

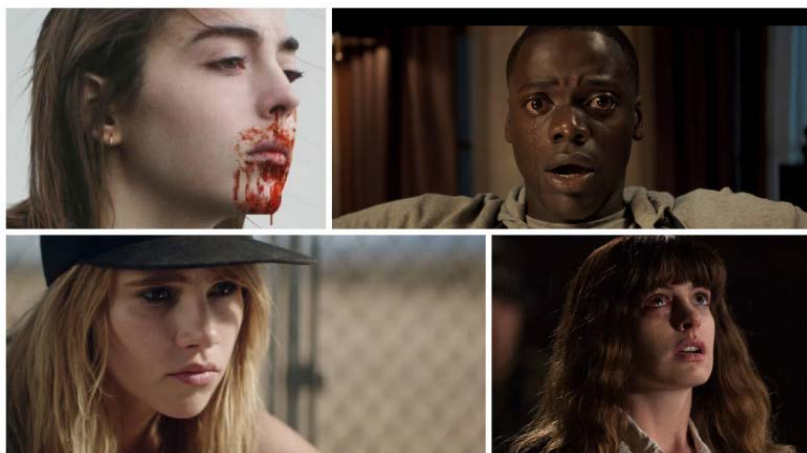
5 Reasons Why We're Living In a Golden Age of Genre Films

From unexpected commercial hits to new venues, there are many reasons why 2017 is looking like a great moment for genre fans.

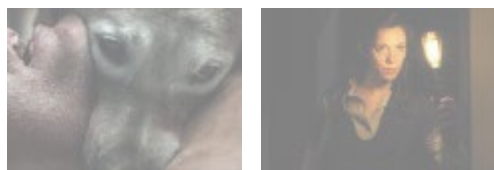
Eric Kohn

Apr 8, 2017 10:51 am

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“Raw,” “Get Out,” “The Bad Batch,” “Colossal”



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Yes, it's only April and there have already been a few [horror](#) movie duds, from the lifeless

sequel “Rings” to the laughable “The Bye Bye Man,” but genre fans have other reasons to celebrate. The first quarter of 2017 has been filled with exciting developments for horror, science fiction and supernatural storytelling, with more promising twists around the corner. Of course, anyone watching the variety of international genre cinema showcased at film festivals around the world was never despairing in the first place, but there are years in which few strong genre movies cross over to a mainstream audience, while plenty of subpar examples cram the multiplexes.

This is not one of those times. From exciting commercial successes to new venues for showcasing first-rate work, 2017 is crammed with reasons why we're living in a golden age of genre cinema. Here are a few of them.

“Get Out” is a cultural phenomenon.



“Get Out”

Jordan Peele’s “Get Out” was a surprise sensation when it premiered at midnight in January at the Sundance Film Festival, where the racially tinged horror-comedy proved that the writer/director was much more than a comedic actor from television. The movie, which [represented years of efforts by Peele](#) to direct his clever screenplay, has already grossed \$167.2 million – and become a critical part of popular culture to boot. In the process, it has kickstarted substantial discussions about racist sentiments among seemingly progressive people, inspiring editorials in The New York Times and endorsements from across Hollywood. It’s a paragon of the horror genre’s ability to embed social commentary in a thrilling package of mass-market entertainment, and viewers of all kinds are talking about it as simply a great movie, whether or not they identify as genre fans. All of this bodes well for the other horror screenplays that Peele has ready to go.

Name actors are looking beyond the studios for edgier genre projects.



“Colossal”

In “Colossal,” Anne Hathaway gives her best performance since “Rachel Getting Married” in Nacho Vigalondo’s clever riff on the monster movie, which is also the story of an alcoholic in a boring small town getting over her problems. When she figures out that her movements in an old playground correlate with the behavior of a kaiju beast in Seoul, the movie gets increasingly odd and surprising — but it’s also a superb and entertaining character study, driven by Vigalondo’s innovative narrative approach, which no studio would ever give the greenlight. That’s part of reason why Hathaway chose to take it on. “I read it and it felt like it was the right kind of weird,” [she told IndieWire’s Kate Erbland](#). It’s a welcome shift from Hathaway’s more limiting turns in bigger budget efforts, including her Catwoman performance, but it also helps elevate the career of a distinctive genre director who has been deserving of attention ever since his clever time-travel comedy “Timecrimes.”

Later this year, we’ll see another example of that, with Trey Shults’ promising follow-up to his family drama “Krisha,” the shadowy thriller “It Comes at Night.” That movie, which opens this summer, co-stars Riley Keough and Joel Edgerton, which should help bring Shults’ penchant for psychologically unsettling storytelling to the wider audience he deserves.

Veteran genre directors are hanging on.



“Baby Driver”

Filmmakers who first made waves more than a decade ago are showing promising signs of staying relevant. While much of the world had written off M. Night Shyamalan, he showed some signs of life by teaming with the nimble production house Blumhouse with 2015’s wacky found-footage tale “The Visit.” However, it’s this year’s “Split” that truly revitalized the director’s career, with a twist in the final 30 seconds that reminded many audiences why they cared about this distinctive filmmaker in the first place. The rest of the movie is pretty solid, too — an unnerving kidnapping thriller that featured one of James McAvoy’s best performances and a wonderful showcase for “The Witch” actress Anya Taylor-Joy.

Then there’s Edgar Wright. In the years since he broke out on the scene with “Shaun of the Dead,” Wright’s stylized action-comedies have continued to impress, even though their commercial success rate has been spotty. That seems poised to change with this summer’s “Baby Driver,” [a dynamic, musically-driven chase movie](#) anchored by a terrific Ansel Elgort as the movie’s titular getaway driver. It’s the strongest showcase yet for Wright’s slick filmmaking techniques, which are so fun to watch that it’s easy to ignore their sophistication. But Wright deserves it: No matter what happens with the latest “Star Wars” entry, you can bet on “Baby Driver” being the best escapism of the year.

Women directors are also kicking ass.



“The Bad Batch”

Annapurna Pictures

One of most exciting action movie performances of this year’s summer slate is [Charlize Theron](#) in “[Atomic Blonde](#),” which finds the actress punching and shooting her way through Cold War–era Berlin. She’s just as exciting to watch as Keanu Reeves is in “John Wick,” and a whole lot more intimidating when she stares down her foes. But women are also revitalizing [genre films](#) behind the camera: French director Julia Ducournau [has delivered a stunning first feature](#) with “Raw,” a grotesque coming-of-age story about veterinarian students with a taste for blood that’s both shocking and rich with atmosphere.

This summer also sees the release of “The Bad Batch,” Ana Lily Amirpour’s genre-bending follow-up to her Iranian vampire movie “A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night.” Equal parts “The Texas Chainsaw Massacre” and “Mad Max,” [Amirpour’s dystopian sophomore effort](#) is a brilliant collage of reference points, a savvy commentary on institutional neglect and a neat showcase for both Jim Carrey (in a wordless performance) and a scenery-chewing Keanu Reeves. And it also has an ass-kicking female star in the form of a restless one-legged desert survivor played by Suki Waterhouse.

There are new avenues for showcasing old and new genre films alike.



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In late April, the first edition of [the Overlook Film Festival](#) (technically a [rebooted version of The Stanley Film Festival](#)) will take place at the Timberline Lodge in Mt. Hood, Oregon, where Stanley Kubrick shot the exteriors for “The Shining.” Fleshing out a calendar of genre festivals that includes Fantasia, Sites, TIFF Midnight Madness and Fantastic Fest, The Overlook promises a tightly-curated selection of horror movie highlights in a communal setting that’s bound to generate a lot of enthusiasm for the state of the genre among its influential crowd. With a board that includes SpectreVision co-founder Elijah Wood and directors like Karyn Kusama and Stuart Gordon, The Overlook is well positioned to send a powerful message about the resilience of the horror film community.

Meanwhile, classic horror is gaining new audiences as well. The streaming service Shudder continues to show amazing potential as both a platform for new material and hard-to-find masterpieces [like Ken Russell’s “The Devils”](#) and greatest hits from the likes of underappreciated auteurs like Mario Bava. All of that means that if you love horror movies and haven’t been seeing enough good ones lately, you aren’t looking hard enough.

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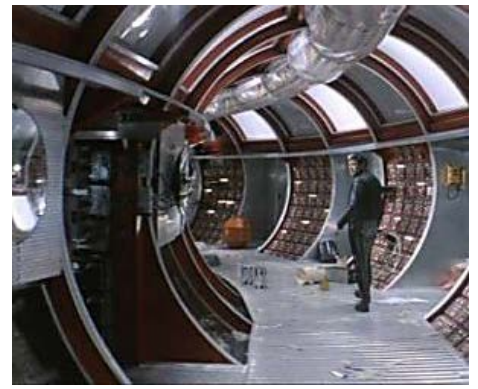
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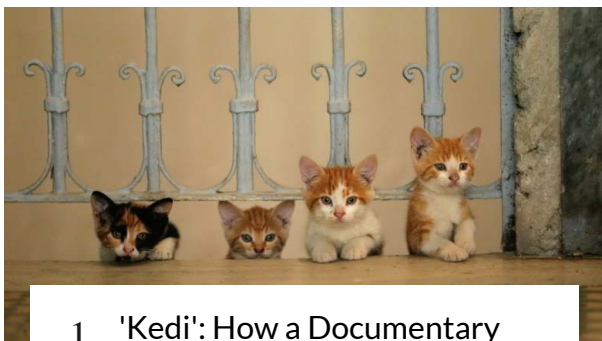
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