

# STUDENT LIFE

## 30 Days of Night frightens horror fans unconventionally



Josh Hartnett plays the Sheriff of a town under the attack of vampires in the new film *30 Days of Night*.

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Picture yourself in this situation: you are in Barrow, Alaska. The sun has just set and will not rise again for thirty days. The last airplane has just flown out of town, and there won't be another coming for a month. On top of that, a pack of blood-thirsty vampires have just cut the town's power and are slaughtering everyone in sight.

This is the situation that is depicted in *30 Days of Night*, director David Slade's newest film starring Josh Hartnett and produced by Sam Raimi. Slade's adaptation of the graphic novel by Steve Niles had people in the theater screaming out loud on more than one occasion. Instead of relying on cheap scares to frighten his viewers, Slade takes a different approach. The characters in the movie are often in a state of hopelessness, focusing more on surviving than getting rid of the vampires.

The film centers on Sheriff Eben Oleson, played by Hartnett. Oleson is your run-of-the-mill small town policeman. Everyone knows him and acknowledges him as the town enforcer. Oleson has just investigated some odd crimes around town. A pack of sled-dogs were slaughtered, and all of the town's satellite phones were stolen and destroyed in a fire. To make things worse, Oleson's soon-to-be ex-wife Stella has just missed the last plane out of town, which means she will be staying there for the next month. Eventually, Oleson is able to trace the odd crimes to a stranger who has just shown up in town. Unfortunately for Oleson, this stranger was

just preparing the town to be massacred by vampires. All the stranger says to Oleson is, "They're coming."

The vampires, who are led by a Dracula look-alike named Marlow, make quick work of the town. With the vampires slaughtering everyone they can find, Oleson has no option but to lead what remaining townsfolk he can find to hide out in the attic of a house. From there, Oleson has to find a way to keep the group alive for the next 30 days, along with rescuing any other survivors he can find. As the end of the 30 days approaches, the vampires break open the Alaskan pipeline and fill the town with oil in order to burn it down as to leave no traces of their actions.

Slade puts his characters in unimaginably hopeless situations. The streets of Barrow are cluttered with dead, bloody corpses and the only places to hide are tiny attics and bloodstained police stations. Hartnett gives a performance that is unlike any character he has portrayed before. He plays a broken man going through a divorce who has the responsibility of saving as many people as he can in impossible conditions.

Slade does a remarkable job of sustaining a feeling of sheer terror throughout *30 Days of Night*. By not relying on cheap scares and shock value to frighten his viewers, Slade uses a more conservative style. While contemporary horror films are shifting their focus from truly scaring their audiences to trying to gross them out, Slade takes the classic approach with *30 Days of Night* and brings back that true feeling of terror that has been missing from current horror films.

## Gone Baby Gone keeps viewers guessing until surprise ending



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Casey Affleck plays private investigator Patrick Kenzie in the new film *Gone Baby Gone*.

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"He lied to me. I can't think of one reason big enough for him to lie that's small enough not to matter," says Patrick Kenzie, a private detective who is haunted by his investigations and determined to find the real truth behind them. Kenzie is the protagonist of *Gone Baby Gone*, a new film that was directed and co-written by Ben Affleck.

*Gone Baby Gone*, a mystery thriller based in Boston, is an offering that Affleck decided to keep in the family. He cast his younger brother, Casey, to play Kenzie, which is his first leading roll in a high-profile movie. The movie is apparently one of many firsts, as it is Ben's first attempt at directing and writing without the aid of his renowned friend and partner, Matt Damon.

The film is based on the best-selling novel by Dennis Lehane, who became extremely well-known when Clint Eastwood adapted his novel, *Mystic River*, for the big screen in 2003. Lehane is known for his attention to detail, mastery of suspense and uncanny ability to create surprising and unfathomable endings.

The movie begins with mock news coverage of a young girl's disappearance from a house in a Boston neighborhood where she lives with her mother, aunt and uncle. Following this, the aunt seeks out Kenzie and his girlfriend—who is also his partner—at their home to hire them so that they can augment the investigation by approaching sources they know in the town.

At the commencement of their investigation,

Kenzie and his partner believe they are simply going to canvas the neighborhood that they have inhabited all of their lives, but the case begins to take many unexpected turns, and they become very emotionally attached to the search for the abducted girl.

When drugs, murder and authority corruption become frightening factors in the case, Kenzie finds himself and the people close to him in potentially career and life damaging danger, but he is so obsessed with the truth that he continues to delve deeper into the investigation.

Kenzie's pursuit of the truth is a large theme in the movie, and it factors into the astounding ending of the movie, which is even more surprising than *Mystic River*. There is absolutely no way that anyone seeing the movie for the first time can predict the way that it will end before the last ten minutes, but it's easy to feel like you've figured it out. There are so many twists and possibilities for conclusion that it gets extremely confusing, but in a good and suspenseful way.

At the end of the movie, Kenzie's moral convictions and unwillingness to leave things unsolved or unjustified drive the movie to its stunning and mind-boggling ending. Affleck's adaptation of Lehane's novel for his directorial debut shows that he is a very capable movie-maker that should continue in the same vein. His younger brother also emerges as extremely talented in his first major leading role, and it looks as though he will become a major star in the years to come.

*Gone Baby Gone* is one of the best films to come out thus far this fall, and is easily the most entertaining of those that fall into the mystery genre.

## Balconites bring "Magic" to life

**By Aeriale Cooksey-Kramer**  
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You pass them as you're leaving Bruno's around lunchtime, casually glancing their way and giving the occasional nod. They are there when you run up the spiral staircase, pushing past them in an effort to make it to your next class on time. You might notice them with their card decks splayed across the tabletops of the balcony, their intense stares boring holes into the other players, daring opponents to make their next move.

Who are they, and why are they seemingly always playing cards with misshapen creatures and other unidentifiable "things" pasted on the front of them? Some people recognize them as the "Balconites" and others smile and timidly call them the "Magicians." They are average people, Behrend students, who are immensely interested and daily engaged in the card game "Magic: The Gathering".

These students devote their free time to meeting each other at the balcony right outside of Bruno's café, never bothering to give specific meeting times because at least a few players are guaranteed to be there. This dedicated, enthusiastic, prepared, and possibly obsessed group of people have this in common; they love the game of Magic and are consistently willing to sacrifice their free time for this fantastical card game almost every day.

Many of these students are a part of the Fantasy Gamers Club (FGC); a student organization that promotes the practice of role-playing games through collectible or fantasy cards. The club began in 1996, uniting gamers from all around campus.

One member of the FGC, a sophomore, eager to explain the game and all it has to offer told his story while playing an opponent at the same time. "I've been playing for about four years, then stopped for awhile, but then started playing again last year." He went on to talk about some major rules, and ways to play the game. "The goal of the game is to reduce your opponent to zero life totes. Everyone begins the game with 20 life totes and that number can increase or decrease. That's just one of the many

ways to win."

A few terms related to the game of Magic could easily be confused with sexual connotations. "Tapping" is what you do to a card after you've used it. By tilting the card slightly to the left, you have "tapped" it and it has no remaining power to be re-used at any other time. "Scooping" is when you promptly end the game because it becomes impossible to win. Although the "BFM" could be mistaken for a few other acronyms, in the game of Magic, it is more commonly understood to be the Big Furry Monster. It is apparently not a card to be joking around with, as it's power can be quite extreme. Many students' opinions have risen to the surface when asked about the "Balconites."

One student is unabashedly outspoken and had plenty on her mind when it comes to this group of fantasy card players. "They are like some kind of secret cult! It's almost as if they have their own language."

Another student commented on the fact that they are seemingly playing cards every time she glances their way. "They must not go to class. Don't they ever have homework?"

And still, another student mentioned that the people on the balcony are always very helpful. "They were all friendly and willing to help new players just starting into the game."

The sophomore, and member of the FGC, mentioned that most of the players on the balcony don't use their own names, but nicknames that they made up. Most of the time, it's a person's last name that he or she will go by, but other times, players make up code names to use while in game mode.

He laughed, still enthralled in the game, and looked up with a grin on his face. "If you're ever here when the balcony is in full swing, you'll see that we are a little 'out there.'"

There are varying opinions and decidedly different outlooks on these FGC members, but one fact is certain: they all have a knack and a passion for what they choose to put their time into, and dedication is a nice trait to recognize amongst campus organizations.

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