FEMALE SLASHERS

THEY EXIST, BUT IS IT ENOUGH?

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Any horror aficionado loves a good slasher film (and if we're being honest, a bad one too). This sub-genre that came into its own in the 70s and 80s is full of some of the best horror films of all time. The perfect recipe calls for a masked killer, a group of (sexually active) teenagers, likely in a secluded setting--with an obscene amount of blood and gore--and a 'final Girl.' Give or take a few ingredients.

In the real world, the horror is that women are still having to prove themselves with less payoff than their male counterparts. But in horror, women are shaking things up. According to the _Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media,_ men are seen and heard nearly twice as often as women in media in all genres except one — horror. While women in horror movies have historically been portrayed as the victim more often than not, this break with other genres is still something, however minuscule, to note.

Women are typically portrayed as (often over-sexualized) victims...but female slashers do exist. If you haven't binged away at least a few weekends watching **Snapped** on Oxygen or **Deadly Women** on Investigation Discovery, have you really even lived?

Whether true life or fiction, humans seem to be more shocked when a woman does the killing. And while male slashers are undoubtedly more popular, we do have some female slashers of note. The way they're presented, though, makes them undeniably intriguing.

Look at how male slashers are portrayed. *Michael Myers* was, according to *Dr. Loomis* in **Halloween** (1978), inherently born evil. *Jason Voorhees* in **Friday the 13th Part 2** (1981) only begins killing after his mother dies, completely and totally stealing her thunder.

Women on the other hand are portrayed as more emotional, or wronged in some way. As women, we are often taught to not acknowledge or show our anger. Rather, we are meant to ignore it, hide it, or overcome it. Sweep it under the rug. When that no longer works and it boils over...women snap! When men (and more specifically, white men) show anger, it is often justifiable. Yet, when women do it is often associated with insanity. Where a woman should be able to be just as vocal about their anger and rage, she is instead seen as overemotional, irrational, hysterical, and most certainly, not justifiable.

The slasher sub-genre has actually never shied away from female killers, they just haven't been as notable or given as much attention. Is it really fair that *Jason* is the face of the franchise? It's his mother, *Mrs. Voorhees* who spearheaded one of the most well-known horror series of all time — **Friday the 13th** (1980).

In the first film, *Mrs. Voorhees* stalked and killed the Camp Crystal Lake teen counselors, motivated by vengeance for her son's death. It can be argued that *Mrs. Voorhees* wasn't born a killer, but rather snapped when her son drowned and began her murderous sprees the following summer.
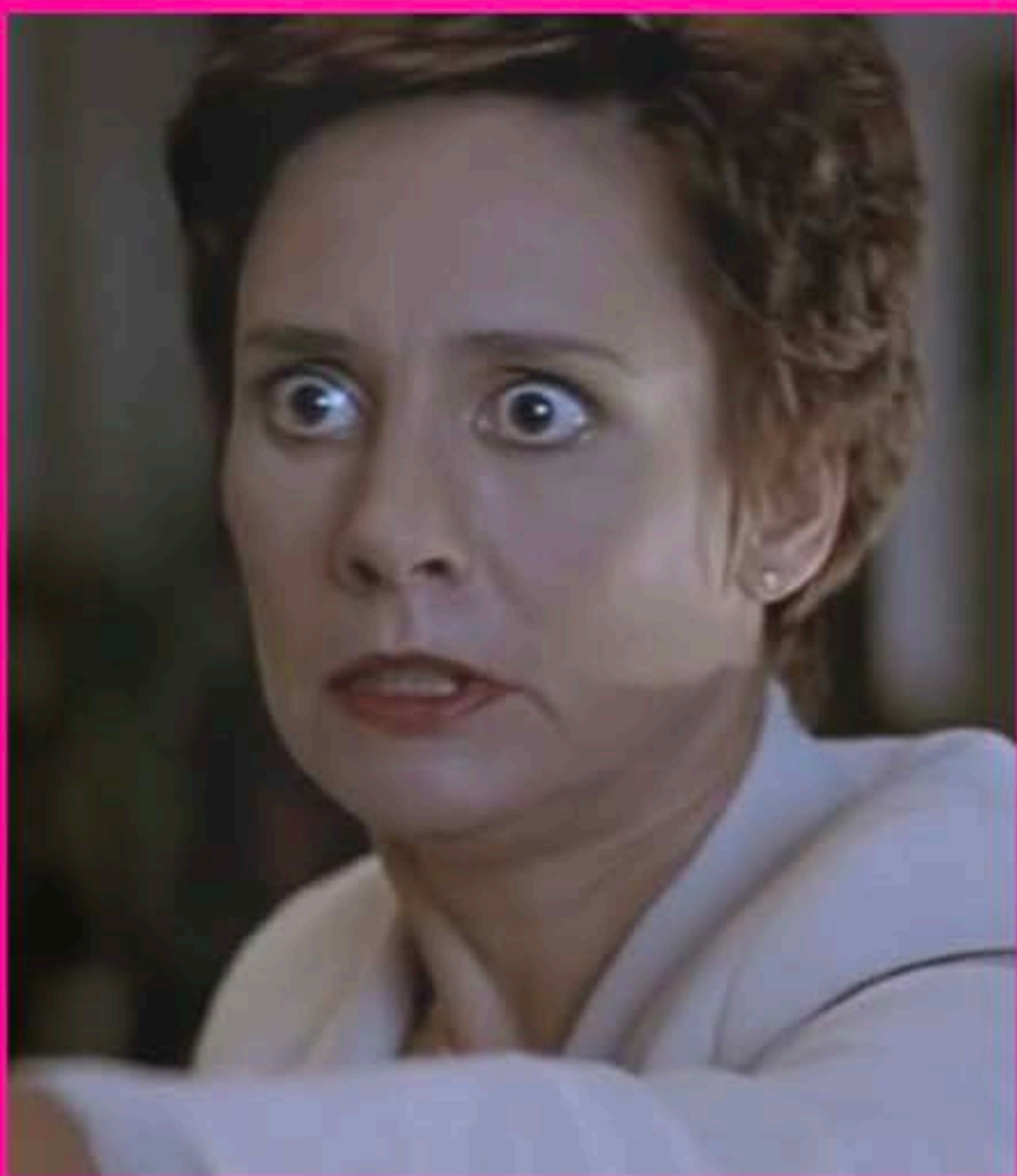
Mrs. Loomis (aka *Debbie Salt*) also takes her motherly duties to the extreme in *Scream 2* (1997) when she's revealed to be *Billy Loomis'* mother. Her maternal "instincts" and revenge are her primary motivation. *Mrs. Loomis* is calculated in her revenge and is eventually seen as "going off the deep end". Complete with the "crazy" look of wild hair and running mascara during the climax. Where male slashers are given masks, female slashers are rarely given covering, and again seen as innocent or crazy and seldom in-between

There aren't many female slashers that do the "crazy" look better than *Brenda Bates* in **Urban Legend** (1998). *Brenda* is also seeking revenge, but this time for her boyfriend who dies in a car accident caused by two girls jokingly mimicking a gang initiation. What better way to do so than to plan in-depth acts of vengeance in the form of urban legends made real?