

HILADELPHIA GAY NEW

'Queering Fear' event in Manayunk is sure to be a scream

By **August Ryan** - October 9, 2024 7:00 am



(Photo: Creative Commons)

Gay Christmas — you might call it Halloween — comes to Manayunk's Fat Lady Brewing on Sunday, Oct. 27 with "[Queering Fear](#)," a film screening and panel discussion celebrating the queerness of the horror genre. The 2:30 p.m. event includes a screening of the first film in the "Scream" franchise, which panelists will then discuss.

Organizer Justin Mendoza has a few goals for the event, including creating an alcohol-optional social event (although the venue is a brewery, there will be nonalcoholic drink options on offer). They're also excited to bring like-minded people together to bond over media and figure out how a 1990s teen slasher film can be textually cisheteronormative and still hit home for so many queer horror fans.

"In media like 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer' or 'Scream,' the sort of campy element with a female protagonist has always been something I related to," Mendoza said. "That plays against heteronormative cultural expectations of the damsel in distress, or the idea that you can't express femininity and still be strong. I and others find that really empowering."

1996's "Scream," written by Kevin Williamson and directed by Wes Craven, serves as a meta-commentary on the slasher sub genre tropes in the telling of its primary story, where a high-schooler and her friends try to survive a murder spree by a masked killer. The main cast of characters is populated mainly by self-styled horror experts, but they aren't the only ones unpacking genre tropes as the film hurtles toward unmasking its killer.



Less than 30 minutes into the film's runtime, heroine Sidney Prescott calls out the sexism she sees in the horror genre: the killer stalks a young woman who is both sexualized and, seemingly, not smart enough to get away.

"I think it's a pretty great point when Sidney says she finds that portrayal of women insulting," Mendoza said. "That's an expectation of something we've commonly seen in horror and slasher films with the exception of Jamie Lee Curtis' character in 'Halloween' — and she's the original Final Girl."

For the uninitiated, the Final Girl is a horror protagonist who uses her wits to outsmart the killer and make it to the movie's end credits, though she's usually challenged in her franchise's next installment. In blockbuster after blockbuster, the Final Girl shows courage and persistence in the face of literal as well as metaphorical demons, but also adds to her collection of physical and emotional scars.



Mendoza and their fellow panelists are preparing to talk about not only the Final Girl's underdog empowerment but also the ways that intertwines with her trauma — and how both are relevant to the queer community.

"Complex trauma is, unfortunately, usually part of a queer experience because of social stigma and a constant, real threat of violence," Mendoza said. "Our community typically has higher rates of anxiety, depression, [and] substance use; our nervous systems are often activated [and] in that threat response, [we experience] the fight, flight, or freeze. When we're watching a horror film, it can conjure feelings our bodies are used to."

Horror can, then, also be a safe outlet for moving through those feelings, for discussion and processing. And like "Scream," with its moments of dark comedy, the panel will mix heavier topics with light, taking on mental health and trauma by way of the horror genre but also tackling humor and camp.

Panelists include "It All Began With A Scream" author Padraic Maroney, the owners of South Street Art Mart and PGN Editor Jeremy Rodriguez. The event will also feature a costume contest, vendor tables and drag performances by Lamia The Cursed Queen.

"The whole vibe of Halloween has these spooky, mysterious elements, but it can also be really playful and fun," Mendoza said. "I want people at 'Queering Fear' to enjoy being together in community, being heard and seen and understood by each other."

"Queering Fear" takes place at 2:30 p.m. on Oct. 27 at Fat Lady Brewing, 4323 Main St. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit [Eventbrite](#).