

Bring Out Your Dead!

Contributed by Bruce Frigeri
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With Halloween approaching, we thought it would be fun to see what you all thought were your ten most "memorable" death scenes in movies. Trent, our intrepid critic, has already written his list. What about yours? I want to use "memorable" as the defining guideline here. If memorable means gruesome and bloody for you, so be it. Sometimes, "memorable" could mean surprising, or heartbreaking, or, as you'll see from my films, spectacular.

I found the list of possible candidates quite long once I got the cobwebs out of my brain. It could change tomorrow, but without further ado, below is my current Top Ten Death Scenes, in no special order.

THE OMEN 2: Death beneath the ice. As an avid outdoor ice skater, I will never forget the first time I saw this rather mediocre sequel. The frantic drowning of one of the characters beneath some very clear ice as his companion struggles to break through and save him still gives me the willies. For good measure he even pops up once, only to disappear under the ice again for good.

CASINO ROYALE: Keeping with the drowning theme, the death of Vera Lynn in the submerged elevator of the sinking house in as Bond does all he can to try and save her has also stayed with me. I think it's the fact that we like this character so much (and she's beautiful to boot), and Bond loves her so much, that makes this one especially disturbing.

JAWS: The opening sequence of the skinny dipping teenage girl who gets torn to shreds by the great white shark still stands as one of the most horrific deaths of modern cinema. We never see the shark, which only makes the scene even more disturbing. The ringing bell on the buoy and the girl's bloodcurdling screams as she's chopped up into a blue plate special are just unforgettable.

THE WILD BUNCH: The final assault on the Banditos' compound. You want death? We got death here. Director Sam Peckinpah summarizes all the horrors of 1968 in one of the most realistic and relentless shootouts ever included in a film. Every time we think this scene is over, somebody else staggers to the gattling gun and blasts away a few dozen more baddies. There isn't one specific death here that stands out, just five minutes of the most incredible mayhem ever. This scene leaves me breathless, both for its technical prowess and its aesthetic commitment to showing just how deadly people can be.

PATHS OF GLORY: The Firing Squad. Stanley Kubrick crafted one of the greatest anti-war films ever with this black and white effort. The deaths of Corporals Paris and Arnaud, along with hapless Private Ferol, are not particularly bloody compared to most others on this list. But the utter injustice and hypocrisy that leads to their executions puts a knot in my stomach even now.

BRAVEHEART: The death of Mel Gibson's Wallace is just brutal. Apparently nobody knew how to kill you more painfully than the British, where the monarchy ruled with fear and a bloody fist for centuries. Gibson is garreted, drawn and quartered, disemboweled, and then in a fit of sympathy, decapitated. Yikes.

BONNIE AND CLYDE: The last shootout. This one is also right up there with The Wild Bunch for bullets fired. Warren Beatty's Clyde gets it pretty bad. But Faye Dunaway's erotic dance of death as the bullets rip into her Bonnie Parker is just gloriously wild and weird. The soundtrack of this film is famous for the realistic sound of gunfire it creates. No where is this more effective than in this final bloody scene.

THE GODFATHER II: The Death OF Fredo. I could have chosen about five deaths from the various Godfather films but am sticking with this one. No blood. Just incredible writing that is enhanced by equally impressive filmmaking as the hapless Fredo goes out fishing on Lake Tahoe one last time. The tragedy of Fredo's death underscores the complete

corruption of Michael with haunting images.

TORN CURTAIN: Death By Oven. This is a near great spy movie with one of the best deaths in the genre. Paul Newman's character battles a Russian spy in the kitchen of a farmhouse. Problem is the spy just won't die, and Newman isn't too into that option either. So frying pans, kitchen knives and other assorted cooking implements are used as weapons until Newman finally subdues the guy by sticking his head in the oven and cooking him to death. Baste every twenty minutes until golden brown.

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN: The stabbing death of Private Mellish. Steven Speilberg is the only director with two films on my list, and with good reason. This one is just brutal. The desperate hand to hand struggle between a German soldier and Adam Goldberg's Private Mellish is an unforgettable argument about the horrors of war. It concludes with the ever slow stabbing of Mellish through the chest by the German as Mellish begs for mercy. It's made even worse by the fact that Private Upham sits cowering on the stairs outside the room, to terrified to help.

So what are your most memorable death scenes?