

Movie Review: "Saw"
Questionable Acting but a Great Storyline

Jeremy Naugle

First time Director James Wan and Screenwriter Leigh Whannell bring an original



story to the horror genre with SAW. In the opening scene, a psychopath nicknamed "Jigsaw" has chained his latest victims to pipes in opposite corners of a dirty bathroom with a man shot in the head lying between them, neither victim recalls how they got there. Much of the story is told from the utility room with flashbacks from Dr. Lawrence Gordon (Cary Elwes). Dr. Gordon is supposed to kill the other man Adam (Leigh Whannell) within eight hours or Dr. Gordon's wife Alison (Monica Potter) and his daughter will be killed. Both men work together in an attempt to free themselves from "Jigsaw's" newest life-or-death "game." Veteran actor Danny Glover ("Lethal Weapon") plays a career-damaging role as Detective David Tapp, who, after being injured on the job, becomes obsessed with finding "Jigsaw."

The killer targets individuals who, in one way or another, take advantage of life. In one of many flashbacks, we learn of a victim who recently made a suicide attempt. "Jigsaw" forces this man to choose between death by starvation or he can try to save himself by making his way through a series of razor wires, but then risks bleeding to death. The killer wanted to know how much blood would he shed to live.

This movie has an excellent story line, but those looking for the gruesome scenes you might conjure up from the title and the

DVD case will be disappointed. You do see some guts, just not what you might expect from the horror genre. Whatever is lacking during the film, including poor acting, is made up for in the end. The many twists will keep you wondering who the real killer is. As you watch this movie, try putting the pieces together to determine the true killer. Look for SAW2 in theaters Fall 2005.

Postnuclear Visionary or Literary Vinegaroon? Chuck Palahniuk Shifts the Landscape of American Fiction

Chuck Palahniuk arrived on the literary scene as the author of the captivating and difficult to classify novel *Fight Club*, a romp into the imaginary world of underground boxing and social rebellion. Ironically, it wasn't the book that focused attention on Palahniuk's writing, but film director David Fincher's riveting adaptation of the novel that generated interest in the writer.

Fight Club recounts the interaction between two men: the unnamed narrator, a milquetoast product of American consumerism and politically correct gender sensitivity, and Tyler Durden, the embodiment of the masculine ideal, a man who embraces violence in his quest to regain an identity free from the suffocating banality of Ikea catalogues and designer crockery. The novel is gutsy and brave. It is the only novel in the past ten years that openly confronts the frustration many men feel toward a shifting cultural landscape which demands of men restraint and denial.

Fight Club launched Palahniuk's career as a writer,

but it does not define his literary limits. His other works are equally engaging, and, although they do not all deal with men, many deal with gender. *Invisible Monsters* chronicles the life of a supermodel who is disfigured in an automobile accident and who travels the country with Brandy Alexander, a transsexual who twists conventional notions of gender.

Survivor skewers religion. The story is told by Tender Branson, the last surviving member of a suicide cult. The novel opens with Branson sitting alone in a commercial airliner. The plane is on autopilot. While Branson, who is not a pilot, waits for the plane to run out of fuel and fall crashing to Earth, he records his life story

into the plane's black box. Palahniuk says of the novel, "Books are never about what you think they are about. *Survivor* is really about our education system because I feel, more often than not, kids are sort of taught or trained to be the best possible cogs in some big corporate machine. They're not really taught in an empowered way that they can

start their own company so that they can create and run their own lives. They are sort of aught to be just good employees, to just fit in."

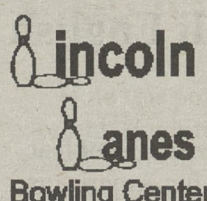
Both *Survivor* and *Invisible Monsters* were pre-*Fight Club* works. Palahniuk followed *Fight Club*'s success with *Choke*, about a med-school dropout and sex-addict who makes a living by

pretending to choke in restaurants and then milking his saviors for money. Then *Lullaby*, a fable about a nursery rhyme that kills, which, according to Palahniuk, "makes *Fight Club* look like *Little Women*."

His most recent novel is *Diary*, which was released last year. *Diary* is Palahniuk's most cohesive work. The book is the diary of artist Misty Wilmot written while her husband lies in a coma. Skillfully, and with a fluidness not found in his previous works, Palahniuk weaves a tale of the people of fictional Waytansa Island and their unique way of retaining their wealth by manipulating Misty into painting

again after a long sabbatical. *Diary* is eerie and subtle and seduces readers into the nightmarish practices of the citizens of Waytansa. It is *Rosemary's Baby* for the postmodern set and Palahniuk's best read to date.

Despite the intelligence and inventiveness of his work, Palahniuk represents, for some, a difficult read. He pulls no punches and dodges no subjects in his work, which sometimes leads to rather visceral passages. But what most disturbs some readers most is his willingness to eschew convention and confront modern culture with its own alarming reality. While many fiction writers are content to keep their readers in the waiting room, Palahniuk insists on walking them into the morgue during the autopsy. He forces readers to face what they already suspect is true, but are afraid to admit, and in a time when many people are trying to put rose-colored glasses on everyone, it's not a bad idea to have someone who is trying to pin back our eyelids and force us to look at the culture we are manufacturing.



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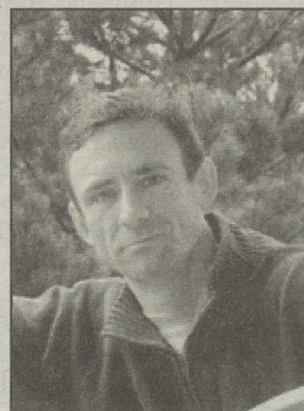
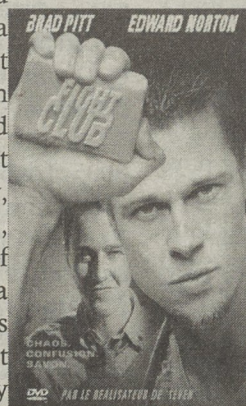
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Chuck Palahniuk