



The date is June 9th, Richard Pryor, perhaps the most legendary comedian of the 20th century, has just set himself on fire and is running at top speed down his neighborhood street.

Welcome to the 80s.

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We start with Star Wars. In the 80s, everything eventually came back to Star Wars. In the three years since the original movie, many attempts have been made to duplicate its critical and commercial success, but none have even come close.

Lucky for 20th Century Fox, George Lucas has cooked up a sequel, and on May 21, 1980, *The Empire Strikes Back* became available to the general public. That name is enough to instill childlike wonder in the most hardened American man. *Empire* was a huge improvement over the original. For one, George Lucas was no longer writing the script, which meant words actually sounded like people should say them. As much of a genius as Lucas is with big story beats, he tends to not really understand how real human beings speak to each other.

Another huge improvement over the original is that Billy Dee Williams is in this one. I like Billy Dee Williams. The special effects also took a markedly superior upturn in quality, with

stop-motion being used heavily in the opening scene on Hoth, the big snowy battle sequence. They also got well-known Muppeteer Frank Oz to control the wise old Yoda. ILM actually built a whole sound stage for Dagobah, elevated so that Mr. Oz could exist under the stage and control Yoda while they were filming.

The thing that *Empire* became known for, however, wasn't its special effects or its improved presentation. It was the meteoric revelation that changed the face of *Star Wars*, only on its second major installment. We don't talk about the holiday special. Luke leaves the Dagobah sound stage to go fight the personification of menace, Darth Vader because he thinks his friends are in danger.

They have a really drawn out but great fight which culminates in Vader, in a position of power, confronting Luke, who is hanging over empty space.

Vader: "Obi Wan never told you what happened to your father."

Luke: "He told me enough! He told me you killed him!"

Vader: "**No, I am your father.**"



That is how every little boy felt. Scratch that, that's how everyone felt when they heard that for the first time. Twist endings or surprises are almost a requirement for a film today, but in 1980? There had only been a select few. And almost none had come out of absolutely nowhere. This was one of those. Nobody had actually questioned Obi-Wan when he had told Luke that Vader had killed Luke's father, which means everyone had trusted him, which means NOBODY SAW

THIS COMING AT ALL. Not even Mark Hamill, who was told literal seconds before his close-up reaction shot to that line that that's what the line actually was. See, David Prowse, the guy who was actually in the Vader suit, wasn't the voice of Vader, and George Lucas gave him a script where the line was different. The only three people who probably knew were Hamill, Lucas, and James Earl Jones, the actual voice of Vader.

That's wild.

Know what else is wild?



Another iconic horror movie! And this wasn't even the only genre-shifting piece of horror this **year**. This is an interesting beginning to a franchise, because the titular character, Jason (the guy in the hockey mask), doesn't even appear in this one. The killer is his mom. I talked about *Alien*, and how it established a basic structure for what came to be known as the slasher movie. This movie cemented that structure. Low budget, high profit, dumb teenagers getting killed. The

POV of the killer shot. You know the one I'm talking about, where it cuts from a normal conversation outside a house to a shot from the bushes, moving closer and closer. Then back to the conversation. Another thing that's really interesting about *Friday the 13th* is that they put a lot of thought into the musical presentation, only playing music when the killer is present, heightening tension and managing the audience's fear with the sound design.

*Friday the 13th* was more of an anchor for the rest of the 80s horror landscape rather than a trailblazer. *Friday the 13th* was released on May 9th, which became the first day of the rest of horror's life.

The rest of horror's life, by the way, lasted for about two weeks.



May 23rd.

hEEEEEEEEERE'S jOhNNy!!

Ah, *The Shining*. Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece. Well, 2nd place. Well, 3rd place. Well, uh, every movie in Stanley Kubrick's entire filmography could be considered a masterpiece. The production history of this movie is fascinating, due to the Intensified Kubrick Experience. What I mean by this is, if you weren't aware, Stanley Kubrick has a bit of a reputation for not only being a genius, but a really mean genius. Shelley Duvall wasn't allowed to relax on set, and had to be

kept in a near constant state of hysteria to fulfill Kubrick's performance expectations. Kubrick's policy of perfectionism, taking tens and sometimes hundreds of takes for a single shot, made Scatman Crothers cry.

Kubrick brought his specific taste and style to the genre of horror. Now **this** was the first day of the rest of horror's life. But not really. Then-current critical reception for *The Shining* was mixed, but it has since become a momentous occasion in popular culture and horror in general.

Hey, hey guess what else was a momentous occasion in pop culture?



Airplane! (how it was actually stylized on the marketing) was released to the wider public on July 2nd.

I cannot stress this enough, Zucker, Abrahams and Zucker invented an entire subgenre of comedy with this movie. The spoof movie! And the kind of movie that they were spoofing was the 50s disaster movie.

Amazingly, they actually got a couple actors who were actually in those kinds of movies to portray parodies of their characters here. Leslie Nielsen and Peter Graves were icons of 50s cinema, and here, they are note perfect. I couldn't imagine anyone else in the roles that they play in this movie.

Of course, besides the fantastic casting, the script is JPM (Joke Per Minute) bliss. Every punchline is structured, inventive and revolutionary. I love it. And of course, it instantly became iconic.

Don't call me Shirley.