

Film's Re-Release Highlights How Halloween & Hollywood Changed in 1978

Written by Ginny Grimsley

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Outside-the-Box Producer Discusses Value of New Blood in the Industry

Once upon a time – before the late 1970s – it was a holiday for children.

Using Halloween as a theme, however, an independent film producer saw opportunity by getting inside the minds of adults. Irwin Yablans, (www.irwinyablans.com), pioneered a highly profitable new genre, Horror, by rebranding an overlooked holiday and introducing Hollywood to new talent.

In his new memoir, “The Man Who Created Halloween,” Yablans details his fortuitous journey from Brooklyn’s tenements to Hollywood and behind-the-scenes tales from the iconic movie.

“I suppose it is a bit of a Cinderella story, if Cinderella were a pugnacious Jewish guy who fought his way out of a run-down Brooklyn tenement and made a living out of rebranding a kiddie holiday with Hitchcockian chiller-flicks,” says Yablans, who created the “Halloween” franchise of movies as an independent producer.

The film that kicked it all off is being rereleased in theaters this holiday season for the first time in 34 years. Showings can be found online, at <http://www.screenvision.com/cinema-events/halloween/>

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Yablans also worked as sales chief at Paramount Pictures and was head of Orion Pictures. But it was when he did things his own way, as an independent producer, that he made his mark on the world. He says the following factors and people significantly contributed to the success of his project:

- **New blood (with John Carpenter):** Thirty-five years ago, Carpenter was an “almost consumptively thin guy” who just graduated from USC’s film school. Yablans admired Carpenter’s film pedigree – both were fans of legendary director Howard Hawks – and liked the young talent’s film, “Assault on Precinct 13,” which was distributed by Compass International Pictures, Yablans’ company.
- **Michael Myers (the original):** Yablans quickly became good friends with a friendly new distributor in England, Mr. Myers, who appreciated Carpenter’s work for its economy and originality. Later, Yablans went with his gut feeling to have Carpenter direct “Halloween,” and the name Michael Myers would forever have a new connotation.
- **New blood/familiar lineage (with Jamie Lee Curtis):** “Curtis had that perfect blend of youthful newness and Hollywood lineage, which was perfect for ‘Halloween,’” says Yablans. “She had an impressive amount of maturity and charm, as she was just 18; but she is also the daughter of Tony Curtis and Janet Leigh.” Curtis’ mother starred in the iconic shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock’s “Psycho,” the primary influence of “Halloween.” “I’m still proud of the fact that we cast Curtis as the heroine Laurie,” he says.
- **It’s all in your mind (Halloween as a concept):** Yablans grew up listening to radio shows that relied on “theater of the mind” narratives to capture the imaginations of listeners. He used the same approach with the “Halloween” series, the first of which premiered in 1978. His films spawned a wave of iconic horror characters, and a new way to do business in Hollywood.
- **Co-producers (Moustapha Akkad and Joseph Wolfe):** Akkad and Wolfe had a dynamic relationship with each other, and they helped Yablans and Carpenter with the \$325,000 budget it took to make “Halloween,” which went on to gross more than \$100,000 million – the most successful independent film of its time.

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About Irwin Yablans

Irwin Yablans is the executive producer and creator of the "Halloween" film series, which forever changed the horror genre and the old studio system. His new autobiography, "The Man Who Created Halloween," details a true rags-to-riches tale of a boy who grew up in a roach-infested tenement in Brooklyn to become the man who transformed society's view of a children's holiday. Yablans' influence in Hollywood includes setting the standard for a new breed of independent producers and filmmakers, the discovery of famed director John Carpenter and advocating for studio support of one of the most acclaimed films in history, Francis Ford Coppola's "Apocalypse Now." Yablans self-published his debut book through CreateSpace, Amazon.com's independent publishing platform.