but like it just it's just that I just think it would have been so cool to see in theater.

J

Jen Myers 04:34

Well, and I guess this is where I kind of come in and brag that I have seen not obviously when I came out and not in like an optimal setting because you said this specifically but this movie came out in 1959. So I was not there for the premiere or for the the full experience of buzzers and seats and and I think that this is one where he also had like I'm not sure if he did it for this one I think he also had other films had like he would have a nurse or actress dressed up as a nurse there in case you know anybody like fainted or how to murder metal were so scared. They had a medical emergency that sort of thing completely as a stunt. But, but no, I did get to see this film just a couple years ago, actually, at the Music Box Theater in Chicago, who to kind of celebrate, being able to be back in the theater after the worst of the pandemic. They did a double feature of Joe Dante's Matinee, which if nobody has seen that one, I highly recommend that. And if you haven't seen it, then know that the reason they chose it for this sort of thing is because that was a film that was made in the 80s. But it's set in the 50s. And it is kind of centered around a larger than life figure who was literally based on William Castle, Lawrence Woolsey is played by John Goodman, and he is this gimmicky B movie producer who, you know, takes his films from theater to theater and rigs up the buzzers and hires actors and all of that stuff to make a real event out of it. And anyway, the music of off showed Matinee followed by The Tingler, which is a really great double feature, they really goes together well. And so they

didn't, yeah, we didn't have like everything that they would have had in a theater 1959 for this sort of thing. But as you describe, there's that time when the screen goes black and Vincent Price tells everybody, they have to scream, otherwise, the Tangler is going to burrow into them and kill them. And so everybody did scream in the theater, and it was a lot of fun.

J Jessi Chartier 06:35

That sounds like a good time.

J Jen Myers 06:37

Yeah, it was it was it was great. And it was such a great celebration of like, this is why we go out to theaters and have these sort of experiences with other human beings centered on a film like this. And that's like the best of the best type of film experience with a community is stuff like that.

J Jessi Chartier 06:54

Yeah, and I that's one of the things that I've talked a little bit about this before. But I'm not a fan of the slasher horrors or the jumpscare horrors. And the only time I'll ever go see as jumpscare horror is when I go to the theater, and it's a collective experience, like, I love there's there is really nothing better in a horror film than go at first, at least for me, during a jumpscare to like, go see it in a theater, jam packed with people. And everybody has the same reaction at the same time. And then everyone laughs afterwards, because we all are like, Oh, my God, we all got scared. Isn't that hilarious. But I mean, I think that you know, the art of that. I don't want to go into that. And it's like, I feel like the art of that is starting to die a little bit. Because it's almost like people don't have to know how to be audience members in the mainstream anymore. But I think if you get yourself into the right community, like the mindset with the right audience, those can be really, really cool. And this movie particular. So we chose our movies before we decided what to do for the money. And I find it kind of ironic, because, for me, all of my horror film experiences started in communities, or a community based environment. So for example, the movie that I chose for the one that we're going to talk about here in a couple of weeks is the first horror movie I ever saw. And I saw it at a sleepover in middle school. And so it made like a huge impression on me, not because of the movie, I mean, the movie doesn't hold up terribly well, but, but because of just the collective nature of what me and my friends were laughing and getting scared together, like it was just a collective experience in a good way. And I think that there's just something really kind of cool about that, especially when it comes to moviemaking is because I guess that's true of all of our like, it can really just just reach in and grab you and like, touch you and hold you. And I feel like the tangler does that in a very direct way where it's like you if you're in a if you were in the theater at the time. And you were part of this performance, or an audience member to this performance, like what a cool memory that would have been, you know, like the whole fact that you have to scream in order to release the energy so that the tangler doesn't affect you or burrow into it's just what a cool narrative device.

J Jen Myers 09:25

Yeah, absolutely. And I think that you know, I like that you have that story of kind of like you're almost like your your origin and turn when it comes to love stories like this are horror movies, having that that really classic experience with a group of friends on an overnight because I don't think I ever had any of that. And I didn't grow up around people who liked horror movies, and I was almost kind of actively discouraged from kinds of horror media. And so it took a really long time for me to kind of find my way to it. But I do think that like I That's maybe why I appreciate those experiences now. And it is interesting that we get to our full length episode this month, the film that I chose is not quite in that vein, because I don't really have those same type of origin stories. So it's a little bit more of a one that I discovered on my own when I was first starting to get into things and just kind of cleave to, as I was like, Oh, this is all the stuff that I like. And I didn't know these movies can have these sort of things that I like it it and be kind of weird and psychological and all of that. But I also think that the from, for me The Tingler. I think, even though I really enjoy the community aspect of it, I think it also just provides this really great kind of meta reasoning of why we are drawn to these types of movies while we watch things that scare us, right. And I don't think that The Tingler is a is deliberately making a statement, like you said, it's a very straightforward movie. This is not to disparage it like it is what it is, and what it is, is great. But I do think you can if you want to read into it, that there's this meta commentary on the fact that, hey, maybe if we don't face the things that scare us, and find ways to process it, and then you know, release our feelings about it, it might hurt us in the end, if we don't know how to do that effectively. And I do think from a psychological standpoint, that if we don't know how to process fear, and terror, and like really understand what it means and how to deal with it, and ultimately how to let go of it, that it probably will have some not great psychological impacts on us. I do think that's, that's the case. So I like thinking of The Tingler as a way of saying that, you know, maybe it's a little bit of a defense to because I think sometimes people who watch horror movies are misunderstood as people who just like to watch bad things, or things like that, and I don't know, maybe some people do, and there, maybe there's a value in that too. But for me, I feel like it is really about catharsis, it's really about like diving deep into these things that are scary, or unsettling or disturbing, and learning how to face them and process them and ultimately, kind of like release them. So you're not carrying around the fear all the time in you. And, you know, that's basically what The Tingler says, it says, You gotta scream, or it's gonna build up inside you, and it's gonna kill you. So maybe we don't like literally have, you know, worms around our spines or something like that, that are gonna kill us, like, we don't scream. But if we don't figure out how to deal with things that scare us, it's probably going to get hurt us in the end.

J

Jessi Chartier 12:37

No, I 100% agree. And I think that that's why I like the particular horror movies that I do is that I'm not, I'm not intrigued by. So there's, there's, there's I'm going to broadly generalize for a hot minute, there's fear of harm, right. So there's like, things like and I think that's what a lot of slasher films are all about is fear of physical harm. And then there's like the, the ephemeral horror films like ghost stories, possessions, those type of things, where it's like, that's more of the fear of the unknown, or the fear of the afterlife, like something external and very ephemeral, ephemeral, like I was saying. But the films that I really like are the, it's almost like the fear of self, where you're in a need a deep explanation or exploration of an area that you don't necessarily want to go. And that, to me, is really where the quiet little horror is set. And ironically, the film that I chose for this month, is not bad at all. But the film you did you chose is spot on for that. There's, I think that there's just something really powerful about those films that do deep deep dives into, you know, the fear of your own self. And it often is blocked by

things like denial or trauma, or societal expectations, you know, like so I think that you're absolutely right. And that there is this sense of catharsis, not only because of, you have to release it, but there's you release it knowing that you're going to remain whole after releasing it. Like you're not going to lose yourself, if you don't keep yourself so tightly measured. And I think that that's, I think it's beautiful. I love that about film. I love that about horror films. And I think that arch often does the same thing. Just in generate

J Jen Myers 14:41

I feel like that's the purpose of it. Right? It gives you a safe place. Like I like how you kind of phrase that there's this idea that you can, you can release things, which is kind of a scary act within itself, right? Like you're talking in some ways Yeah. About like, maybe there's a loss of control or there's some crossing about boundaries are things like that. And I think art gives you a safe place to explore what that feels like. And what's possible with that, without, you know, maybe having stronger consequences. If you're, you know, if you're watching a movie or reading a book, you can kind of participate in that with it out being a real part of your life, at least in that moment. Right. So yeah, I mean, I mean, that's, we use the word catharsis. But that's literally what catharsis was all about us why Aristotle came up with it, it he describes it in the Poetics is like, it is this process by which humans use art to engage in these emotions. And you know, and fully feel them as a way of, you know, essentially discharging their power from our system, or maybe bringing us back to a place where we can not exactly control them, but, you know, maybe live more comfortably with them. So, and we needed to get that in there, just so we can draw the straight line from The Tingles to Aristotle.

J Jessi Chartier 15:59

I feel like yes, absolutely. 100%. Yeah. And I like how you say, it's that sense of relinquishing control a little bit. And by letting things go, it's almost like you gain control, you regain your own center, you're re centering yourself again. And I just think that that's really cool. And I love, that's true of almost all of the movies that we have covered on this podcast thus far is that it's, it's that ability, it's that cathartic element, but it's not the typical horror, catharsis of like tension, release, tension release, it's, it's much more subtle, and much more, in my opinion, much more powerful. Because it's more surgical,

J Jen Myers 16:45

I mean, that makes a lot of sense. I mean, I think that the main, here's the moral of our story is that, you know, horror movies are a great big umbrella. And I think there's a lot of different experiences we can have with that. And but yet, they still have this kind of underlying, it's a way for us to explore these emotions, right? And feeling them and what it means. And so it doesn't matter if it's The Tingles or if it's something more intense, like Hereditary. There are also just draw a straight line from The Tingles to Hereditary. But yeah, you know, I yeah, I think that's again, that's why we're drawn to this sort of thing. That's why we do it. That's why we watch them. That's why we discuss it. Because this is a worthwhile thing to do as humans still to learn how to how to deal with all of it.



J Jessi Chartier 17:29

Exactly. That's exactly right. Well, and in our next episode, we're going to talk about some of our favorite horror films and why. So dear listeners, we'd love to hear what horror films do for you. What are What draws you to them? And what are some of your favorite horror films that we should be watching on our podcast, please feel free to reach out to us anytime at Hello at quietlittlehorrors.com. And we can find you can find us online as well at our website at quietlittlehorrors.com. Instagram, I believe is quiet little horrors but Twitter is quiet horrors. Is that right? Jen? Yeah. All right. I love it. Any other movies that you loved, that didn't make it to the list around The Tingler? Or around what we're going to talk about in the future?

J Jen Myers 18:14

You know, that sort of thing? Because yeah, I actually do feel like I missed a real obvious one that's very closely related to The Tingler. And it's The House on Haunted Hill, which was also directed by William Castle. It is very particular favorite of mine. So I would say and I think that's a good one too, for maybe people who aren't necessarily into horror, or younger folks that are interested in horror. And if you don't want to freak them out completely, then you should all sit down and watch House on Haunted Hill because it's a lot of fun.

J Jessi Chartier 18:45

That is a good one. I would say also, maybe not a movie, but a series that I really loved that got me into this whole side of things was dark shadows was the original Dark Shadows in the 60s. That's just a real good. Gothic soap opera is the way that I would describe that one. That sounds great. No. All right. Thanks for listening, everybody, and we will see you in our next episode. Jen. Thanks so much.

J Jen Myers 19:11

Hi, happy October.

J Jessi Chartier 19:13

Happy October.