

Game Developer's Conference
Cologne 2011

SILENT HILL

Past, Present, and Future

Introduction

- History of Horror in 10 minutes or Less
- Welcome to Silent Hill
- Challenges of Survival Horror
- Silent Hill Downpour
- Evolving the Genre

Goals

- Share some of the genre-specific challenges we encountered on Downpour, and how we dealt with them.
- Spark discussion amongst my fellow developers about the horror genre and where it's going in the future.



- Formed in Brno, Czech Republic in 2008
- Formerly Illusion Softworks / 2K Czech
- Xbox 360 & PlayStation 3 Game Development
- Staff of approx. 50 developers
- Part of Kuju Entertainment since 2009

Brian Gomez

Design Director, Vatra



- 15+ years game dev experience
- Game Designer, Writer, Director
- Alchemic Productions, Pandemic, VIS, Paradox (Midway L.A.)





SILENT HILL DOWNPOUR



What is Horror?

- 1) an intense feeling of fear, shock, or disgust.
- 2) a literary or film genre concerned with arousing such feelings

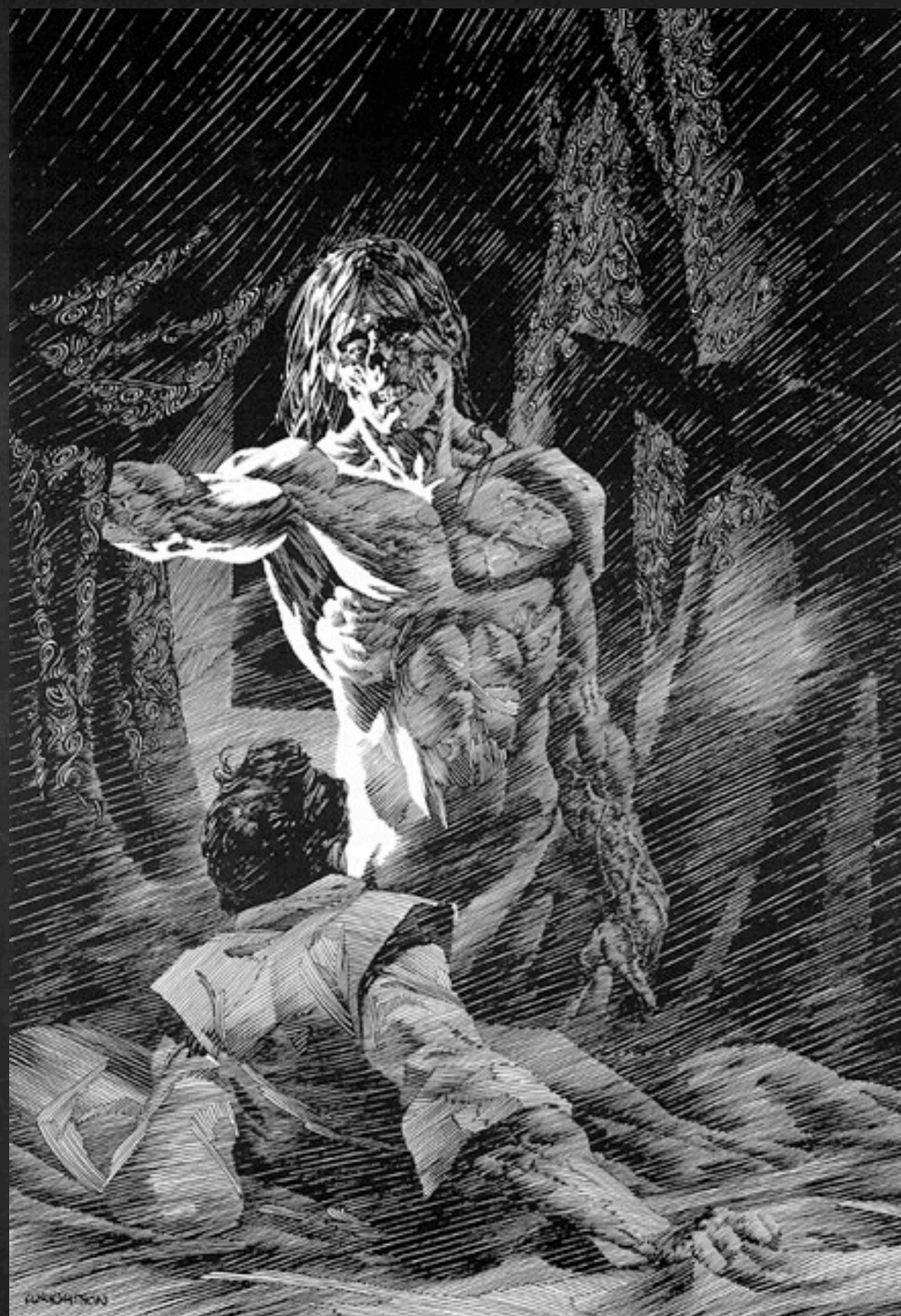
What is Horror?



- A very broad category of fiction.
- **Any** work that produces these feelings – fear, dread, shock, disgust – can be categorized as “horror”.
- The Horror Genre is unique in that the label also describes the emotion produced.













RICK BAKER
© / '05





PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE

with
BELA LUGOSI
VAMPIRA
LYLE TALBOT

A J. Edward Reynolds Production

Produced and Directed by
Edward D. Wood, Jr.

a DCA release





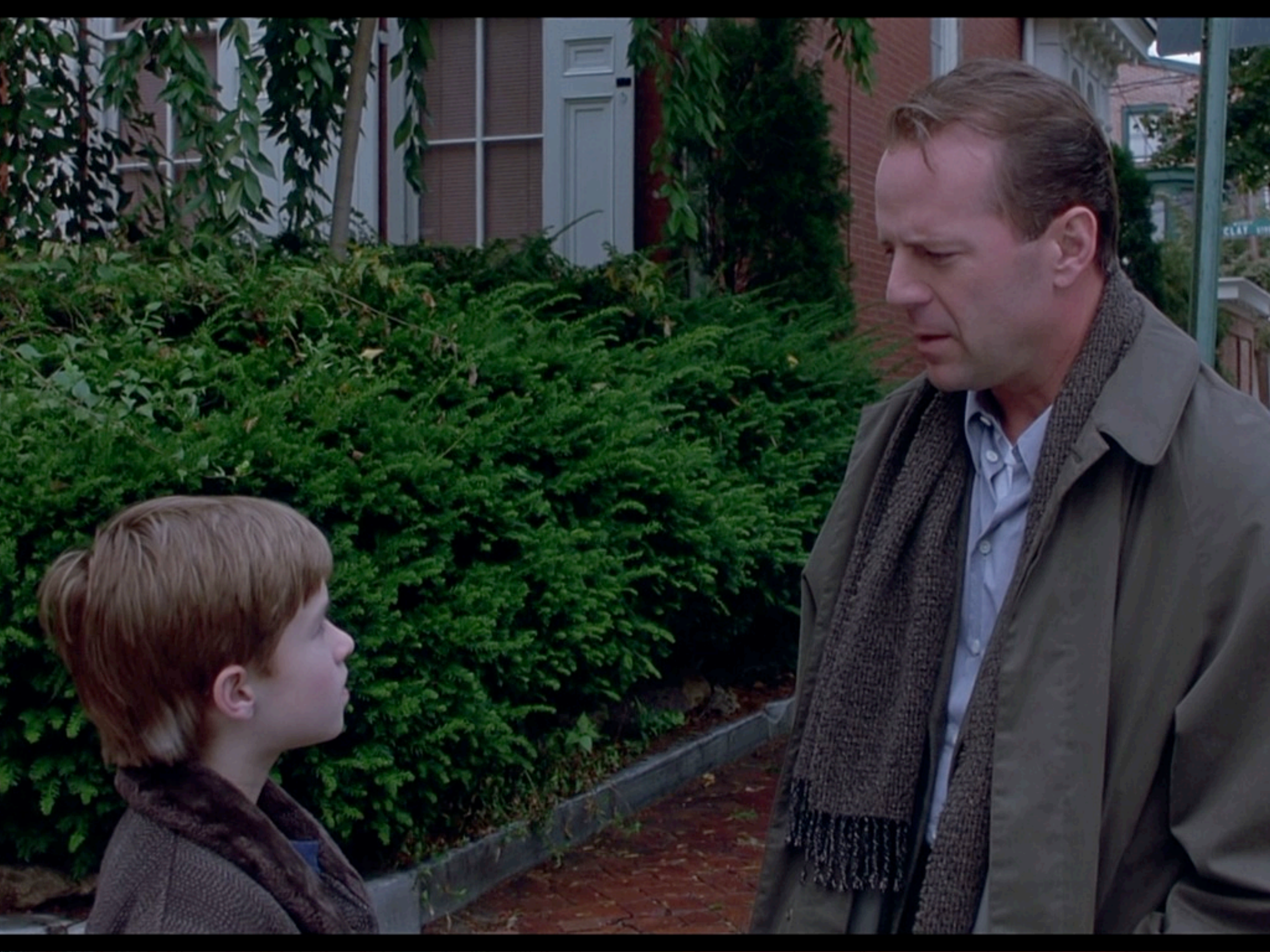
WILLIAM PETER BLATTY'S
THE EXORCIST

DIRECTED BY WILLIAM FREEDKIN











THE OTHERS





MICHAEL UETTING



THE JU-ON
GRUDGE





FROM THE AUTHOR OF 'THE RING'

DARK WATER

IN THEATERS JULY 8



SAW

WWW.OFFICIALSAW.COM



3:08:26 AM

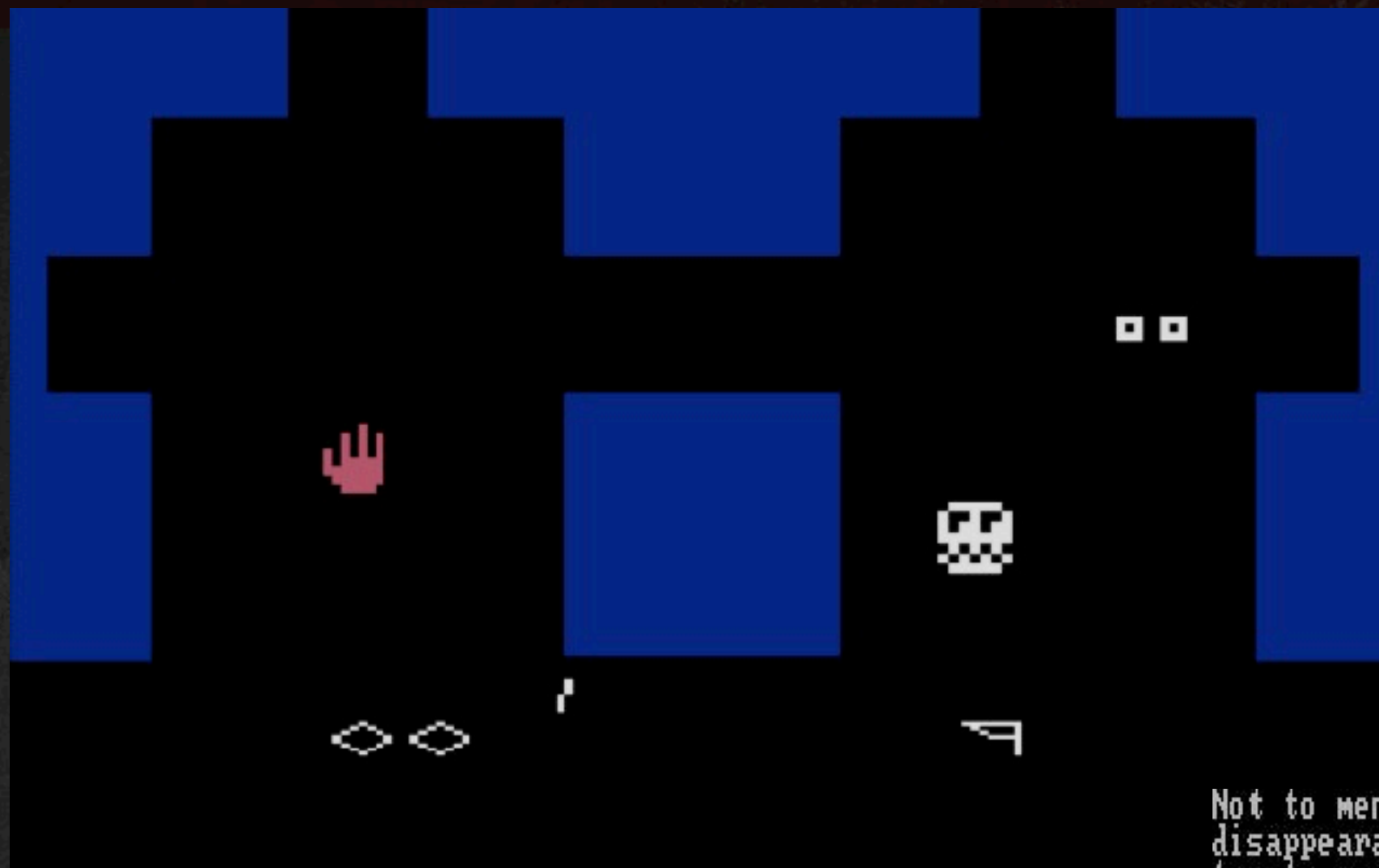
What is Horror?



- Part of Game Design is manipulating player behavior and conducting an emotional response.
- Horror is about extreme emotions...
- ...thus, designing games for the horror genre presents some **extreme** challenges.

Horror Games

- What do **good** Horror Games do?
 - ...immerse us in an atmosphere of dread.
 - ...explore our fears.
 - ...violate our comfort zones.
 - ...allow us to vicariously experience the thrill of being preyed upon.



Not to mention jumping at every shadow, what with disappearances. Time to find a free machine, get twenty page paper.

THE LURKING HORROR

An Interactive Horror

Copyright (c) 1987 by Infocom, Inc. All rights reserved.
THE LURKING HORROR is a trademark of Infocom, Inc.
Release 203 / Serial number 870506

Terminal Room

This is a large room crammed with computer terminal printers. An exit leads south. Banners, posters, Most of the tables are covered with waste paper, Coke cans. There are usually a lot of people here deserted.

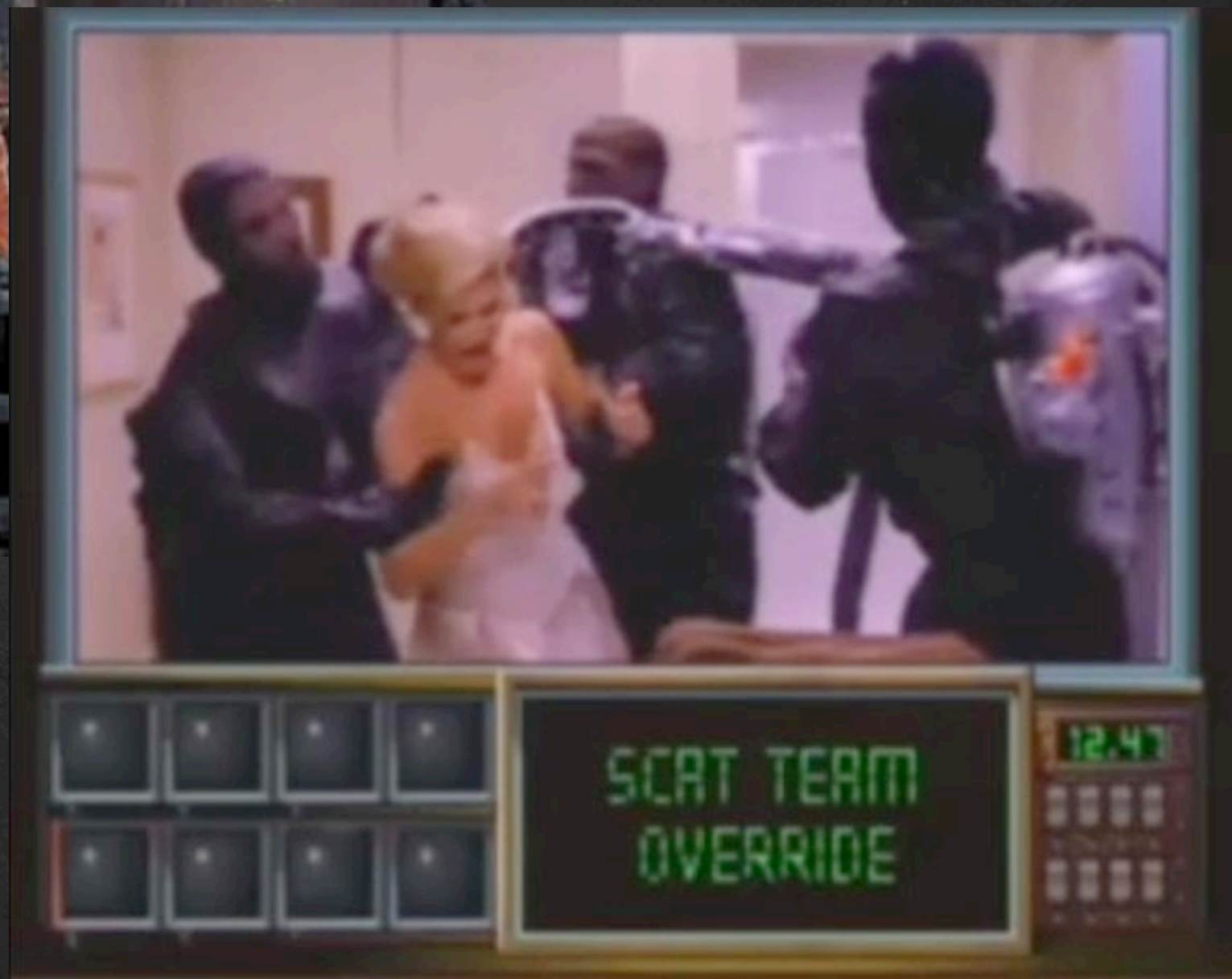
A really whiz-bang pc is right inside the door.















resident evil®

best nintendo







enemy

FILM TYPE-14

89



遅

SHADOW OBSCURE

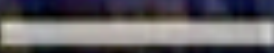
WEEK



SONY



LIFE 

PP  Lv: 5















The Horror Game Schism

| Action Horror | Survival Horror |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| Faster Pace (“Fight”) | Slower Pace (“Flight”) |
| Action | Puzzles |
| Combat | Exploration |
| Action Hero Protagonist | Survivor Protagonist |
| Empowered Player | Disempowered Player |

Survival Horror

- Survival Horror is full of contradictions.
- Video games provide wish-fulfillment, escapism, but...
- ...Survival Horror puts players in horrible situations and settings; “Nightmare Fulfillment”
- Video games are empowering...



Survival Horror

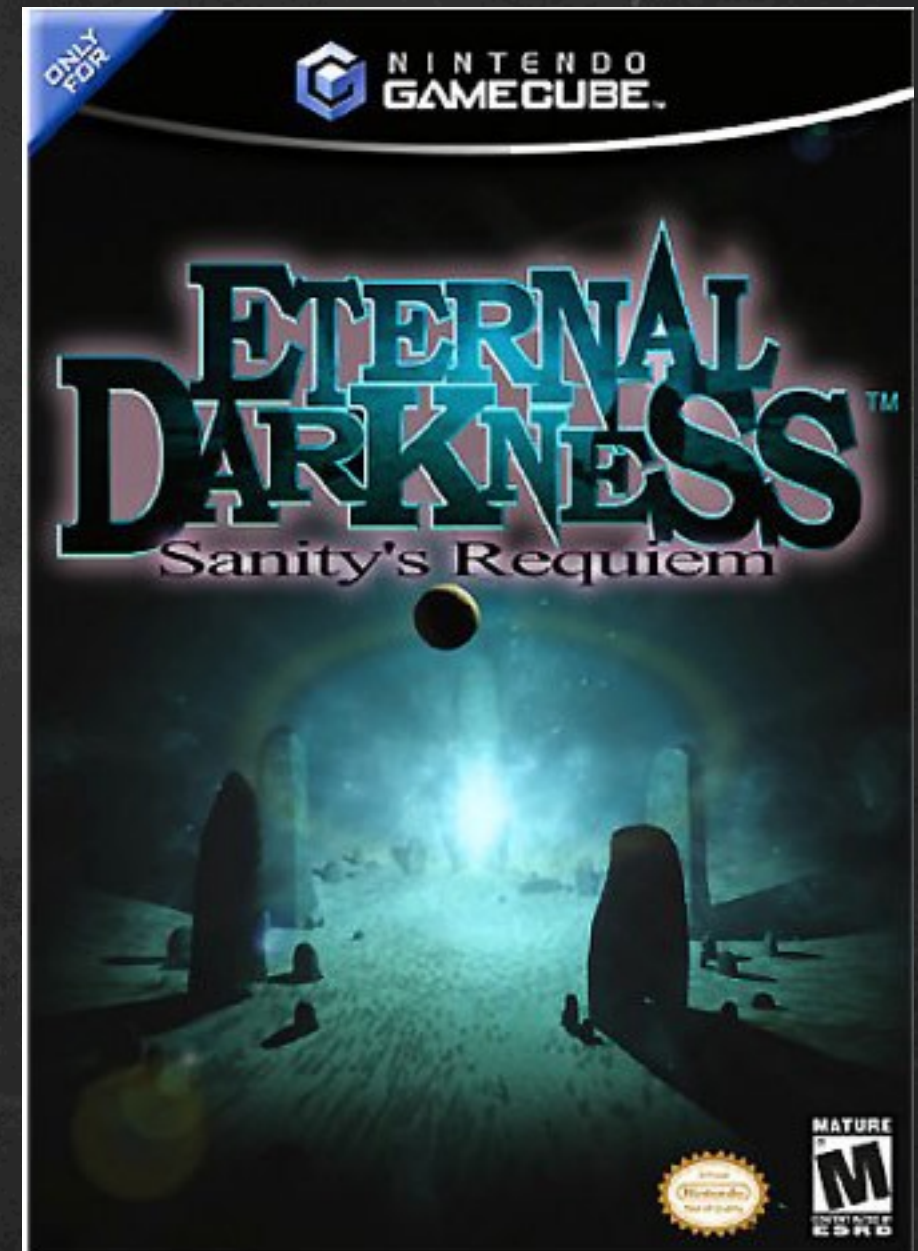
- ...but Survival Horror is about **disempowering** the player, making him feel vulnerable.
- Early Survival Horror Games were basically broken action games.
 - Poor Camera
 - Poor Controls
 - Poor Interface

Survival Horror

- Action Games have evolved.
 - Interface & Controls have been improved greatly.
 - Clever Inventory Systems
 - Streamlined, Minimalist HUDs
 - Intuitive Cameras
- But when these advances are applied to Survival Horror Games, the player is EMPOWERED again.

What are Players Afraid of?

- Losing the game
- Losing progress
- Being unprepared for the next challenge
- Surrendering/submitting to the mercy of the game designers







Welcome to
Silent Hill

The Silent Hill Legacy



- A father, Harry Mason, searches for his lost daughter Cheryl after crashing in Silent Hill.
- Introduced us to The Order, Dahlia, and Alessa.
- A cult religion attempts to summon a new god.

The Silent Hill Legacy



- Used the limitations of the console to great effect.
- “Uncanny Valley” helped create unease.
- Unnatural dialogue, off-kilter performances gave game a “David Lynch-ian” vibe

The Silent Hill Legacy



- James Sunderland receives a letter from his dead wife, inviting him to Silent Hill.
- Fears and Guilt made manifest
- “Turn of the Screw” storyline – is it all in his head?

The Silent Hill Legacy



- Direct sequel to SH1
- Heather Mason travels to Silent Hill to avenge her father's murder.
- A return to the “Order” storyline.
- Claudia, analog to Dahlia

The Silent Hill Legacy



- Henry Townsend pursues a serial killer through his apartment block.
- Radical departure from Silent Hill formula.
- Removed from the location fo Silent Hill; very little ties to first 3 games.

The Silent Hill Legacy



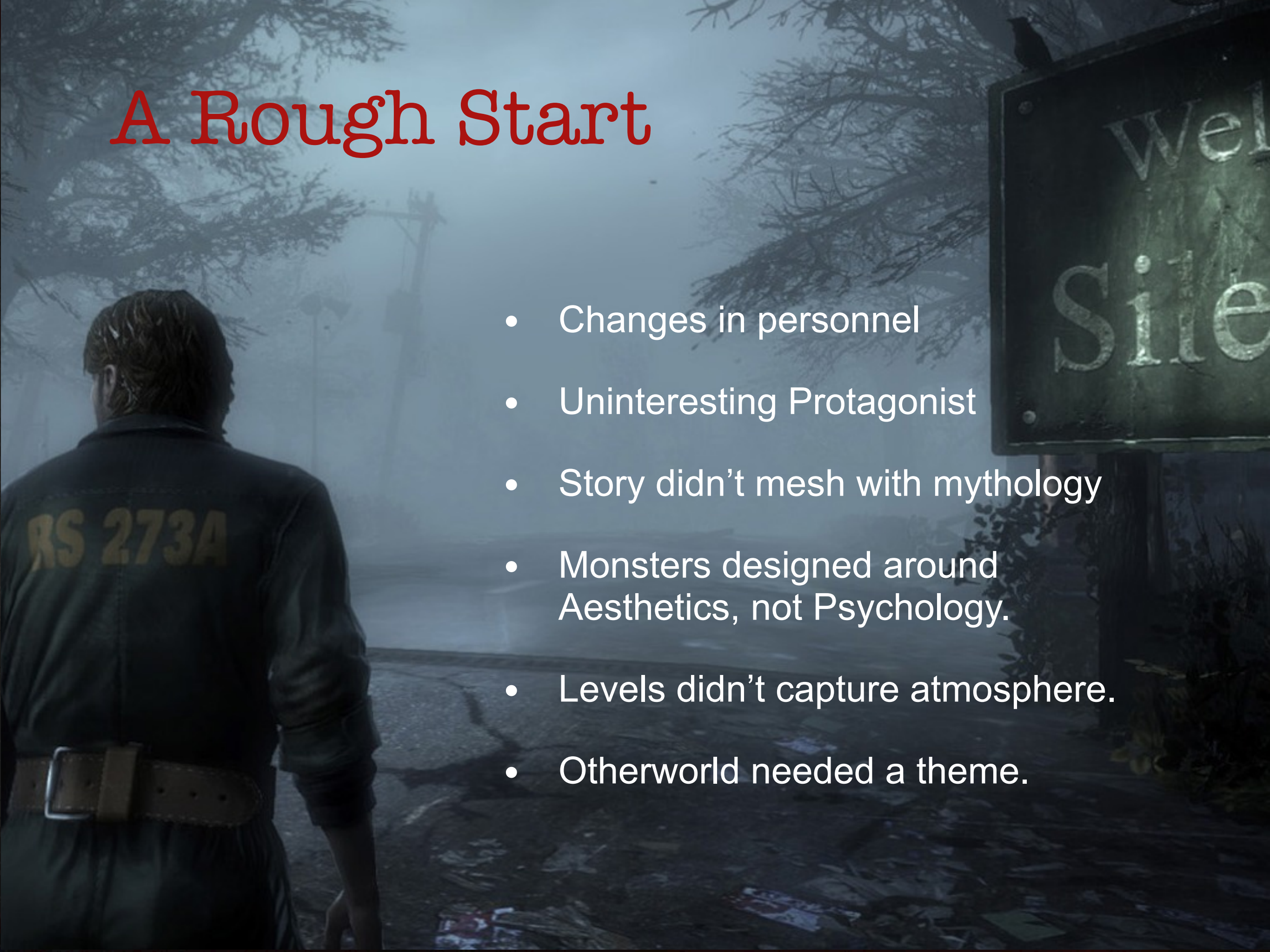
The background of the title screen is a dark, atmospheric scene of a town in the rain. In the center, a tall clock tower with a clock face is visible, surrounded by other buildings. The rain is depicted as numerous white streaks falling across the entire scene. The ground in the foreground is wet and reflective, showing ripples from the falling rain. The overall color palette is dark, with shades of blue, grey, and black, creating a moody and ominous atmosphere.

SILENT HILL

DOWNPOUR

A Rough Start

- Changes in personnel
- Uninteresting Protagonist
- Story didn't mesh with mythology
- Monsters designed around Aesthetics, not Psychology.
- Levels didn't capture atmosphere.
- Otherworld needed a theme.



The Pillars of Silent Hill



- Silent Hill as Genius Loci
- Guilt & Past Sins made manifest
- Exploration & Revelation
- Flawed Protagonist
- Player Vulnerability
- Varying Camera Styles
- Multi-layered story, open to interpretation

Murphy Pendelton



- Flawed but Sympathetic Protagonist
- Prisoner on the Run
- Attempting to escape multiple levels of guilt, past sins.
- Multiple endings offer different revelations about this character.

Body Language & Attitude

A person with dark hair, wearing a dark, heavy coat, is seen from behind, walking away on a path through a misty, dark forest. The atmosphere is somber and mysterious, with tall trees and a foggy background.

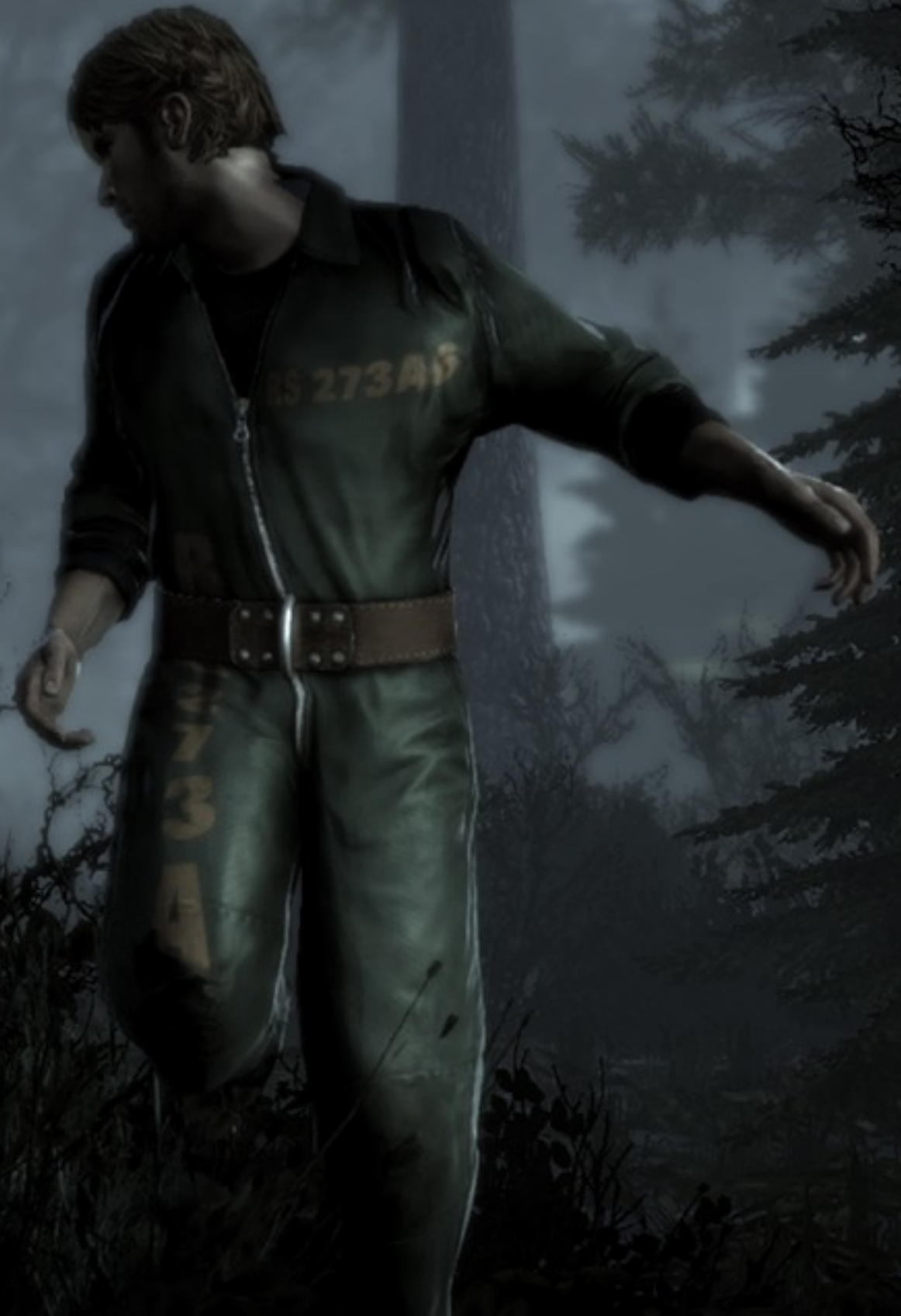
- Changed Murphy's Body Language
- If your character doesn't look scared, it's hard to believe he's in peril
- Dynamic reactions based on scenery, game events.
- Self-Talks are more natural, provide clues to his mental state.

The Story

- Needed a consistent inner logic.
- Focus on psychological horror.
- Violate player's comfort zones with darker themes, taboo subject matter.
- **Side Quests** – Plant seeds for new lore for future chapters.

The Story

- Multiple endings, multiple interpretations
- Team confronted our own fears.
- Fear is about Loss
- **What are you most afraid of losing?**



Combat

The background image is a dark, atmospheric scene from a video game. In the foreground, a character is shown in profile, holding a large, curved blade or weapon. The character is wearing a dark, textured outfit. In the background, another figure is visible, standing in a misty or smoky environment. The overall tone is dark and gritty.

- Improvised Weapons
- Weapons don't reduce Vulnerability, Desperation
- More powerful weapons are few and far between.
- Firepower is extremely limited.
- Fight vs. Flight

Cameras

- Fixed & Railed Cameras
- Limiting view to build tension, dread
- Different camera angles evoke different emotions...







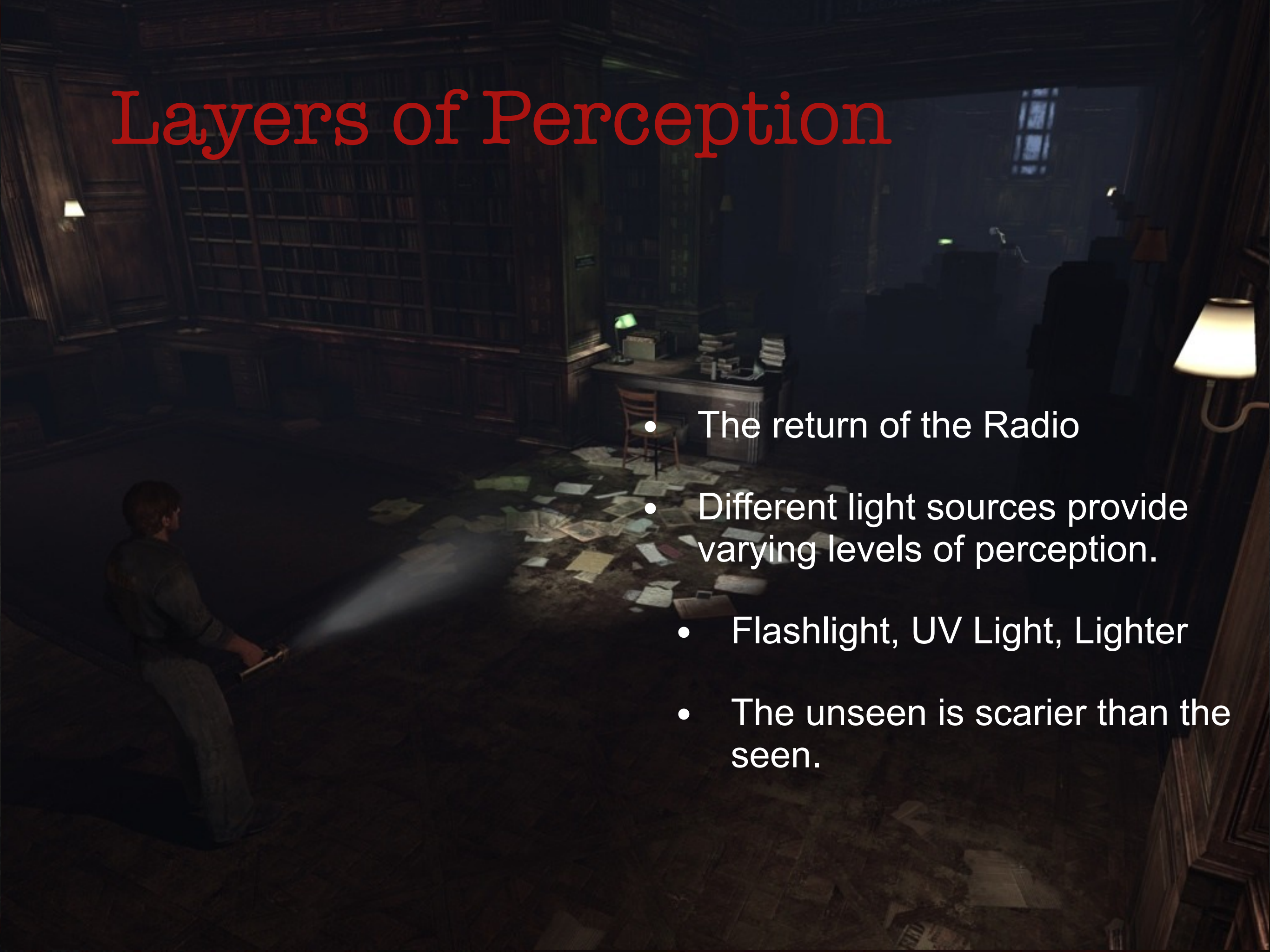
The Environment

- 5x Larger than previous Silent Hills
- Minimal UI, No Loads
- Every location tells a story
- What you don't see is sometimes scarier than what you do see
- Places of Vulnerability
 - Bathroom, Elevator, Train, Theater, Nursery, Etc.



Layers of Perception

- The return of the Radio
- Different light sources provide varying levels of perception.
 - Flashlight, UV Light, Lighter
 - The unseen is scarier than the seen.



Soundtrack

- Transitioned from Akira Yamaoka to Daniel Licht (and yes... Korn, too.)
- Humans are hard-coded to react to certain sounds...
 - Baby/Child Crying
 - Animals in distress
 - Alarms / Sirens
 - Heartbeat / Breathing



The Otherworld

- Fog & Rain
- “Downpour” reflects Murphy’s deteriorating sanity.
- Water is highly symbolic.
- Water became the catalyst and central theme of The Otherworld.

The Monsters



What are Monsters?

- Monsters are the physical manifestation/personification of human fears and anxieties.
- These fears are very specific to culture, time, place, and age.
- Monsters exist in games to modify or drive player behavior.

Clive Barker's “3 Degrees of Violation”

- *1st Degree: Infliction*
- *2nd Degree: Infestation*
- *3rd Degree: Possession*

Clive Barker's “3 Degrees of Violation”

- **1st Degree: Infliction**
 - The breaking of body surfaces.
 - The violation of human superiority; upsetting the natural order of the world.
 - The indignation of being preyed upon.
 - Death is the ultimate result... but the worst is over.



JAWS

Copyright 1975 Universal Studios

Clive Barker's “3 Degrees of Violation”

- **2nd Degree: Infestation**
 - The colonization and/or transformation of tissues and membranes. (“Body Horror”)
 - Prolonged horror: Impending death, impending doom.
 - Invasion of the body; despoiling the sacred temple.
 - Self-Destruction -- RELEASE! -- is still an option.



Clive Barker's “3 Degrees of Violation”

- **3rd Degree: Possession**
 - The hijacking of not just the body, but the mind.
 - Psychological horror: Ellison's “I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream”
 - The victim is conscious of the horror, but unable to affect release.
 - Death is not an assured release.



THE EXORCIST

Designing Monsters

- When describing a monster, most people begin with the physical description...
- ...but this is actually the last step when designing a good monster.

Designing Monsters

- What is the monster's combat role?
- How does the monster punish the player?
- What player behaviors does the monster encourage or discourage?
- How does it move?
- What is its back story?
- How does it reflect the dark side of our hero? Of ourselves?

The Future...?



Silent Hill's Future

- It's time to move beyond The Order
- Refocus on Psychological Horror
- Stories about world-destroying gods are hard to relate to.
 - The Exorcist was about the battle for a little girl's soul, not a battle for the planet.
- Book of Memories
 - New Hardware, New Game Play...

Co-Op Horror



Co-Op Horror

- The future of horror is co-op, not solitary.
- Team Mates provide a graphic example of the price of failure.
- Safety in numbers rapidly diminishes as the body count rises.
- Distrust amongst the team leads to paranoia, stress, panic.

Stronger Performances



Stronger Performances

- L.A. Noir raised the bar by several degrees
- The better we can capture an actor's performance, the more emotion is conveyed.
- Strong emotional connections will make horror players care more about their on-screen characters.
- Convincing emotional performances will make us believe these characters are truly vulnerable, in peril.

iOS, Mobile & Social



- Breathes new life into old genres
 - Point & Click Horror
- Socially Connected Devices
 - Paranormal Activity on iOS
 - Imagine a horror game that knows **everything** about you...

Kinect & Move

RISE OF
NIGHTMARES™



Kinect & Move

- Imagine a survival horror game that knows...
 - ...how many people are in the room.
 - ...the light and sound levels in your living room.
 - ...how close you are to the screen.
 - ...who (or what) is in the room with you.

