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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

This Month's Topic: Halloween Part 2

In last year's issue of *CIR's Corner*, I only scratched the surface of Halloween customs by introducing jack-o'-lanterns and trick-or-treating. This year, I'd like to tell you a bit more, so I will introduce horror movies and haunted houses.

Horror Movies

Many Americans watch horror movies around Halloween. I actually don't really like horror movies, but my family loves them, so I grew up watching them with my mom and brother.

The quintessential Halloween horror movie is *Halloween*. It was released in 1978, and it became so popular that 13 films were made, as well as novels and comics. The main character, Michael Myers, killed his older sister when he was a child, so he was committed to a sanitarium. On Halloween 15 years later, he escapes the sanitarium and goes on a killing spree in his hometown.



Michael Myers from the *Halloween* film series

Friday the 13th is another popular horror movie. One Friday the 13th in 1957, a young boy named Jason Voorhees was believed to have drowned in a lake due to the negligence of the camp staff. Some decades later, the lake is said to be cursed, and a series of murders occurs there. There are 12 films in the franchise, as well as books and all sorts of Jason merchandise. When I was a child, I watched one of the movies at my friend's house, and there was a scene where Jason removes his mask. Upon seeing Jason's misshapen face, my friend was so scared that she cried, but to me, he looked so silly that I laughed. By the way, in Western cultures 13 is thought to be an unlucky number, and Friday the 13th is considered a particularly unlucky day. The 13th falls on a Friday this month, so be careful everyone!



Jason Voorhees from the *Friday the 13th* film series

Costumes based on horror movie characters are always ubiquitous on Halloween. In addition to Michael Myers and Jason, Freddy Krueger from the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* series is also a popular choice.



Nightmare on Elm Street film series and Ghostface from the *Scream* film series are also well known, and can often be seen at Halloween parties and while trick-or-treating. I've dressed up as Ghostface to go trick-or-treating before, but the mask was very hard to breathe in, so I don't recommend it.



Freddy Krueger from the *A Nightmare on Elm Street* film series (left)
Ghostface from the *Scream* film series

I said I don't really like horror movies, but it's not because they're too scary for me. I think most popular horror movies have ridiculous stories, so I actually end up laughing at them rather than being scared. I like movies that make me think, so around Halloween, I watch spooky movies from the sci-fi and thriller genres rather than horror.

A thriller movie I recommend that takes place on Halloween is *Donnie Darko*. Donnie Darko is a mentally unstable teen who lives a regular suburban life. He sometimes hallucinates. On the night of October 2, he meets a grotesque rabbit named Frank, who tells him the world will end in 28 days, 6 hours, 42 minutes, and 12 seconds. In other words, the end of the world is fated to occur on Halloween night. As Halloween approaches and Donnie sees more of Frank, strange things start to happen. Who is Frank? Will the world really end? I won't spoil anything for you, so watch the movie to find out!



Donnie Darko, his girlfriend Gretchen, and Frank

Haunted Houses

As soon as fall comes around, haunted houses start popping up everywhere. While Japanese haunted houses are generally based on ghost stories, American haunted houses are often based on themes from popular horror movies, such as homicidal maniacs and zombies. Other common themes are hospitals, circus clowns, and aliens. When I was around 7, I went to an alien-themed haunted house called "Flight to Mars." To this day, I still feel that movies about aliens are the scariest, so maybe I was slightly traumatized by the haunted house?



Seattle haunted house "Flight to Mars"

Last year, a few ALTs and I built a Western-style haunted house for the Ebetsu World Fest. Around 100 people came, and I heard many of them say it was very scary. We are making a haunted house again this year, so if you would like to get a taste of authentic American Halloween, why don't you stop by?



Last year's haunted house



The 2023 Ebetsu World Fest

Date and Time: Sunday, 10/15, 1 PM to 4 PM

Place: Nopporo Community Center

In addition to the haunted house, there will be stage performances and food for sale from around the world!

Pictures: Wikimedia

Commons, Ebetsu City

Lifelong Learning Division

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